

Foreword by the Permanent Secretary



I am proud to be the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions for many reasons, but one of the most important is the Department's commitment to help people to realise their potential and to lead rewarding and fulfilling lives. Recognising and respecting the diversity of people's needs and enabling equality of opportunity for all is at the heart of this ambition – and that applies as much to our staff as to our 20 million customers.

Our agenda for change for the next three years is challenging and exciting, and brings us many opportunities. As well as introducing the new Employment and Support Allowance, for example, there will be further reform of state and private pensions. The Pensions Bill currently before Parliament contains a set of principles that the new Personal Accounts Delivery Authority will have to have regard to. One of those principles is that 'diversity among members and future members of such a scheme should be respected.' That is an important example of the way we are seeking to mainstream our diversity and equality agenda.

The equality schemes and progress reports which we are publishing in this document set out other examples of ways in which we think that we're getting it right. But we know that we have more to do. The three equality duties play an essential part, not least in helping us to listen to our customers, stakeholders and staff when they tell us where we are not yet getting it right.

Within the Department too, our diversity and equality agenda is vitally important. We all have a responsibility to make sure it is at the forefront of our thinking in everything we do. One of the ways in which I try to do this personally is by meeting the Chairs of our Diversity Network Groups every quarter to hear their views on the way we are delivering our services and the issues that are affecting our staff.

While we can, I believe, take pride in the progress we have made, we remain determined to do better. The steps set out in our action plans for the next three years aim to help us to do so. I invite you to take the time to read our equality schemes, and to give us your feedback on them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leigh Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leigh Lewis
Permanent Secretary