



Child Support Agency Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes

child support agency

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Chief Executive Foreword



I am delighted to introduce the Child Support Agency Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes. These schemes and associated action plans reflect our commitment to promoting diversity and increase our understanding of the diverse needs of our people and our customers. We have developed a set of values which underpin our commitment to treat all of our clients and all of our people equally. These values and behaviours are key to achieving our programme of cultural change within the Agency.

Our Values are:

- Client Focused
- Professional
- Open and Honest
- Firm and Fair

Our Client and Stakeholder Team have developed a strategy on engagement that is intended to improve service to our clients with diverse needs. They liaise with representatives from Ethnic Minority Groups to understand their needs on service accessibility and improvements we need to make. We plan to further engage stakeholder representatives and clients to understand and improve the service we deliver.

We are committed to continuous improvement to meet the diverse needs of our people and measure our progress through regular surveys. We will further develop our Action Plans to address areas of concern raised by our people and I will report progress on these.

The Child Support Agency will become a Non Departmental Public Body – the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (CMEC) during July 2008*. Until the new Commission is established the Child Support Agency remains committed to building on our principles of Diversity and Equality for our people and our customers through engagement, involvement and improvement.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Geraghty'.

Stephen Geraghty
Chief Executive

*Legislation was introduced in Parliament in June 2007 that sets out the Government's intention to establish a new Commission as the statutory body responsible for managing the child maintenance system. At the time of publishing we are waiting the final stages of the bill process to occur, this includes the Lords Report and Third Reading which we expect to take place in May 2008, with Royal Assent expected shortly after. The Commission will then become a legal entity.

Where we are now

Our challenge is to work through what is a complex environment to bring some degree of financial stability for children. Our overarching Operational Improvement Plan sets out how we can change how the Agency delivers its services in order to provide a much stronger focus on the things that matter to our clients. The plan focuses on four key elements:

- getting it right
- keeping it right
- putting it right
- getting the best from the organisation.

Having improved in many areas since April 2004, the Agency's performance is currently stable and we continue with our approach to making Diversity and Equality an integral part of everything we do providing a supportive, responsive service where clients will be directed to the right people, who have the right knowledge and skills to tackle their issues in the right way. Building on the principles of Diversity and Equality already established within our organisation, where we have clearly demonstrated our commitment through the achievements outlined below, our Operational Improvement Plan provides a firm foundation for the future.

Achievements

- **Disability:** We have continued to utilise our Agency specific Disability Budget to fund adjustments for our people. The budget is in addition to what managers spend on adjustments. Most recently we have funded a communication support worker and arranged a dyslexia IT training workshop with additional dyslexia support.
- **Race:** Our Agency Ethnic Liaison Officers continue their proactive approach by visiting local ethnic communities and attending ethnic minority open days, where they learn and share good practice. They promote the services of the Agency and identify barriers to help improve access to our service.
- **Gender:** We have reviewed and renewed our Agency specific Child Care contract, to continue to encourage and support our people who have childcare responsibilities and commitments. We have nominated Child Care representatives within each business unit to provide support, advice and guidance on our Childcare Policy.

General Diversity

- Working with Departmental colleagues we have conducted a Customer Accessibility Gap Analysis. Work is continuing to see how we might improve the service we provide.
- The Agency Diversity Team have undertaken and passed a diploma course in Employment Law, which included discrimination law.
- The Agency has people who attend and contribute to the Departmental Diversity Network Groups for Age, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Work Life Balance, Race and Disability.
- The Agency took part in the Community 5000 event with Agency staff volunteering to help with local and national charitable organisations. Some of these were:
 - Claire's Hospice for Children
 - Stick n Step, a charity for children with cerebral palsy
 - Riding for the Disabled
 - Hamlet Centre
 - Barnardo's
 - NSPCC
 - Local Special Schools to help with the replanting of sensory gardens.
- Our Agency Executive Team attended Percy Hedley School for Disabled Children and following the visit, a cheque for £1,150 was presented to the school from our Agency Charity Committee, following a fund raising event.
- A member of our Agency was nominated for and won both the regional and national Remploy Individual Awards for raising and helping with disability issues and reasonable adjustments in the work place.

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
- To move towards a single Equality Scheme across the department.

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 Commission for Equality and Human Rights 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.

Equal pay review

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

Consultation and involvement

The Agency has reviewed and revised its approach to working with stakeholder Organisations. We are continuing this process working with Departmental centre colleagues to provide a strategic approach to engagement nationally and locally to ensure we involve diverse internal and external audiences. The delivery of this approach at a national level is undertaken by our Client and Stakeholder Team through a series of bilateral meetings with a wide range of stakeholder Organisations such as Families Need Fathers and One Parent Families. The stakeholder team act as a single point of contact for individual case and policy queries and provide regular information on progress and changes within the Agency.

At a local level this is provided by our Agency Client Service colleagues.

Child Support Agency

The Agency has a team in each of our geographic business regions resourced to provide a service via client interviewing officers, Forces Focal Points and Ethnic Liaison Officers. Typically these people provide the 'face of the Agency' at employer talks and Departmental events and proactively engage with diverse audiences such as ethnic communities and people living with disabilities.

Outcomes from our consultation, including those from the Employers' Forum for Disability, have been shared with appropriate areas within the Child Support Agency.

Our Agency Ethnic Liaison Officers look to ensure that our services are accessible to ethnic minority communities. They meet, consult and engage with various national ethnic organisations. Some of these are:

- The Centre for Equality and Diversity
- The Jain Temple
- Jyoti Ashram
- Barnado's Apna Ghar
- Shakti Women's Aid
- Muslims Women's Aid.

The Agency commissioned and carried out a Client Insight Survey, contacting over 4,000 of our clients to seek their views, experiences and extent to which they felt the Agency had performed well and we are reviewing the findings to establish how we can continue to improve our service.

Our People

We engage with our people using a variety of methods such as surveys, workshops and Lunch and Learn sessions. We promote participation in the Departmental Staff Survey and as part of our current Equality Scheme, we invited our people to provide their comments and suggestions for areas for improvement. Areas for improvement that our people would like to see are:

- Continued staff training on disability awareness issues.
- Better use of telekits and video conference facilities to improve work life balance and to help remove barriers due to disabilities.
- Continued promotion of diversity.

Here are two examples of what our people said we do well:

- **Provision of reasonable adjustments:** “I have seen many disabled staff who are given reasonable adjustments to enable them to function in the Agency”.
- **Promotion:** “not preventing promotion because of my disability, I am currently doing a temporary promotion”.

Monitoring and evaluation

The Agency undertook an intensive programme of client research. The overall aim of the research was to understand better our clients experiences and perceptions of the service provided by the Agency. Fifteen focus groups were conducted nationwide with Agency clients to gather evidence on various aspects of the Agency client experience.

Research was commissioned by the Agency to improve its service provision to clients at a period when the child maintenance system is currently going through a period of rapid change and reform. We continue to use discussion forums and analysis of data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

We monitor, analyse and evaluate a range of information on our people 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 people from under-represented groups receive equal outcomes and are able to fulfil their potential. Our employment data is reported in the Department for Work and Pensions Equality Schemes in the chapter on Corporate Human Resources. With regard to the diversity of our people we currently monitor by means of the Departments Resource Management system. The data is entirely dependant on staff voluntarily declaring their ethnicity and whether they have a disability.

Impact assessments

We continue to follow Departmental processes to ensure that we impact assess proposals and change for Race, Disability and Gender. We have undertaken screenings on our Court Centralisation project and the merger of our Investigator and Inspector roles which showed there was no significant disproportionate impact to any minority group. We will continue to undertake impact assessments and publish them on our internet and intranet site.

Progress reporting and reviewing

The Agency will publish an Information Memorandum Report during 2008.

Equality Impact Assessment of our functions, policies and activities

In approaching our duties under Equality and Diversity, the Agency, as part of the Department, takes a systematic approach to assessing our functions, policies and activities for discrimination (primarily looking at Disability, Race and Gender), to promote equality. The Agency identified its relevant functions and associated policies and where appropriate undertook an Equality Impact Assessment to assess whether any discrimination was apparent.

The following functions, policies and activities have been given a high priority:

- To make speedy and accurate calculations of the child maintenance due
- To make consistently accurate and correct decisions on child maintenance claims
- To collect child maintenance and arrears from non resident parents with liability due to be paid through the Agency's collection service
- To assist clients as they go through this process
- To deliver an efficient disagreement, appeals and variation process.

Race Equality Action Plan from March 2008 – June 2008

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
Governance of the Diversity Equality Scheme.	Implementation of the Diversity Equality Scheme.	March 2008 – June 2008.	That all objectives are taken forward and actioned.	The Agency has progressed in all areas of diversity through our commitment to our Operational Improvement Plan.	Agency Human Resources Director.
Re-assessment of all functions and policies that may have an impact on staff or clients. Arrangements in place to review relevant functions and policies.	Evaluate strategy for assessment of policies and functions and rate the potential adverse diversity impact. Revised scheme published.	June 2008.	That all functions and policies comply with the requirements of the Act.	We reviewed our functions and policies as published in our 2006 Equality Scheme.	Agency Human Resources Director. Agency Executive Team.

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
To ensure that the Child Support Agency includes processes to enable diversity monitoring of our policies and functions.	When developing policies and products, our business will consider the need to capture customer information. Ensure we adhere to the relevant legislation and service standards.	March 2008 – June 2008.	That sufficient data is available to measure indicators of equality to report on progress and identify areas for improvement.	The Agency has undertaken a Customer Service Accessibility Gap Analysis to improve customer service and support compliance with legislative requirements. Findings have been shared with the Agency Executive Team.	Agency Human Resources Director.

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
<p>To ensure that our policies and functions have no adverse impact on diversity.</p>	<p>Engage with staff and clients.</p> <p>Train relevant staff to perform impact assessments.</p> <p>Agree an approach to impact assessments.</p> <p>Where appropriate, publish the results of consultation and monitoring.</p>	<p>March 2008 – June 2008.</p>	<p>Greater public confidence in our services.</p> <p>Products and decisions are transparent and accessible to the communities we serve and to our own people.</p>	<p>We have included the requirement to impact assess policies and changes that the Agency introduces via our Agency Project Managers Implementation Guide document.</p> <p>Working with Departmental colleagues we are planning to arrange workshops for key managers within our Agency on the Impact Assessment process.</p>	<p>Agency Human Resources Director.</p> <p>Agency Training Solutions Team.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
To make our products available to our partners and have consultation arrangements in place.	<p>Engage with staff and clients.</p> <p>Consult through Agency Consultation Forum and DWP Ethnic Minority Forum as well as with other stakeholders to provide an opportunity to influence and give feedback.</p> <p>Through increased interaction with the community by our Ethnic Liaison Officers, we can develop and improve our service delivery for ethnic minority clients.</p>	March 2008 – June 2008.	Greater public confidence in our services and improved partnership working, resulting in improved staff and client satisfaction.	<p>We have produced leaflets about the role of our Ethnic Liaison Officers in alternative languages, to encourage the consultation process and improve our accessibility.</p> <p>We have shared our products e.g. Diversity Toolkit, with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs colleagues.</p>	<p>Agency Human Resources Director.</p> <p>Agency Client Relations Manager.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
<p>To communicate effectively with our clients.</p>	<p>Engage with staff and clients.</p> <p>Promote the use of language allowance to staff.</p> <p>Support staff increasing their knowledge and raising awareness.</p> <p>Raise awareness of our services and how to contact us.</p> <p>Improve the range and availability of translated material.</p>	<p>March 2008 – June 2008.</p>	<p>Break down barriers for vulnerable groups, thus increasing staff and client satisfaction.</p>	<p>The Agency has undertaken a DWP customer service accessibility standards gap analysis.</p> <p>In February 2007 the Agency published its Client Charter and also carried out a review of its leaflets.</p> <p>Our website includes a contact facility for the Agency Ethnic Liaison Officers. We have attended the Departmental Inclusion Forum (previously the Ethnic Minority Forum) to seek views for improvement.</p> <p>We have published our Agency forms/leaflets e.g. Introduction to Child Maintenance in PDF format on our website. We have included a Polish version to reflect our client base.</p>	<p>Agency Human Resources Director.</p> <p>Agency Communications Director.</p> <p>Agency Human Resources Business Partner Teams.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
To ensure that all our staff are treated fairly and in line with existing and developing Human Resources policies.	<p>Use findings from staff surveys and monitoring to identify strengths and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Consider analysis of grievances bullying and harassment data.</p> <p>Apply the impact assessment process to reduce inequalities for staff and clients.</p>	March 2008 – June 2008.	That all policies and functions are adhered to.	<p>The One Agency Team will utilise findings from specific staff surveys that will seek to improve, inform and develop Agency strategies.</p> <p>We have recruited a new Agency representative for the Departmental Race Network Group.</p>	<p>Agency Human Resources Director.</p> <p>Agency Human Resources Business Partner Teams.</p> <p>One Agency Team.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsible
To ensure that all aspects of diversity are embedded in the organisation.	<p>Communication from DWP Diversity Network Group Champions via Agency members of DWP network groups.</p> <p>Agency Executive Team.</p> <p>Continued promotion of Diversity Toolkit.</p> <p>Articles in staff magazines/intranet.</p>	March 2008 – June 2008.	An organisation that enables its people to give their best to deliver the exemplary service all our clients deserve.	<p>We launched our Agency Equality Scheme with an event for our senior managers.</p> <p>The Agency sponsored a “Spreading the Word” Diversity Event attended by staff from all levels of DWP.</p>	Agency Human Resources Director.
Workshops for staff on race awareness, as part of implementation of the Departmental Diversity Toolkit.	Mandatory for all staff.	Completed.	That we will facilitate greater awareness of race equality issues across the Agency making staff better equipped to deal with ethnic minority clients and colleagues.	Delivery of the workshops has been completed and the Agency now incorporates diversity training as part of the Agency induction programme.	Agency Human Resources Director.

Disability Equality Action Plan from March 2008 – June 2008

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Review internal equality impact assessment process, products and guidance.	<p>Publication of the DWP Equality Impact Assessment guidance on the revised Agency Diversity Team website.</p> <p>Promotion of process within Agency.</p> <p>Arrange with DWP for impact assessment training for key Agency staff.</p> <p>Assessments conducted and published.</p>	March 2008-June 2008.	<p>Ensure that new and proposed policies are consulted on and impact assessed for compliance with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).</p> <p>Ensure that policies are non discriminatory.</p> <p>Feedback provided to policy developers.</p> <p>Further transparency.</p> <p>Publication of assessments.</p>	<p>We are adding features to our revised Agency website and have a work action plan and communication action plan in readiness to promote the site.</p> <p>Working with departmental colleagues we are planning to arrange workshops for key managers within our Agency on the Impact Assessment process.</p>	<p>Agency Diversity and Equality Team.</p> <p>Agency Human Resource Director.</p> <p>Agency Client Service Directorate.</p> <p>Agency Communications Directorate.</p> <p>Departmental Corporate Centre of Expertise.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Continue to work with DWP to develop and implement the new Resource Management (RM) information tool.	Continue to raise staff awareness of RM processes and enhancements.	March 2008- June 2008.	Implementation of RM enhancements across the agency. Provision of improved monitoring information, for example, reasonable adjustments to improve our Human Resources policies and practices. Improved collation of data.	We have published Agency RM update communications and have provided workshops to our people.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team. Departmental Corporate Centre of Expertise.
Analyse data from RM.	Discuss and agree an action plan for implementation of findings.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Action plan to monitor and evaluate data.	We have used data findings to continue to work with our corporate colleagues to progress requests for change.	Departmental Corporate Centre of Expertise. Agency Diversity and Equality Team.

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Engage with Client Relations Directorate and Agency Operational areas to review client service process.	Utilise findings from the Agency Accessibility Gap Analysis. Agreed action plan in place.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Improved client accessibility to our services to meet with code of practice. Improved customer service. Action Plan in place to improve consultation process.	We are using the findings to look to improve our clients first contact experience.	Agency Client Relations Directorate. Agency Operational Managers. Agency Diversity and Equality Team.
Update annual Disability Action Plan.	Publication of progress report.	March 2008.	Compliance with DDA. Communication of outcomes.	We published our latest action plan on December 1st 2007.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team.

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
To engage with agency disabled staff via internal communications such as One Agency Bulletins and Survey Maker.	System in place. Feedback received.	Feb 2008.	Ensure that targeted consultation takes place to inform future Disability Equality Scheme. Improved customer service. Promote disability issues. Improve Human Resource practices.	We have engaged with our people via the Agency survey maker and One Agency bulletins and our Agency website. We also encourage our people to complete the Departmental surveys.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team. Agency Communications Directorate.
Produce annual Staff Diversity Monitoring report.	Annual presentation to agency Executive Team.	June 2008.	To review, identify gaps and look to improve our employment, recruitment, Human Resource policies and practices.	We have produced a variety of diversity reports for our Agency HR Director and Executive Team to assist with Agency specific HR issues, plans and projects.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team.

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Provide improved disability training and support for our staff via revised Diversity and Equality Team website.	<p>Increase in communication media.</p> <p>Revised Agency Diversity and Equality Team website.</p> <p>Feedback from staff.</p> <p>Analysis of staff data.</p> <p>Workshops to HR staff.</p>	March 2008 – June 2008.	<p>To raise awareness of responsibilities under DDA.</p> <p>Improved knowledge of DDA.</p> <p>Promote equality and positive attitudes towards disability.</p> <p>Improved staff retention rate.</p>	<p>We have worked with our HR Business Partners to design work force management workshops for our Agency Line Managers, with a focus on disability.</p> <p>We have worked with our Agency health and safety colleagues to produce an Agency specific Reasonable Adjustment flowchart which was issued to our Agency Line Managers. The flowchart will be published on our Agency intranet website.</p>	<p>Agency Human Resource Directorate.</p> <p>Agency Diversity and Equality Team.</p> <p>Agency Departmental Corporate Centre of Expertise.</p> <p>Agency Communications Directorate.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Improve communications with our clients.	<p>Act on client feedback.</p> <p>Utilise findings from the Agency Accessibility Gap Analysis.</p> <p>Consider needs of diverse customer base when developing strategy.</p>	March 2008 – June 2008.	<p>Improved customer service.</p> <p>Improved accessibility within DDA guidelines.</p> <p>Improved performance of Agency.</p> <p>Improved confidence in the Agency.</p> <p>Improved Agency performance.</p>	<p>We have attended the Departmental Inclusion Forum (previously the Ethnic Minority Forum) to seek views for improvement.</p> <p>We have published our Agency forms e.g. Introduction to Child Maintenance in PDF format on our website.</p> <p>We are using the findings to look to improve our clients first contact experience.</p> <p>We are considering a wider remit to the Ethnic Liaison Officer role to encompass their involvement with disability groups.</p>	<p>Agency Communications Directorate.</p> <p>Agency Client Service Directorate.</p> <p>Agency Diversity and Equality Team.</p> <p>Agency Business Design Directorate.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Continue to make improvements to our Diversity and Equality intranet site.	Staff feedback. Disabled staff contributions.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Promote disability issues to staff. Encourage disabled staff involvement.	We have utilised the Department Accessibility Team to ensure that our communications are accessible to assistive package users. We will incorporate suggestions from our Agency People Survey.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team. Agency Communications Directorate.
Promote Agency Disability Budget.	Increase managers' awareness of its availability, educate them and support their use of it. Produce, publish and promote our Agency Reasonable Adjustment flowchart.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Improved provision of adjustments.	We continue to promote the budget via Agency communications and disability related HR Business Partner workshops. We have produced an Agency specific Reasonable Adjustment flowchart where we make reference to the Agency Disability budget.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team. Agency Communications Directorate.

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Work with HMRC colleagues to promote disability awareness.	To arrange 'Lunch and Learn' diversity sessions for staff to attend. Staff feedback for suggested themes.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Improve staff awareness of disability issues in the workplace. Share good practice with other Government Agencies.	We are developing plans to hold more awareness day sessions throughout the year, for example International Stammering Awareness Day.	Agency Diversity and Equality team. HMRC Diversity Team.

Gender Equality Action Plan from March 2008 – June 2008

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Review internal equality impact assessment process, products and guidance.	<p>Publication of the DWP Equality Impact Assessment guidance on the revised Agency Diversity Team website.</p> <p>Promotion of process within the Agency.</p> <p>Arrange with DWP for impact assessment training for key Agency staff.</p> <p>Assessments conducted and published.</p>	March 2008 – June 2008.	<p>Ensure that new and proposed policies are consulted on and impact assessed for gender equality.</p> <p>Feedback provided to policy developers.</p> <p>Further transparency.</p> <p>Publication of assessments.</p>	<p>We are adding features to our Agency website and have a work action plan and communication action plan in readiness to promote the site.</p> <p>Working with Departmental colleagues we are planning to arrange workshops for key managers within our Agency on the Impact Assessment process.</p>	<p>Agency Diversity and Equality Team.</p> <p>Human Resources Director.</p> <p>Agency Communications Directorate.</p> <p>Departmental Corporate Centre of Expertise.</p>

Objectives	Action	By	Outcomes	Progress	Responsibilities
Continue to work with DWP to develop and implement the new Resource Management (RM) information tool.	Continue to raise staff awareness of RM processes and enhancements.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Implementation across Agency. Provision of improved monitoring information for example to improve our human resources policies and practices. Improved collation of data.	We have published Agency RM update communications and have provided workshops to our people.	Departmental Corporate Centre of Expertise. Agency Diversity and Equality Team.
Analyse data from RM.	Discuss and agree an action plan for implementation of findings.	March 2008 – June 2008.	Action plan to monitor and evaluate data.	We have used data findings to continue to work with our corporate colleagues to progress requests for change.	Agency Diversity and Equality Team. Corporate colleagues.

