

Private Office

Contents

Why we are reviewing our disability and gender schemes early	333
Private Office: aims and objectives	333
Our mission	334
Where we are now	334
Progress reporting and reviewing	335
Equality Action Plan	336

Why we are reviewing our disability and gender schemes early

In our equality schemes annual progress reports published in November 2007, we explained that we had decided to review all our equality schemes in 2008 for the following reasons:

- race legislation requires race equality schemes to be reviewed by May 2008;
- to take on board comments on our first disability and gender equality schemes;
- to move towards our objective of mainstreaming and aligning with the usual April-March planning cycle used across government, and to align our cycle with the Spending Review cycle; and
- to move towards a single equality scheme.

This will help to embed diversity and equality into the way we do business. As this review is significantly earlier than required for disability and gender, we discussed this decision with the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission before they became part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in October 2007. They supported the proposal to carry out the third year review early with a 'light touch' review of our disability and gender equality schemes at the same time as we review our race equality schemes.

Private Office: aims and objectives

Private Office provides the key link between Ministers and the wider Department, Parliament and other government departments. We provide support to Ministers in developing and communicating their policies for this Department by:

- Providing day-to-day support and advice to Ministers in developing, implementing and delivering policy.
- Enabling Ministers to meet their commitments to Parliament.
- Enabling Ministers to communicate their policies through the effective management of ministerial correspondence.

Our key priorities are set out in the Private Office Vision for 2006-2008 which we're currently in the final year of delivery. This is focused around three areas: Our People, Our Business and Our Communications. A healthcheck was carried out in 2007. We will be working on developing a new 2 year business plan in the coming months and will ensure that our equality priorities continue to take an essential role in this.

Our mission

To deliver a professional, personal service to our customers, where our people are proud and passionate about what they do.

Where we are now

- Since 2006 we have held 5 open days to encourage staff from across all business areas from around the country to consider working in Private Office.
- In February 2008 we took the open day idea one step further by getting out of London and taking this event on the road - running several sessions in Leeds and Sheffield. Based on feedback we will be running future sessions in other parts of the country to reach a greater audience, including those who may be unable to travel to London for events either due to disability or other commitments (such as caring responsibilities)
- We have also relaunched our STAR scheme – for short term attachment – again to encourage wider understanding of our business from people who may not be able to work here permanently, but who might be able to cover for a few days.
- We also continue to encourage people to job shadow staff here.
- We have revised our guidance on ministerial submissions to ensure that all policy proposals are considered against cross-cutting legislation, including the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Disability Discrimination Act. And Sex Discrimination Act.
- Private Office has a good track record on gender equality. Many of our top roles are filled by women and we've worked hard to support flexible working patterns for our people.
- We continue to hold annual events for staff to enable them to feed in their views on issues including diversity and equality.
- We ran a pilot workshop for staff on prejudices and assumptions when we launched our Learning Academy in 2007.

Equal pay review

We undertake regular equal pay audits to review our pay policies and their application. Our pay statement is included in the chapter on Corporate Human Resources and in others across the Department where they have responsibility for recruiting professional staff.

Employment Data

We monitor, analyse and evaluate a range of information on our staff to meet the specific requirements of the Race Relations Act, the Disability and the Equality Act. This helps us to ensure that our staff from under represented groups receive equal outcomes and are able to fulfil their potential. Our employment data are reported in the chapter on Corporate Human resources.

Impact assessments

- We follow Departmental processes to ensure that we impact assess proposals and change for race, disability and gender.
- Colleagues who submit proposals and policy changes to Ministers and the Permanent Secretary have responsibility for equality impact assessments. Work has been ongoing within Private Office to raise awareness of this requirement. Further details of equality impact assessments will be included in the chapters by policy parts of the Department.

Progress reporting and reviewing

We will assess and report progress on our action plans annually or as directed by DWP. As part of that process we will ensure that we continue to involve customers and staff and use the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.

We will keep our schemes under review by integrating them into our business planning round.

Equality Action Plan

Action	Timescales	Responsibility	Outcomes	Progress
We will issue new guidance on ministerial submissions to ensure that the principles of the Department's diversity equality schemes are considered before any policy proposals are made	August 2008	Principal Private Secretary	Embedding of diversity equality principles into all policies.	Revised guidance is being issued following recent ministerial changes
We will ensure that Ministers are always aware of the impact of policies on race, gender and disability issues	Ongoing	Private Secretary to the Special Advisers	Embedding of diversity equality principles into all policies	Work has been ongoing to raise awareness of impact assessments to Ministers and private secretaries

Action	Timescales	Responsibility	Outcomes	Progress
We will ensure that Ministers visit and engage with a representative sample of customers in terms of race, disability and gender	Ongoing	Principal Private Secretary	Embedding of diversity equality principles into all policies	Ministers have ensured they visit and engage with a representative sample of customers and this continues
Changes being made to our business, for example our scheduled relocation, will take account of disability, race and gender issues in order to promote equality	December–January 2006	Business Support Team	Promoting equality among our staff, prospective staff, visitors and customers	Relocated in January 2007 to new accommodation, mainstreaming accessibility so that people with mobility impairments no longer have to use a different route through the building
We will ensure that all Private Office staff are fully briefed about the diversity equality schemes and that they have the opportunity to comment regularly on how well we are fulfilling our commitments via a named contact	September 2008	Business Support Team	Promoting equality among our staff, prospective staff and customers	Diversity equality workshops for staff held in June as part of the unit's learning-at-work day and we're currently developing further diversity and equality learning sessions

Action	Timescales	Responsibility	Outcomes	Progress
We will ensure that we work with the rest of the Department to be an exemplar for the enforcement of the disability equality duty. We will encourage and initiate inter-departmental communications at ministerial and Permanent Secretary level on this issue	Ongoing	Principal Private Secretary	Acting as an exemplar for good practice in the promotion of equality	Ongoing
We will continue to initiate high-level, inter-departmental communications about the forthcoming changes to Access to Work funding	Ongoing	Principal Private Secretary	Acting as an exemplar for good practice in the promotion of equality	The Department's monitoring of the impact on Government departments of the funding changes is ongoing, and no departments have as of yet asked us to provide any extra funding. If there are any areas of concern we will address them immediately

Action	Timescales	Responsibility	Outcomes	Progress
We will ensure that policies and communications, such as correspondence, are disseminated in ways that meet the needs of customers; for example, in accessible formats and different languages	Ongoing	Principal Private Secretary Business Support Team	Embedding of diversity equality principles into all policies	Ongoing. Ministerial correspondence has been issued both in Braille and large font sizes on request
We will continue to hold open days, using them to encourage staff from ethnic minorities and disabled staff to apply for posts in Private Office	September 2008	Business Support Team	Promoting equality among our staff and prospective staff	A number of open days have been held. We have also worked to encourage greater take up by running pilot events out of London in Leeds and Sheffield and will continue to do more in other parts of the country (and in under representative areas of the South East)
Appoint a Diversity and Equality Champion within Private Office to act as a focal point for staff to raise issues with	March 2008	Business Manager	Embedding diversity and equality into the business	Champion appointed

Action	Timescales	Responsibility	Outcomes	Progress
Develop a new 2 year business plan which will have diversity and quality embedded still further into the mainstream of the business	October 2008	Business Manager	Embedding diversity and equality into the business	

Contact Details

We are keen to receive feedback and comments on our equality schemes. We can be contacted by:

Post: DWP Private Office (Equality Schemes)
Business Support Team
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA

Email: po-business-support@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Further copies of this publication and in other formats, such as Braille, audio and other languages, can be obtained by:
Email: adelphi.diversityandequality@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0114 259 7820

Textphone: 0114 259 6308

Fax: 0114 259 6147

All DWP Equality Schemes are available at:

www.dwp.gov.uk/aboutus/equalityschemes

978-84763-478-8