

**Law, Governance and
Special Policy Group**

Law, Governance and Special Policy Group

Disability Equality Action Plan

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Increase awareness of disability issues for staff and managers | <p>All staff to complete the disability toolkit</p> <p>All line managers to include an objective in staff personal development plans</p> <p>All staff to attend line manager's briefing and complete mandatory open learning module</p> | <p>Completion of toolkit by April 2007</p> <p>Objective in personal development plans by end December 2006</p> <p>Review progress by end December 2006</p> <p>Attend line manager's briefing by December 2006</p> <p>Complete open learning module by April 2007</p> | <p>All training actions completed and staff to be aware of the disability issues and impact in their daily roles</p> | <p>All staff have attended a line manager's briefing and completed the mandatory module on legislation changes</p> <p>To date 100+ staff (20%) have completed the diversity toolkit for disability. Progress on this objective will be reviewed in December 2007 (see 2 below)</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <p>2. Undertake a review and identify specific disability equality training needs for all staff</p> | <p>Diversity action group to review training opportunities</p> | <p>By end of October 2007 Review progress June 2007</p> | <p>Future training needs established</p> | <p>A review was completed in June 2007. Of those that had completed the training, whilst the majority felt that the training met their needs, most did not like the manner in which the training was delivered, i.e. an online learning package. We are investigating possible alternative training methods and progress on this objective will be reviewed in December 2007</p> |
| <p>3. Look at ways to improve the training on disability given to decision makers with particular reference to mental health issues</p> | <p>Undertake to work with the agencies in reviewing the training available to decision makers on disability, and in particular on mental health issues</p> | <p>To meet agency timetables Review progress by end March 2007</p> | <p>Effective training packages agreed with agencies</p> | <p>We have obtained the evaluation summary from the Disability and Carers Service pilot for Professionalism in Decision Making and Appeals competency programme which ended in December 2006. The Disability and Carers Service gave approval for implementation into their business in March 2007. As it rolls out we will look at feedback from the extended programme and review progress in December 2007</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| 4. Consider ways to identify and remove barriers to effective working between the Department and the representatives of disabled customers | Undertake to work with the agencies in reviewing their policies on discussing cases with representatives of disabled customers | To meet agency timetables Review progress by end March 2007 | Existing barriers identified and removed if possible, or justification for maintaining current procedures set out | The guidance on 'Working with Representatives' has been updated to stress the advantages of working with representatives. The new version was available on the Department's internal website site at the end of June 2007. We will take a new action to discuss with the agencies how the effectiveness of the application of the guidance can be monitored. Review progress April 2008 |
| 5. Improve the availability of decision makers, particularly in the Disability and Carers Service, to discuss cases | Undertake to work with the agencies in reviewing the availability of decision makers to discuss cases with customers and their representatives | To meet agency timetables End March 2007 | Policy on availability agreed with agencies | Decision makers in the Disability and Carers Service have been putting their name on decisions since last year A central explanation team has been set up in the Disability and Carers Service for some time with specialised help-line officers trained in the relevant aspects of decision making. Recent pilots have looked at whether this service can be delivered better by the decision makers We will amend this action to reflect the need to discuss this further with the Disability and Carers Service to ensure that there is some way to monitor the accessibility of the explanation process. Review March 2008 |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>6. Improve speed of reasonable adjustments</p> | <p>Set up a central control to monitor progress on reasonable adjustments and for managers to take remedial action as relevant to ensure speedy delivery</p> | <p>By end October 2007 Review progress April 2007</p> | <p>Central control established and used to monitor progress on speed of reasonable adjustments</p> | <p>Numbers have been small, however, current trends show most reasonable adjustments are cleared within six months of being requested More effective monitoring will be achieved once the Department has set up a central team which will monitor the speed of the adjustment process through an enhancement to the Resource Management system. Review March 2008</p> |
| <p>7. Review and improve induction process for disabled staff</p> | <p>Review induction packs and line managers' duties</p> | <p>By end October 2007 Review progress April 2007</p> | <p>Review completed and any necessary actions identified</p> | <p>This action has risen out of responses to last year's staff diversity questionnaire. After consideration it was decided that our induction event could not be further tailored towards disabled staff because it was only designed to give all new staff an overview of what our different divisions do We will study the responses from this year's diversity questionnaire to see if the need still exists before considering how best to tackle this issue. Review December 2007</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>8. Formalise future arrangements with the Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise, the Disability and Carers Service, Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service to involve disabled customers in reviewing our progress against our action plans</p> | <p>Agree suitable arrangements with all stakeholders</p> | <p>By end October 2007 Review progress April 2007</p> | <p>Customers and disability organisations have been involved and consulted on our progress against action plans at a proportionate level</p> | <p>The Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise is setting up a co-ordination role to help ensure that involvement does not overload voluntary organisations. We will look for a proportionate level of involvement to identify our actions as the work progresses, given that our policy areas cross cut across the wide range of services delivered by the agencies. Review December 2007</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| 9. Discuss with the Department's Standards Committee its role in identifying barriers that can prevent disabled customers from engaging effectively in the decision making and appeals process | Discuss with the Standards Committee how to identify whether there are any barriers preventing disabled customers from engaging effectively in the decision making and appeals process and agree an action plan as necessary | By end October 2007 Review progress April 2007 | Identify ways to make it easier for disabled customers to engage effectively in the decision making and appeals process | Delayed as the membership of the Standards Committee was refreshed last year. The new committee met for the first time in June 2007 and it will be asked to consider its role at the first opportunity Review progress December 2007 |
| 10. Identify any areas in the decision making and appeals process where customers with mental health problems, sensory impairments, or hidden disabilities suffer discrimination | Work with the Department's Standards Committee to identify any part of the process that discriminates against these groups | By end October 2007 Review progress April 2007 | Discuss findings with relevant agencies and agree programme of work to assist disabled customers to engage in the process more effectively | Delayed as the membership of the Standards Committee was refreshed last year. The new committee has met for the first time in June 2007 and it will be asked to consider its role at the first opportunity Review progress December 2007 |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>11. Review existing policies to ensure they promote equality for disabled customers</p> | <p>Conduct initial screening through impact assessments for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims and payments regulations • Overlapping benefits regulations • Decision-making and appeals regulations • Agents and appointees • Freedom of information and data protection <p>Conduct full impact assessment for any policy where a negative impact is identified</p> <p>Publish results</p> | <p>To be completed by December 2009</p> | <p>Disability impact assessments completed</p> <p>Actions included in future action plans to address any negative impacts identified from full impact assessments</p> | <p>Our work to introduce the new disability and gender equality schemes showed that because our policy areas are cross cutting and affect all the benefits administered by the Department's agencies, there was no specific source of information we could use which would allow us to measure impacts, and we only had anecdotal information on how our policy areas affect different client groups</p> <p>We are therefore dependent on the Department's agencies to establish, via the equality schemes working group, the necessary data collection processes in order to conduct an initial screening exercise, and we have asked for our needs to be considered in that forum</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>12. Monitor the group's services and functions to ensure they promote equality and take account of the needs of disabled customers</p> | <p>Work with the Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise led working group to establish relevant disability management information sources</p> <p>Set up process for regular analysis of disability management information</p> | <p>To be completed by December 2009</p> | <p>Establish provision of relevant disability management information</p> <p>Responsibilities agreed for regular analysis of management information relating to groups policies</p> | <p>The work on publishing the equality schemes has shown that we do not have the necessary structure in place to measure the effects. Information had to be gathered on an ad-hoc basis</p> <p>We are establishing with Jobcentre Plus, Disability and Carers Service and The Pension Service what sources of information are available to enable us to do this</p> |

Gender Equality Action Plan

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. All staff are made aware of gender issues and the requirements of the gender duty under the Equality Act 2006 | <p>All staff to complete the gender toolkit</p> <p>All line managers to include an objective in personal development plans</p> <p>All staff to attend line manager's briefing and complete mandatory open learning module</p> | <p>Objective in personal development plans by end December 2006</p> <p>Completion of toolkit by April 2007</p> <p>Review progress by end December 2006</p> <p>Attend line manager's briefing by December 2006</p> <p>Complete open learning module by April 2007</p> | <p>All training actions completed and staff to be aware of gender issues and impact in their daily roles</p> | <p>All staff have attended a line manager's briefing and completed the mandatory module on legislation changes</p> <p>To date 100+ (20%) staff have completed the diversity toolkit for gender. Progress on this objective will be reviewed in December 2007 (see 2 below)</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| 2. Undertake a review and identify specific gender equality training needs for all staff | Diversity action group to review training needs and propose programme of suitable opportunities | October 2007 Review progress June 2007 | Future training needs established | A review was completed in June 2007. Of those that had completed the training a majority of 77% felt that the training met their needs. However 60% did not like the online learning package. We are investigating possible alternative training methods and progress on this objective will be reviewed in December 2007 |
| 3. Undertake a review of the current arrangements for part-time and home-working | Discuss with diversity action group and new court network group | October 2007 Review progress April 2007 | Establish network groups in other locations | We discussed this with our staff. It was agreed that a network of sub-groups was not the way forward. Instead, the issue will be a regular agenda item at our diversity action group meetings to provide a regular forum where concerns could be raised |
| 4. Involve and consult customers and gender organisations in reviewing our progress against the gender action plan | Formalise future consultation arrangements with all stakeholders. (Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise, the Disability and Carers Service, Jobcentre Plus and The Pension Service) | October 2007 Review progress April 2007 | Customers and gender organisations have been involved and consulted on our progress against action plans at a proportionate level | The Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise is setting up a co-ordination role to help ensure that involvement does not overload voluntary organisations. We will look for a proportionate level of involvement for our action plans as the work progresses, given that our policy areas cross cut across the wide range of services delivered by the agencies. Review December 2007 |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| 5. Identify and remove barriers preventing customers of either gender engaging effectively in the decision making and appeals process | <p>Discuss with the Department's Standards Committee the role it could play in identifying barriers</p> <p>Following discussion with the Standards Committee, draw up a list of barriers</p> | <p>By end October 2007</p> <p>Review progress April 2007</p> | <p>Identify solutions to enable customers of either gender to engage effectively in the decision making and appeals process</p> | <p>Delayed as the membership of the Standards Committee was refreshed last year. The new committee met for the first time in June 2007. It will be asked to consider its role at the earliest opportunity</p> <p>Review progress December 2007</p> |
| 6. Review existing policies to ensure they promote equality between men and women | <p>Conduct initial screening through impact assessments for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims and payments regulations • Overlapping benefits regulations | <p>To be completed by December 2009</p> | <p>Gender impact assessments completed</p> <p>Actions included in future action plans to address any negative impacts identified from full impact assessments</p> | <p>Our work to introduce the new disability and gender equality schemes showed that because our policy areas are cross cutting and affect all the benefits administered by the Department's agencies, there was no specific source of information we could use which would allow us to measure impacts, and we only had anecdotal information on how our policy areas affect different client groups</p> <p>We are therefore dependent on the Department's agencies to establish, via the equality schemes working group, the necessary data collection processes in order to conduct an initial screening exercise, and we have asked for our needs to be considered in that forum</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>6. Review existing policies to ensure they promote equality between men and women <i>(continued)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making and appeals regulations • Agents and appointees • Freedom of information and data protection <p>Conduct full impact assessment for any policy where a negative impact is identified</p> <p>Publish results</p> | <p>(See above)</p> | <p>(See above)</p> | <p>(See above)</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>7. Monitor the group's services and functions to ensure they promote equality and take account of the needs of men and women</p> | <p>Work with the Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise led working group to establish relevant gender management information source</p> <p>Set up process within for regular analysis of gender management information</p> | <p>To be completed by December 2009</p> | <p>Establish provision of relevant gender management information</p> <p>Responsibilities agreed for regular analysis of management information relating to our policies</p> | <p>The work on publishing the equality scheme has shown that we do not have the necessary structure in place to measure the effects. Information had to be gathered on an ad-hoc basis</p> <p>We are establishing with Jobcentre Plus, the Disability and Carers Service and The Pension Service what sources of information are available to enable us to conduct the initial screening</p> |

Race Equality Action Plan

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 1. All staff are made aware of the requirements of the race duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 | <p>All staff to complete the race toolkit</p> <p>Line managers to include an objective in personal development plans for all staff</p> <p>All staff to attend line manager's briefing and complete mandatory open learning module</p> | <p>Objective in personal development plans by end December 2006</p> <p>Completion of toolkit by April 2007</p> <p>Review progress by end December 2006</p> <p>Attend line manager's briefing by December 2006</p> <p>Complete open learning module by April 2007</p> | <p>All training actions completed and staff to be aware of race issues and impact in their daily roles</p> | <p>All staff have attended a line manager's briefing and completed the mandatory module on legislation changes</p> <p>To date 100+ staff (20%) have completed the diversity toolkit for race. Progress on this objective will be reviewed in December 2007 (see 2 below)</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| 2. Undertake a review and identify specific race equality training needs for all Law, Governance and Special Policy Group staff | Diversity action group to review training needs and propose programme of suitable opportunities | October 2007 Review progress June 2007 | Future training needs established | A review was completed in June 2007. Of those that had completed the training a majority of 77% felt that the training met their needs. However 60% did not like the online learning package. We are investigating possible alternative training methods and progress on this objective will be reviewed in December 2007 |
| 3. Involve and consult customers and race organisations in reviewing our progress against the race action plan | Formalise future consultation arrangements with all stakeholders. (Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise, the Disability and Carers Service, Jobcentre Plus, and The Pension Service) | October 2007 Review progress April 2007 | Customers and race organisations have been involved and consulted on our progress against action plans at a proportionate level | The Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise is setting up a co-ordination role to help ensure that involvement does not overload voluntary organisations. We will look for a proportionate level of involvement for our action plans as the work progresses, given that our policy areas cross cut across the wide range of services delivered by the agencies. Review December 2007 |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>4. Review existing policies to ensure they promote equality for ethnic minority groups</p> | <p>Conduct initial screening through impact assessments for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims and payments regulations • Overlapping benefits regulations • Decision-making and appeals regulations • Agents and appointees • Freedom of information and data protection <p>Conduct full impact assessment for any policy where a negative impact is identified</p> | <p>To be completed by December 2009</p> | <p>Race impact assessments completed</p> <p>Actions included in future action plans to address any negative impacts identified from full impact assessments</p> | <p>Our work to introduce the new disability and gender equality schemes showed that because our policy areas are cross cutting and affect all the benefits administered by the Department's agencies, there was no specific source of information we could use which would allow us to measure impacts, and we only had anecdotal information on how our policy areas affect different client groups</p> <p>We are therefore dependent on the Department's agencies to establish, via the equality schemes working group, the necessary data collection processes in order to conduct an initial screening exercise, and we have asked for our needs to be considered in that forum</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| <p>5. Monitor the group's services and functions to ensure they promote equality and take account of the needs of ethnic minority groups</p> | <p>Work with the Department's Diversity and Equality Centre of Expertise led working group to establish relevant ethnic minority management information sources</p> <p>Set up process for regular analysis of ethnic minority management information</p> | <p>To be completed by December 2009</p> | <p>Establish provision of relevant ethnic minority management information</p> <p>Responsibilities agreed for regular analysis of management information relating to groups policies</p> | <p>The work on publishing the equality schemes has shown that we do not have the necessary structure in place to measure the effects. Information had to be gathered on an ad-hoc basis</p> <p>We are establishing with Jobcentre Plus, the Disability and Carers Service and The Pension Service what sources of information are available to enable us to do this</p> |
| <p>6. Set up central point to collate impact assessments</p> | <p>Agree with our management board that divisional heads will supply copies of impact assessments to diversity champion</p> | <p>April 2007</p> | <p>Impact assessments collated in central point</p> | <p>Cleared. All divisional heads have been notified of the need to send any impact assessments to the diversity champion</p> |

| Objective | Action | Timescale | Outcome | Progress |
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| <p>7. Identify reasons for any imbalance of ethnic minority staff in higher grades</p> | <p>Obtain figures by grade</p> <p>Find out about any Government Legal Service initiatives to increase diversity amongst lawyers</p> | <p>April 2008</p> | <p>Address any imbalance of ethnic minority staff in higher grades where one exists</p> | <p>This action had arisen out of responses to last year's staff survey where the perception of some staff was that there were few ethnic minority staff in higher grades.</p> <p>Completion of staff ethnic minority information on Resource Management is voluntary, so figures are not complete. The number of senior civil servants in our group is too low to get a separate breakdown</p> <p>Latest figures obtained for January 2007 show that taking senior civil service and feeder grades together we are actually higher than the Departmental average (15.2% against 5.0% and 4% respectively) and above the economically active rate at Spring 2007 (9.1%) so the perception is not confirmed by the figures and we will communicate this to staff</p> <p>23 of our group's 27 senior civil service posts are held by lawyers. We have agreed with the Government Legal Service that they will keep us aware of any initiatives to increase diversity in recruitment of lawyers</p> <p>Review figures in April 2008</p> |