

DRAFT**House of Commons Equality Scheme****2009 - 2011**

This Equality Scheme explains how we plan to implement and manage equality, diversity and inclusion in the House of Commons Service. It sets out an equality action plan to address race, gender and disability equality. Age, religion and sexual orientation issues are also covered, although not currently included in the equality duties.

This document is a draft approved by the House of Commons Commission. We are working towards a Scheme that is realistic and will have a meaningful impact on all those who work in and for the House of Commons Service and thus further consultation will inform the contents of the Scheme itself and the detailed Action Plan. We actively seek involvement of interested parties. If you would like to comment on the Scheme, a questionnaire is attached as an Appendix which you can return to the Diversity team:

By post:

Corporate Learning & Diversity, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

By email: corporatelearning&diversity@parliament.uk

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Foreword

Include Photos

Foreword by The Speaker

Introduction

Through this Equality Scheme, we plan to strengthen and advance equality, diversity and inclusion in the House of Commons. It will help us take and monitor action to tackle inequality in a positive and pro-active way.

Although the House is not legally required to develop an equality scheme, we strongly believe that it is in line with good practice and demonstrates our commitment to equality and inclusion; enhancing the performance and working environment of the House Service, and delivering benefits for all those involved: Members of Parliament, staff and the public.

1.1 Our commitment to equality and diversity

The House of Commons exists for all people of the United Kingdom. Members of Parliament and staff and the public expect that the House of Commons Service should have the same equality of opportunity and employment as any of the leading institutions and employers in the country; indeed, we seek to be an organisation that others look to for a lead.

'We recognise and value the diversity of our staff and are committed to developing working practices which will allow every member of staff to contribute his or her best, regardless of race, sex, marital status, religion or belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other irrelevant factor.'¹

The House of Commons Service currently has an equality and diversity policy in line with UK legislation on equality of opportunity and equal pay.

Background and Context

¹ Equality and Diversity Statement, House of Commons Staff Handbook, Feb 2008

The House of Commons is a sovereign institution, as the national legislature of the United Kingdom. It has authority over the rights and privileges of its proceedings and asserts its right to self-determination of its own finances and administration. In general, UK legislation applies to it only where the House has agreed that it should. Although the House is not subject to the Equality Act 2006, the House of Commons Commission has agreed to apply the spirit of the Act in this Scheme. The relevant legislation is set out in Annex 1.

The House of Commons administration is overseen by the House of Commons Commission, which is chaired by the Speaker of the House. The Commission is a statutory body, set up under the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978. The Commission has delegated most of its administrative functions to the Chief Executive and the Management Board.

The work of the House of Commons is facilitated by a wide range of support, administrative and executive staff employed in four departments: the Department of Chamber and Committee Services (DCCS), the Department of Facilities (DF), the Department of Information Services (DIS) and the Department of Resources (DR). In addition, the joint Parliamentary Information and Communications Technology (PICT) department provides ICT services for everyone on the Parliamentary Estate. The heads of these departments, together with the Chief Executive and a non-executive member, form the Management Board.

The Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the House of Commons is the Clerk of the House. He is also Corporate Officer.

2.1 Organisational values of the House of Commons

The core values for House staff are:²

Integrity	We serve the House of Commons, its Committees and Members, and the public, with honesty, probity and political impartiality.
Professionalism	We strive for excellence, effectiveness, efficiency and accuracy, remaining always open-minded on the prospects for better ways of delivering our services. We seek to be responsive to changing requirements, and to be outward looking.
Teamwork	We value a co-operative approach, based on mutual support, trust and respect.
Recognition	We are committed to maximising personal development, to valuing diversity and the contribution of all individuals, and to equality of opportunity.
Commitment	We seek to ensure that the House of Commons is a good place to work, that recognises the importance of maintenance of work-life balance, and enables us to get the most out of the jobs we do.

2.2 The House Equality Scheme

This Equality Scheme is an opportunity to build on and broaden our existing achievements in equality, inclusion and access to all those in the House of Commons. The Action Plan will effectively support the application of the Scheme in the House, by providing a good practice model for Members of Parliament and staff to follow.

2.3 Speaker's Conference

The House of Commons itself has recognised that its membership does not reflect the diversity of the population it represents. Accordingly, it agreed on 12 November to establish a Speaker's Conference – a cross party committee of enquiry chaired by the Speaker – to consider and make recommendations for rectifying the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the UK population at large. The conference is expected to take around a year to complete this work.

Our approach to equality and diversity

The House Service has a dedicated diversity team which consists of the Head of Corporate Learning and Diversity, the Corporate Diversity Manager, and the Corporate Learning and Diversity Facilitator. Its approach has been to bring the issue of diversity into the mainstream and work towards embedding a diversity

² Core Values, House of Commons Staff Handbook, Ch.1, section 1.1

culture in everything we do. Our aim in producing this scheme and action plan is to achieve clarity regarding the day to day responsibilities of all people working in and for the House, thus creating an equal and diverse organisation.

The Director General of Resources is Diversity Champion. In this role, he supports the Diversity team in their strategy development and action implementation. He also ensures that the strategy is communicated effectively at Board level.

3.1 Diversity strategy 2006 and ongoing work

Building on work by the Diversity Forum³, a *Diversity Strategy for 2006-2011* was developed. This focused on five key themes – Disability, Flexible Working, Education and Learning, Recruitment and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Theme 1: Disability

Completed actions in this area include:

- a booklet on guidance for managers with staff with disabilities was produced and distributed
- web pages for the intranet were developed to give general advice and information on disabilities in the workplace
- guidance on written documents was produced and distributed
- information events were run on various 'hidden' disabilities such as mental health and learning disabilities
- permanent employment status was achieved for three adults with learning disabilities.

Theme 2: Flexible working

Completed actions in this area include:

- guidance for staff and managers were produced
- an application form for non-statutory flexible working was designed and advertised
- more detailed information was produced for the Staff Handbook
- a database was created to record and monitor flexible work patterns.

Theme 3: Education and learning

Completed actions in this area include:

- all corporate workshops were reviewed to ensure diversity messages were mainstreamed,
- equality and diversity values were embedded into the core competence framework
- a diversity session was included into the House-wide induction day

³ The Diversity Forum, a House-wide volunteer group which comprised of over 20 staff, drawn from each department, met to discuss diversity issues from 2003 to 2007.

- a wider range of learning methods were introduced to support the different learning styles
- specific diversity and disability workshops were designed and launched

Theme 4: Recruitment

Completed actions in this area include:

- the recruitment & selection workshop being redesigned to strengthen the messages around discrimination and equality of opportunity
- the application form was changed so that personal details are kept separate from the rest of the form
- e-recruitment pages on the internet were changed to improve 'usability' by people with disabilities
- new methods of reaching out to potential applicants were trialled e.g. recruitment fairs

Theme 5: Monitoring and evaluating

Completed actions in this area include:

- a number of campaigns run to ensure returns on ethnicity questionnaire remain at over 90% accuracy on statistics was improved
- information on disability was collected for the first time
- staff diversity statistics were published in the Commission Annual Staff Report
- a wider range of statistics became available for answering Parliamentary Questions, use in pay audit, etc.

However, internal communications demonstrated that a considerable number of staff thought that more could be done in the areas of diversity and inclusion to bring consistency and challenge the culture of the House. This resulted in the Diversity Managers proposing to the Commission and the Management Board that there should be an equality scheme in line with those published by public bodies.

3.2 'Valuing Others' policy

The Management Board is committed to providing a work environment that is fair to all and where everyone is treated with respect and dignity by those around them.

This 'respect agenda' is expressed through the '*Valuing Others policy*⁴ which sets out:

'the rights and responsibilities of managers and staff in ensuring that everyone is able to work in a positive environment free from unacceptable behaviours such as discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.'

This should help create an environment where people will feel valued, encouraged to realise their potential and support the House in achieving its objectives. All staff

⁴ Valuing Others, House of Commons Staff Handbook, Ch 4 section 4.8

deserve, and should expect, to be treated with respect for who they are and what they do. This attitude should be consistent, inclusive and universal. Key behaviours are:

- to ensure the dignity at work of all our employees
- to respect others and value their contribution to the organisation
- to demonstrate our commitment to equality and inclusion through our actions
- to be open and constructive in our communications
- to be fair and just in our dealings with each other
- to handle conflict promptly, effectively and creatively
- to raise awareness of the effects of unacceptable behaviour.

3.3 Selection procedures

To ensure equality in the selection of employees, the House Service published 'Guidance Notes for Members of Selection Boards' in September 2005 and revised June 2007 which contained the following statement on Equal Opportunities:

'At all stages of consideration candidates must be assessed solely on their merits. In particular there must be no discrimination on grounds of ethnic/national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion/belief or disability. The interview board should avoid asking questions which could lead to potential discrimination'.

It reminds selectors that:

'It is good practice for boards to bear in mind that some candidates may have fewer educational qualifications or less work experience than others, because fewer opportunities were open to them in the past; and that they may be as suitable for the job as other candidates. Cultural bias must also be avoided when making recruitment and selection decisions.'

In addition, it includes reference to applicants with disabilities: candidates should be assessed on merit and should not be ruled out on the grounds of their disability, unless it is absolutely clear that the disability is such that it would prevent the candidate from doing the job. Advice is available from Human Resources Management Directorate and the Disability Contact Officers if particular interview arrangements are needed, every effort should be made to provide these.

3.4 Learning and development

The House Service is committed to providing learning and training opportunities to support the business objectives so that everyone has the skills and knowledge to perform their job role competently. It also supports personal development so that individuals can work towards different roles and responsibilities. While all learning and development activities uphold the principles of equality and diversity and make particular reference where appropriate, those interventions specifically focusing on behaviours, skills and knowledge around equality and diversity include:

- generic disability awareness training
- disability awareness workshops for managers and front-line staff
- accredited training for internal workplace mediators, in support of our *Valuing Others* policy
- diversity awareness training ('Valuing each other')

3.5 Investors in People

The House of Commons Service was first accredited as an Investor in People in 2003, and reaccredited in July 2006. We try to ensure we maintain the Standard and will undergo a further assessment at the end of 2009. Part of this maintenance is ensuring that:

- staff at all levels are involved in business planning
- staff are given appropriate and fair access to the support they require
- strategies for managing people are designed to promote equality of opportunity within staff development
- everyone is valued for his/her contribution to the organisation
- appropriate investment is committed to learning and development interventions.

3.6 Procurement

The equality and diversity principles of the House of Commons Service apply to procurement procedures. By actively promoting equality and diversity within these processes, we seek to encourage suppliers to promote fair employment practices.

Gathering evidence: diversity monitoring in the House

The House of Commons collects and analyses equality monitoring data relating to its staff. This data is held by the Diversity team and can be cross-tabulated in a number of ways to show representation of specific groups such as ethnic origin or age group by, for example, pay band, department, and employment status. Pay bands are grouped into House of Commons administration, catering and craft groups.

4.1 Ethnicity

At the time of writing the scheme⁵ the number of staff in the House is 1,978 and of these, 1,742 have disclosed their ethnicity:

- 18% of those disclosed are of ethnic minority origin which includes staff from Asian, black, Chinese, mixed and other backgrounds.
- representation of ethnic minority staff varies across departments, with the Department of Facilities having the highest percentage (29%) and DCCS the lowest (7%).
- Outside catering and craft grades, most ethnic minority staff are in the lower pay bands: 59% at pay band E, 21% at band D, 14% at band C, 16% at band B and 5% at band A. There are currently no ethnic minority staff at SCS grade.
- Within catering grades, there is a similar pattern, with relatively high representation of ethnic minority staff in the lower pay bands, E - C (42%), and much lower representation in the more senior pay bands A – B (6%).
- Within the craft group, 14% of staff are of ethnic minority origin.

The closest employer comparator to the House Service is the Civil Service which has 8.3% of ethnic minority staff. However, it should be taken into account that some services which traditionally have high numbers of ethnic minority staff such as catering and cleaning are generally outsourced within the Civil Service. Within London, the percentage of economically active ethnic minority people currently stands at 32%

4.2 Disability

⁵ Statistics are of 1.11.08 unless otherwise stated

Disability status information has been requested from House staff only since December 2007. After several campaigns, information is now available for 1,228 staff (62%)⁶:

- 75 staff or 4% of the workforce have identified themselves as having a disability
- there is fairly even representation across all pay bands and departments
- the two most common types of declared disability are deafness/hearing impairment and mobility/physical disabilities.

This compares with 6.7% disabled staff within the Civil Service staff which is slightly higher than the House figure although the information has been collected for a considerably longer period.

4.3 Gender

Since 1997, there has generally been an even gender split of House staff. Currently, however, there is a slightly higher percentage of men than women in the organisation.

- The workforce is currently 55% male : 45% female
- There is departmental variation, with the lowest percentage of women in PICT (33%) and the highest in Resources (61%)
- Representation of women varies across the pay bands, but generally women are most highly represented in the lower pay bands: 80% of band E staff are women, 50% of band D, 52% of band C, 51% of band B, 43% of band A. Female representation drops to 28% within the Senior Commons Service
- In the catering group, there is a similar pattern, with relatively high representation of women in the lower pay bands, E - C (39%), dropping to a lower representation (12%) at the more senior A – B bands
- There are no women in craft jobs.

52% of staff in the Civil Service are women. A target was set for April 2008 for 37% of senior jobs being filled by women which was not achieved; this figure currently stands at 26.6%

4.4 Age

There is a full spread of ages within the House from under 19 years to 65+ and numbers within age groups are fairly typical of such an organisation, apart from a comparatively low number of staff under 25.

- The largest group is the 40 – 49 group which contains 31% of all staff
- The smallest age group is 19 and under at 0.8% (15)
- 10% of staff are 60+ although this is lower in Resources and PICT. This has increased since that House has moved to a no-age retirement policy

⁶ House staff statistics 1.11.08

- The youngest staff on average are in the C and D pay bands with no SCS staff under 30 (which is not unexpected, given the experience required to reach that level)
- In the senior catering bands A and B, there is no one under 25 or above 60.

4.5 Flexible work patterns

There are examples of staff in all departments and in most pay bands contracted to flexible work patterns. There is also regular take up of ad hoc flexible working, locally agreed between the member of staff and the line manager.

- 217 (11%) of permanent staff work part-time⁷
- 78% of this figure are women
- Other working patterns are in place such as compressed hours, flexi-time and job share, but as this information is held locally, it does not feature in the regular diversity statistics.

Development of the House Equality Scheme

5.1 Consultation

⁷ This sample includes permanent and fixed term staff only.

We are committed to ensuring that all stakeholders are given an opportunity to contribute towards formulation of policies that are relevant to them, within the parameters set by the House of Commons itself. Consultation and involvement which has informed this scheme has taken a number of forms.

- There has been a specific **internal consultation exercise** with Members of Parliament, staff of the House and MPs' staff, carried out between February and September 2008 (see paragraph 5.2)
- Information has been obtained from two **staff surveys** (2007 and 2008) which had a number of questions on diversity and equality issues. The demographic data from the surveys has also been used to cross-relate with ethnicity and disability data gathered by other means.
- There has been a second separate **disability questionnaire** in the autumn of 2008, which has improved our understanding of the number and needs of staff with disabilities.
- A **House Equality Scheme working group** was set up with a number of volunteers from the former Diversity Forum, Trade Union Side, Central and Departmental Human Resources and the Diversity team. Meetings were held during the consultation period and the group were invited to discuss and comment on the key emerging issues.
- Three meetings were held with the **Trade Union Side** to discuss the consultation process itself and to get their views on equality issues within the House.
- There has been a specific exercise in November 2008 when a **group of disabled visitors** were invited on an accompanied tour of the Palace of Westminster. They then gave feedback on their experiences including access, helpfulness of staff, parking, and signage. This was facilitated by external disability consultants

All of the above will be supplemented by **public consultation** on the draft scheme. Public consultation will take place by posting the scheme on the House of Commons website for open comment. Specific organisations and groups such as the House of Lords, the Cabinet Office, Employers' Forum for Disability and Age Concern will be directly informed.

5.2 Details of the internal consultation exercise

We have consulted staff of the House, Members and Members' staff. We used the services of a diversity specialist who regularly advises organisations such as the Museums and Libraries Association and the British Council on equality and diversity policies. A total of 110 people participated, providing insights into equality and diversity in practice in the organisation as well as contributing their views on what would be useful to include in an equality scheme. Participants reflected diversity in terms of pay band, department, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, religion and sexual orientation as well as representing a wide range of different types of work and across the hierarchy. All members of the Management Board participated.

Around 70% of the sample were women, 7% had a disability and 25% were of ethnic minority origin. There was a good age spread, and staff ranged from those who had recently joined to those with more than 30 years' service in the organisation. The sample also included people from a number of different religions. A small number of interviewees volunteered the information that they were gay or lesbian.

5.3 Findings from the consultation exercise

The themes which emerged from the consultation so far are summarised below under specific equality areas.

5.3.1 Findings: Race and ethnicity

Although around 20% of the current staff are non-white, there is significant under-representation in the middle to senior pay bands and an over-representation at the junior professional levels and in manual jobs.

- According to recruitment statistics, numbers of applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds are generally low compared to public sector employers.
- There has been little success to date in either the external appointment or internal promotion of ethnic minority people to more senior posts.
- There have been relatively few ethnic minority applicants and entrants into the fast-stream.

Taken together, this suggests that:

- diverse recruitment methods might be considered
- ethnic minority targets could be set at application level with recruitment agencies
- development programmes for ethnic minority staff could be considered.

5.3.2 Findings: Disability

Staff with disabilities generally found that the House was responsive when asked about providing reasonable adjustments although this was occasionally hampered by questions around budgets. However, comments were more negative around general management of someone who had a disability and attitudinal issues and ignorance which could engender feelings of exclusion. By far the biggest issue was accessibility across the Estate.

An extensive disability audit was carried out several years ago, resulting in the setting up of a Project Board responsible for an action plan across the whole of the Estate. This has resulted in a number of improvements such as the refurbishment of accessible toilets and replacement of dated lifts. However,

- entry, egress and navigation across the Estate can still be difficult. There are particular difficulties for wheelchair users complicated by security procedures and listed building status; access to and through the Cromwell Green entrance to the Visitor Centre is problematic especially for those using larger,

battery operated chairs. A number of doorways are inaccessible and others too heavy to open

- signage needs to be improved whilst adhering to English Heritage requirements for the Palace of Westminster
- more recent buildings and structures, specifically Portcullis House and the Cromwell Green Entrance, are not 'disability friendly'
- car parking for disabled people is currently not permissible anywhere on the Estate, under any circumstances.

Issues raised other than access:

- clarity is needed around confidentiality and how information on staff with disabilities is communicated to the relevant parties
- additions to the website are not routinely checked (font, links, navigation etc) for disability best practice
- job advertisements/vacancy notices are not regularly checked to ensure the 'essential' qualities are actually essential to the job. Examples were given of applicants who did not meet the requirements because of their disabilities, but could actually have done the job.
- there is a lack of facilities to assist people with hearing impairments
- attitudinal issues and ignorance (for example around dyslexia and mental health issues) have produced experiences of exclusion.

Taken together, the findings suggest that:

- more needs to be done on the Estate around accessibility
- more needs to be done to improve the visitor experience
- managers need to be made more confident in managing staff with disabilities
- better information is needed so that necessary adaptations can be made.

5.3.3 Findings: Gender

For a number of years, women have made up around 50% of the workforce with a high percentage of women returning after maternity leave, though often in a role with reduced responsibilities and hours. There are a number of family friendly policies including flexible working and the provision of childcare vouchers. Female managers outnumber males in the areas of Catering & Retail and Human Resources.

However:

- although women form 45% of the workforce, the percentage of female senior staff is only 27%
- following structural changes recommended by the Tebbit Review, there is now only one female member of the Management Board
- some women in senior positions commented that they have experienced being belittled or sidelined, especially in meetings.
- there are no women in the Craft group and applications from women are few. Consequently, there are no female staff in these areas and the benefits of mixed gender teams are not fully appreciated.

- although both women and men highlighted the issue of inconsistency in access to flexible working arrangements, women raised this more frequently particularly those who have young children.

5.3.4 Findings: Age

There is diversity within the staff age profile with all age groups being represented within the House and recruitment campaigns generally attracting a good range of ages, whatever the job. The House now works with a 'no retirement age policy' below SCS level. However, interviewees reported examples of age discrimination or poor practice.

- There sometimes appears to be a bias towards a younger age group for positions that require long-term or intensive training.
- The ability to perform physical tasks with the same levels of energy, skill and precision as staff get older is regularly questioned
- There is discrimination against older people around opportunities for training and up-skilling
- There is a perception of discrimination against younger staff trying to gain promotion.
- Recruitment statistics for under 25s is disproportionately low.

5.3.5 Findings: Religion

Information on religion/belief is not formally requested and it is a subject that is rarely raised in the workplace. However, from the consultation exercise and through various requests, there appears to be a range of religions/beliefs amongst House staff and most people believed there was no discrimination around this area.

A quiet/contemplation room has been made available to everyone and this has been advertised and is used as a non-religious facility. Provision is made for a range of dietary needs in the various refreshment outlets.

However, some examples where improvements or changes could be made were given:

- The availability of the quiet room is not widely known
- Owing to the existence of a Christian chapel on the premises Christian worship - in particular the Anglican Church - is felt by some to be privileged.
- Social drinking, which is often regarded as the 'normal' way to build working relations or network, could be excluding for some groups. In terms of religion, this could, for example, be exclusionary or uncomfortable for some Muslim members of staff.

5.3.6 Findings: Sexual orientation

There is some indication that there is a very wide range of views about the degree to which the House is a comfortable place for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people to work. There were diverse views, reflecting different experiences and it had also been suggested that acceptance of diversity regarding sexual orientation 'has been tacitly recognised, strangely enough, without anything formally being done about it', and that the atmosphere is 'reasonably open', particularly since the civil partnership legislation has made people more comfortable about acknowledging their sexual orientation. Others are more categorical about the advances in acceptance: 'we have the full range of sexual orientation here and it doesn't enter into anybody's thinking or discussion'.

5.4 Key conclusions from the consultation exercise

Most staff interviewed said that they enjoy working at the House and believe the House Service is a good employer. However, there is strong feeling that in the areas of equality, diversity and inclusion, we could and should be better. People expressed the reasons they believe change should happen in different ways: some stated that we should ensure everyone has equality of opportunity and should feel comfortable within the workplace; that they should be valued for the difference they bring to the organisation. Others quoted the changes in the demographic make-up of the UK and said that the House needed to reach out to the widest pools of talent, attract and retain the best people whatever their ethnicity, gender, disability, age, etc., if we wanted to continue to give and continuously improve the services we are here to provide.

Whatever the driver for better equality and diversity, it was agreed that there were three key channels for change:

Priority 1: Leadership and setting an example

Priority 2: Addressing under-representation

Priority 3: Improving working practices

Priorities

6.1 Priority 1: Leadership and setting an example

From all of the target groups that have been consulted, leadership in its widest sense was a recurring theme:

there is a feeling that the House of Commons as a whole, as representative of the country at large, should be seen to set a good example, both in its employment practices and in how it signalled diversity and equality principles to the public

within the House Service, there is a desire for clear leadership by top management on equality and diversity issues. This includes articulating the business benefits of a diverse workforce, ensuring that measures are in place to facilitate differing working practices, and promoting inclusion so that all can give of their best.

This priority is reflected in the Action Plan by, for example: integrating components of equality and diversity into leadership and management development programmes introducing new equality, diversity and inclusion workshops, 'Valuing each other', for all staff and as part of induction training, ensuring all staff participate ensuring there are positive messages to staff and managers about the benefits of a) part-time working and b) flexible working, with consistent procedures across the House.

6.2 Priority 2: Under-representation

Race

The most visible issue of under-representation is race at senior levels, which was commented upon by a wide range of Members, staff and visitors. It is clear that there are many ethnic minority staff in the House, but they are over-represented in the lower pay bands and jobs with limited responsibility.

There must be focus on the provision of appropriate development opportunities (both formal and informal) and a system of mentoring/coaching/providing role models if we wish to encourage ethnic minority staff at the lower pay bands to consider career paths and realise their potential.

Although a number of senior vacancies have recently been filled, there has been no change to the profile of the workforce. Therefore, positive action should be considered around attracting and selecting ethnic minority candidates to more senior/specialist posts. This would be in line with equality work in other areas such as the Speaker's Conference and the Equality Bill.

Disability

Currently, only a very small number of staff have declared themselves to have a disability and a key reason for this is that many feel their chances of progression and promotion would be adversely affected if that information was known. Consequently, people will struggle at work rather than ask for reasonable adjustments which can result in performance issues. Only when staff believe that their disabilities will not make a difference to their career in the House will they be open and receive appropriate support.

There is strong feeling that ignorance and attitudinal issues - along with the more physical access problems - are what produce feelings of exclusion

amongst staff with disabilities. This has manifested itself through people feeling ignored and that they are causing extra work. They also expressed being treated in a patronising way as not uncommon practice. Education should be provided for everyone around being 'disability confident' and treating everyone with respect. For customer facing staff, providing services for people with disabilities should be part of induction and ongoing training. For line managers, training and support should be provided for working with staff with disabilities through all parts of the employment cycle (from recruitment to leaving employment)

Staff must feel comfortable and confident about disclosing their disabilities so that they feel fully integrated into the workplace and can realise their potential. For this to happen, clear procedures and good communication channels need to be in place.

Gender

Despite a number of women at senior levels, the decrease in female members of the Management Board as a result of the recent restructuring has been noted by many, both male and female. Action is required to ensure that barriers to full participation throughout the organisation are recognised and addressed. These include:

a commitment to gender balance throughout the organisation by addressing areas of under-representation, underpinned by a culture that considers the needs of both men and women

the availability and positive promotion of a variety of flexible working patterns
the scrutiny of policy through equality impact assessments, to determine its impact on women.

How the action plan tackles under-representation of race, disability and gender

The priority of under-representation is reflected in the Action Plan by, for example:

positively engaging in recruiting from non-traditional areas.
systematically and comprehensively following up all new starters who have a disability to ensure that any access or reasonable adjustments required have been addressed

setting goals for reducing under-representation in senior pay bands.

6.3 Improving working practices

Best equality and diversity practices must be within the context of House of Commons business practices and not stand outside what we do on a day-to-day basis. This can cause tension with traditions valued by Members and staff, which has implications for acceptance of an equality scheme. The House Service must find a way for the two to sit comfortably together. A better understanding of what is really meant by equality, diversity and inclusion must be pursued through House-wide communication, leadership and training. Opportunities to bring an end to situations which cause demotivation and division should be continually sought.

Staff indicated a desire to be empowered more, be trusted to do a good job without constant monitoring, and be given more responsibility. For this to happen, they saw managers being coaches rather than controllers. 'Privileges' for staff of pay bands A and SCS should be regularly reviewed and if circumstances change or opportunities arise, these 'privileges' could be extended to other staff. Examples given were car parking spaces being made

available as usage has reduced since congestion charges began and a refreshment outlet being open during summer recess when all staff are allowed to use the Terrace.

Working practices should be aligned as far as possible across departments, e.g. annualised leave and a flexible working strategy covering all staff. Equality impact assessments to our policies and working practices would help identify when changes would be most beneficial.

This priority is reflected in the Action Plan by, for example:

- ensuring equality and diversity messages are clear, consistent and in a format accessible to different audiences.
- establishing and communicating career development opportunities which are fair to all
- establishing processes for equality screening and impact assessment.

Equality impact assessment of policies and functions

An important part of any effective equality scheme is to set out plans for carrying out equality screening and impact assessment of policies and functions. An outline process has been developed which is explained in Annex 3.

Arrangements for ensuring public access to information and services

Information for the public is a priority for the House of Commons. The House will promote and continue to develop a culture of openness, transparency and customer focus both internally and externally. To demonstrate the House's commitment and to ensure that this is carried out, a member of the Management Board (the Director General of Facilities) champions accessibility issues.

In taking this forward, the House will consider the needs of the different audiences. Different approaches will be considered (e.g. full detail for specialists, summaries for the general reader). The House will communicate in plain language and avoid the use of jargon.

Work on our re-designed website continues, and we are testing it with a range of users with disabilities in order to ensure its accessibility.

Improving access is an integral part of developing our facilities for visitors.

Outreach work in building relationships with schools, communities and organisations around the country is an important part of the House's work in widening public access to information and services. Over the past few years, this has increased significantly with a number of schemes being well established such as the Toucan Scheme for assisting adults with learning difficulties get into the workplace, Mr Speaker's Apprenticeship Scheme which gives young adults unlikely to go on to further education an opportunity for extended work placement and a work experience scheme with Westminster to give local students an experience of working in Parliament.

Feedback on the implementation of the Equality Scheme

Any feedback on the Scheme should be referred to:

Corporate Learning and Diversity
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA
E-mail: corporatelearning&diversity@parliament.uk
Telephone: 020 7219 1412

Plans for publication of the Equality Scheme

The House of Commons will publish the Equality Scheme both electronically and as hard copy. On request, the Scheme will be available in different formats, for example in large print or audio. However, the primary source of information will be the website.

Monitoring and review of the House Equality Scheme

Progress against the House Equality Scheme will be monitored on an annual basis by the Diversity team, with an annual report produced and published. A three-year review will be carried out, aiming to further develop the Scheme and Action Plan. A six-monthly update will be sent to the House of Commons Commission as requested by the Speaker.

House Equality Scheme Action Plan

Introduction

This first draft of the House Equality Scheme Action plan aims to outline specific timetabled actions with clear lines of responsibility. These actions will ensure that the organisation moves in a positive direction within the framework of the Scheme.

There are nine key target areas:

1. Accessibility and communications
2. Public access to and information about services
3. Policies and functions
4. Staff responsibilities and training
5. Employment cycle
6. Equality monitoring
7. Plans for the publication of the Equality Scheme
8. Involvement in the development of the Equality Scheme
9. Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme

There are generic action points for each of the above nine areas. These are then followed, as relevant, by specific action points for the individual seven equality areas of race, disability, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, transgender.

Accessibility and communications

This section includes the action planned to enhance accessibility to information and effective communications, particularly to the public. Action covers:

- Provision of accessible information, including in different languages as appropriate
- Disability access issues – nature of communication methods; information about disability access provided
- Physical access to the Parliamentary Estate.

Section 1 - Accessibility and communications											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Communicate the Equality Scheme through a variety of mechanisms including a specific note/article to Members and their staff.	Apr 09	Communications team	House-wide communication; liP communication; Speaker's Conference	Evidence that this has been communicated in different forms to staff, Members and Members' staff.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure visibility of the equality scheme throughout the organisation, by summary version to all staff, regular articles in <i>InHouse</i> and departmental newsletters, events, references in	Apr 09, Jun 09, Sept	Communications team in Office of the Chief Executive;	liP communication	Examples of references to the Equality Scheme in wide range of	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 1 - Accessibility and communications											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
business plans, inclusion in management conferences.	09, Dec 09	departmental comms teams		publications and events appearing regularly throughout the year.							
Ensure equality and diversity messages are clear and consistent and in a format accessible to different audiences.	Ongoing	Office of the Chief Executive Dept of Facilities	liP communication	Positive feedback from staff, Members, Members' staff and the public.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve website (intranet, Internet and website of external recruitment agency) to meet disability access standards. Ensure that website is compatible with a range of web browsers for visually impaired people.	Jun 09	DIS Hays Recruitment	DIS House-wide communication	Internationally accepted access standards met.		✓					
Ensure website includes content on access to information about the House of Commons, including job opportunities and facilities available for	Jun 09	DIS Hays Recruitment	DIS Hays recruitment Recruitment	Positive feedback from stakeholders and the public.							

Section 1 - Accessibility and communications											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
deaf visitors, for example printed guide as a supplement to the tour guide.			strategy Information to the public work								
Continue work to improve access and facilities across the Estate for people with disabilities, including prioritisation of repairs with target response times, checking visitor wheelchair routes and appropriate emergency procedures, car parking availability and provision for vehicle drop-off in front of Visitor Centre	Ongoing	DDA Project Board Fire Control	DDA Project Board plan of work; Legislative requirements; Fire safety; Visitor Services review	Improvements reported to schedule and positive feedback from the public and from staff; emergency plans in place and safely executed; issues considered appropriate action taken		✓					
Volunteer scheme to be available as required to greet and ensure that disabled visitors to the House are provided with what they require in order	Oct 09	Visitor Services	Visitor Services review DDA Project Board plan of	Volunteer Scheme in place and positive		✓					

Section 1 - Accessibility and communications											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
to carry out their business. This could, for example, be a visitor to an MP.			work Legislative requirements	feedback from visitors and from Members.							
Be able to provide assistive technology, such as induction loops, mobility aids, on request.	Jun 09	DDA Project Board Facilities Dept	Visitor Services review DDA Project Board plan of work Legislative requirements	Central record of assistive technology readily available for staff either for their own use or to provide to visitors; positive feedback from visitors and Members		✓					
Establish procedure to provide British Sign Language interpreter or similar on request, and inform Members of this service.	Oct 09	Diversity team	Visitor Services review DDA Project Board plan of work	Procedure in place and Members informed.		✓					

Section 1 - Accessibility and communications											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					Ensure staff are trained to provide quality service to disabled customers passing through security.	Ongoing	SAA Directorate Police & Security	Visitor Services review Legislative requirements Respect agenda	Training in place and positive feedback from visitors.		✓
Communicate widely the availability of staff quiet/contemplation room through staff notices, newsletters and appropriate equality action group.	Jun 09	Diversity team	House-wide communication	Used by range of staff and positive feedback received.					✓		
Summarise additional specific points made during the consultation with disabled people regarding disability access to the buildings and raise with the DDA Project Board.		Diversity team	DDA Project Board	Implementation of points; Improved access for users of the estate; positive feedback.		✓					

Public access to information about services

This section covers the action planned to ensure wide public access to services, and information about the services. The actions cover:

- Engaging the wider community
- Improvement of signage in the premises
- Provision of information to MPs, regarding facilities they can use to widen access for their visitors

Section 2 – Public access to information about services											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					Engage the local and wider community through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outreach work including Parliamentary Education Service initiatives, work experience schemes, voluntary activities, Mr Speaker’s Apprenticeship Scheme, etc. • presenting the House of Commons as a potential employer to the wider diverse population. To be done through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - under-represented groups featuring in publications such as recruitment literature - placement fairs, open days, 	Dec 09	Outreach team Education Services Diversity team Recruitment team	Outreach strategy Parliamentary Education Service Corporate social responsibility (CSR)	Evidence, through monitoring, of wider take-up of the opportunities indicated Greater diversity of images and clear statements on equality in recruitment publicity materials and	✓	✓

Section 2 – Public access to information about services											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Improve signage around the Parliamentary Estate, Consider how visitors are given directions – in map format – both tactile and print – at beginning of visit. Consider where possible displaying Braille signs and large print signs (for example by paintings or statues) as well as information available in a variety of formats.	Dec 09	DDA Project Board SIG	DDA Project Board work Visitor Services review	Accessible signage in place at strategic points. Positive feedback from disabled visitors.		✓					
Consider targeted tours for disabled people, exploring the options for evening tours, early morning tours, touch tours (for visually impaired people), with tactile maps which also show the position of tactile and Braille signage. Visually impaired visitors should be directed to points where they can touch certain objects, and guide to Braille labels. Additional time on tour is	Apr 10	Visitor Services PES Diversity team	Visitor Services review	Some targeted tours offered, with an initial pilot providing feedback. Positive feedback from disabled visitors.		✓					

Section 2 – Public access to information about services											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender

Section 2 – Public access to information about services											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
available and well signposted.											
Update 'touch' model of Palace of Westminster and move from Robing Room to accessible area	Jun 09	PED? Visitor Services	Visitor Services review	Model moved to accessible area.		✓					
Assess the signage and directions from outside the Visitors' Centre entrance through to Westminster Hall and improve.	Jun 09	Dept of Facilities SIG	DDA Project Board Visitor Services review	Consideration given to what is achievable and appropriate and action taken to improve signage.		✓					
Explore provision of some facility for the hearing impaired in the Chambers (public galleries). For example, screens displaying captions of what is being discussed would benefit deaf <i>and</i> hearing people.	Oct 09	SAA: DCCS	Visitor Services review	Investigation into possible provision. Deaf people consulted. Some provision made.		✓					
Improve advice to Members about	Oct 09	Members	Visitor Services	Advice in		✓					

Section 2 – Public access to information about services											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					services available for use with their visitors, such as a signing service and translation services; provide expert advice from the Diversity team.		' Centre Diversity team	review	place. Positive feedback from MPs including evidence of take-up.		

Policies and functions

This section sets out the action planned to ensure that equality and diversity are embedded in policies and functions of the organisation. The action points cover:

- Assessing the equality impact of policies and functions
- Enhancing visibility of the equality policy
- Agreeing areas for positive action
- Establishing mechanism for dealing with any equality issues between MPs and staff
- Carrying out work to meet Disability Standard

Section 3 – Policies and functions											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Establish the process for equality screening and impact assessment (See Appendix for draft Equality Screening and Impact Assessment Form).	Oct 09	Diversity team Human Resources (HRM&D)	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Organisational development HR strategy	Process in place and piloted in a sample of departments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
List all policies and functions and prioritise in terms of high, medium and low relevance for equality.	Oct 09	Departmental Director Generals, Business	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Organisational development	List of policies and functions, prioritised, submitted to the Diversity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 3 – Policies and functions											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
							Managers and Senior HR Managers	HR strategy	Unit		
Set up centralised system and allocate resources to monitor exercise and collate results of equality screening and impact assessment and action taken. Publish findings and actions/decisions taken.	Dec 09	Diversity team HRM&D PICT	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Organisational development HR strategy	System in place and examples of pilot exercises filed with summaries published on internet and in annual Equality Scheme report.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Equality impact assess changes made as a result of work of Officer Status Working Group. Report findings to Resources Management Group.	Oct 09	Diversity team	Staff survey action plan	Assessed and report made to the Resources Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 3 – Policies and functions											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
									Group.		
[s.36(2)(b) and s.36(2)(c)]	Oct 09	Department of Resources	[s.36(2)(b) and s.36(2)(c)]	Mechanism in place, communicated to different groups on the Estate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consider extending central HR recruitment advice to an optional service to Members of drafting advertisements, person- and job specifications, and interviewing candidates.	Oct 09	PAS/HR M&D	Improving services to Members (Corporate Plan primary objective 2)	Appropriate service developed and offered. Monitoring shows take-up and positive feedback.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carry out an updated childcare provision feasibility study for Members	Mar 10	Diversity team through the Admin Committee	Improving services to Members (Corporate Plan primary objective 2)	Updated study carried out, leading to recommendations implemented			✓				

Section 3 – Policies and functions											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Further develop ways of involving all sections of the public in consultations and submissions of evidence to Committees, building on the good practices already established.	Apr 10	DCCS – Committee Office	Corporate Plan primary objective 1: supporting Chamber and committees	Evidence of inclusion of diverse groups in consultation.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seek evidence that equality and diversity principles within the procurement process is leading to the selection of suppliers who promote fair employment practices.	Sept 09	Central Procurement Office	Recruitment review	Monitoring of suppliers shows that fair employment practices are in place.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carry out the work required to participate in Disability Standard, run by the Employers’ Forum on Disability, key elements of which include diagnostic tool to assess current status in terms of disability effectiveness, assisted action plan, assessment.	Feb 10	Diversity team Dept Resource Managers DDA Project Group	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1	Performance in Disability Standard meeting own target set, with report and recommendations acted upon.		✓					
Disabled staff, MPs’ staff, MPs who	Jun 09	PICT	Corporate Plan	Policy in		✓					

Section 3 – Policies and functions											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					require equipment and facilities, such as computer programmes, should have priority for any computer equipment or upgrades in order to ensure that they can carry out their work and do not suffer a detriment due to needing to wait along with others.			primary objective 2, supporting task 1	place, communicated and evidence of it being implemented		

Staff responsibilities and training

This section sets out the action planned to ensure that equality and diversity are covered in the area of staff responsibilities and training. The action points cover:

- Career development plans
- Training grades and development opportunities
- Inclusion of equality and diversity principles in training
- Equality values in job descriptions
- Positive action within development
- Performance appraisal

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Establish and communicate that career development opportunities are fair to all (including facilitating short term/permanent internal/external moves, secondments, temporary promotions, coaching, mentoring) and encourage under-represented groups to participate	Sept 09; built into talent management programme	CLD Career Adviser	Corporate Plan supporting task 1; Learning & development strategy; HR strategy; Staff survey; liP; Corporate Plan supporting task 1; Learning &	Clear criteria for career development opportunities which are communicated widely to managers and staff; evidence of increased	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
								development strategy; Talent management strategy; Capability agenda	diversity in programme with equality monitoring data available		
Ensure when opportunities for temporary promotion arise that policy and procedures are adhered to since it can lead to greater access to permanent posts.	Apr 09	Recruiting Manager HRM&D Senior HR advisors	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Temporary promotion strategy	Dissemination of clear reminder on policy and procedures for temporary promotions sent to all recruiters. Evidence of policy and procedures being	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
				applied.							
Provide staff in Catering & Retail Services and cleaning teams with opportunities for access to work experience in other activities, for example in the visitors' assistant work or in administrative/clerical jobs.	Apr 10	Diversity team HRM&D Facilities Dept Senior HR Managers	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Workplace experience Personal development plans	Aim for 3 development opportunities through temporary work experience to have taken place.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Establish opportunities for training grades for existing staff who may wish to progress. Draw on existing scheme in DIS (ensuring that this existing scheme is effectively communicated).	June 10	HRM&D Dept Resource Managers	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Talent management programme Management Board initiative: cross-dept moves	Scheme in place throughout the House Service, effectively communicated, with evidence of take-up.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review all training, to ensure appropriate equality and diversity	Jun 09	Corporate Learning	Corporate Plan supporting task 1	Review conducted	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
DVD or alternative of short interviews with a variety of disabled people (MPs, staff, visitors) talking about their experiences of access to the House of Commons and participation in activities. (NOTE: these could be positive stories – attitudes, facilities, etc.)	Dec 09	Bow Tie Productions	Corporate Plan supporting task 1	DVD or alternative produced and used in training, seminars, presentations.		✓					
Develop series of 'Toolbox' talks on diversity issues, e.g. managing time off	Jun 09 – Dec	CLD Diversity	Diversity team Learning &	Talks taking place and	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					for religious holidays; equality legislation.	11	team	Development strategy	attended by range of managers and staff. Open to all staff, MPs and MPs staff.		
Introduce new equality, diversity and inclusion workshops, 'Valuing each other', for all staff, then as part of induction training. Ensure all staff participate.	Oct 09	Line managers CLD Diversity team	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Respect agenda Staff survey Learning & Development strategy HR remodelling	Programme of new courses up and running with positive feedback and evidence of impact.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure all staff involved in recruitment, selection and promotion have undertaken training to be on selection boards within the last three years with	Dec 09	Recruitment manager; Corporate	Corporate Plan supporting task 1; Recruitment review;	Records showing that all involved in	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					regular refresher training. Briefing note to be prepared for MPs involved in recruitment. Newly-trained delegates to participate on board within six months of training wherever practical		Learning & Development	Learning & Development strategy	recruitment have undertaken training, with programme of refresher training running; appropriate take-up and positive feedback		
Leadership and management development to have components of equality and diversity integrated into the programme.	Jun 09	Senior Management Development Group/CLD	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Learning & Development strategy Talent management strategy	Evidence of inclusion in programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Disability awareness training to be	Jun 09	CLD	Corporate Plan	Policy in		✓					

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Provide support and guidance for staff (including police and security staff) who work with and manage staff with disabilities, through tailored workshops and guidance booklets. Targeted training for security staff to increase awareness of disabled visitors' aids, for example, pagers for fire alarm alerts that might be carried by deaf people.	Dec 09	Diversity team	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Diversity team	Training and other support and guidance provided. Booklets available and distributed.		✓					
Check equality values are mainstreamed into job descriptions and discussed as part of regular	Apr 10	Diversity team Line	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 HR remodelling	Job descriptions include	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					performance reviews by equality impact assessments.		managers	Forward Job Planning ASR briefings	reference to equality and performance reviews show evidence of discussions on relevant action taking place.		
Encourage under-represented groups to take advantage of development opportunities; through educating line managers. Consider providing training aimed at specific job categories where there is relatively high representation of minority ethnic staff and limited movement or progression. Compile and communicate positive examples of people who have been successful in progressing in the	Dec 09	Director Generals Line Managers Career Adviser CLD; Communications team	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Learning & Development strategy Talent management strategy; Corporate Plan supporting task 1; House-wide communication	Increased take-up and successful completion of development opportunities by under-represented groups; a check of a range of	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					organisation. Include those from ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds.				relevant communications shows positive examples of career progression stories of those with a non-traditional background		
Review staff appraisal system to ensure that it is a purposeful dialogue. New system should include objective measurements upon which performance reports are discussed/written. Line managers should be trained and monitored in effective use of the system.	Sept 09	HRM&D	Corporate Plan supporting task 1 Forward Job Planning Talent management strategy HR remodelling	Staff appraisal system revised in line with recommendation and training being run.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 4 – Staff responsibilities and training											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					Make available and communicate opportunities for Members’ staff to participate in equality training, and other training, where possible.	Jun 09	DIS L&D; DR Quality Assurance Team; Office of the Chief Executive	Corporate Plan primary objective 2	Training opportunities communicated to Members’ staff leading to take-up and positive feedback.	✓	✓
Equality and diversity awareness to be included in the induction programmes for staff of Members.	Sept 09	Diversity team DR Quality Assurance Team	Corporate Plan primary objective 2	Included, with positive feedback.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Employment cycle

This section sets out the action planned to ensure that equality and diversity is addressed at all relevant points of the employment cycle. The action points cover:

- Continuation of equality pay reviews
- Inclusion of equality and diversity at all recruitment stages – from application through to appointment
- Inclusion of equality and diversity in competence frameworks
- Communicate positively about opportunities to work part-time and flexibly
- Reasonable adjustments
- Goals

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					Continue to carry out the regular equal pay reviews of pay and banding system to encompass pay structure, job evaluation schemes, reward strategy. Principal requirement is to cover gender. Ensure that findings and recommendations are published and acted upon.	Ongoing	HRM&D	Pay Policy equal pay reviews HR strategy Corporate Plan supporting task 1	Evidence of action taken on Equal Pay Audit findings.		
All parts of the recruitment and selection processes to be diversity	Oct 09	Recruitment Manager	Recruitment review	Report showing that	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					tested.				process are non-discriminate <i>and</i> promote equality and diversity.		
Investigate reasons for low response rates from ethnic minority communities and disabled people to various recruitment campaigns. Decide what changes should be made.	Dec 09	Recruitment team Diversity team Recruitment agency	HR strategy Corporate Plan supporting task 1	Findings point to reasons for low response and action implemented to redress the imbalance, resulting in increased		✓		✓			
Ensure policy on make-up of recruitment panels - mixed panels in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability, age range - is adhered to.	Jun 09	Recruitment team Diversity team	Recruitment review	Records show attempts made to	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
									ensure diverse panels and that these are in place.		
Include images in recruitment literature to ensure recognition of diversity amongst Members and staff (ethnicity age, gender, disability and religions)	Jan 10	HR recruitment team	Recruitment review	Recruitment literature reflects diversity in a positive way.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment process to be reviewed to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - eliminate all but necessary written elements - remove inadvertent barriers from advertisements - ensure plain English used - only include professional qualifications where absolutely necessary - consider flexibility to take into account applicants' particular needs, e.g. autistic 	Oct 09	Recruitment Manager	Recruitment review	Evidence of changes made in the recruitment process which remove unnecessary potential for exclusion.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Positively engage in recruiting from non-traditional areas. Extend outreach work in colleges, schools and diverse communities, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contact ethnic minority student groups on suitable courses, and invite them to an Open Day for Black and Asian students with an interest in working in Parliament • Links with special schools • Continued participation in Civil Service fast stream positive action programmes 	Ongoing 2009 - 2011	Diversity team Outreach team Director Generals	Outreach initiatives	Positive feedback from the outreach work leading to some applications for work placements, internships or posts. Evidence of some recruitment from Civil Service positive action programmes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Check the current mechanism for	Jun 09	Occupation	Induction policy	Policy in		✓					

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
<p>providing information about the requirements of any new disabled staff to the line manager is effective.</p> <p>Systematically and comprehensively follow up all new starters who have a disability, or staff who have acquired a disability in-service, a few weeks after they have seen Occupational Health, to ensure that any access or reasonable adjustments required have been addressed.</p>		Occupational Health		<p>place. Evidence to show that all new starters who are disabled, or those who acquire a disability are followed up systematically. Check procedure for alerting line manager to any relevant information regarding new disabled staff member.</p>							

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Consider extending the use of the Toucan Employment Scheme or similar, with more ongoing support for supervisors of Toucan Scheme participants.	Jun 09	Diversity team	Outreach initiatives	Toucan Employment Scheme communicated widely and take-up increased. Action taken to check if supervisors require further support and responded to. Positive feedback from supervisors		✓					
Ensure that there are positive messages to staff and managers about the benefits of a) part-time working and	Oct 09	HRM&D Senior HR managers	Line management development; Diversity team;	Evidence that messages		✓	✓				

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					b) flexible working, and that procedures are consistent across the House.			Corporate Plan supporting task 2	have been sent out. Monitoring data shows take-up at different levels in the organisation.		
Set a reporting goal for staff with disabilities to be monitored and reviewed over time.	Jun 09	Diversity team	Management Board initiative Disability Standard	Reporting target set and regular monitoring in place to review progress.		✓					
Set a reporting goal for achieving ethnic minority staff in senior pay bands to be monitored and reviewed over time.	Jun 09	Management Board	Management Board initiative	Goals set and regular monitoring in place to review progress.				✓			
Set a reporting goal for increasing the	Jun 09	Management	Management	Goals set							

Section 5 – Employment cycle											
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
number of women in senior pay bands to be monitored and reviewed over time.		nt Board	Board initiative	and regular monitoring in place to review progress.			✓				

Equality monitoring

This section sets out the action planned to ensure that equality monitoring is comprehensive. The action points cover:

- Continuation and extension of equality monitoring
- Analysis of data
- Increase of reporting of disability status

Section 6 – Equality Monitoring											
Generic	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Extend equality monitoring data to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff and visitors • all stages of recruitment and selection • performance evaluation outcomes; • access to training and development; • temporary and permanent promotions; • secondments; internal moves; • grievances, harassment and disciplinaries. These should be:	Jun 09 and ongoing	Diversity team HRM&D Office of the Chief Executive Visitor Centre Manager Education Services PICT	Services to the public Visitor Services review	Monitoring in place with regular analysis and reporting, leading to action taken to address any under-representation or specific needs identified.	✓	✓	✓	✓			

Section 6 – Equality Monitoring										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-tabulated by department • analysed more regularly • used to monitor progress and review actions. • reported on a six-monthly basis to senior management. • benchmarked with other relevant organisations or sectors, 										
Monitor perceived inconsistencies between departments in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers of grievances • charges of harassment, • applications and approvals for training and development 	Sept 09	Diversity team Dept HR teams	Staff survey responses	Action taken to address any inconsistencies of concern.	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Provide more detailed, relevant and regular equality statistics for management and staff, with accompanying analysis on a six monthly basis	Ongoing	Diversity team	Office of the Chief Executive strategy	Detailed reports provided, leading to discussion and points for action and further development	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Continue to increase the response rate on the disability monitoring question.	Ongoing	Diversity team.	Disability Standard Parliamentary Questions	Increased response rate over time.		✓				

Section 6 – Equality Monitoring

			responses								
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Involvement in the development of the Equality Scheme

This section includes the action planned to involve people in the development of the Equality Scheme. The action points cover involvement of:

- Staff – ethnic minority staff; disabled staff; women
- Staff – as well as the above targeted groups, a wide range of males, full age range, gay and lesbian staff and those of a range of religions
- Members of Parliament and their staff
- Public consultation, including groups with disabilities

Section 7 – Involvement in the development of the Equality Scheme											
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Consult people with disabilities (focus groups and 1-1 interviews).	Feb – July 08	Diversity team		Recommendations made which are included in Equality		✓					

				Scheme.								
Consult minority ethnic staff (focus groups and 1-1 interviews).	Feb – July 08	Diversity team		Recommendations made which are included in Equality Scheme.				✓				
Consult women staff (focus groups and 1-1 interviews).	Feb – July 08	Diversity team					✓					
Public consultation, including specific involvement of people with disabilities.	Sept – Oct 08	Diversity team		Recommendations made which are included in Equality Scheme.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme

This section sets out the action planned to monitor and review the implementation of the Equality Scheme. The action points cover:

- Mechanisms to monitor on an ongoing basis
- Interim and annual reporting on progress
- 3-year review

Section 8 – Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme											
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
Select diversity leads on issues, beginning with race, disability and gender. These will be a resource for the Diversity team and also support the work of the Diversity Champion.	Apr 09	Diversity team Diversity Champion	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1	Diversity leads in place and acknowledged widely as having a positive		✓	✓	✓			

Section 8 – Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme											
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
									impact on equality and diversity.		
Individuals and groups to be available to advise on disability, gender, race, age, religion and sexual orientation. Group to be convened by Diversity team as required during the period covered by the Equality Scheme.	Apr 09 and ongoing	Diversity team	Diversity team Corporate Plan supporting task 1	Individuals and groups to be identified who can input on specific aspects of the Equality Scheme, to provide information and support the Diversity team.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Encourage a dialogue with disabled people by setting up a mechanism for disabled people and non-disabled people to work together to remove any	Ongoing		Diversity team; Corporate Plan supporting task 1; Disability	Mechanism in place and information and advice		✓					

Section 8 – Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme											
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					barriers.			Standard	being received from disabled people on the implementation of the disability elements of the Scheme.		
Prepare an interim and an annual report on progress of the action plan.	Ongoing	Diversity team	Diversity team Corporate Planning	Interim and annual reports produced and published.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Produce a 3-year review of the plan at the end of 2012.	2012	Diversity team	Diversity team Corporate Planning	3-year review of plan produced and	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Section 8 – Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme											
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
									published, with recommendations on future action.		
Take responsibility for the corporate administration and monitoring of the scheme	Ongoing	Diversity team working with the Office of the Chief Executive	Corporate Planning	Successful implementation of the scheme resulting in actions achieved.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Plans for the publication of the Equality Scheme

This section sets out the action planned to publish the Equality Scheme.

Section9 – Plans for the publication of the Equality Scheme											
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success	Age	Disability	Gender	Race	Religion/ Belief	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
					Publish the Equality Scheme on the House of Commons website, with an Easy Read version. Offer should be made to make this available in different formats, on request.		Diversity team Office of the Chief executive	House-wide communication Information for the public	On website and information about how to provide in different formats available.	✓	✓

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY OF RELEVANT EQUALITY LEGISLATION

Public Duties on equality

Public authorities are required by law to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality. An equality scheme is a strategy for setting out in a timetabled action plan how an organisation will build equality into its activities and how it will monitor and evaluate its performance.

The general and specific duties are described below. These are different for each of the areas – race, disability and gender - partly because of different needs for each of those groups, but also because of the way they have developed over time.

Race

There is a general duty in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Good practice⁸ includes monitoring ethnicity and publishing the findings as follows:

- numbers in post
- applicants for employment, training and promotion
- recipients of training
- those who benefit from or suffer detriment as a result of performance assessment procedures
- those involved in grievance procedures
- those who are the subject of disciplinary procedures
- leavers.

A Race Equality Scheme should set out arrangements for:

- assessing and consulting on the likely impact of proposed policies on the promotion of equality
- monitoring policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality
- publishing the results of such assessments, consultation, and monitoring
- ensuring public access to information and services
- training staff in connection with the equalities' duties imposed
- a review of the assessment of functions for relevance to the duty.

Disability

The general duty in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 is to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others

⁸ The stages we have listed are those set out in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 for equality monitoring staff

- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other persons.

A Disability Equality Scheme needs to include a statement of:

- the way in which disabled people have been involved in the development of the Scheme
- methods for impact assessment
- steps which will be taken towards fulfilling our general duty
- arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment and, where appropriate, delivery of education and functions
- arrangements for putting the information gathered to use, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of the action plan and in preparing subsequent Schemes.

Authorities covered by the Equality Act 2006 must, within three years of their Equality Scheme being published, take the steps set out in its action plan and put into effect the arrangements for gathering and making use of information. An annual report containing a summary of the steps taken under the action plan, the results of its information gathering and the use to which it has put the information must be published.

Gender

The general duties under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as amended by the Equality Act 2006, are to:

- eliminate unlawful (gender-based) discrimination and harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

A Gender Equality Scheme needs to:

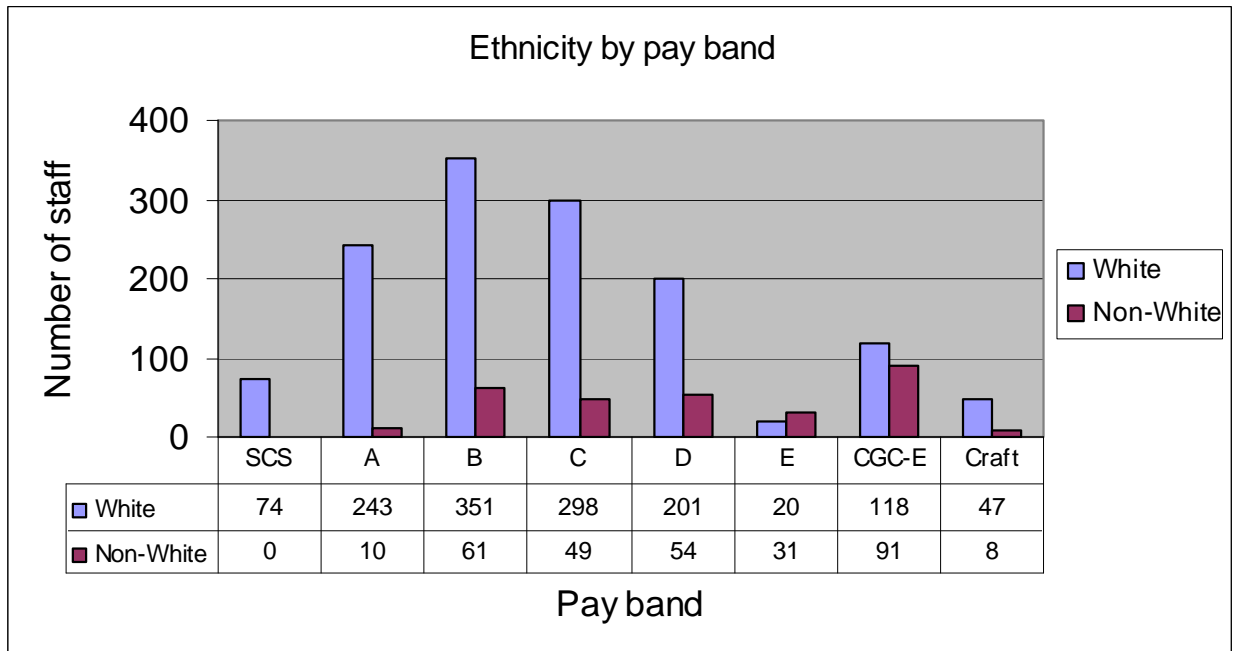
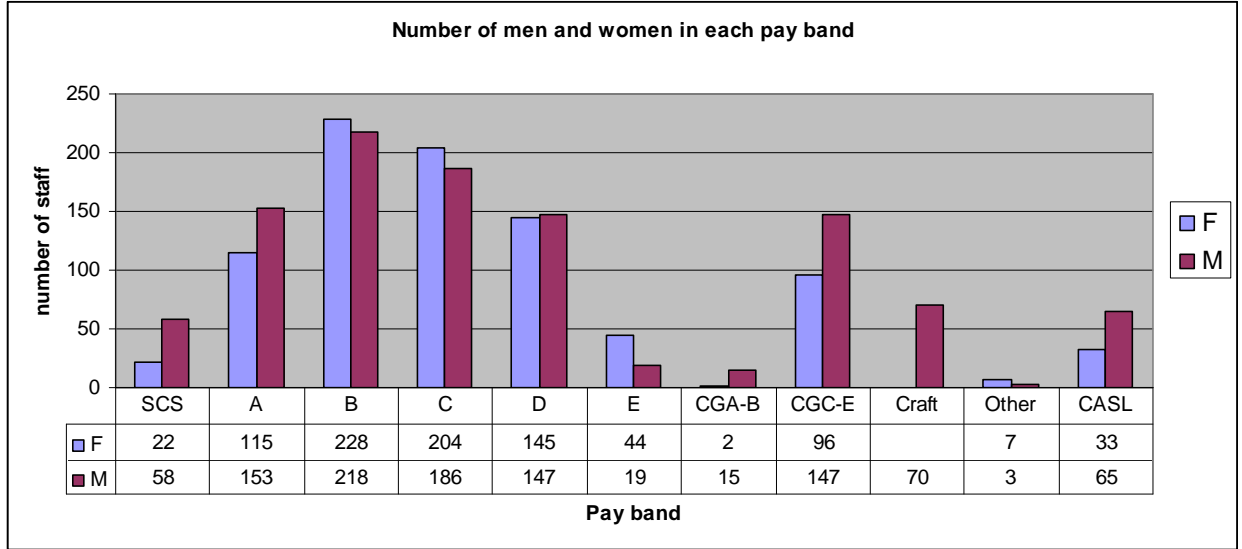
- identify gender equality goals and show the action that will be taken to implement them
- consult employees and stakeholders as appropriate in drawing up the Scheme
- publish the Scheme, setting out goals and planned outcomes
- monitor progress and publish annual reports on progress
- review the Scheme every three years
- develop and publish a policy which must be reviewed at regular intervals on developing equal pay arrangements between women and men – including measures to promote equal pay, to ensure fair promotion and development opportunities, and to tackle occupational segregation
- conduct and publish gender impact assessments
- develop and publish arrangements for identifying the conditions that justify conducting a formal gender impact assessment.

Since 2007, compliance with these general and specific duties has been overseen by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

ANNEX 2: SUMMARY OF MONITORING

This data is taken from statistics compiled on 01.11.2008

Figures exclude unknown data and any areas with data protection issues.



ANNEX 3: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

An outline process for equality impact assessments has been developed with the following stages:

1. List all policies and functions, prioritising them to decide in what order to carry out the assessments.
2. Policy owner to complete the assessment, gathering evidence of relevance to equality and diversity - such as staff equality monitoring data, research into diversity of user group - and information about particular needs of specific groups who may be affected by the policy.
3. Policy owner to identify a panel of staff and customers where relevant (for example on disability), to work through the questions in order to assess the impact of the policy or function on equality. The questions relate to:
 - Negative impact of the policy
 - Different needs, experiences, issues and priorities
 - Differing levels of participation
 - Identification of opportunities to promote equality
 - Justification (if there is any adverse impact that cannot be avoided)
 - Summary of points for action and allocation of responsibility.
4. Progress on action points to be monitored by the Diversity team.