



**Department for Work and Pensions
Race, Disability and Gender Equality
Schemes 2008 – 2011**

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Foreword by the Minister for Disabled People



I am delighted to introduce the Department for Work and Pensions race, disability and gender equality schemes. We have taken the opportunity to review, not only our race equality scheme as required at this time by legislation, but also our disability and gender equality schemes. Although this is earlier than required for disability and gender, reviewing the schemes now means that we have been able to move towards a single equality scheme. I believe that this will help ensure that our equality action plans are considered as part of day-to-day business.

As well as setting out our public commitment to the work we will be taking forward between 2008 and 2011, this report also gives an update on the progress we have made since we published our last progress report in November 2007. We have continued to make good progress. In particular, we have implemented our strategy for involving our customers, stakeholders, partners and staff. This has included a first meeting of our equality schemes customer involvement workshop whose members will specifically help us to monitor and focus on the delivery of our equality schemes and action plans.

As Minister for Disabled People, I was particularly pleased to see the launch of the Government's Independent Living Strategy for disabled people in March of this year. The strategy has been developed in partnership with disabled people and has cross-Government support. It sets out a five year plan that seeks to realise our aim that all disabled people should be able to live autonomous lives, and to have the same choice, freedom, dignity and control over their lives as non-disabled people. It also contributes towards the Government's work to ratify the United Nations Convention on Disability rights which I was privileged to sign on behalf of the United Kingdom in March 2007.

Once again, I would like to thank the Department's customers, stakeholders and staff for their help and support in driving forward and developing further the equality agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Anne McGuire'.

Anne McGuire
Minister for Disabled People

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

1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the Department for Work and Pensions' revised equality schemes on race, disability and gender and an update on other aspects of diversity. It also includes an update on progress since we published our last annual progress report in November 2007. The detail of the actions we will be taking over the next three years is included in the action plans but some of the key highlights are set out under:

- Our customers.
- Our staff.
- Our work across Government.
- Our approach to impact assessments.
- Our approach to procurement.
- Our approach to monitoring and evaluation.

1.2 Since we published our race, disability and gender equality schemes progress reports in November 2007, we have made some progress in a number of important areas. We have continued to involve our customers, stakeholders and staff in developing our equality schemes. They confirmed that their priorities remain the same and will be delivered through our Change Programme.

1.3 We will not be able to change how we deliver our services overnight but over the three years of this equality scheme, customers will see changes in how we meet their diverse needs.

1.4 The actions set out in our actions plans represent a challenging programme of work. We are looking forward to meeting this challenge and delivering services that our diverse customers need.

1.5 Within the Department, each part of the organisation that provides services to the public:

- Jobcentre Plus;
- The Pension, Disability and Carers Service;
- Child Support Agency; and
- The Rent Service.

has published its own schemes. The schemes for our central directorates, including our policy-making directorates, are included as chapters in this document.

1.6 As well as being placed on the Department's website, we will of course provide paper copies and alternative formats on request. Please see page 31 for details of how to contact us. Our equality schemes are supported by an annual programme of internal communications to all staff.

2. The Department's aims and structure

2.1 The Department for Work and Pensions exists to:

- contribute towards fair, safe and fulfilling lives, free from poverty, for children, people in work and retirement, disabled people and carers;
- reduce welfare dependency and increase economic competitiveness by helping people to work wherever they can and employers to secure the skills and employees they need; and
- provide greater choice, personalisation and quality of service for customers where it is in their interests and those of the taxpayers.

2.2 Our three year Business Plan for 2008-09 to 2010-11 can be found at www.dwp.gov.uk/resourcecentre/corporate-publications.asp. It sets out the objectives that will drive our activities for the next three years. It contains information about the Spending Review 2007 settlement where it was agreed that the Department will lead on two Public Service Agreements for 2008-2011:

- maximise employment opportunity for all; and
- tackle poverty and promote greater independence and wellbeing in later life.

2.3 We will contribute to a further nine Public Service Agreements in particular on child poverty and equality.

2.4 The Department has also agreed Departmental Strategic Objectives for the period 2008-2011 that cover its entire work and represent the fundamental purpose and future direction of the Department:

- reduce the number of children living in poverty;
- maximise employment opportunity for all and reduce the numbers on out-of-work benefits;
- improve health and safety outcomes;
- promote independence and well-being in later life, continuing to tackle pensioner poverty and implementing pension reform;
- promote equality of opportunity for disabled people;
- pay our customers the right benefits at the right time;
- make the Department an exemplar of effective service delivery to individuals and employers.

Case study

As part of our wider Disability Employer Engagement Strategy, we have launched our Employ Ability campaign in the West Midlands and South Yorkshire. It directly contributes to our strategic objective of narrowing the gap in the employment rate of disabled people and those with long term health conditions.

Its key aims include challenging negative assumptions about the skills and talent that disabled workers, and those with long term health conditions, have – building the confidence of employers in recruiting and retaining disabled workers.

It encourages employers to widen their talent pool by focusing on individuals who have the right skills and abilities for the job – not whether they have a disability or health condition. It is aimed at managers of small to medium sized businesses who want to discover more of the talent their business cannot do without.



3. Our approach to equality schemes and annual progress reports

3.1 When we published our first disability and gender equality schemes and our annual progress report on race in December 2006, we said that we had decided to integrate the reviews of our equality schemes and the yearly progress reports into our mainstream business planning and reporting process. We wanted to do this so that equality action plans are considered as part of day-to-day business.

3.2 Moving towards this we explained, in our equality schemes annual progress reports published on 30 November 2007, that we had decided to review all our equality schemes in 2008. Race legislation requires race equality schemes to be reviewed by May 2008, and reviewing all three schemes together now gives us the opportunity to:

- take on board comments on our first disability and gender equality schemes;
- 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
- move towards a single equality scheme.

3.3 As a result, we now have a single plan covering most actions for race, disability and gender, unless an action specifically applies to one area only in which case it is shown at the end of the main action plan.

3.4 As this review is significantly earlier than required for disability and gender, we discussed this approach 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.

3.5 As part of the review of our race equality schemes, we have reviewed our functions and policies as required under the Race Relations Act. Each business area has listed its relevant functions and associated policies in its schemes. We have also adapted and used the assessment of functions and policies framework to take a systematic approach for assessing our policies and activities for disability and gender discrimination.

The disability equality duty

3.6 The Disability Discrimination Act requires the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (and others) to publish by December 2008, a report that:

- gives an overview of the progress made by public authorities in that policy sector in relation to disability equality;
- sets out proposals for co-ordination of action by those public authorities in that policy sector to bring about further progress on disability equality.

3.7 Any actions that are identified as this report is developed will be added to our disability action plans in future annual progress reports.

4. Our customers

Involving customers

4.1 When we published our first disability and gender equality schemes in December 2006, we explained that, as a result of the new duties, we had decided on a new approach to involve our customers and their representative groups. One of the actions in our action plan was to develop, agree and implement an involvement strategy. This action was completed and our involvement approach was set out in our equality schemes annual progress report published in November 2007.

4.2 We have continued to implement this approach and have discussed equality schemes with a range of both large and small organisations, for example at our:

- Strategy and Pensions Forum which many of the national stakeholder groups attend; and
- Inclusion Forum (previously called the Ethnic Minority Forum) which is attended by a large cross section of stakeholder organisations.

All parts of the Department have also continued to involve customers at a local level – further details of this are included in their equality schemes.



4.3 In our progress report published in November 2007, we said that we were considering setting up a reference group to help us monitor and focus on the delivery of our equality schemes and action plans and the delivery of our diversity and equality policies. We invited stakeholders to participate in the reference group – now called the equality schemes customer involvement workshop – and also gave them the opportunity to contact us directly if they wished to have any input into the development of our equality schemes.

4.4 The first workshop was held in February 2008 specifically to discuss priorities for our equality schemes and action plans. Examples of organisations that took part are:

- DIAL UK;
- Equalities National Council;
- Disability Awareness In Action;
- UK Council on Deafness;
- RNID;
- Action for Blind People;
- National Advisory Group on Learning Disability and Ethnicity;
- Inspired Services;
- Diversity Solutions.

4.5 We also invited comment from a range of organisations who were unable to attend the event. We did not get many responses from groups representing a race or gender perspective. One of our priorities is therefore to get better representation in the future.

4.6 Going forward, we intend to invite this group to meet on a regular basis – it will become part of our menu of events where we involve stakeholders. We will ask them to help us monitor and focus on the delivery of our equality schemes and action plans and the delivery of our diversity and equality policies.

4.7 We have continued to draw on other, more traditional forms of consultation, for example using the information we gather from customer surveys. We also share best practice with other government departments through a variety of meetings and individual contacts.

Case study

In November 2007, Jobcentre Plus repeated the involvement exercise it held on behalf of the whole Department in 2006. Much of the feedback received was positive. No issues were raised specifically connected to customers' gender or ethnicity. One issue that was raised by disabled customers was that, although Jobcentre Plus advertised text phones and hearing loops, they did not always work. As a result, all Jobcentre Plus customer outlets are required to test their text phones and hearing loops on a regular basis.

Disability and Carers Service has worked with customers with mental health issues to identify difficulties that they might experience in accessing services. They identified that:

- leaflets were unclear and claim forms were daunting and confusing;
- customers preferred to use the telephone for contact;
- customers might have difficulty explaining their needs and the effects of their mental health condition; and
- customers might not fully understand the decision.

As a result:

- leaflets are being revised;
- decision makers are using the telephone to contact customers;
- guidance and notifications are being improved; and
- work is underway to improve claim packs.

What our customers told us

4.8 Our customers told us that the things they identified when we were developing our equality schemes in 2006 are still important to them – these priorities therefore continue to be reflected in our action plan. Many are significant areas of work linked to our business strategy and will take time to deliver through the implementation of our Change Programme.

4.9 The key areas identified by our customers are:

- involving them at a Departmental level while not losing involvement that takes place at a local level. We need to consider how customers can actively influence the development of policies or services;

- accessing our services – making sure that we consistently provide information in the format requested, use plain English and simplify our forms. We need to ensure there is a choice of how to access a service, for example internet, telephone, face-to-face;
- being customer focused – collecting information once, one person dealing with all enquiries, recognising the barriers customers face;
- equality impact assessments – ensuring that they are done well and published;
- working better with our external providers – ensuring that external companies that provide services on our behalf understand and embed diversity and equality into their practices and procedures.

4.10 We have shared these priorities with others across the Department so that they can be taken into account both in equality schemes action plans and as we develop our policies and services.

4.11 We are very grateful to our customers and their stakeholders for their continued involvement during the year.

Our business strategy – responding to customers

4.12 Our business strategy reflects these priorities identified by our customers and will transform the way we deliver for our customers. The Change Programme we established as a result of this strategy involves putting our customers at the heart of everything we do. The activities in the programme reflect and build on the priorities our customers have identified – including, for example the need to be customer-focused and consider how customers access our services. It has moved from strategy design into implementation. There are five implementation strands:

- **Transforming customer contact** – building on existing work to make better use of our contact centres and to make it easier to navigate our advice services;
- **Customer transitions** – building on the existing ‘In-and-Out of Work’ pilots that we are running with HM Revenue and Customs and Local Authorities. This aims to ensure that customers who move between the departments’ various services can do so smoothly;
- **Information management** – providing information management structures and solutions that will allow us to make most effective use of the information we hold. Examples include not recording the same information many times and not requesting the same information more than once. It is building on work that will let our staff have a single on-screen view of a customer’s information and so answer a range of enquiries;

- **Self-service** – using the work we have already done to deliver 'My DWP'. 'My DWP' is the first step towards creating a secure customer account on the internet. Since April 2008, customers have been able to access the new services, via the Directgov internet site. This strand will also develop options for self-service telephony and look at other options for accessing the Department's services; and
- **Continuous improvement using Lean techniques** – improving the customer focus and efficiency of many of our major processes using the results of our initial work and Lean techniques that put the customer at the heart of design and delivery. This will include working with staff to establish a culture of continuous improvement across the Department.

4.13 We anticipate that, as a result of changes made by 2011, customers will:

- increasingly be more satisfied with the service they receive;
- only have to tell us once about key changes;
- have an online account with the Department;
- be able to submit claims online and track progress;
- feel that the Department understands all their requirements and be able to answer a range of queries;
- have a wider choice of fast, secure methods for communicating with the Department; and
- have a wide choice of intermediaries who can initiate business with the Department.

Case study

The Chesterfield 'Lean' initiative looked at applications to the Social Fund where customers had asked for quicker decisions and shorter, easy to understand forms.

The team found that paperwork travelled the length of three football stadiums before reaching the decision maker. Decision makers now sit opposite staff processing the claim and the paperwork travels across a desk. They are piloting a new form that is two pages long – it was previously 13.

Trials are currently being evaluated but early indications are that average clearance times have improved.

Customer Insight Team

4.14 Our Customer Insight Team builds on our customer involvement activity. The team is responsible for:

- providing a joined-up customer view across the Department's businesses;
- acting as customer advocates – challenging others to view things from the customers' perspective.

4.15 Key progress to date:

- **access to our services** – this will help us understand our customers' preferences for how they wish to access our services. It will help us identify customers who do not wish or who are unable to use self-service routes into our services and allow us to target investment more effectively;
- **people approaching retirement** – through existing research and data, we will identify areas where we have knowledge gaps and how we can fill these. This will enable us to gain a more in-depth understanding of these customers' needs, preferences and behaviours, and allow us to design more relevant and tailored products and services; and
- **customer service standards** – we worked with our customers, stakeholders and staff to understand what our customers think 'good customer service' is. We are using these findings to inform the development of indicators for the Departmental Strategic Objectives on paying the right benefits at the right time and making the Department an exemplar of effective service delivery.

Case study

To inform the development of new customer self-service channels and services, the Customer Insight Team commissioned qualitative research to establish which customers would be willing and able to access our services through self-service channels. In-depth interviews were conducted with a wide range of customers including ethnic minority and disabled customers. Where appropriate, interviews were carried out:

- in the customer's preferred language;
- with carers present.

The research:

- identified areas where a self-service approach would be most, or least, likely to meet customer needs; and
- provided evidence to indicate how such services could be best developed to meet individual requirements.

Our IT systems

4.16 Our IT systems enable and support almost everything we do as a Department. Further detail is contained in the chapter on Corporate Information Technology. A key aspect of our work to promote equality is the provision of accessible solutions for disabled people. Following the audit of accessibility across all our existing IT systems in 2007, we are developing a programme to improve accessibility for existing key systems over the next three years.

4.17 Through the Chief Information Officer Council our Chief Information Officer champions accessibility across government and also sits on the newly created Business Taskforce on Accessible Technology – a forum of private and public sector organisations which had its inaugural meeting at the end of January 2008.

5. Our staff

Building a diverse workforce

5.1 Following the success of our diversity event for 500 of our staff in June 2007, we will be holding another event in 2008. Once again our six national staff networks are helping to organise the event which will be a diversity week culminating in a national conference. Businesses will be encouraged to participate in and support the diversity activities marketed by the staff network groups. The work our staff do is also regularly recognised through external awards.

5.2 We have good levels of diversity across the Department. For example, 10.1 per cent of our staff are from ethnic minorities compared with the economically active rate of 9.2 per cent. However, we still want to be better represented at senior levels. We have a range of diversity targets for under-represented groups across the Department. We consider these targets to be floors not ceilings and have made some progress against them during the year. Our targets and progress against them is set out in Annex 1. These targets have been rolled forward until the new Civil Service diversity strategy is published later in 2008.

5.3 We are piloting a new positive action scheme, Reach, for ethnic minority and disabled staff in the administrative assistant to senior executive officer grades. Following evaluation, it will be rolled-out across the Department. We intend to begin selecting 50 candidates (25 ethnic minority and 25 disabled) in May 2008 and launching the programme in September 2008.

5.4 The first phase of Reach will include activities such as coaching, mentoring and networking and there will also be various development activities such as 'skills clinics', which will look at particular topics of relevance or concern to participants. A second phase will comprise further, work-based development activities such as projects, secondments or work shadowing.



Case study

Staff in our Shared Services Directorate who have been taking part in Reach have been extremely positive and enthusiastic about the scheme – their comments speak for themselves:

“an inspirational, thought provoking and transformational programme. This is not just another project; this is a programme that can realise ‘in-house’ talent to reshape the organisation. It should not stop here!”

“far exceeded my expectations. Every time I return from the solution centre, I’m on a high, feeling like I’ve just won the lottery.”

“has given me the confidence, understanding and realisation that I can achieve something if I put in that little extra effort. I really look forward to our workshops and I am so pleased that I applied to join the programme”

5.5 In February 2008 we began piloting a mentoring circle where one senior mentor is holding sessions with around a dozen women, disabled and ethnic minority staff in grade 6 and 7. We are also running two pilots for a reverse mentoring scheme during 2008. This is where senior staff are mentored by staff in under-represented groups to give them an understanding of the issues. These will be evaluated towards the end of 2008 with a view to rolling them out across the Department.

5.6 We are complementing these initiatives by continuing to:

- participate in the Cabinet Office's Leaders UnLtd scheme for high potential civil servants who are women, disabled or from an ethnic minority; and
- roll-out our best practice around diversity in recruitment workshop to members of our senior civil service.

5.7 We have been developing our leadership capability and our most senior managers have:

- had 360 degree feedback;
- spent time in frontline offices; and
- taken part in our Community 5000 initiative which gives our staff the opportunity to volunteer for a day with a local voluntary or community organisation that is linked to our customers.

Case study

A change of supplier in mid-2007 prompted us to consider how we might deliver reasonable adjustments differently. Using Lean techniques, we have begun work to make 'step change' improvements to the delivery of reasonable adjustments to our staff. We worked with disabled staff, managers and stakeholders to:

- identify the root causes of problems with, and activities that did not add value to, our current processes; and
- develop solutions to ensure that staff receive reasonable adjustments more quickly.

Identified areas for improvement fell into three categories:

- timing and procurement;
- control and management; and
- guidance and information.

Work is now underway to:

- tackle contract issues;
- agree responsibility for end-to-end management of the process;
- develop management information collection and data handling processes; and
- develop guidance that is suitable for our internal website – easy to navigate, and supports managers and staff through the process.

5.8 Take up of our Childcare Voucher (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme which supports our working parents has continued to be encouraging and has now increased to 1.25 per cent.

Involving our staff

5.9 Our staff continue to contribute to our priorities in several ways. Each part of the organisation uses action plans to take forward issues of concern identified in our annual staff survey and our internal review of Investors in People.

Case study

Our six national staff network groups, each championed by a member of the Department's Executive Team, have been involved in a variety of activities. For example, they:

- quality assured the content of the learning zones that will help staff find diversity and equality information more easily on our internal website;
- attended and contributed to our first customer involvement workshop;
- informed our policy on how we implemented monitoring the sexual orientation of our staff;
- worked with Right Corecare who provide our employee assistance programme to embed diversity in its marketing and communications; and
- organised an event with speakers for International Women's Day.

5.10 Staff are also involved in our Change Programme initiatives helping to re-design processes around what is important to our customers. They continually look for improvements and cut out wasteful processes.

What our staff told us

5.11 Each of our businesses' schemes include information about feedback from staff. The main themes from our staff survey carried out at the beginning of 2008 were that they want the Department to:

- be committed to delivering quality customer service; and
- act on customer feedback.

Case study

Staff in the Pension Service (now Pensions, Disability and Carer Service) want:

- disabled staff to be involved in any changes to ensure the changes are inclusive;
- a simpler process for reasonable adjustments;
- training and support for staff so they can provide a better service to disabled customers; and
- flexible working practices in pension centres addressed.

Staff in Disability and Carers Service (now Pensions, Disability and Carers Service) said they appreciated the advice and support provided by the Disabled Persons Officers and acknowledged that their intervention helped support managers in offering disabled staff a beneficial service.

Supporting our staff to deliver to our customers

5.12 Our aim is to ensure that diversity becomes integrated into the business. To help us achieve this, we have built our internal diversity and equality website around our business case for diversity so that our staff can easily see why considering diversity at the right time can help us deliver our services.

5.13 We also have information on our internal website that provides our staff with information on how they should deal with customers who have specific needs, examples include customers who require interpreters or written communications in another format, for example Braille. It includes a forum to encourage staff to share good practice at a local and national level.

5.14 We are developing a set of criteria to be met by staff who use their language skills to communicate with customers to ensure that they meet a pre-defined standard of competence in the relevant language.

5.15 From April 2008, our staff competency framework that sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours our staff need to help deliver our business objectives has been changed to include specific diversity and equality behaviours. It sets out the behaviours that will help staff meet our equality legal obligations. Following them will support staff to ensure equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in their day to day dealings with customers, partners and each other. These changes reinforce existing good practice. To support staff we have provided additional practical advice to help them apply these behaviours in all aspects of their contact with customers.

Equal pay review

5.16 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.



6. Our work across Government

Our cross-Government leadership of the disability agenda

6.1 The Office for Disability Issues is part of the Department for Work and Pensions and is the focal point within Government for co-ordinating disability policy and ensuring that the recommendations from the report 'Improving Life Chances of Disabled People' are implemented.

6.2 As a result of the recommendations in this report, the Independent Living Review was set up and in March 2008 the Independent Living Strategy was launched. The strategy was co-produced with disabled people and makes a series of new commitments, including:

- new websites that will demonstrate how to move resources from professional assessment and care management to user-led support and advocacy organisations to ensure people get the right support to make decisions for themselves;
- a national strategy to enable people to remain in employment when they acquire an impairment or their condition worsens;
- an awareness campaign aimed at practitioners (in social work, the NHS and elsewhere) and disabled people themselves to ensure that health, social care and other services are delivered in ways which enable disabled people to have choice and control over how their needs are met;
- a new toolkit to assist the development of local independent living strategies for and with older people; and
- good practice guidance to enable people to have choice and control over continuing health care.

6.3 Progress will be monitored annually to ensure that change happens.

6.4 Other examples of the Office for Disability Issues' work includes:

- asking disabled people what equality for disabled people means, issues they think the Government should be addressing and how we should measure progress towards disability equality;
- looking at how disabled people get information about public services. This has already resulted in the publication of five principles to help public bodies provide high quality information; and
- leading the Government's 'Images of disability' initiative. This ongoing initiative aims to ensure that disabled people are properly considered in the development and production of Government communications.

Our cross-Government leadership of the age agenda

6.5 We lead for the Government on age equality policy. We also lead for the Government on older people and the ageing society strategy and James Purnell, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, is the Government's older people's champion.



Case study

We are continuing to tackle age discrimination in employment. One of the indicators for our Departmental Strategic Objective 'promote independence and well-being in later life, continuing to tackle pensioner poverty and implementing pension reform' is:

'the employment rate of those aged 50-69 and the difference between this and the overall employment rate'.

An example of work to address this is our Age Positive initiative that aims to:

- tackle stereotypical attitudes towards older workers;
- raise employer awareness about the cost and practical benefits of employing older people; and
- bring about a long term culture change in employment practices encouraging more flexibility in all aspects of treatment of older workers including:

- recruitment;
- training;
- promotion;
- retention;
- redundancy; and
- retirement.

We have published 11 booklets to help businesses get to grips with age discrimination. They cover subjects such as recruitment, training and flexible retirement and each guide includes frequently asked questions, practical tips and case studies. In autumn 2007, we began a pilot aimed at finding out what face-to-face guidance people 50 and over need so they can consider future options on employment and retirement. We anticipate that this work will be concluded and embedded by 2010.

The website can be accessed at www.agepositive.gov.uk.

Other areas of cross-Government transformation

6.6 In April 2008 Directgov joined the Department. It continues to operate as a separate business delivering a service across Government. It will increasingly become a single point of access for people who want to access government services online. It is placed firmly at the heart of the Government's plan to transform the delivery of public services around the needs and expectations of citizens. By 2011 all public-facing government content and most of its related e-services will move to Directgov with a more citizen-focussed delivery.

6.7 We are also leading a cross-Government programme called 'Tell us once'. This is looking at the feasibility of customers being able to tell central and local Government of any change of circumstance only once. The aim is that by 2011 customers will be able to inform Government only once about a birth, death and change of address and their information will be updated across all the services they need to access.

6.8 A series of pilots is underway with Local Authorities using real cases to:

- test various delivery models;
- assess feasibility; and
- find out whether customer expectations are met.

6.9 The lessons learned from these early pilots will be included in the development of subsequent pilots. These will inform a full business case in April 2009 and if this is improved, implementation will begin. This links to one of the priorities identified by customers, which is to avoid having to pass the same information to different parts of the Department.

7. Our approach to impact assessments

7.1 All parts of the Department follow our standard processes to ensure that they impact assess proposals and change for race, disability and gender. Those that affect our customers are published on our website. Published equality impact assessments do not always show where an adverse impact has been discovered because, as a policy is developed or a service delivery change considered, it is continuously updated.

7.2 Assessing the very wide range of the Department's policies for their diversity impact is critical to making further progress on our diversity objectives. All our frontline businesses and corporate centre directorates will have timetables in place to impact assess their wide range of policies for their impact on:

- disability by December 2009; and
- gender by April 2010

by the end of June 2008. Details can be found in individual equality schemes where these have already been agreed.

7.3 To ensure that we embed further the importance of equality impact assessments in our culture, we are taking action in several areas:

- we are continuing the programme of workshops for staff, particularly those who work on policy development, to ensure that they have the confidence to carry out equality impact assessments. We have evaluated both our guidance and the workshop with particular emphasis on whether staff find them effective. As a result the workshops will continue for the foreseeable future;
- our internal audit team will audit our equality impact assessment processes during the summer of 2008;
- our risk assurance team is changing its processes to ensure that it asks to see equality impact assessments where appropriate; and
- during the first half of 2008, we will up-skill staff in Ministers' offices so they can ensure that papers to Ministers contain the correct diversity and equality information and impact assessments.

Case study

We published an equality impact assessment together with the Independent Living Strategy in March 2008. The assessment considered the impact of the cross-government strategy on independent living on equality of opportunity on grounds of disability, age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and gender. It provides a summary of the anticipated consequences of the Independent Living Strategy as a whole in relation to equality issues.

It also provides an initial assessment of where an equality impact assessment will be required by each of the policy commitments by government departments. For some of the commitments considerable work has already been done to consider equality impacts, for others the Strategy will help to provide evidence and address any gaps.

The equality impact assessment was drawn up following consultation with, and the close working involvement of, disabled people and their organisations, and other government departments.



8. Our approach to procurement

8.1 We continue to work to ensure that our external suppliers, particularly those providing a service on our behalf, are aware of their responsibilities in supporting the Department in meeting its obligations under equality legislation. We will ensure that this responsibility is highlighted and prioritised within our tendering process. We want to contract with organisations that are prepared to work with us to make progress within their own workforce and supply chain. We believe this is an indispensable part of demonstrating the capability to deliver employment services to our customers.

8.2 Further information is contained in the chapter on Group Finance.

9. Our approach to monitoring and evaluation

Customers

9.1 We have been working with our IT colleagues to ensure that in future, customers will only be asked about their personal diversity information once, as this information will then be viewable by all other parts of the organisation. We are continuing to work with our businesses to establish what further information we need to collect to help us design and deliver the policies and services that our customers need. This will enable us to ensure consistency of information collected across the Department. We will involve our customers and their stakeholders as this work progresses.

Case study

Our businesses are also improving their approach to monitoring.

Jobcentre Plus collects a great deal of diversity information about its customers. The experience gained from developing equality schemes meant that it decided it could use this information in a much more effective and systematic way. To help achieve this, a review is being undertaken to:

- catalogue all the diversity information Jobcentre Plus collects;
- identify and prioritise issues;
- suggest key high-level indicators to use for benchmarking purposes;
- develop a database compiling key diversity and equality data in a single accessible format; and
- list any gaps in data.

At the first point of contact, the Pension Service collects and records ethnicity details for customers who are happy to provide it. From July 2008, it will be able to compare levels of service to ethnic minority customers who make claims to State Pension and Pension Credit. It also collects any additional communication needs, for example, large print, audio, textphone or Braille for future contact with customers. Its mystery shopping programme monitors service to customers whose first language is not English and those with speech or hearing difficulties.

Staff

9.2 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 are reported in the chapter on Corporate Human Resources.

9.3 In April 2008, we started to monitor the sexual orientation of our staff to ensure that we are providing equality of opportunity. We have raised awareness through communications, for example by using personal anecdotes from a number of staff on the impact that sexual orientation can have on the work place.

9.4 Our trade unions continue to provide valuable feedback on issues that staff raise with them and are supportive of our efforts to raise awareness of diversity and equality issues across the Department. We have agreed a joint communications exercise with them to coincide with the launch of sexual orientation monitoring to encourage staff to check and update their personal data on our resource management system. This will enable us to monitor and evaluate our staff data more effectively.

9.5 Each year we provide guidance for our managers and staff about how to take diversity and equality into account when operating our performance and development system. Research in March 2008 has helped us better understand the impact of diversity on our performance management results. The research explored trends in depth and has enabled us to target areas for improvement. It also looked at other factors, for example:

- the wider diversity and equality support we provide for staff;
- wider learning and development opportunities; and
- made comparisons with other similar organisations and their experience to share good practice.

9.6 We are considering the recommendations to take into our action planning.

10. Progress reporting and reviewing

10.1 We will assess and provide an update on outcomes and progress against our action plans on a yearly basis. We will ensure that, as part of that process, we continue to involve our customers, their stakeholders and our staff. We will include the outcomes of our monitoring and evaluation and of impact assessments we have carried out on our policies and services.

Conclusion

10.2 We continue to be pleased with the progress we are making on all aspects of diversity. We are very aware of the scale of the challenge and know that there is still more to do. It will not be easy as many of the issues will take time and scarce resources – but work is underway and we are committed to making a real difference to our customers, our stakeholders and our staff.

10.3 Thank you for taking the time to read this document. If you have any views, please write to us at:

Diversity and Equality Team
2nd Floor, The Adelphi
1-11 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6HT

or

e-mail us at Adelphi.diversityandequality@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

10.4 If you would like a paper copy of this document or to receive it in an alternative format, please contact us at the address or email above or phone us on 0114 259 7820.