

Department for Work and Pensions: update to our Gender Equality Schemes

Key priorities

The Department for Work and Pensions exists to deliver the Government's welfare reform agenda. Our detailed schemes – Department for Work and Pensions: Disability and Gender Equality Schemes and Race Equality Scheme Progress Report – provides information on our gender objectives and actions across all our businesses. From these we have identified three key priorities:

- mainstreaming gender equality into welfare reform policy development work;
- reducing the gender pay gap; and
- reforming pensions.

Mainstreaming gender equality into Welfare Reform Policy development work

Our welfare reform agenda builds on the Government's commitment to achieving a fairer, more inclusive society where nobody is held back by disadvantage or lack of opportunity. This includes tackling child poverty, working towards employment for all and reforming the welfare state. To help achieve this we are introducing and piloting new initiatives including:

- developing the New Deals with a focus on women returners and in particular lone parents. We are currently piloting 'In Work Credit' across 22 Jobcentre Plus Districts. This is a support initiative aimed at lone parents and provides up to £60 per week (dependent on eligibility and location) for up to 52 weeks. It is not means tested and does not affect other in work benefits or tax credits;
- changing the lone parent work focused interview (WFI) regime to introduce six monthly interviews for all lone parents. These interviews will be available from April 2007 for those with a youngest child aged 5 - 13 and from April 2008 for those with a youngest child aged 0-4. Lone parents continue to receive Income Support and any activity to prepare for work remains voluntary;
- introducing Local Housing Allowance which is an easier and more transparent way of calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit. We have Pathfinders currently delivering the Local Housing Allowance which pays a set amount of money (in the majority of cases) to private tenants towards rent. There is ongoing qualitative and quantitative evaluation which involves interviewing both women and men. At present there is no strong evidence of any emerging patterns or gender differences;
- providing women returners with access to confidence building measures;

- offering a voluntary session with a Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser to access information on work, childcare, commuting and dress;
- on 27 March *Working for Children* was published. This document sets out the Department for Work and Pensions' strategy for tackling child poverty. Much of the strategy is aimed at families and in particular lone parents, who are predominantly female. A full copy of the report can be found at: www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2007/childpoverty/childpoverty.pdf

Reducing the gender pay gap and our customers

Many of our existing policies have a key role to play in addressing the gender pay gap. For example, we are developing the in-work support available to lone parents – many of whom are women – to help improve job retention and progression. In addition the Employment Retention and Advancement Demonstration (ERA) project gives personal adviser support and financial help to low income workers to stay in work and to take up training. Early feedback suggests lone parents on the project earned more than other lone parents, partly because the financial support encourages them to make the move from part-time to full-time work; and those participating were more likely to take up training both in and out of work. Overall, 45 per cent of the New Deal for Lone Parents group undertook some education or training. Evaluation is still ongoing, and will provide us with valuable lessons on how we can sustain employment and help those with lower skills progress and lift their families out of poverty.

Reducing the gender pay gap and our staff

The Department undertakes regular equal pay audits to review the Department's pay policies and their applications. The most recent audit was completed in 2005 and the next one is planned for 2007. Our pay audits help us to ensure that our pay system is closely aligned to our business need, by, among other things, shortening pay scales further. We want our pay structures to be clearer and more transparent. Shorter pay scales will ensure fewer differences in pay for people doing the same job. We have reviewed our reward strategy and the Department's Executive Team has agreed the approach. The details are subject to negotiation with the Departmental Trade Unions and agreement by the Treasury.

Pension Reform

Our Departmental equality schemes outline our objectives to take forward our Pension Reform programme and includes our plans to:

- promote equality between men and women in relation to state pensions;
- reform state pensions so that they are simpler and more generous, to provide a solid foundation on which people can save;

- make the state pension fairer and more accessible to women and carers; and
- make it easier for people to save for their retirement.

Demonstrating that we are fulfilling the full requirements of the Gender Equality Duty

The Department for Work and Pensions is committed to fulfilling the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty. We have explicit Diversity and Equality and Standards of Behaviour policies which impose duties and protections on every member of staff. They provide safeguards for ensuring that information dealt with by our Human Resource services is handled in the correct way, remains confidential and is only disclosed in certain circumstances.

We take harassment, discrimination and bullying very seriously and investigate all allegations fully. We have clear procedures in place to ensure that such situations are addressed sensitively, quickly and in confidence. Our Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying policy explicitly includes gender, trans-gender status, marital status and caring responsibilities as grounds for protection against harassment, discrimination or bullying. The procedures apply to both our staff and our external suppliers, such as contractors and consultants.

We currently monitor harassment, discrimination and bullying for gender, disability and race and from 2008 we will be specifically monitoring transgender as a separate area. This will improve our ability to identify whether complaints are occurring, provide the basis for awareness training and tackle unacceptable behaviour where it occurs.

The Department also has in place health and safety policies for pregnant women and nursing mothers and:

- assess the generic risks for women of childbearing age;
- undertake an individual risk assessment once notified of a pregnancy to ensure any necessary adjustments are made to the working environment, and review this as the pregnancy progresses to take account of changing needs;
- provide suitable facilities for pregnant women and nursing mothers, including provision of facilities for breastfeeding and/or expressing milk.

Gender reassignment

The Department provides full guidance for its staff to deal with the receipt of Gender Recognition Certificates and questions from customers. Processes have

been established to ensure that the receipt of a Gender Recognition Certificate is built into all our services, for example benefit and pension processes.

We have good practice guidance on gender recognition, transsexualism and transgenderism. Our guidance includes:

- when and how to share information with the employee's colleagues;
- communicating the need for respectful and appropriate behaviour towards the employee;
- whether a transfer to another site should be considered if the employee wishes it; and
- how time off for treatment will be recorded and managed.

Mainstreaming our equality schemes

Our intention is that equality schemes and in particular their action plans become part of our annual business plans, with the yearly progress report featuring in our routine Departmental reports.

Impact assessments

The Department has already committed to undertake impact assessments on new (or changes) to its functions, policies and services. We will also ensure that over the next three years (by April 2010) we will carry out gender impact assessments on our current key functions, policies and services where these have not already been undertaken as part of the preparation for development of our schemes.

We continue to raise awareness of the requirement to carry out impact assessments through provision of guidance and processes, awareness workshops and a specific workshop module within our Diversity Toolkit (which provides comprehensive information and computer-based communications packages for our staff).

Involving and consulting our customers and staff

The Departmental Trade Union Side (DTUS) were fully involved in all stages of the development of our equality schemes. Progress on our schemes remains a standing agenda item for our quarterly meetings.

We do regularly consult with organisations through our corporate customer affairs team including:

- Gingerbread;

- One Parent Families;
- Family Welfare Association;
- The Equal Opportunities Commission;
- The EOC's Women's Pensions network (including e.g. Help the Aged, Age Concern, the TUC); and
- The Fawcett Society.

As already mentioned in our Departmental equality schemes we have recently established a new Customer Insight Team to provide a cross cutting approach to involvement and consultation. The new team will ensure a more inclusive and joined up approach to involvement activities across the Department and all of the diversity strands.

By the end of March 2008 we will have developed and implemented (across the Department) a formal strategy for actively engaging and involving our customers and staff.

Monitoring

We have developed effective systems for gathering information about our staff which ensures we can monitor the extent to which we promote equality between men and women. These systems enable us to do cross-cutting analysis between gender and other diversity strands including age, ethnicity, disability, working patterns and from April 2008 sexual orientation.

The following sets out the key data which is available (or collected through surveys) on gender and which is used in developing and monitoring our policies, particularly in relation to Pension Reform. These sources have been used extensively for example in the Women and Pensions Report (Nov 2005) and the Gender Impact Assessment (published Nov 2006).

Work and Pensions Longitudinal Survey

This is the principal source of information on pensions within the DWP and is publicly accessible via our website. It provides data on State Pension and Pension Credit payments by gender.

Pension Credit Estimates of Take-up

This is published annually and contains estimates of the take-up of Pension Credit (including a gender break-down).

Second Tier Pension Provision

Estimates of people in contracted-out pension scheme memberships and SERPS/S2P memberships (broken down by gender).

Other Publications

The following publications and data are also available and used in developing policies:

- Family Resources Survey (sponsored by the DWP);
- Pensioners' Incomes Series (derived from the FRS);
- Households Below Average Income (derived from the FRS);
- Pension Trends (a National Statistics publication); and
- English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (part-funded by the DWP).

Gender equality action plan – additional actions

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcome	Persons responsible
To change the structure of our pay system so that it is more closely aligned to our business need, by, among other things, shortening pay scales further.	2007 pay deal will be negotiated with the Trade Unions.	Negotiations will have started by April 2007.	We want our pay structures to be clearer and more transparent. Shorter pay scales will ensure fewer differences in pay for people doing the same job.	Employee Policy Director.
Review all existing policies to ensure they promote equality between men and women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct initial screening impact assessments on all Departments 	To be completed by April 2010.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All current policies are assessed for their impact on gender. • Negative impacts 	All Departmental Directors.

	<p>ntal policies established prior to April 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct full impact assessment for any policy where a negative impact is identified. 		<p>identified and addressed future actions plans include action to address.</p>	
<p>To develop further objectives building on the Women and Work Commission's recommendations and 'one year on' findings reports.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review report when available. • Agree actions. • Take forward actions. 	<p>Timings to be decided.</p>	<p>Our policies and practices reflect recommendations made by the Women and work Commission.</p>	<p>Work and Welfare Equality Group.</p>
<p>To ensure our customers, staff and stakeholders are consulted with, involved in and contribute to the setting of the Department's priorities.</p>	<p>Develop, agree and implement an involvement strategy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review what we have in place. • Consider whether we are reaching all groups, including specific groups targeting gender and transgender issues. • Coordinate activity across the 	<p>End of March 2008.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men and women (including transgender) are consulted and involved in setting the agenda and priorities for the Department. • Their views are taken on board and the agenda and priorities of the Department reflect their views. 	<p>Department for Work and Pensions director of Diversity and Equality.</p>

	Department to lessen the burdens on customers and stakeholders.			
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