

# 1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the Department for Work and Pensions' first annual progress reports on disability and gender, our 2007 annual progress report on race, and an update on other aspects of diversity. It includes the action plans published by each part of the Department in December 2006 together with progress since then and new actions that have been identified. Each of the action plans and the progress reported has been signed-off by the appropriate leader in each part of the business. 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 30 for details of how to contact us.

1.2 We begin with an overview of where we have made real progress and where the biggest challenges remain, and then set out the Department's aims and structures and our approach to equality schemes and annual progress reports. Looking back at the equality schemes published on 1 December 2006, we have made significant progress in a number of key areas. Progress is detailed in the action plans themselves, but a selection of key highlights is set out here under:

- Progress for our customers.
- Progress for our staff.
- Progress across Government.
- Impact assessments.
- Our approach to procurement.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

## 2 Overview

2.1 Over the last 12 months we have made progress in a number of important areas. Our change programme means that, by 2011, we aim to deliver services to our customers in a completely different way. We are also leading a cross-Government initiative 'Tell us once'. The aim is for customers to need to tell us – and other government departments – only once about changes. This information will then be updated across all the services they need to access. These are huge pieces of work and the challenge they present, not only for the Department for Work and Pensions but also for the rest of Government, should not be under-estimated. They will need not only an overhaul of our processes, but also a shift in culture for our people who are delivering our services. We see this not as a challenge but rather as an opportunity to deliver the services that our diverse customers need.

2.2 One of the actions that came from our discussions with customers and stakeholders while we were developing our disability and gender equality schemes in 2006, was the need to build on our arrangements for involving them when we establish our priorities and actions for the future. During 2007 we have done this by building on the local practices that were already in place and strengthening how we take forward Departmental issues with stakeholders as well as how we share information and best practice across the Department.

2.3 Our staff network groups not only chose the theme of our diversity event in June 2007 but were also instrumental in designing and developing it. 500 of our staff attended the event where they were able to share ideas and spread best practice.

2.4 We have good diversity levels generally across the Department but this is not so at senior levels. To help address this, we have explored ways in which we can recruit people from diverse backgrounds. We also began piloting a new positive action programme for ethnic minority and disabled staff in the administrative assistant to senior executive officer grades during the year. We are determined to develop our staff from diverse backgrounds and give them the best possible chance to succeed.

2.5 We have timetables for assessing all our policies for their impact on disability and gender and have supported staff carrying out these impact assessments through improved guidance and workshops.

2.6 We have set ourselves a challenging work programme. However, we are looking forward to meeting that challenge and designing and delivering the policies and services that our diverse customers need.

## 3 The Department's aims and structure

3.1 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, and those with disabilities;
- 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 in their interests and those of the taxpayer.

3.2 In doing this we aim to enable and encourage people to fulfil their potential over longer, more active lives. Our focus will remain firmly on our customers; providing them with the services they need; looking, wherever possible, to join up our services, both within our Agencies and with others across government, while providing our services as efficiently as possible.

3.3 The Department's 'Five year strategy: Opportunity and security through life' sets out the direction for the years to come. It builds on, and puts into context, those changes already taking place across the organisation. It can be found at [www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/5\\_yr\\_strat//pdf/report.pdf](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/dwp/2005/5_yr_strat//pdf/report.pdf)

3.4 Further information on our aims and values, our businesses and our Public Service Agreements for the period to 31 March 2008 can be found through our website [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk). In addition, our Spending Review 2007 Public Service Agreements were published in October in the Comprehensive Spending Review White Paper. They can also be found through our website [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk). Following the Spending Review 2007 settlement, we have agreed a number of Strategic Objectives that will support the achievement of the Public Service Agreements on which we lead.

## **4 The Department's approach to equality schemes and annual progress reports**

4.1 In the 'Department for Work and Pensions Disability and Gender Equality Schemes and Race Equality Scheme Progress Report' published on 1 December 2006 we explained our approach to producing our equality schemes. We also explained our intention to integrate reviews of the schemes and annual progress reports into regular business planning and reporting processes. This will mean that equality action plans will be considered as part of day-to-day business ('mainstreaming') and demonstrates how important we believe it is to integrate equality into everything we do.

4.2 Following publication of these 2007 annual reports, we have decided that we will formally review our equality schemes in 2008. Although significantly earlier than required for disability and gender, we have taken this decision for the following reasons:

- race legislation requires race equality schemes to be reviewed by May 2008;
- to take on board feedback received on our first schemes;
- to achieve 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.

## 5 Progress for our customers

### Our business strategy – responding to customers

5.1 Last year we described how the Department's Executive Team had been considering our future business strategy. As a result, we have established a major change programme that involves putting our customers at the heart of everything we do. The activities in this programme reflect and build on the priorities identified by our customers (these included, for example, joined up services across the Department and a need to consider a customer's individual needs).

5.2 Our new business strategy will transform the way we deliver for customers. At the centre of our strategy is a new vision – 'Work, Welfare, Well-being, Well delivered'. We know that we will only be able to achieve this if we recognise and respond to the diversity of our customers – one size will not fit all.

5.3 A dedicated team within the change programme is leading the work to deliver our new proposition for customers. To develop this, we are adopting a 'pathfinder' approach which is based around four high priority customer groups:

- disabled people;
- people on the border between work and retirement;
- people with chaotic lifestyles, for example homeless people or those who are drug dependent; and
- people who move in and out of work.

5.4 Disabled people will be involved in all the pathfinders from the beginning and the results from the pathfinders will be fed into the design of our services.

Our 'disability pathfinder' has established a forum of disabled customers, their representatives, Equality 2025 and our staff who have experience of working with disabled customers. They will be looking at how we carry out various activities, identifying where changes and improvements can be made, prioritising them and working up solutions. These will be trialled in the Department before being rolled-out.

The Department has also been asked to take the lead in developing a cross-Government initiative called 'Tell us once'. This will provide a central point of contact for customers to tell Government services and agencies of any change of circumstance. Our aim is that, by 2011, customers will be able to tell us once only about births, deaths and changes in address and their information will be updated across all the services they need to access. This links to one of the priorities identified by our customers, which is to avoid having to pass the same information to different parts of the Department.

## Customer Insight Team

5.5 One of the commitments made in the equality schemes published in 2006 was that we would set up a Customer Insight Team by the end of March 2007. The team has now been set up and its objectives are to generate knowledge and understanding of our customers' needs and to improve the way we work across the Department, so we can provide them with a more joined-up service.

5.6 The team's work plan includes a focus on access to our services, identifying customers who face the greatest barriers and proposing alternative delivery approaches.

5.7 For example, the team is working with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to explore the needs of disabled customers who need to deal with both Departments, particularly focussing on:

- customers with a disabled child;
- disabled customers making the transition from education to work;
- customers who become disabled in mid-life; and
- customers who become disabled during retirement.

5.8 The work being undertaken includes engaging directly with disabled customers and a wide range of intermediaries.

5.9 The work of the Customer Insight Team feeds directly into the change programme.



## Involving customers

5.10 The need to involve customers in developing the first disability and gender schemes marked a change in our approach to our customers. During 2007 we have continued with and built on those approaches. We have developed an **involvement approach**, building on the activities we undertook last year in developing our first schemes.

5.11 Much of our involvement with customers and their representatives is at a local level, about local issues. When we were developing our equality schemes in 2006, customers told us there was lots of excellent local practice in involving customers that needed to be spread across the Department. We wanted to ensure that this happened but did not want to hinder local involvement by developing a Departmental approach that changed what was working well.

5.12 During 2007, therefore, we have detailed the involvement that already takes place across the Department. This has helped us to develop an involvement approach that builds on these excellent local practices but will also allow us to take forward a more joined-up approach to ensure involvement of large organisations as well as individual customers. Examples of large organisations we have involved are:

- Royal National Institute of Blind people;
- RNID;
- Scope;
- MIND;

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- Fawcett Society;
- Gingerbread;
- Citizens Advice;
- Mencap;
- RADAR; and
- Leonard Cheshire Foundation.

5.13 Our involvement approach has three elements to it:

- a strategic level – taking forward cross-cutting, departmental issues with our customer representative groups either individually or through the various meetings the Department holds;
- a co-ordination role – a new role where we join up and share the work going on at a local level between the different parts of the Department – and make sure that the feedback is two-way; and
- local involvement – involvement at a local level continues.

5.14 We are also 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 anticipate members of this group being a mixture of individual customers and representatives from intermediary organisations.

5.15 In addition, we continue to use the qualitative and quantitative data that we have in relation to our customers' experiences, for example surveys, questionnaires and focus and advisory groups. We also share best practice with other Government departments through a variety of institutional as well as individual contacts.

Some examples of the work we are doing:

- In December 2007, on behalf of the whole Department, Jobcentre Plus will be repeating the involvement exercise that it ran in 2006. There will be a number of regional events in England, Scotland and Wales with customers and their representative groups to gather information about their views on Jobcentre Plus services and, where appropriate, our other businesses.
- In May 2007, Jobcentre Plus launched its diversity challenge to help make its equality schemes a reality. Set against a series of questions the aim of the diversity challenge is to help Jobcentre Plus to:
  - focus on its responsibilities and baseline where it is against the requirements of diversity legislation;

- make improvements to the delivery of its services to priority customer groups and ensure that its services are accessible, available and appropriate for all customers;
- contribute to the Government's aspiration of increasing the employment rate from 75% to 80%; and
- deliver the mandatory business planning objective on diversity.
- The Pension Service:
  - achieved the RNID 'Louder than Words' accreditation in 12 transformation pension centres with the one remaining centre agreeing a date for assessment by the end of 2007; and
  - has a target and marketing strategy for Pension Credit which is aimed at vulnerable customers including ethnic minority and disabled customers. The customer service standards are regularly reviewed with customers, customer representative groups and staff ensuring that all diverse groups are consulted.
- Our Telephony Accessibility Group is a forum for issues about access for disabled customers and staff using our telephones. It includes representatives from across the Department, RNID and BT. It has recently overseen the publication of our Textphone standards.
- Disability and Carers Service:
  - has developed and implemented a mystery shopping programme that includes a focus on accessibility issues; and
  - is using its customer satisfaction survey to understand what customers think of the quality of the service it offers and to develop and review its equality schemes.
- We are making arrangements to monitor the sexual orientation of our staff from April 2008. We will use this information to help us identify, tackle and prevent discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and asexual staff.
- We write and co-ordinate the content of the over 50s section of Directgov which provides a range of public service information and services on-line.

At the Department's annual forum in July 2007, we asked customer representative groups 'In transforming our service, what are the three things we could do that would make a difference to you?' The key themes that we will be taking forward arising out of the discussion are:

- access to information – can we provide a dedicated telephone number for advisers?
- more joined-up service – can staff take ownership of an issue and follow it through even if it is not in their area of expertise?
- accuracy in decision making – more investment in staff training, with costs offset by getting the decision right first time and reducing reviews and appeals;
- communications – improving the awareness of frontline staff of national guidance that affects customer claims; and
- working with voluntary organisations – making better use of voluntary organisations in delivering awareness training to staff.

## Our IT systems

5.16 Our IT systems enable and support almost everything we do as a Department. A key aspect of our work to promote equality is the provision of accessible solutions for disabled people.

During 2007 we have been undertaking an audit of accessibility across all our existing IT systems. This is:

- considering accessibility across all existing IT systems on a prioritised basis to provide a common understanding of the current position; and
- identifying those systems where accessibility improvements are most urgently needed.

Jobcentre Plus has undertaken a stocktake of all its customer facing IT and its website and has changed the latter as a result.

5.17 We are very grateful to our customers and their representatives for their continued involvement during this year as we have taken forward the actions in our action plans. All of the feedback we get from customers is being fed back to those leading our Change Programme to ensure it influences the design of our services.

## 6 Progress of our staff

### Building a diverse workforce

6.1 During 2007 we have continued to build on the diversity of our workforce. In June we held a ground-breaking diversity event attended by 500 of our staff and our executive team in five locations across the country, linked by satellite. The theme 'spreading the word' was chosen by our six national staff network groups – to spread the word that diversity and equality matter, and to share best practice. As well as hearing from the Minister for Disabled People, the Permanent Secretary and the Chief Executive of Stonewall, participants were able to share and discuss examples of good practice from around the Department and were encouraged to take ideas back to their offices, share and discuss them with colleagues and adapt them for use. The first ever Departmental awards for 'excellence in diversity' were also presented at the event.

6.2 More generally, we have maintained good levels of diversity across the Department, for example 68.9 per cent of our staff are women compared with the economically active rate of 46.3 per cent. However, we need still to be more diverse at senior levels. In line with all government departments, we have a 10-Point Plan that includes diversity targets that are to be met by March 2008. We also have a range of diversity targets for under-represented groups across the Department. Our targets and our progress against them is set out in annex 1.

6.3 We have this year achieved some of our targets, but we know that there is more to do. Our strategy aims both to develop the talent we have in the Department, and to recruit more diverse staff into the Department from outside.



## Developing staff

6.4 In September 2007 we began piloting a positive action programme for ethnic minority and disabled staff in the administrative assistant to senior executive officer grades. It replaces our previous scheme, 'Realising Potential' which was open to ethnic minority staff in certain grades. There are 11 ethnic minority staff and 12 disabled staff taking part in the pilot. The pilot will consist of six months central training followed by a further six months during which participants will have access to opportunities within their own business which will be tailored to address their individual development needs. This could include, for example, secondments, work shadowing or work-based placements. The programme aims to address some of the barriers faced by ethnic minority and disabled staff and to equip them with the confidence and motivation they need to compete on merit for promotion, job selection exercises and other development opportunities. The evaluation of this pilot will be used to inform a wider roll-out of the new programme across the Department.

6.5 To complement this, we are also participating in the second phase of the Cabinet Office's Leaders UnLtd scheme which is an 18 month scheme for high potential civil servants who are women, disabled or from an ethnic minority. Of nine people nominated, four have been accepted on the programme, of whom three are women.

6.6 We are also exploring mentoring schemes for staff in under-represented groups. These are likely to include:

- a mentoring scheme, for women and ethnic minority and disabled staff in grades 6 and 7;
- a reverse mentoring scheme, where senior staff are mentored by staff in under-represented groups to give them an understanding of the issues; and
- mentoring circles, where one mentor can hold sessions with around a dozen people at a time.

6.7 To support working parents, we rolled out a Childcare Voucher (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme across the Department by April 2007. Take up has been encouraging with around one per cent of staff taking advantage of the scheme.

## Recruiting more diverse staff

6.8 We have been exploring how to recruit more people from diverse backgrounds, particularly into the senior civil service, and how we might improve the position. An audit of recent selection exercises showed that when women, disabled people and people from ethnic minorities apply for jobs with the Department, they generally do well, but that too few are applying. As a result, we have:

- developed a strategy to market the Department as a prospective employer with guidance on the most effective ways to attract a wider group of credible candidates for advertised vacancies. This has been complemented by a series of 'advertorials' – see annex 2 – in media aimed at minority communities to raise awareness of our aspiration to recruit from these communities;
- a framework for managing the performance of our recruitment consultants more effectively; and
- put in place good practice guidance in search and selection for recruiting managers with specific guidelines on search and selection with a strong diversity angle. This includes a workshop for senior recruiting managers on best practice around diversity in recruitment which will be rolled out over a 12 month period from October 2007.

6.9 We are also leading by example as the Department for Work and Pensions by having become the first Government Department to enter into a Local Employment Partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Local Employment Partnerships are part of the Government's programme to work with major employers to ensure that more people at a disadvantage in the job market, such as lone parents or disabled people wanting to return to work, move into the vacancies which those employers advertise. We are looking as a core element of the Partnership at what specific measures we can put in place to support our priority customers into work whenever we are recruiting.

## Involving our staff

6.10 Our staff continue to contribute to our priorities in different ways. We use our annual staff survey to identify areas where there is cause for concern. Our six national staff networks – for race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and work-life balance – were re-launched at the end of 2006. Each one is championed by a member of the Department's Executive Team. As an example of their involvement, the Sexual Orientation Network is helping with the communication exercise to support the introduction of sexual orientation monitoring. The national networks are complemented by networks in the businesses.

Some further examples:

- Following comments raised by our customers in 2006 as a result of the requirements of the new disability equality duty, staff who attended the Department's annual summer school in July 2007 considered how the Department could meet the individual needs of vulnerable customers when systems and processes are designed for the majority to use.
- The staff networks have been asked for their views on the review of our staff competency frameworks.
- The Disability and Carers Service has appointed a diversity co-ordinator in each of its business units, one of whose roles is to encourage and support staff to take action on diversity and equality issues. Each unit will also have its own focus group of staff to agree local initiatives and to address issues.
- In July 2007, we modified our contract with our main IT supplier, EDS, to introduce an improved service for our assistive technology users. The new service will include regular software upgrades and brings the service for our assistive technology users up to a similar level as that received by standard desktop users. We are now discussing a similar contract change for our telephony.

## Supporting our staff to deliver for our customers

6.11 Both our customers and our staff have told us that our staff need more training on diversity and responding to this concern has been a major thrust of our work over the last year. By the end of 2006 every member of staff should have received a mandatory diversity awareness session from their line manager and by the end of March 2007 everyone should have completed a legislation and awareness computer-based training package.

6.12 Additionally, we have put in place a set of minimum accessibility standards and guidelines for providing information on the internet and intranet to make the sites easy for everyone to use, including disabled people. We have also issued guidance on answering Textphones. Jobcentre Plus has worked with RNID to train staff and centralised all Textphone calls in two call centres to improve the quality, consistency and expertise of staff answering these calls.

6.13 We have also reviewed our language allowance policy to ensure that, where appropriate, staff provide a professional, efficient and consistent interpreting and British Sign Language facility for customers who access our services.



6.14 During 2007, we held a series of open days for staff and managers to familiarise them with the challenges faced by disabled users and the IT solutions available. This was aligned to a leadership conference that allowed our senior IT managers to get hands-on experience of disabled users using assistive technology.

6.15 We have also decided to extend the Disability and Carers Service initiative, 'Community 500' to a Department-wide 'Community 5000' programme where staff across the Department can spend a day volunteering for a local voluntary or community organisation linked to our customer groups. Our staff will get a fresh perspective on the Department's work, learning more about our customers and helping to build long-term partnerships with local organisations. Members of the Executive Team, including the Permanent Secretary, have committed to participating personally.

We have celebrated the achievements of our staff and regularly enter awards:

- six of our 28 nominations for the Remploy awards reached the final stage and were all regional winners. At the national final in October 2007, we were successful in two categories; the outstanding individual category and the Jobcentre Plus award for outstanding contribution. Remploy complimented us on the high standard of entries submitted;
- nine of our 13 nominations for the diversity award at the Whitehall and Westminster World Civil Service awards were finalists and two were short listed. At the awards ceremony in November 2007, The Pension Service won for its work to ensure that diversity is at the heart of every conversation with its customers;

- we were one of three organisations to win the Employers' Forum on Disability Chief Executive's diamond award for accessible information in recognition of our textphone standards; and
- The Pension Service Transformation Programme was short listed for the first Race for Opportunity awards.

## Equal pay review

6.16 The Department completed an equal pay audit in 2005. Encouragingly, the results showed that our gender pay gap had reduced to 4.8 percent. This meant that significant progress had been made since the last audit in 2002 which measured the gap at 5.7 percent. The next audit is due to start in late 2007 after the current pay review has been implemented.

6.17 In relation to gender there are two main areas on which we will continue to focus. The first is the gender pay gap within each pay band. This ranges from 1.6 percent in favour of women in the administrative officer pay band to 3.4 percent in favour of men at grade 6. Analysis indicates that there is a correlation between average pay in the pay band and length of time served in the pay band, for example women spend longer in the administrative officer pay band and so progress higher up the pay scale. Men spend longer in higher pay bands.

6.18 The second key issue is the proportion of men and women represented in each pay band. Women currently make up 69 percent of the Department's workforce but 72 percent of our administrative officers – while there are significantly fewer than 69 percent women in the higher pay bands. This leads indirectly to a gender pay gap because of the disproportionate percentage of women employed in the lower pay bands.

6.19 Our strategy is to tackle these issues on two fronts. Following wide consultation with our senior managers, staff and trades unions, we have agreed a reward strategy that will give priority to faster pay progression within the pay band. Initially this will be on the basis of time served but in the next few years the intention is to introduce pay progression linked to capability. This approach will reduce the effect of time served in the pay band and tend to equalise the gender pay gap that currently exists within each pay band. The second part of our strategy is to monitor the application of human resource policies such as promotion and recruitment to ensure that these are not indirectly preserving the disproportionate number of women and part-time staff in the lower pay bands.

## 7 Progress across Government

### Our cross-Government leadership of the disability agenda

7.1 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 across all departments and ensuring robust implementation of the recommendations from the report 'Improving Life Chances of Disabled People'.

7.2 During 2007 it led the cross-Government review of independent living to identify practical ways of improving opportunities and support for disabled people. The conclusions of the review are due to be published shortly, when government will set out a five-year strategy to give disabled people the necessary choice and control over the support they need to go about their daily lives. It also commissioned an audit of how public bodies were meeting their duties under the Disability Equality Duty. This was completed in January 2007 and gave a snap shot of compliance during that month. Learning from this audit was consolidated by a series of events for public authorities held in March and April 2007.

7.3 The Office for Disability Issues website achieved the highest level of accessibility – triple-A compliance – after being tested by independent user experts including disabled people.

7.4 The Office for Disability Issues will be publishing its own annual report in December 2007 to cover the scope of its work. It will be published on its website at [www.officefordisability.gov.uk](http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk).

7.5 In addition, we established at the end of 2006 **Equality 2025** as a new non-departmental public body sponsored by DWP. It is an advisory body to help the Government understand the needs and wishes of disabled people when developing policies and designing service delivery. It works with the Government to help achieve the aim of equality for disabled people by 2025 and has 23 members who are all disabled people. They bring a wide range of skills and experiences that enable them to look at all issues from an equalities viewpoint rather than being representative of any disability or organisation. It will not replace existing Departmental arrangements for involving disabled people but will supplement them. It will also encourage disabled people to participate in public life.

7.6 The Department's Minister for Disabled People – Anne McGuire – signed the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities** on behalf of the United Kingdom on 30 March 2007. A scrutiny exercise is now underway for all UK domestic legislation, policy, practice and procedure to ensure compatibility with the Convention's obligations. The United Kingdom will ratify the convention without undue delay and in tandem with the European Community.

7.7 From April 2008, the Department will take on leadership of the Directgov website. By 2011 all Government citizen-facing content and most of its e-services will migrate to Directgov. One of our key aims will be to ensure maximum accessibility to Directgov for disadvantaged users.

## **Our cross-Government leadership of the age agenda**

7.8 We lead for the Government on **age equality policy**. We worked with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, which leads on employment equality legislation, in the lead up to the introduction of age employment legislation and we are continuing to tackle age discrimination in employment. We also lead for the Government on **older people and the ageing society strategy**.

7.9 We are contributing to the Government's work on the development of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights which became operational in October 2007. We contributed to the proposals that were developed through the Discrimination Law Review and these were published in the consultation document *A Framework for Fairness: Proposals for a Single Equality Bill for Great Britain*.

## **Our cross-Government leadership on IT**

7.10 We are leading a recently established cross-Government network on accessibility issues. This will take forward priority issues to help promote accessibility across Government.

## 8 Impact assessments

8.1 Assessing the very wide range of the Department's policies for their diversity impact is critical to making further progress on our diversity objectives. Accordingly, we will assess all our policies for their impact on:

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

8.2 During the past year we have revised our guidance on carrying out impact assessments. It is now more user-friendly and takes account of advice from the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Office for Disability Issues. The need for impact assessments has been included in our 'Change Lifecycle' guidance for all staff introducing change.

8.3 We have developed and delivered impact assessment workshops to staff in a variety of different roles across the Department, particularly to those in corporate roles. The workshops cover:

- what an equality impact assessment is;
- our legislative commitments to carry out such assessments;
- what we must impact assess and when;
- governance and accountability routes; and
- the process by working through examples.

8.4 From July 2007 the Social Security Advisory Committee has introduced new arrangements for proposals coming before it to be accompanied by an impact assessment on race, disability, gender and age.

8.5 We have over the past year carried out numerous impact assessments of both policy development and service delivery changes. Those that affect our customers, for example when a new policy is being developed, are published externally and, since October 2007, we have had a specific area on our website for published impact assessments.

We published an impact assessment together with the Green Paper 'In work, better off: next steps to full employment' in July 2007. The impact assessment focused on three areas of the Green Paper where policy changes were proposed and consultation questions had been asked:

- the introduction of a flexible New Deal to replace the current suite of employment support for long-term unemployed people;
- replacing income support with Jobseeker's Allowance for lone parents with older children; and
- Local Employment Partnerships which aim to offer 250,000 job opportunities to people on inactive benefits and the long term unemployed.

In April 2007 a screening report was undertaken on the Operational Programme 2007-13 for the European Social Fund. This programme establishes the priorities for spending money in line with the EU's Lisbon agenda and the Government's employment and skills strategies. The report concluded that the new programme was likely to have a positive impact on the equality groups targeted and that a full impact assessment was not needed. The Equal Opportunities Commission, the Disability Rights Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality were all invited to comment on the report. The screening report will be reviewed regularly during the life of the programme.

We have carried out a thorough exercise to check that our policies and processes will meet the new requirements of the Gender Directive (including prevention of discrimination against transsexual men and women).

8.6 Businesses are also planning their approach to impact assessing major policy change. For example, our Work, Welfare and Equality Group now ensures that as all policies are designed they take account of the equality impacts. There is considerable evidence that work itself has a beneficial impact. For groups such as lone parents, there is a reduction in poverty, including child poverty, which remains one of the Government's priorities. There are also other significant welfare effects, including increased social inclusion. But if the lone parent moves into a low paid job, that can have a negative impact on the gender pay gap. That said, our obvious preference is for people to move from welfare into sustainable employment, with the prospect of advancement. The Employment Retention and Advancement project, which is focused heavily on lone parents, promotes a work based welfare policy to break the low pay-no pay cycle and help customers who are furthest away from the labour market to sustain and retain work.

8.7 Another example is the Pensions Reform that will affect individuals who reach state pension age on or after 6 April 2010. The changes will benefit carers and those with broken career histories due to disability. They will also equalise state pension age between men and women and entitlement to basic state pension compared to now. Information has been published internally and externally to help staff and customers understand how the changes introduced by the Pensions Reforms will affect them. We are consulting with carers organisations on delivery options for the carers credit as part of the review of the 1999 carers strategy led by the Department of Health. The review is due to be published in spring 2008. Equality impact assessments and other actions to implement the changes are being planned for the future to address staff and customer requirements.

## 9 Our approach to procurement

9.1 As part of its focus on diversity, the Department has set up a focus group to support the work of the Ethnic Minority Task Force. Its aim is to take forward the Task Force's priority to promote equality in the work place through public procurement. The group will:

- agree an action plan to promote equality of opportunity through procurement with the aim of incorporating measures into new contracting arrangements;
- consider further measures to promote supplier diversity within the Department's supplier base;
- consider the findings of the Business Commission report on ways to increase recruitment, retention and progression of ethnic minorities in the private sector in relation to public procurement and take them forward across Government; and
- work with the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights to develop practical guidance on procurement and the public sector duties on equality.

9.2 Our sustainable procurement strategy was re-written and re-launched in September 2007 and we have put plans in place to deliver our sustainable development targets.

9.3 The Department was highly commended for its work at the Government Opportunities Excellence in Public Procurement awards in June 2006. The sustainable development team was highly commended in the Sustainable Procurement Award category and the office services project team was presented with an award for Team Excellence in public procurement.

9.4 Equality requirements are included in the invitation to tender documents, bidding instructions and incorporated into the terms and conditions of the contract for Jobcentre Plus contracts. Providers' progress in implementing and complying with these equality requirements is checked annually by the external organisation responsible for our procurement accreditation system. The results are reported back to our contract holders to take any necessary action.

## 10 Monitoring and evaluation

### Customers

10.1 We are working with our businesses to establish what further information we need to collect to help us design and deliver the policies and services which 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.

10.2 Our businesses are also improving their approach to monitoring. For example, The Pension Service has improved its IT to allow customers' ethnicity and additional requirements to be recorded which supports the monitoring of services, and identifies areas for improvement. It also means that customers only now need to tell us once what their language or other requirements are. As a result of additional training, staff are more aware of the interpreting service which is available to help them and the number of requests for the service more than doubled between June 2006 and June 2007. A mystery shopping exercise held for the period ending June 2007 indicated that of 62 calls made requiring the use of an interpreter, 81% had in fact accessed an interpreter.

10.3 Jobcentre Plus is also working on the quality and availability of data and arrangements for analysis and reporting. It is drawing on a wide range of information from across policy development, service delivery and human resource functions.

10.4 We are actively considering using standard definitions of disability and standard impairment categories across our evidence gathering activities.

### Staff

10.5 Our current monitoring and evaluation strategy was published on our website in April 2007. We use our staff data to obtain a picture of our employees' experience by diversity group. The full range of employment data is shown in Annex 3. This information is fed back to our staff network groups who in turn help us to agree priorities for action.

10.6 Our trades unions continue to provide valuable feedback on issues which 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 our trades unions to encourage individuals 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.

## 11 Conclusion

11.1 While conscious of the scale of the challenge, we are pleased with the progress that we are making on all aspects of diversity. At the same time we know that there is still much more to do and we are committed to making a real difference for all of our customers, our stakeholders and our staff.

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

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or

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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.