

## Annex 4 – Other aspects of diversity

This annex explains what we are doing in respect of other aspects of diversity:

- age;
- sexual orientation; and
- religion or belief.

Some of the things we have done since November 2007 or have planned for the future have been mentioned earlier in this document and we have not repeated them here.

### Age

#### Our customers

#### **Age: rights of older workers and enabling older people to contribute to society**

We are responsible for developing strategies to stimulate increases in the employment rate for people aged over 50 and increase the opportunities for people in this age group to work towards a more financially secure retirement. We have ensured that our policies and practices offer equal treatment to people of all ages, except where there is evidence to support continued targeting at certain age groups, for example New Deal for Young People and New Deal 50 plus.

We are continuing to take forward the proposals in the 2006 Welfare Reform Green Paper. For example:

- we started to rollout a mandatory regime of joint claims to couples aged 50-59 in February 2008; and
- we will treat people aged 60 to 64 as labour market participants as the State Pension age for women and Pension Credit age for men and women is phased up from 60 to 65 between 2010 and 2020.

## Opportunity age – meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century

The Government published its ageing strategy 'Opportunity Age – Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century' in March 2005. We lead on taking this strategy forward, for example:

- LinkAge Plus pilots are testing new and innovative methods of providing information and access to services to over 50s. Interventions are locally-focused, based on priorities set by local older people, and go beyond the traditional health and social care agendas to address wider well-being. They use a mixture of outreach activity, 'drop-in' type resource centres and volunteers or paid mentors – all of which increase the scope of older people to access services. The programme has £10 million available for 2006-07 and 2007-08, funding seven Local Authorities and one Primary Care Trust. Each pilot focuses on local needs, and how best to integrate services within those locations. Funding ends in October 2008. A number of interim evaluation reports will be published culminating in a final report by March 2009;
- we supported the Department of Health in piloting Individual Budgets for disabled people and older people. These put users of care and support services at the centre of the process so that they could decide what services best suit them. The initial two-year pilot is now coming to an end and will be evaluated;
- we supported the Department of Health in the Partnerships for Older People Project. £60m was ring-fenced for 2006-08 to enable Local Authority-led partnerships to establish innovative pilot projects with and for older people. The pilots tested and evaluated innovative approaches that sustain prevention work in order to improve outcomes for older people. These are currently being evaluated.

The Public Service Agreement to 'tackle poverty and promote greater independence and well-being in later life' is the first to be set specifically for older people and continues the work of Opportunity Age.

### Other examples

We continue to write and co-ordinate the content for the over 50s section of Directgov which provides a range of public service information and services on-line.

## Sexual orientation

We are making arrangements to monitor the sexual orientation of our staff from April 2008. We will use this information to help us identify, tackle and prevent discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and asexual staff.

We took part in Stonewall's 2008 workplace equality index, where we came 74th with 76 per cent. We scored highly in areas such as our policies, practices and employee benefits. We have since met Stonewall and will be addressing areas identified for improvement.

We highlight sexual orientation issues through our internal website and in staff magazines. These have included a series of articles during lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history month.

## Religion or belief

We respect the religions and beliefs of all our staff. We provide prayer rooms for staff. Our managers consider favourably requests for time away from desks for religious obligations. Although we do not grant the right to take additional paid leave for religious purposes, managers view applications for time off for religious reasons sympathetically. Staff can apply for a salary advance for religious festivals.

We publish an annual religious calendar for staff. As well as dates, it includes information on all the major religions and provides background to all the key religious festivals and events. All managers are made aware of the Departmental guidance on enabling staff to observe religious obligations and festivals.

We take religious festivals and events into account when arranging interviews with customers.

The new religion or belief learning zone went live on our intranet in September 2007.

We are a member of the Employers' Forum on Belief, which was set up to establish and share good practice on religion, belief or non-belief in the workplace. It is made up of private and public sector employers. The forum's aim is to enable employers not only to comply with the law but to understand what changes they could make to enable everyone – whatever their faith, belief or non-belief – to contribute to the workplace.