



Our Vision
Department for Work and Pensions
Disability and Gender Equality Schemes
and Race Equality Scheme Progress Report

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

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Department for Work and Pensions – Disability and Gender Equality Schemes and Race Equality Scheme Progress Report

On 1 December 2006, the Department for Work and Pensions published its first disability and gender equality schemes with an annual progress report on our race equality scheme. To embrace all aspects of diversity and equality, we include our commitments to age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

Committed to equality

The Department for Work and Pensions aims to deliver the Government's welfare reform agenda. We want to promote opportunity and independence for all.

As the Government's leading department for disability issues, we have delivered, under the Disability Discrimination Act, the biggest extension of disability civil rights the country has ever seen. We are also taking forward the recommendations in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report 'Improving Life Chances of Disabled People'.

Our approach to equality schemes

We have embraced the need for disability and gender equality schemes as a new way of identifying how we deliver the policies and services our customers need.

In future, reviews of our equality schemes and the yearly progress reports will be integrated into our mainstream business planning, so that equality is considered as part of the Department's day-to-day business.

The Department's agencies that provide services directly to the public are:

- Jobcentre Plus;

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

They have all published their own schemes in addition to an overarching scheme for the Department. Our relevant non-departmental public bodies, such as the Health and Safety Executive, are also publishing schemes.

Meeting the needs of disabled people

We are committed to meeting the needs of all disabled people – both customers and staff – and aim to ensure that we do not discriminate.

Involving our customers

We have taken seriously our new duties to involve disabled customers and their representative groups, and to seek the views of both men and women, in preparing our schemes.

- We held a number of events for customers and local representative groups to gather information about their views on our businesses.
- Staff also asked customers who contacted us for their views.
- We ran workshops involving large numbers of disabled customers and their representatives.
- We met leading disability charities to find out their views.

Our customers' views, particularly those of disabled customers, have been used to draw up action plans and set departmental priorities. These actions will enable us to make visible improvements over the next three years. We are very grateful for the feedback which has helped to shape our action plans, and we will continue to involve our customers.

What our customers told us

- We need to consider the needs of individual customers and offer them a range of options for accessing our services. We need simpler letters and instructions and we need to make better use of telephones and typetalk.
- We need more staff training in general disability awareness and for specific conditions.
- We need to join up our services to avoid customers having to give the same information to several different parts of the Department.
- We need to spread the excellent practice found at the local level across the Department.
- There are specific areas of physical accessibility that we need to address.

Where we want to be

We have listened to what our customers and their representatives have told us and we have tried to reflect their priorities in our action plans. But we know there is a lot more to do and we are committed, over time, to transforming our services.

Building a diverse workforce

To deliver policies and services that meet the needs of today's and tomorrow's society, we believe that our workforce needs to reflect that society. In line with all government departments, we have a '10-Point Plan' that will help us to achieve that, particularly at senior levels. The plan includes diversity targets for the Senior Civil Service to be met by March 2008, and the Department also has a range of diversity targets for under-represented groups immediately below the Senior Civil Service.

Involving our staff

Our staff can contribute to our priorities in several ways. For example, we used our intranet (internal website) to ask them for feedback on those issues that were important to them. We also use our annual staff survey to identify areas of concern. Staff can also feed their views through one of our six national staff networks. Our trade unions provide valuable feedback on issues that staff have raised with them and have been supportive in our desire to raise awareness of diversity and equality issues across the Department.

What our staff told us

Our staff have told us that they want us to:

- ensure that there is comprehensive, relevant and up-to-date diversity and equality training, particularly on providing services for disabled people, and that the information on our intranet is kept up to date and easy to access; and
- implement an improved reasonable adjustments process so they can get suitable reasonable adjustments quickly.

Supporting our staff to deliver to our customers

We have developed a mandatory training package on the new disability and gender equality duties that will be delivered to all staff by the end of March 2007. We have reviewed the diversity and equality content on our intranet and have made some changes. We will make significant improvements to the quality and structure of the information early in 2007.

Impact assessments

Our businesses and corporate centre directorates have responsibility for carrying out assessments to consider if proposals for changes to, or new, functions, policies and services impact on equality, particularly in relation to race, disability and gender. The requirement to carry out impact assessments has been built into internal policy making and change management processes. Impact assessments are published internally and externally.

Our approach to procurement

We are one of the largest purchasers of goods and services in Government and spend around £4.28 billion a year. We want to make best use of procurement as a lever to deliver equality objectives – to remove discrimination and promote equality. We want to lead by example.

Equal pay review

We undertake regular equal pay audits to review our pay policies and their application. We are committed to identifying and addressing any policies or systems that might directly or indirectly result in inequality in pay, including its impact on men and women.

Monitoring and evaluation

During 2006, we have developed a new diversity and equality monitoring and evaluation strategy to ensure a consistent approach across our businesses. This will ensure we can make comparisons both within and outside the Department.

We also monitor, analyse and evaluate a range of information on our staff, meeting the specific requirements of the relevant legislation. This helps us to ensure that our staff from under-represented groups enjoy equal outcomes and are able to fulfil their potential.

Progress reporting and reviewing

We will assess and provide an update on outcomes and progress against our action plans on a yearly basis. We will include the outcomes of our monitoring and evaluation and of impact assessments we have carried out on our policies and services.

Conclusion

We are proud of the progress that we are making on all aspects of diversity. We are pleased to be able to add our first disability equality and gender equality schemes to our race equality scheme, taking further steps towards achieving equality of outcomes for all. If you would like a copy of any of our equality schemes which set out, in detail, the work that the Department has planned for the next three years and the progress we have made so far, please refer to the back page of this document.

Further copies of this publication in either English or Welsh and in other formats, including Braille, audio and Easy Read, can be obtained by:

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