

The Pension Service

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Disability Equality Action Plan

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. We will comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by:</p>	<p>Monitoring our policies</p> <p>Using management information data to identify inequality and to improve service</p> <p>Reviewing the existing customer service measurement processes and addressing any gaps</p> <p>Agreeing a standard approach to the impact assessment process</p>	<p>The process to equality impact assess was reviewed in October 2006 and a review to analyse information held on disability will be carried out by December 2007</p>	<p>That sufficient information is available to ensure equality and accessibility, report on progress and identify areas for improvement</p> <p>That information is available to monitor compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and to assure us there is no inequality</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>The marketing strategy for pension credit is aimed at vulnerable customers including disabled customers. The Pension Service won the Joined-up Government Award at the Whitehall and Westminster World Civil Service Awards 2007 for our joint work with DWP's Work, Welfare and Equality Group to make it easier for Pension Credit customers to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. We have also been short-listed for the Guardian Public Service Awards 2007 in the 'Joined-up Government' category for tackling pensioner poverty</p> <p>The customer service standards are regularly reviewed with customers, customer representative groups and staff ensuring that all diverse groups are consulted.</p> <p>We have improved our customer service measurement processes. A new method was piloted to obtain direct feedback from customers via an automated survey. This will be rolled out to all pension centres from April 2008</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. We will comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Coaching staff to perform impact assessments and promoting awareness of the requirement and benefits in doing so</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Textphone access is improving – 83% successfully accessed the textphone on average in 2006/07 compared with 77% in 2005/06. Textphone standards have been published and improvement workshop was held in March 2007</p> <p>Mystery shopping now monitors textphone calls including the quality of service provided and interaction of staff with customers</p> <p>Disability monitoring will be included at phase 2 of the transformation programme in 2009</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>We apply all Departmental human resources policies consistently. Where new functions or ways of working are required, equality impact assessments are carried out to identify potential adverse impact and mitigation actions are put into place at the earliest stage</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. We will comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>The employment data of our staff, which feeds into the Departmental diversity targets, is regularly monitored and published internally. Reasonable adjustments are provided to help disabled staff perform their jobs. Over 88% of the reasonable adjustments requested by disabled staff since January 2007 have been provided</p> <p>Team leaders in pension centres apply existing guidance to ensure that disabled staff receive the required support when they move into the new contact centre job roles</p> <p>A new equality impact assessment approach has been used since December 2006. Impact assessment workshops and coaching have been delivered to key staff in policy and change roles, and more workshops are planned for 2007/08. Impact assessments carried out as part of the Disability Discrimination Act for the next stage of the pension transformation process were published in August 2007</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>2. We will establish internal and external robust consultation and involvement processes</p>	<p>Customers We will consult and involve through Departmental forums and other stakeholders Encouraging involvement with disabled customers in a more inclusive way by, for example; home visits by local service staff; regular telephone calls to disabled customers following contact with pension centres; and working jointly with other agencies</p>	<p>June 2007 – working with other Departmental agencies to establish a more joined-up approach Establish a process for disabled staff to influence change by June 2007</p>	<p>Joined up and improved consultation and involvement will lead to greater public confidence in our services and improved partnership working This will meet the needs of staff and customers whenever possible, resulting in improved staff and customer satisfaction</p>	<p>Customers Consultation process with key stakeholders is in place for review of customer service standards. Independent research undertaken by GfK Social Research including consultation with all diverse groups. Customer representative workshops held with key representative groups. Customer charter and customer complaints leaflet were revised and published in 2007. There is ongoing consultation with customer groups, e.g. Partnership Against Poverty Forum We have a bespoke visiting service for customers who need it. In 2006/07, local service staff made 956,000 face to face visits to customers in their homes or at convenient places close to their homes</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
2. We will establish internal and external robust consultation and involvement processes (<i>continued</i>)	Staff Involving diversity advisers and representative staff with disabilities to ensure that decisions and approaches are inclusive	(See above)	(See above)	Staff The diversity advisers action group is actively consulted and involved in developing and delivering diversity approaches and awareness throughout the organisation The transformation testing plans involve the disabled staff user group to test the new customer account manager systems using assistive technologies. The group is also involved in the quality assurance of new guidance to enable line managers to meet the needs of disabled staff who use assistive technologies
3. We will meet the Department's accessibility standards and ensure our services are accessible to all our customers	Ensuring the telephony service, including textphone, meet customers' needs by monitoring the service through mystery shopping, national customer survey and customer feedback information	Ongoing and will be reviewed in June 2007 – analysis of information and feedback Progress will be reported annually	To make access to our services as simple and easy as possible through a variety of communication channels providing an improved customer experience	Customers The feedback from mystery shopping has been used for continuous performance improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone responsiveness increased to 91% in 2006/07 from 82% in 2004/05 • Quality of interaction has increased to 94% in 2006/07 from 86% in 2004/05

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>3. We will meet the Department's accessibility standards and ensure our services are accessible to all our customers (<i>continued</i>)</p>	<p>Ensuring the most effective use of local service by continuing to encourage the sharing of good practices and to promote a holistic approach to customer service through joint teams (working in partnership with local authorities and other partners)</p> <p>Consulting on, setting and regularly reviewing service standards</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy of information has increased to 78% in 2006/07 from 56% in 2004/05 • Textphone access is improving – 83% successfully accessed the textphone in 2006/07 compared with 77% in 2005/06 <p>National customer survey shows customers with a disability/long-term illness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47% have no problem contacting us • 12% have problems using the telephone <p>We have a bespoke visiting service for customers who need it. In 2006/07, local service staff made 956,000 face to face visits to customers in their homes or at convenient places close to their homes</p> <p>There is a comprehensive consultation strategy in place for reviewing the standards with customers, customer representative groups and staff. The service standards were reviewed in 2007 and the customer service charter published June 2007</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>4. We will meet the Department's accessibility standards and improve communications by:</p>	<p>Monitoring the standard of letters sent to customers</p> <p>Monitoring the provision of alternative formats</p> <p>Improving access to text phones and working with the Royal National Institute For The Deaf to ensure that all pension centres reach the Louder than Words standard (quality service standards that we aim to provide deaf and hard-of-hearing customers and employees)</p>	<p>Progress review in March 2007 and further review in December 2007</p> <p>Customer feedback and involvement</p> <p>All pension centres to be accredited with the Louder than Words standard by March 2007</p>	<p>Improved accessibility for all our customers, thus promoting an inclusive customer experience</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>A 100% check of all responses to Ministerial correspondence to the Chief Executive is undertaken. In 2006, 93% of delegated Ministerial correspondence from customers was cleared in 20 days</p> <p>Letters to customers are monitored for quality, accuracy and response times. 67% of checks passed the quality standard, 89% passed the accuracy standard and 82% met the response target in transformation pension centres in 2006/07</p> <p>Mystery shopping monitors the provision of leaflets in alternative formats, large print, Braille and audio-cassette. Improvements are being addressed through a leaflet review and the ordering process has been simplified to make it easier for staff to access leaflets. Disability monitoring will be included at phase 2 of the transformation programme in 2009</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>4. We will meet the Department's accessibility standards and improve communications by: (<i>continued</i>)</p>	<p>Improving our service to disabled customers by improving our IT systems to allow us to collect data on disability and record it so that we only gather the information once</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Textphone access is improving – 83% successfully accessed the textphone in 2006/07 compared with 77% in 2005/06. We have provided a best practice guide on the use of textphones, which is being used as the Departmental corporate textphone standard. Textphone service has been centralised for new state pension and pension credit claims and extended to change of circumstances from September 2007</p> <p>12 of the 13 transformation pension centres have achieved the Royal National Institute for the Deaf Louder than Words accreditation with the one remaining site to agree a date for assessment by the end of 2007</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Results from the interim staff survey in April 2007 show that 78% of our staff think that we respect individual differences, an improvement from 70% in April 2006. The results and how the senior management team plans to respond were published internally</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
4. We will meet the Department's accessibility standards and improve communications by: <i>(continued)</i>	(See above)	(See above)	(See above)	<p>We ensure that all content on the internal website is easy for everyone to use by applying accessibility guidelines. Work is currently going on to make the internal website more accessible to all</p> <p>Alternative formats of internal communication materials are provided on demand. All learning and development online products are designed to meet the Department's accessibility standards</p> <p>A short film on disability is available to highlight customer good news and increase awareness of the needs of customers. This will be shown to staff and to partners such as Age Concern</p>
5. We will improve communications and improve the customer experience by:	Coaching staff to identify customer communications needs and to help customers access alternative formats and other support	The awareness/training for staff will continue and specific disability training will be carried out by December 2006 with an ongoing programme	An inclusive organisation with a workforce confident in dealing with disability issues	<p>Customers</p> <p>Identifying customer communication needs is now automatic for transformation pension centres – customers are asked if they have any additional communication needs and this is recorded for future transactions</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>5. We will improve communications and improve the customer experience by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Providing training for staff about their legal duties under the Disability Discrimination Act and what it means to them as an employee</p> <p>Supporting staff by raising awareness of disability, including helping decision makers to better understand conditions that affect our customers, such as learning disabilities and mental illness</p> <p>Offering a choice of channels of information for staff</p>	<p>The effectiveness will be reviewed in June 2007 through customer and staff involvement</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Learning and development including scripts have been provided to help staff through the new process. Additional training and guidance has been provided to ensure staff ask all customers for communication needs and follow correct procedures to access alternative formats</p> <p>The Pensions Transformation Programme's Customer Workstream won the Diversity Award at the Whitehall and Westminster Civil Service 2007 Awards for identifying communication needs of disabled customers and introducing ethnicity monitoring of all customers for improving services to customers</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>'All Inclusive' and 'Diversity Toolkit' diversity and equality awareness training was delivered to all staff. The modules, including legal duties, responsibilities and practical examples of what they mean, are also available online. The experiences of disabled staff were featured in internal magazines</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>5. We will improve communications and improve the customer experience by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Guidance was issued to human resource business partners ahead of an assessment and placement exercise, to ensure that disabled staff were selected on merit and reasonable adjustments were provided on placement into jobs</p> <p>In October 2007 new guidance on assistive technology was made available for line managers to raise awareness of the impact a disability might have on a person's ability to carry out a job role, potential IT solutions, reasonable adjustments and illustrative examples of amended job roles for certain disabilities</p> <p>12 of the 13 transformation pension centres have achieved the Royal National Institute for the Deaf's Louder Than Words accreditation. During the accreditation process, staff with hearing impairments were interviewed on a one to one basis to ensure all necessary support measures are in place. Since then, various improvements have been made, including amplified headsets and tannoy messages via e-mail. This achievement was featured in August 2007 edition of our internal magazine</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>5. We will improve communications and improve the customer experience by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Pension centre staff have been trained and given guidance for asking customers about additional communication needs. The customer account manager system is also set up to assist staff to ask the customer relevant questions</p> <p>Learning and development products are available to support staff and external partners such as local Government workers, and raise awareness of the needs of different customer groups</p>
<p>6. We will ensure that our staff are treated fairly by:</p>	<p>Ensuring that we recruit from the widest pool of applicants so that our workforce better reflects the community it serves, for example through wider advertising, working with Jobcentre Plus and other agencies</p>	<p>Review in April 2007 – analysis of information and how areas of inequality are being addressed and will be reported annually</p>	<p>That all policies and functions are compliant with legislation and that we are an inclusive employer of choice</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>Staff survey results in April 2007 show that 78% of staff think that we respect individual differences, an improvement from 70% in April 2006. The results and senior management team response were published internally. The plans include five staff priorities to support transformation</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>6. We will ensure that our staff are treated fairly by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Supporting the review of the recruitment process to ensure it is fully accessible</p> <p>Using findings from the staff survey to identify strengths and areas for improvement</p> <p>Considering analysis of redeployment and staff reductions for adverse impact</p> <p>Considering analysis of grievances and complaints of harassment</p>	(See above)	(See above)	<p>Seaham pension centre recently piloted a new recruitment process including the use of on-line selection. Some accessibility issues for disabled and older applicants have been identified and are being addressed by specifically-designed human resource actions for 'Improving the Effectiveness of Recruitment'. This is one of five staff priorities to support the transformation programme</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>7. We will increase and improve the awareness of staff and line managers about the support that is available to make reasonable adjustments when required by:</p>	<p>Simplifying guidance and raising awareness of reasonable adjustments, for example: IT, furniture, equipment, Key Work Objectives; working conditions, and any other reasonable adjustment</p> <p>Providing health and safety training to raise awareness of managers' and individuals' roles and responsibilities</p>	<p>All staff to be health and safety aware by December 2006 (e-learning training)</p> <p>Improvements following Departmental pilots on reasonable adjustment processes will be implemented during 2007 and reviewed in December 2007</p>	<p>To create an environment where all staff can and are encouraged to contribute to the maximum of their potential, and in which real and perceived barriers have been removed</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>We have issued guidance and continue to raise awareness of staff and managers' roles to ensure that reasonable adjustments are provided promptly to those who need them. Over 88% of the reasonable adjustments requested since January 2007 have been provided. Compliance on various health and safety training packages has improved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 98% on display screen equipment training, reasonable adjustment and personal health and safety training • 96% on managers training <p>In October 2007 new guidance on assistive technology was made available for line managers to raise awareness of the impact a disability might have on a person's ability to carry out a job role, potential IT solutions, reasonable adjustments and illustrative examples of amended job roles for certain disabilities</p> <p>The successes of one of our disabled members of staff were highlighted in the August 2007 edition of our internal magazine</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>8. We will ensure that staff with special requirements are considered during the transformation programme by:</p>	<p>Ensuring that disabled staff are not discriminated against</p> <p>Carrying out impact assessments of each stage of the transformation programme</p> <p>Involving disabled staff in the changes that are being introduced</p> <p>Obtaining specialist advice on current and future job roles and considering flexibility within the modernisation programme</p> <p>Conducting workplace risk assessments in line with the Department's policy on new job roles</p>	<p>December 2006 – review AbilityNet consultation report</p> <p>Ongoing reviews during transformation of The Pension Service (July 2007, January 2008)</p>	<p>To create an environment where all staff are supported to contribute to the maximum of their potential; staff are not adversely impacted by improved IT and the transformation of the business</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>In the recent assessment and placement exercise, staff with disabilities were selected on merit and provided with reasonable adjustments on placement into jobs</p> <p>Transformation pension centres have the workplace risk assessment process built into their implementation plans</p> <p>Impact assessments were carried out and a strategic plan is being implemented to put in place mitigation actions. These will ensure that job role flexibilities and reasonable adjustments are available to enable disabled staff</p> <p>The disabled staff user group is involved in testing wave 2a customer account management technology, job roles and learning and development during the transformation</p> <p>In October 2007 new guidance on assistive technology was made available for line managers to raise awareness of the impact a disability might have on a person's ability to carry out a job role, potential IT solutions, reasonable adjustments and illustrative examples of amended job roles for certain disabilities</p>

Gender Equality Action Plan

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. We will comply with legislative requirements by:</p>	<p>Monitoring our policies and using management information to identify inequality and to improve service</p> <p>Coaching staff to perform impact assessments and promoting awareness</p>	<p>The process to equality impact assess was reviewed in October 2006 and a review to analyse information held in gender will be carried out by December 2007</p>	<p>That information is available to ensure equality and accessibility, report on progress and identify areas for improvement</p> <p>That information is available to monitor compliance with legislation and to assure that there is no inequality</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>All groups including gender groups are consulted on the review of service standards. No specific gender issues were raised during consultation on service standards. We are working with the wider Department to establish external involvement with our customers</p> <p>The pension credit campaign is aimed at all diverse groups including men and women, to ensure maximum take-up of benefit. Take-up is aimed at women as social demographics for the UK confirm poverty is experienced more within this group</p> <p>The Pension Service won the Joined-up Government Award at the Whitehall and Westminster World Civil Service Awards 2007 for our joint work with DWP's Work, Welfare and Equality Group to make it easier for Pension Credit customers to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. We have also been short-listed for the Guardian Public Service Awards 2007 in the Joined-up Government category for tackling pensioner poverty</p> <p>Impact assessment carried out for transformation wave 2a changes were published in August 2007</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. We will comply with legislative requirements by: (<i>continued</i>)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>We apply all Departmental corporate human resource policies consistently. Where new functions or ways of working are required, equality impact assessments are carried out to identify potential adverse impact and mitigating actions put into place at the earliest stage</p> <p>The employment data of our staff, which feeds into the Departmental diversity targets, is regularly monitored and published internally</p> <p>An article entitled 'Inspiring Women', which highlighted the challenges and opportunities of three leading female managers, was published in our internal magazine to raise awareness of the Gender Equality Duty in April 2007</p> <p>A new equality impact assessment approach has been used since December 2006. Impact assessment workshops and coaching have been delivered to key staff in policy and change roles, and more workshops are planned for 2007/08</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>2. We will improve services for future pensioners by:</p>	<p>Liaising with the future pensions client directorate about gender information for the future pensioner population</p> <p>Providing accurate information for future pensioners to help them make the right decisions about saving for their retirement by: issuing 15.4 million individuals with pension forecasts by 2007/08; and undertaking 60,000 successful pension traces a year by March 2008 (allows members of occupational pension schemes to trace any schemes with which they have lost touch)</p>	<p>Reviewed and reported annually in March through the business plan</p>	<p>Greater public confidence in our services and improved partnership working resulting in improved customer satisfaction</p> <p>Future planning will recognise and take account of the demographic gender implications</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>Between April 2005 and March 2007, 18.8 million individuals were issued with a pension forecast. The target of 15.4 million individuals was achieved in July 2006 some 20 months early. In addition, over 40,000 successful pension traces took place in 2006/07</p> <p>Customers and Staff</p> <p>The Pensions Act 2007 received Royal Assent in July 2007. It introduces pensions reform which will affect individuals who reach pension age on or after 6 April 2010</p> <p>The pensions reform delivery programme has published information internally and externally to help staff and customers understand how changes introduced by the pensions reform will affect them. An internal bulletin was issued to customer-facing staff on how to handle customer enquiries. Further work is planned to address staff and customer requirements. Equality impact assessments and other actions to implement the Act are planned for the future to address staff and customer requirements</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>3. We will make our services accessible to all our customers</p>	<p>Ensuring the telephony service meets the gender differences of customers' needs by monitoring the service through mystery shopping, national customer survey and customer feedback information</p> <p>Ensuring we meet the needs of customers who cannot access the service by telephone</p>	<p>Information and feedback from customers will be considered on an ongoing basis and recommendations made to address inequality</p> <p>Review June 2007</p> <p>Progress will be reported annually</p>	<p>A greater understanding take-up and use of services by gender enabling us to ensure there is no discrimination</p> <p>A holistic approach to customer service, leading to an improved customer experience and a more accessible organisation</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>Mystery shopping currently monitors telephony service, we are now getting results by gender and the reports will be published shortly. National customer survey shows 63% of current customers were women (this reflects the actual profile of pensioners in Great Britain)</p> <p>The customer's gender had no significant effect on the likelihood of being dissatisfied with contacting us by telephone</p> <p>A secure and sensitive process has been established for customers to notify us of any changes in gender as required under the Gender Recognition Act</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
3. We will make our services accessible to all our customers (<i>continued</i>)	<p>Making effective use of local service and joint teams (working in partnership with local authorities and other partners)</p> <p>Analysing gender differences and identifying priority areas for improvement in consultation and involvement with our staff, customers and partners</p>	(See above)	(See above)	(See above)
4. We will ensure that our staff are treated fairly by:	<p>Supporting the review of the recruitment process to ensure it is fair and equal</p> <p>Monitoring the staff position on gender in terms of grade and working patterns</p>	Review in April 2007 – analysis of information and how areas of inequality are being addressed will be included in the annual progress report	That all policies and functions are compliant with legislation and that we are an inclusive employer of choice	<p>Staff</p> <p>We apply all Departmental corporate human resources policies consistently. Where new functions or ways of working are required, equality impact assessments are carried out to identify potential adverse impact and mitigation actions are put into place at the earliest stage</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>4. We will ensure that our staff are treated fairly by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Using findings from staff survey and monitoring to identify strengths and areas for improvement</p> <p>Considering analysis of redeployment and staff reductions for adverse impact</p> <p>Considering analysis of grievances</p> <p>Promoting awareness of our family friendly policies</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>'All Inclusive' and the Departmental diversity and equality awareness training were delivered to all staff. The modules, including legal duties, responsibilities and practical examples of what they mean, are also available online</p> <p>Results from the staff survey 2007 show that 78% of our staff think that we respect individual differences such as working styles</p> <p>We actively promote time off policies such as adoption and study leave to enable employees to balance work and life responsibilities. Over 29% of our female staff work part-time with most of them in the junior to middle management grades</p> <p>Since we joined the Childcare Vouchers (Salary Sacrifice) Scheme in February 2007, there have been monthly increases in the number of staff that benefit from the tax and National Insurance relief on the cost of registered childcare through the scheme. We continue to promote the scheme and encourage take-up through internal bulletins and articles on personal experience of the scheme users. In addition, childcare facilities such as nurseries are available in some locations</p>

Race Equality Action Plan

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. To ensure that the pensions transformation programme includes processes to enable diversity monitoring of our policies and functions by:</p>	<p>Improving IT to enable ethnicity data to be collected</p> <p>Monitoring our policies by using information from mystery shopping, customer research and feedback</p>	<p>Ethnicity monitoring (new claims) commenced in October 2006; to be reviewed in October 2007</p>	<p>That sufficient data is available to ensure equality, report on progress and identify areas for improvement</p> <p>That sufficient data is available to monitor compliance with Race Relations Amendment Act and to assure that there is no inequality</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>Mystery shopping monitors access to interpreters and 63% of customers whose first language is not English accessed an interpreter in 2006/07 compared with 59% in 2005/06. Activities undertaken during 2006/07 showed improvements in the final 6 months with 70% successfully accessing an interpreter, in the final two quarters</p> <p>Mystery shopping improved from April 2007 to ensure better comparisons with the main telephony calls and those from customers whose first language is not English</p> <p>National customer survey shows 8% of current pensioners were from ethnic groups. Customers who did not speak English as first language rated the service lower than other customers on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being responsive to customers needs (70% compared to 79%) and • having staff you find easy to talk to (77% compared to 88 %)

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>1. To ensure that the pensions transformation programme includes processes to enable diversity monitoring of our policies and functions by: (<i>continued</i>)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Training and awareness initiatives have been delivered to frontline staff to improve access to interpreters</p> <p>From wave 2a of the transformation programme, customers who report a change of circumstances will be asked their ethnicity. This compares favourably to the current process of only asking for customers' ethnicity on their initial claim</p> <p>The Pension Service won two awards at the Whitehall and Westminster World Civil Service 2007 Awards. We won the Diversity Award for identifying communication needs of disabled customers and introducing ethnicity monitoring of all customers for improving services to customers. We also won the Joined-up Government Award for our joint work with DWP's Work, Welfare and Equality Group to make it easier for Pension Credit customers to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit'.</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>The employment data of our staff, which feeds into the Departmental diversity targets, is regularly monitored and published internally</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>2. To ensure that our policies and functions have no adverse impact on diversity by:</p>	<p>Training relevant staff to perform impact assessments</p> <p>Agreeing a standard approach to the impact assessment process</p> <p>Publishing the results of consultation and monitoring</p> <p>Reporting progress annually</p>	<p>Standard process introduced in October 2005 and deployment reviewed in October 2006</p>	<p>Greater public confidence in our services</p> <p>Products and decisions are transparent and accessible to the communities we serve and to our own people</p> <p>Established equality impact assessment process (October 2005).</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>Training and awareness initiatives have been delivered to frontline staff to improve access to interpreters</p> <p>All Inclusive' and the Departmental diversity and equality awareness training were delivered to all staff. The modules, including legal duties, responsibilities and practical examples of what they mean, are also available online</p> <p>A new equality impact assessment approach has been used since December 2006. Impact assessment workshops and coaching have been delivered to key staff in policy and change roles, and more workshops are planned for 2007/08</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>3. To make our products available to our partners and have consultation arrangements in place by:</p>	<p>Consulting with Partnership Against Poverty, Ethnic Minority Forum and other stakeholders to share our products and facilitate inclusion of partners' products, seeking feedback, validation and evaluation</p> <p>Progress 'Race to improve' through our partnership arrangements and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of products externally</p>	<p>Products available from May 2006; to be reviewed in May 2007 (products are being shared at forums and positive feedback has been received about availability in various languages)</p>	<p>Greater public confidence in our services and improved partnership working resulting in improved staff and customer satisfaction</p> <p>Future pensioners will have a raised awareness of preparing for their retirement</p> <p>Customers and partners to be included in consultation of future policies and products</p> <p>Policies and products that are owned by our staff, partners and customers</p>	<p>Customers</p> <p>There is a greater move towards involving individual customers in testing products including the leaflet review and standard notifications</p> <p>The interpreting service was presented at the Scottish Forum in November 2006</p> <p>The transformation programme was short-listed (for improving services to diverse customers) in the leadership category for 'Race for Opportunity' Chairman's Awards 2007</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>3. To make our products available to our partners and have consultation arrangements in place by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>'Race to improve' is a project carried out during 2004 to improve the service we provide to our ethnic minority customers and to support staff in doing so</p> <p>It included a library of audio and visual products in several languages and support/guidance for staff</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>Customers and partners feel valued and listened to</p>	<p>(See above)</p>
<p>4. To make our services accessible to all our customers by:</p>	<p>Monitoring the effectiveness of our telephony and local service by analysing information from mystery shopping, national customer survey, customer feedback data and research findings</p>	<p>Reviewed monthly and progress reported annually</p>	<p>Improved rights and opportunities for all our customers in a fair and inclusive society</p>	<p>Customer</p> <p>We have worked with the interpreting contractor 'thebigword' to deliver a training programme to frontline staff. Briefing was produced for team leaders on best practice for using interpreters</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
4. To make our services accessible to all our customers by: <i>(continued)</i>	Identifying priority areas for improvement in consultation with our staff, customers and partners	(See above)	To make access to our services as simple and easy as possible through a variety of communication channels	<p>The profile of mystery shopping programme has been raised significantly and pension centre managers are encouraged to use the feedback widely to improve services</p> <p>Mystery shopping monitors the effectiveness of telephony, including calls from customers whose first language is not English. 63% of customers whose first language is not English accessed an interpreter in 2006/07 compared with 59% in 2005/06</p> <p>Mystery shopping methodology improved from April 2007 to ensure better comparisons with the main telephony calls and those from customers whose first language is not English</p> <p>The transformation programme continues to review effectiveness of our service and how we can reduce unnecessary contacts</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>5. To communicate effectively with our customers and staff by:</p>	<p>Customers Raising awareness of how to contact us, our standards and performance by various methods, for example at Departmental forums and marketing in local ethnic press</p>	<p>Customer Charter consultation is an annual review and involvement is sought on an ongoing basis Review staff language skills – December 2006</p>	<p>Break down barriers for vulnerable groups resulting in a higher level of staff and customer satisfaction</p>	<p>Customers We advertise in the yellow pages and the telephone directory. The customer charter is available in hard print and on the external website. We publish our performance our and the Departmental annual reports, which are available in hard copy or on the external website. We are represented at the annual Departmental forum We publish the results from our national customer survey on the external website and results from our social research programme We developed an inclusive campaign with initiatives specifically aimed at ethnic minority elders, their friends and family through English and translated advertisements in national and ethnic minority press, TV and radio stations, direct mail packs and local service activities within ethnic communities. We also attend national Asian community gala events</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>5. To communicate effectively with our customers and staff by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>Staff Promoting the use of staff language skills and increasing knowledge and awareness through various channels such as line managers' briefings and staff newsletters</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>The marketing strategy for pension credit campaign is aimed at all diverse groups to ensure maximum take-up of benefit. The Pension Service has been short-listed for the Guardian Public Service Awards 2007 in the 'Joined-up Government' category for tackling pensioner poverty</p> <p>The transformation programme continues to review effectiveness of our service and how to reduce unnecessary contacts</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Through partnership working with 'thebigword', our interpreting contractor, training and awareness initiatives have been delivered to frontline staff to improve access to interpreters. 'thebigword' will be featured in a future edition of our internal magazine</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>6. To ensure that all our staff are treated fairly and in line with existing and developing human resource policies by:</p>	<p>Analysing ethnicity data held on IT systems, staff survey and other sources</p>	<p>Ongoing and reported annually Review June 2007</p>	<p>That all policies and functions are adhered to</p>	<p>Staff We apply all Departmental corporate human resources policies consistently. Where new functions or ways of working are required, equality impact assessments are carried out to identify potential adverse impact and mitigation actions are put into place at the earliest stage</p> <p>The employment data of our staff, which feeds into the Departmental diversity targets, is regularly monitored and published internally</p> <p>Results from the staff survey 2007 show that 78% of our staff think that we respect individual differences, including backgrounds</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>7. To ensure that all aspects of diversity are embedded in the organisation by:</p>	<p>Utilising the commitment of diversity champions</p> <p>Action group of staff representatives from all areas</p> <p>Making effective use of Departmental staff network groups and our diversity advisers</p> <p>Publishing articles in staff magazines/ internal websites</p>	<p>Review June 2007</p>	<p>An organisation that enables its people to give their best to deliver the exemplary service all our customers deserve</p> <p>All staff to have received diversity awareness through modules of the diversity toolkit</p> <p>To be ready and prepared to welcome equality legislation</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>We have proactively involved our diversity advisers action group and the Departmental staff network groups in communicating good practices and progressing diversity matters though national and local business plans. Customer service is a standing agenda item at the diversity advisers action group</p> <p>Our human resources business partners are involved in identifying policy areas for improvements to take forward Departmentally</p> <p>'All Inclusive' and the Departmental diversity and equality awareness training were delivered to all staff. The modules, including legal duties, responsibilities and practical examples of what they mean, are also available online</p> <p>The internal website, bulletins and internal magazine are regularly used for communicating diversity and equality news; a recent example highlighted interpreting issues</p>

Objective	Action	Timescales	Outcome	Progress
<p>7. To ensure that all aspects of diversity are embedded in the organisation by: <i>(continued)</i></p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>(See above)</p>	<p>As Departmental race champion, our Chief Executive sponsored the Newcastle part of the Departmental diversity event 2007. The aim was to promote and share good practices for embedding diversity and equality into business activities. We won the Permanent Secretary's special award for diversity in recognition of the transformation programme to improve service to diverse customers through the customer information system</p>