

Communications

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DWP Communications Directorate race, disability and gender equality schemes 2008-2011

Why we are reviewing 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.

Our aims and objectives

Our communication priorities (Annex 1) drive all our work and are assessed by our communications team for their race, gender and disability impact.

Our delivery is organised around tackling 4 key communications challenges, derived from the Departmental Strategic Objectives (DSOs):

- Work and getting back to work;
- Entitlement and responsibilities;
- Planning and saving for later life; and
- Employers, stakeholders and diversity.

Diversity issues are embedded throughout the challenges and all our work reflects this.

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.

We also contribute to an annual benchmarking exercise of pay for communication professionals across Whitehall and find that DWP generally has one of the highest rates of pay for communication 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 Discrimination Act 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 is 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. A recent example includes the DWP Leaflet Review project. From April 2008 we have been promoting the availability of impact assessment training events for staff through our internal newsletter and our Learning and Development calendar.

Procurement

We have a Procurement Centre of Expertise for marketing and communications. We are responsible for buying communication products and services on behalf of the Department. Our contracts specify that our suppliers must conform to the Department's equality policies.

Progress since 1 December 2007

Race

The Communication Standards Team continues to develop and monitor standards for communicating with our diverse customer groups, including ethnic minority audiences. We are embarking on a Public Information Review that will ensure the provision of information is based on customer need.

We currently have a DWP Ethnic Language Standard which is based on objective bespoke research into the information and communication needs, geo-demographics, and literacy and fluency characteristics of the language users. The intention is that translation-related decisions will be driven by evidence rather than other, potentially more subjective, considerations.

The Ethnic Minority Language Review on which this standard is based contains detailed information about ethnic minority communities in the United Kingdom. The intention is to use this additional information in conjunction with other relevant research to improve communications with the ethnic minority communities. This is due for a full review based on the outcome of the Public Information Review during 2008. Findings will be based around customer insight and segmentation to meet the changing demographics in the UK. The next review will align with the findings of the 2011 Census.

Disability

We have reviewed the cross-government Images of Disability initiative to give it a greater focus on ensuring that government communicators actively promote positive attitudes to disability and have the knowledge to meet the requirements of disability legislation by:

- being disability aware;
- involving disabled people from the start of the development of our marketing and communication campaigns;
- ensuring the communications planning, delivery and outputs are accessible to everyone; and
- mainstreaming the representation of disabled people in communications outputs.

Based on the outcome of research with government communicators, we will be relaunching Images of Disability with a rolling programme of activity including direct marketing and communications to key government communicators, publishing new Images of Disability best practice guidance on the Office for Disability Issue's and Government Communications Network websites, developing disability communications training roadshows and building stakeholder support for our approach.

We have launched a marketing and stakeholder campaign to challenge employers' assumptions about the skills and abilities of disabled people and those with long term health conditions. The Employ ability campaign was piloted at the end of 2007 in four areas and will be rolled out regionally throughout 2008.

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The key objective of Employ ability is “to engage employers in changing their attitudes and behaviour towards disabled people, and people with long-term health conditions, motivating them to take positive action to be fair and equal in their recruitment and retention activities.” Employ ability is aimed at medium sized employers who employ between 100 and 250 employees.

Extent to which services and functions meet the needs of disabled people

We have communications staff dedicated to disability issues and communications to disabled customers. They work with colleagues in the Office for Disability Issues and advise the Department on involving disabled people in the formation of communications, for example liaising with disability groups about our accessibility standards, and ensuring communication campaigns use appropriate research to inform their campaign plans.

Accessibility, particularly online accessibility, has always been a very important issue to us – our aim is that all departmental websites meet the Government and international standard of ‘AA’ accessibility. Currently all our websites meet the ‘A’ level of accessibility and our ‘AA’ sites have increased from 20% to 68% since the last report. The ‘AA’ standard is set by the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative, which works with organisations around the world to develop standards to make the web accessible to disabled people. We are working towards having all our sites at ‘AA’ standard by the end of 2008.

Gender

An example of recent work includes our ongoing Pension Credit campaign which has a clear impact on women. The pension reform section of the website outlines the work we are doing for women and carers.

To support the New Services for Lone Parents announced in September 2007 a wide range of both marketing and information products were revised or reviewed by March 2008 to ensure accuracy of information, and the provision of appropriate material to promote the new services. These were used to support national or local campaigns starting from March 2008. In addition plans are to be submitted to Ministers to suggest that the new services are launched nationally as part of the national lone parent campaign planned for spring 2008 aimed at the harder to help lone parents.

Customer Insight Team

A Customer Insight Team has been established to enable the Department to gain a better understanding of its diverse customer base. Customer insight takes a 'whole customer view' of the Department's services rather than looking at each interaction in isolation. By taking this perspective and listening to our customers to understand their beliefs, behaviours and experiences, customer insight will inform decision making on products, processes and service transformation to place the individual, and their needs, at the heart of the Department.

For example, the team are currently working on a project to understand the needs of our diverse customer base, to inform the development of the new customer self-service channels and services.

Qualitative research was commissioned to establish which customers are willing and able to access the Department's services via self-service channels, and for what purpose. This research identified areas where a self-service approach would most likely, or least likely, meet customer needs and provided evidence to indicate how such services could best be developed to meet individual requirements.

To develop a comprehensive understanding of our customers' needs, in-depth interviews were conducted with a wide range of customers including those from ethnic minority backgrounds and customers with disabilities. Interviews were conducted in the customer's native language where required and/or with carers where appropriate.

By commissioning research into our diverse customer base, Customer insight will inform the design of the self-service approach to ensure it meets our customers' needs – where appropriate, reflecting specific diversity requirements.

Summary

We have made further progress since November 2007. The Communications Action Plan sets out some specific work planned on race, disability and gender. But crucially, our communications priorities for 2008-2011 as set out in Annex 1 will all impact on diverse audiences. We are embedding the use of customer insight and understanding to ensure that we plan and deliver effective communications in support of these strategic priorities.

Annex 1 – Communications Directorate assessment of key priorities

Priorities	Race	Gender	Disability	Reason for rating
1. Provide customers with accurate and accessible information about our benefits and services tailored to their needs	High	Medium	High	Focus of public information review is to get the right information based on a deep understanding of our customer needs
2. Encourage and enable customers who are able to do so, to return to work and to access the back to work support provided by the Department	High	High	High	Significant communications effort to support priority groups into work
3. Deliver clear communications for customers to support the introduction of Employment Support Allowance.	Medium	High	High	Significant communications effort to support priority groups into work
4. Via the Employ ability campaign, challenge Small Medium Employers assumptions around the Employ ability and willingness to work of disabled people or those who have health conditions.	Low	Low	High	Significant communications campaign during 2008/9 focusing on disability issues
5 Challenge barriers to working longer – particularly for the over 50s – by targeting employers	Low	Low	Medium	Focus on disability and health conditions as above
6. Develop a consistent government wide proposition for employers	Medium	Medium	Medium	Flexibility and diversity will be a key part of the proposition
7. Develop an evidence-based strategy targeted at the working age population around planning and saving for retirement	Low	High	Low	Significant communications effort being planned around this objective which has a particular focus on women
8. Encourage take up and increase understanding of entitlements for today's pensioners	Medium	Medium	Medium	Communications effort to target all groups to take up and understand entitlements
9. Engage our staff in equality and diversity issues delivering change	Medium	Medium	Medium	Images of Disability Programme across Government

Annex 2 – Race Equality Action Plan

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
The Department's communications are based on truthful insight into our ethnic minority audiences	Use the customer insight function	May 2008	Embedded into business planning	<p>Workstreams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self service improving access to DWP for those customers who have the social capacity to access self service channels • Insight to inform the development of pan-Departmental customer service measures (including ethnic minority customers) • Understanding the face to face contact needs of customers (including ethnic minority customers)
	Engage with ethnic minority groups and individuals to put together a full picture of this audience	October 2008	Ethnic minority audiences recognise increasing relevance of Government communications	
	Evaluate and promote our findings throughout the Department	Ongoing		
	Take forward the 'Engage' framework in the Department	Ongoing		
Accessibility standard in use	<p>Accessibility standard published</p> <p>Accessibility is considered at the start of planning</p>	Review May 2008	Consistent and accessible communications	The accessibility standard was published in October 2007 and will be reviewed in May 2008

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
Staff engage with key Departmental messages about race equality	<p>Internal communications editorial board established</p> <p>Photo library of images built</p> <p>Ensure positive messages about racial diversity are communicated</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>April 2007 – March 2008</p>	<p>Impact and clarity added to our communications</p> <p>Raised awareness of the Department's activities externally and internally regarding racial diversity</p>	<p>Editorial Board established December 2006 and now in operation</p> <p>Photo library now operational</p> <p>Cross DWP communications undertaken to celebrate Black History month promotion of Racial Diversity Network group</p>
Equality scheme promoted to communications staff	<p>Include in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular newsletter • induction pack for new staff • briefing sessions 	Ongoing	Awareness and compliance across communications network	Equality scheme information included in communications newsletter articles. Equality scheme information is now in our staff induction pack

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
Diversity objective built into our staff appraisal for communications staff	Developed through our Senior Communicators group, implemented and embedded through our staff appraisal system	Ongoing	Diversity embedded in the communications network	All managers within communications now have a common line management objective outlining their responsibility to champion and adhere to diversity and equality practice within their teams
Customer information products (leaflets) designed from customer point of view, not service	New series delivered	March 2008	Customer information products meet customer needs	Our range of leaflets has been systematically reviewed with the help of an external company, customer tested and checked for plain English. We have reduced the number of leaflets from 245 to 66. All leaflets are written for the national reading age and Crystal Marked
Staff engagement segmentation and communication preferences	Develop staff profiles to enable better targeted communications/ engage staff	Review April 2008	Consistent and accessible communication	The staff segmentation has been a result of an engagement analysis from staff survey findings and complemented by Jobcentre Plus results of the internal communications audit. This will be reviewed following the 2008 staff survey

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Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
<p>The Department's communications are based on truthful insight into our disabled audiences</p>	<p>Use the customer insight function</p> <p>Engage with disabled groups and individuals to put together a full picture of this audience</p> <p>Evaluate and promote our findings throughout the Department</p>	<p>May 2008</p> <p>October 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Embedded into business planning</p> <p>Disabled audiences recognise increasing relevance of Government communications</p>	<p>Workstreams include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self service (improving access to DWP for those customers who have the social capacity to access self service channels) • Insight to inform the development of pan-Departmental customer service measures (including customers with disabilities) • Understanding the face to face contact needs of customers (including customers with disabilities) • Proposal to undertake customer journey mapping to better inform the needs of working age customers who become disabled <p>Disabled customer forum held on 30 July 2007. Findings from this conference are being considered</p> <p>Ongoing evidence gathering from external and internal sources, review took place August – October 2007</p>

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
The Department's communications are based on truthful insight into our disabled audiences (<i>continued</i>)	Take forward the 'Engage' framework in the Department Accessibility standard published Accessibility is considered at the start of planning	Ongoing April 2008	Consistent and accessible communication	New accessibility guidance published across government as part of Office for Disability Issues Images of Disability best practice guide
Staff engage with key Departmental messages about disability	Ensure positive messages about disability are communicated	Ongoing	Impact and clarity added to our communications Raised awareness of the Departments' activities externally and internally regarding disability	Editorial Board established December 2006 and now in operation Photo library now operational and ensuring a balance of imagery of all diverse groups is practised Messages communicated to staff include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicising the Equality and Diversity Awards which featured a category for 'Best Practice in Disability' Internal messages about the external campaign Employ ability to employers Communications to staff around award winning DWP Text Phone standards to raise awareness of their existence and effectiveness Ongoing messaging about reasonable adjustments for staff

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
Staff engage with key Departmental messages about disability (<i>continued</i>)	(See above)	(See above)	(See above)	Equality schemes progress reports communicated across DWP to all staff. Diversity Impact Assessments guidance and links to further info issued to key staff
Better representation of disabled people in Government communications	Add to the Images of Disability website Promote Images of Disability initiative	April 2009	Improvement in portrayals of disabled people in Government communications	Major review of Images of Disability undertaken Published new Images of Disability best practice guidance for government communicators Developing disability communications training road shows and building stakeholder support for approach
Equality scheme promoted to communications staff	Include in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular newsletter • induction pack for new staff • briefing sessions 	Ongoing	Awareness and compliance across communications network	Equality scheme information included in communications newsletter articles. Equality scheme information is now in our staff induction pack

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
Diversity objective built into our staff appraisal for communications staff	Developed through our Senior Communicators group, implemented and embedded through our staff appraisal system	Ongoing	Diversity embedded in the communications network	All managers within communications now have a common line management objective outlining their responsibility to champion and adhere to diversity and equality practice within their teams
Customer information products (leaflets) designed from customer point of view, not business	New series delivered	March 2008	Customer information products meet customer needs	Our range of leaflets has been systematically reviewed with the help of an external company, customer tested and checked for plain English. We have reduced the number of leaflets from 245 to 66. All leaflets are written for the national reading age and Crystal Marked
Staff engagement segmentation and communication preferences	Develop staff profiles to enable better targeted communications/engage staff	Review April 2008	Consistent and accessible communication	The staff segmentation has been a result of an engagement analysis from staff survey findings and complemented by Jobcentre Plus results of the internal communications audit. This will be reviewed following the 2008 staff survey

Annex 4 – Gender Equality Action Plan

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
The Department's communications are based on truthful insight into gender	Use customer insight function	May 2008	Embedded into business planning	Workstreams include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self service (improving access to DWP for those customers who have the social capacity to access self service channels) • Insight to inform the development of pan-Departmental customer service measures (including gender)
	Engage with groups and individuals to put together a full picture of this audience	Ongoing	Improved customer service	
	Evaluate and promote our findings throughout the Department		Audiences recognise increasing relevance of Government communications	
	Take forward the 'Engage' framework in the Department	Ongoing		

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
Staff engage with key Departmental messages about gender	Ensure positive messages about gender are communicated	April 2007 – March 2008	Impact and clarity added to our communications Raised awareness of the Departments' activities externally and internally regarding gender	Celebration of International Women's Day Promotion of Gender Staff network group Internal communications around pension reform feature articles on changes for women and carers
Engage in debate about pensions – encouraging action	Inform women about changes in pensions that affect them and engage them with the need to plan for their retirement	Ongoing	Changing attitudes and behaviours (long term aim)	<p>There have been a number of activities over the last year to inform women of the changes to their entitlements, including articles, a series of advertorials and mailings to intermediaries</p> <p>We are currently developing an evidence-based communications strategy for planning and saving for later life, which will include the need to communicate with women about specific pensions issues</p> <p>As part of strategy development, we are carrying out an insight and segmentation project to look at the key drivers behind retirement planning behaviour. This will look, amongst other things, at the whether ethnicity, disability or gender plays a significant role in retirement planning</p>

Objectives	Activities required	Timescales	Outcomes	Progress
Engage in debate about pensions – encouraging action (<i>continued</i>)	Pension credit campaign will focus on 'friends and family' – women will be a key group in this	Ongoing	Raise awareness of entitlement (short term aim)	Pension credit campaign delivered; radio adverts, direct mail and a publicity campaign targeted at vulnerable pensioner groups who were eligible to apply for pension credit
To ensure children are lifted out of poverty	Support the promotion of New Services for Lone Parents	Jan 2008 April 2008	Changing attitudes and behaviours (long term aim)	Launched initially during January in North and North East London, Birmingham and Solihull. Going national in April 2008
Equality scheme promoted to communications staff	Include in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular newsletter induction pack for new staff briefing sessions 	Ongoing	Awareness and compliance across communications network	Equality scheme information included in communications newsletter articles. Equality scheme information is now in our staff induction pack
Diversity objective built into our staff appraisal for communications staff	Developed through our Senior Communicators group, implemented and embedded through our staff appraisal system	Ongoing	Diversity embedded in the communications network	All managers within communications now have a common line management objective outlining their responsibility to champion and adhere to diversity and equality practice within their teams
Staff engagement segmentation and communication preferences	Develop staff profiles to enable better targeted communications/ engage staff	Review April 2008	Consistent and accessible communication	The staff segmentation has been a result of an engagement analysis from staff survey findings and complemented by Jobcentre Plus results of the internal communications audit. This will be reviewed following the 2008 staff survey