

Annex 8

DWP other aspects of diversity

This annex explains what we are doing in respect of other aspects of diversity:

- age;
- sexual orientation; and
- religion or belief.

Some of the things we have done during 2006/07 or have planned for the future have been mentioned earlier in this document and we have not repeated them here.

Age

Our customers

Age positive

The Be ready campaign, part of the ongoing Age Positive initiative, was aimed at raising employers' awareness of age discrimination legislation. It ran between May 2005 and April 2006 and reached more than 1.4 million employers. Additionally Be ready provided free in-depth help and information materials were provided to a further 140,000 employers.

Our Age Positive campaign continues to encourage employers, particularly small and medium employers, to:

- change ageist culture by removing discriminatory practices and countering stereotypical views; and
- provide opportunity and choice for their older workers.

The website can be accessed at www.agepositive.gov.uk.

In September 2007, we launched a series of booklets to help businesses get to grips with age discrimination. The series covers 11 subjects such as recruitment, training and flexible retirement and each guide includes frequently asked questions, practical tips and case studies. We began a pilot in autumn 2007 aimed at finding out what face-to-face guidance people 50 and over need so they can consider future options on employment and retirement.



Age: rights of older workers and enabling older people to contribute to society

We have checked our policies and services that will be affected by age legislation. We are responsible for developing strategies to stimulate increases in the employment rate for people aged over 50 and increase the opportunities for people in this age group to work towards a more financially secure retirement. We have checked our policies and practices to ensure that they offer equal treatment to people of all ages, except where there is evidence to support continued targeting at certain age groups, for example New Deal for Young People and New Deal 50 plus.

An example of our progress towards age diverse practices is that we allow voluntary access to our programmes and provision by making Pension Credit a qualifying benefit for many of them.

The 2006 Welfare Reform Green Paper proposed:

- joint claims – the rollout of a mandatory regime to couples aged 50-59 from early 2008;
- rollout of mandatory New Deal 25 plus – an intensive activity period to 50 to 59 year old Jobseeker's Allowance customers went live in June 2007;

- Statutory Sick Pay – the upper and lower age limits have been removed;
- we will treat people aged 60 to 64 as labour market participants as the State Pension age for women and Pension Credit age for men and women is phased up from 60 to 65 between 2010 and 2020.

Opportunity age – meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21 century

The Government published its ageing strategy document “*Opportunity Age – Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century*” in March 2005. We lead across Government on this strategy, and Peter Hain, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, is the Government’s older people’s champion. We support him in driving this agenda forward. Good progress is being made. For example:

- LinkAge Plus is testing new and innovative methods of providing information and access to services to over 50s. It aims to join up services to existing clients and increase take up through outreach work with isolated individuals. The programme has £10 million available for 2006-07 and 2007-08. Eight LinkAge Plus pilots have been developed to expand the principles of joined-up working by providing access to a wide range of services for older people, beyond the traditional benefits and care agendas. Each pilot focuses on local needs, and how best to integrate services within those locations. Funding ends in October 2008 and we are developing an evaluation process and aim to produce a report by March 2009.
- We have supported the Department of Health in piloting Individual Budgets for disabled people and older people. These put users of care and support services at the centre of the process so that they can decide what services best suit them. There are currently six funding streams included in the initial two-year pilot, with the intention of expanding the pilot to include education and transport. The pilots are being carried out in 13 local authorities in England, nine of which are planning to include services aimed at older people. The pilots will also generate information on the role of advocacy.
- The Partnerships for Older People Project is using pilots to test and evaluate innovative approaches that sustain prevention work in order to improve outcomes for older people. £60m has been ring-fenced for 2006-08 to enable Local Authority-led partnerships to establish innovative pilot projects with and for older people. The Partnerships for Older People Project is helping to fund innovative approaches which will:
 - provide more low-level support and care in the community;
 - improve the health, well-being and independence of older people, preventing or delaying the need for higher intensity and more costly care;

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- reduce avoidable, emergency admissions and/or bed days for older people; and
- support more people at home or in supported housing.

Taking the first steps into work

Jobcentre Plus has issued guidance on helping youngsters make the bridge from school or college into work. It covers:

- get the basics right – the covering letter, the cv and the interview;
- do your research – find out more about the organisation;
- practice makes perfect – practice interview questions;
- dress for success – dress appropriately for the position; and
- last minute tips – arrive early, smile as you enter the room and turn your mobile off.

Other examples

We write and co-ordinate the content for the over 50s section of Directgov which provides a range of public service information and services on-line. A satisfaction survey during 2007 indicated that 74 percent of users aged over 50 rated the section as excellent or good which is well ahead of Directgov's overall satisfaction rating of 59 percent. Other organisations have also asked to use the content on their websites.

The Disability and Carers Service is:

- reviewing the attendance allowance claim form – improvements will include for example, an additional question about a customer's accessibility needs and a tear-off so customers can keep important information;
- running a pilot where all visit requests are sent to the Pension Service for their staff to do; and
- encouraging customer organisations to become alternative offices especially those located in rural areas.

Our staff

From October 2006, we have no mandatory retirement age for our employees below the senior civil service. These new arrangements are working well and we have reviewed the information we give our employees to include more about pension choices. We have been sharing our experiences with other government departments.

We also abolished our upper age limit on recruitment from October 2006 and feedback from our staff is that this choice is welcomed.

Our development schemes do not discriminate on grounds of age.

We have an age champion at senior level who raises the profile of age issues in the Department. Our staff network group that focuses on age issues was re-launched in January 2007.

The new age learning zone went live on our intranet in October 2007.

We are a member of the Employers' Forum on Age, an independent network of leading employers who recognise the business value of attracting and keeping experienced employees regardless of age.

Sexual orientation

We took part in Stonewall's workplace equality index during 2007 and expect to receive the results in January 2008.

The Government introduced regulations in April 2007 that prohibited sexual orientation discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services, in education and in the execution of public functions. For the Department this covered all our service delivery, policy making and processes – we reviewed these before the regulations were introduced to make sure they met this legislation.

We highlight sexual orientation issues through our intranet and in staff magazines. These have included communications on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history month and an article 'DWP on parade' about our sexual orientation staff network group participating in Europride.

The new sexual orientation learning zone went live on our intranet site in September 2007.

Our national sexual orientation staff network group was re-launched in January 2007.

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.

Religion or belief

The Government introduced regulations in April 2007 that prohibited discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services, in education and in the execution of public functions. For the Department this meant all our service delivery, policy making and processes – we reviewed these before the regulations were introduced to make sure they met this legislation.

We respect the religions and beliefs of all our staff. We provide prayer rooms for staff. Our managers consider favourably requests for time away from desks for religious obligations. Although we do not grant the right to take additional paid leave for religious purposes, managers view applications for time off for religious reasons sympathetically. Staff can apply for a salary advance for religious festivals.

We publish an annual religious calendar for staff. As well as dates, it includes information on all the major religions and provides background to all the key religious festivals and events. All managers are made aware of the Departmental guidance on enabling staff to observe religious obligations and festivals.

We take religious festivals and events into account when arranging interviews with customers.

The new religion or belief learning zone went live on our intranet in September 2007.

We are a member of the Employers' Forum on Belief, which was set up to establish and share good practice on religion or belief in the workplace. It is made up of private and public sector employers.

During 2007 the Disability and Carers Service provided awareness training on the Islamic culture for its outreach and diversity and equality staff.