

REVIEW OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SCHEME 2012-2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report reviews the implementation of the current Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Scheme 2012-2015 and points to ways to take D&I forward after the Scheme completion date. It is based on information supplied by over 400 people that completed a survey for the review; 40 members of staff interviewed, either individually or as parts of focus groups; and by documentation requested from the D&I team.

The basis of the Scheme is that equality, diversity and inclusion help to make the House Service respected, effective, efficient, and well informed about what it does. This review looks at progress made in planned action for 2012-2015 within four priority areas:

- Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion within mainstream practice
- Ensuring access and inclusion for employees and visitors
- Providing support, talent management, and career progression
- Recognising leading edge practice in equality, diversity and inclusion

Success in these four key areas were all dependent on, and were to be supported by, senior management leadership. This review was firmly attached to the four priorities of the D&I Scheme, and its objectives were to:

- Assess progress made in implementing the 2012-2015 D&I Scheme including identifying any gaps and areas for improvement
- Identify benefits of having the D&I Scheme to the work of the House Service
- Inform how to take D&I work forward across the organisation.

Findings

The overall finding is that there is now a much greater focus on diversity and inclusion in terms of policy and practice than there was at the beginning of the Scheme, and that senior managers are demonstrating leadership in D&I; departments are mainstreaming this more into their business.

D&I activities such as equality analyses, mainstreaming D&I into business planning, and the Workplace Equality Networks (WENs) are more routine and proactive now, even though progress towards embedding D&I issues within mainstream practice would seem to be uneven and not yet comprehensive across the organisation. For example, experiences of access to flexible working varies across departments.

In general, there appears to be a more relaxed attitude to discussing diversity issues, and they now appear more regularly in mainstream policy such as the People Strategy. There seems to have been a shift in emphasis from dealing with direct discrimination to the less obvious elements of indirect discrimination or unconscious bias. This progress is credited by many to the levels of leadership that, despite not always working in synergy or with effective follow-through, nevertheless demonstrate undeniable commitment. A key factor is the work of the D&I team who are universally praised for their integrity, enthusiasm and strong and effective leadership.

There is a strong perception that improvements have been made in the way staff have been recruited, and 'recruiting in your own image' is now more difficult in formal interviewing, though far from impossible in the granting of informal 'development' opportunities. There is general acceptance to the ideas that equality of opportunity should operate in the promotion process and that access to opportunities for career progression should be open to all. Although the overall statistics of diversity across the House look broadly representative, there were concerns about the representation of women and minority ethnic staff at the senior pay bands and of the inability of any of the current strategies to deal with this issue being successful in the short to medium term. Training and general talent management have their place in addressing this; various mentoring schemes are also seen as a potentially useful but as yet unproven tool. WENs have been active, with the Speaker's and the Clerk's support over virtually the entire period of the Scheme, and have provided a platform for their individual members to make contact, argue a case, and raise issues with more than normal persuasiveness.

There is general agreement that the House is getting more diverse, though at a slow rate, with some small movement in women in areas of senior responsibility, but little in the progression of minority ethnic staff to similar levels. However, with limited turnover at the senior level, there are few opportunities for staff at the lower pay bands to rise in the hierarchy unless there is a concerted effort to recruit across directorates and departments for staff with transferable skills and experience and/or an increase in efforts on talent management and unlocking potential.

There are some overriding constraints that inhibit and prevent action on some equality issues. The special nature of the Palace of Westminster and its listed building status and security needs seemingly prevents some adaptations that would, for example, be supportive of disabled people.

It is felt that, though there is much to do, there is a serious intention in the organisation to change based on better understanding, higher levels of engagement, more collaborative working across boundaries, and greater

progress towards seeing D&I as a 'core requirement'. The House is compared with a variety of organisations through award schemes and has recorded progress in comparison with their standards. Progress towards strategic targets has been monitored but this process has been hampered by the lack of complete statistics from the staff.

There is general agreement that the Scheme has made a visible difference, but that it has not yet run its course. The House Service is at the point where its Scheme is being embedded and requires continued joint action by leadership as well as the committed people throughout the organisation that are determined to push matters forward.

In order to consolidate the gains made in the 2012-2015 Scheme, we suggest that a Diversity and Inclusion Plan should run for the next three years to focus on a select number of key areas, with a major aim of building on and developing what has been achieved to date. The proposed Diversity and Inclusion Plan comprises six main areas of focus, each with an overarching objective. They are:

Leadership and Management

Objective: To strengthen diversity and inclusion leadership, and management, building on what has been achieved in the House Equality Scheme (2009-2011) and Diversity and Inclusion Scheme 2012-2015.

The main action points which will achieve this are:

- Ensure that the Board Diversity Champions, with clear Diversity and Inclusion objectives, are more visible and pro-active.
- Include Diversity objectives in senior and middle managers job descriptions and job plans as relevant, with accountability measures built in, and action followed up and monitored.
- D&I mainstreamed into all departmental business plans which are peer-reviewed through pre-work before the Challenge Meetings.
- Continued support for the development of WENs ensuring their ongoing communication with senior management.

Achieving representation targets at senior level

Objective: To achieve ethnic diversity of staff at SCS level.

The main action points which will achieve this are:

- Developing a strategic approach to recruitment to senior posts – building on the internal work on talent management and also on the wider searches externally. Establishing at an early stage which SCS posts, when they fall vacant, would be suitable for full and open

competition (either internally across the whole House or externally), or which genuinely need to be filled from within.

- Shadowing, secondment, and mentoring programmes for under-represented groups – minority ethnic staff in A pay bands and, separately, women in A pay bands.
- Review of the equality targets. Plan action to make progress towards the senior level equality target (aim for a critical mass of minority ethnic staff in senior grades).

Talent management

Objective: To support career progression opportunities for staff

The main action which will achieve this is:

- Talent management – actively looking for talent and unlocking potential: focus on opportunities to gain wider experience across the House Service including short work experience placements and work shadowing.

Consistency across the House Service

Objective: To build on good practice aiming for a consistent approach across the House Service.

The main action points which will achieve this are:

- Streamlined systems to assess the quality, the scrutiny, and the implementation of equality analyses, with regular reports back from D&I team to policy owners.
- Stronger central commitment to flexible working, ensuring consistency of approach across all departments.
- Implement mandatory D&I training, with systems to record and report regularly on levels of participation, particularly at department level.

Wider organisational culture

Objective: To work on the interface between staff and MPs where diversity and inclusion are relevant to staff

The main action points which will achieve this are:

- Explore how MPs have been briefed about the Respect Policy and suggest how that could be done, if required, for MPs and their staff.
- Take opportunities to communicate the WENs more widely to MPs through communications via the Members App, taking part in the New Members exhibition of services in June 2015 and other communications channels to Members.

Monitoring and quality assurance

Objective: To monitor performance, assess progress, and identify areas for further development

The main action points which will achieve this are:

- Develop a tailored House Service Diversity and Inclusion Assessment Exercise, which draws on acknowledged good practice indicators in comparable assessment frameworks – for departments to submit a report to the D&I team annually, to receive feedback on a) achievements; b) gaps; c) recommendations for consideration.
- Produce regular equality and diversity monitoring data for applicants and for staff that achieve near universality in collection by concentrating on improved data capturing and increasing response rates. Compare progress against other organisations including other parliaments where available and relevant. Data to be made available regularly to Management Board, and easily accessible for those carrying out relevant Equality Analyses.
- Diversity data for customers – analyse and communicate more effectively and routinely the customer data that is collected for Visitor Services.
- Include Diversity and Inclusion within the Continuous Improvement programme, for example when considering learning and development and equality analyses of programmes.