

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'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne McGuire
Minister for Disabled People