

The House of Commons and Parliamentary Digital Service D&I Strategy 2019-2022

Foreword

At the House of Commons, we are committed to providing a positive and inclusive environment where people are valued for the essential skills and experience that they bring. We know that when people can be themselves, they are happier and more motivated. While we have made progress in recent years, there is still much to do to ensure that Parliament is a more accessible, diverse and inclusive organisation. Our aim is to reflect the nation we serve by employing highly talented people from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that the services we provide and Parliament itself is more representative and inclusive, where our people can thrive. With passion and dedication, we can and will make this happen.

Rt Hon John Bercow MP
The Speaker of the House of Commons

People and culture make the House of Commons a great place to work. We value diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences and recognise that each person is unique. It takes a range of skills and experience to keep the House of Commons running effectively, from catering to communications, maintenance to marketing. That's why the House of Commons is committed to the development of every member of staff. We want to help them to perform their roles to a high standard, develop broader skills and knowledge and we want to support longer-term career planning. Workplace flexibility is important, and we offer a range of ways to do this. We are committed to building a diverse and representative workforce and we welcome and encourage applications from everyone.

Dr John Benger
The Clerk of the House of Commons

Setting the Direction

The strategic aim of the House of Commons is ‘supporting a thriving parliamentary democracy’. The case for a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy underpins this aim and is based on the principle that democracy is stronger when it is inclusive and reflects all the people it seeks to serve. In supporting a thriving parliamentary democracy, it is imperative that the staff of the House reflect the people we serve and that we deliver services which reflect the diversity of our democracy.

Our challenge:

- At the senior pay bands women and BAME people are underrepresented. Seven per cent of senior staff are BAME, it should be 13 per cent, 38 per cent of senior staff are women, it should be 47 per cent. We will set targets for the representation of the House, benchmarking the data against the economically active population. For ‘mobile’ pay bands we will set targets based on the national population, for ‘non-mobile’ pay bands we will set targets based on the London population.
- According to our recent Staff Survey, staff with disabilities have the highest rates of experiencing discrimination and bullying and harassment and are less likely to agree that the House Service provides an inclusive environment. This is followed by BAME staff and in particular Black or Black British staff.
- The contributors to the Independent Inquiry by Dame Laura Cox into bullying and harassment of House of Commons staff gave insights regarding the prevailing culture, the incidence of harassment and bullying and sexual misconduct and the availability of support. The report highlighted an institutional failure in this regard and the gendered nature of much of the bullying and harassment reported. Taken together with the results from the Staff Survey, which suggested that 18 per cent of staff had experienced bullying or harassment in the past 12 months, most of it at the hands of other staff, and three per cent had experienced sexual harassment, we clearly have a long way to go before we can claim that we have an inclusive workplace. Work is underway to respond to the overall findings of the Inquiry and its specific recommendations.
- Though we have made progress in service provision, there is still more work to do to engage hard to reach communities and to reap the benefits of D&I. We must never underestimate our influence as contributors to diverse and inclusive change, on and off the Parliamentary Estate. We need to ensure that we role model best practice, challenging our customers, contractors and providers to embrace and deliver on D&I.

The House Service continues to strive for better outcomes and D&I is an enabler in this respect. Research shows that diversity of background and life experience bring different insights, create challenge and encourage change and innovation. This in turn produces more accountable and trusted services and better decisions, as they are more attuned to the needs and interests of all our communities. An inclusive culture will help us to attract the kind of diverse, expert and dedicated talent that is needed to deliver our outcomes, as it engages all staff more effectively, regardless of their background, and thus leads to greater productivity.

For the benefits of diversity and inclusion to be felt, we must create an environment where differences of thought and outlook are not only respected but expected. We want all staff to feel that they can be themselves at work, valued for the distinct perspective that they bring, and that they are able to access opportunities, irrespective of their age, disability, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, sex, sexuality or socio-economic background. Feeling included is good for us as individuals, it's good for teams, it's good for the people and communities we serve and the services we deliver.

2018 marked 100 years since the Representation of the People Act was passed, which allowed the first women, and all men over 21, to vote for the first time. The Parliament we serve has, over the centuries, seen many battles to win rights and freedoms, overseeing the abolition of the slave trade, tackling child labour, regulating factories, extending the franchise and more recently enacting the Equality Act 2010. The 2017 General Election gave Britain its most diverse House of Commons in history, which we are all proud of. However, our commitment to D&I is not contingent on this fact and, no matter the composition of the Members, the House service will continue to ensure that D&I is a key priority.

Our ambition is to make the best use of the talent that exists in all parts of society and to lead the way on D&I. The 2019-2022 D&I Strategy emphasises that diversity and inclusion are equal priorities of the strategy; to continue to increase the representation of all groups in the House, to make D&I central to service delivery and to build an inclusive culture, challenging and dismantling barriers, championing and reaping the benefits of inclusion.



Diversity

The House of Commons needs to attract talent from a wide range of backgrounds. Progress on increasing the representation amongst women and BAME staff in the most senior grades has been slow. We will continue to monitor progress by grade, team and functions, benchmarking performance through internal and external indices and measures. We will develop the existing talent programme and build a leadership programme where D&I is central, and we will continue to review our recruitment processes. We are committed to the Workplace Equality Networks (WENs) who play an important role in providing a safe space, representing the views of underrepresented groups and scrutinising the progress we are making.

Inclusion

Inclusion is an indicator and product of good leadership and management, so we will embed inclusive behaviours within organisational and individual performance measures. There will be a focus on inclusive leadership skills and work to promote the positive behaviours that make people feel more included. We will not tolerate negative behaviours which lead to discrimination, bullying and harassment. We are committed to Parliament being a place where people with different skills, beliefs, talents and backgrounds can thrive. Therefore, we have developed the House of Commons behaviours to help us focus on quality, delivery and inclusion. This strategy will focus on the collaboration behaviour. It is only by working together that we gain a multiplier effect and impact, which will enable us to achieve our D&I ambition.

Accountability, Performance and Business Planning

Accountability is critical to driving actions and improvements in outcomes. To ensure that D&I is central to all business planning, both at the corporate level and in Teams, a Corporate D&I Action Plan will be developed, and a D&I Steering Group will be set up. Performance against the Corporate D&I Action Plan will be monitored quarterly by the D&I Steering Group who will review and assess progress. The Commons Executive Board will review the D&I Action Plan as part of their quarterly performance review and will conduct an annual review of the programme of work for the House of Commons Commission.

In line with our commitment to inclusive leadership, Board members will ensure that they have D&I leadership objectives and D&I objectives for their Teams. Each Team will have a D&I Action Plan, which will include objectives from the Corporate D&I Action Plan and actions identified locally as a result of staff consultation and analysis of diversity monitoring data.

D&I is well established across House Teams, although practice varies. The business planning exercise should ensure that all Teams and business units have plans that reinforce and deliver on the D&I strategic objectives. Though ultimate responsibility for the D&I Strategy rests with the Commons Executive Board, to ensure success we will all need to demonstrate an active commitment to championing D&I.

The D&I Profile

The D&I workforce data shows that the House is moving broadly in the right direction with regards to the working population. Below is a snap shot of the key areas where work needs to be focused. There is still more work needed to ensure that diversity is reflected at senior grades and across Teams. The disability data in particular shows low completion rates, which, coupled with the results from the Staff Survey, shows lack of confidence in the House amongst staff with disabilities. For further details, including information on other characteristics, see the [D&I Monitoring Report](#).

Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff	Staff with Disabilities	Female Staff
<u>House of Commons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19% • Prefer not to say 14% <u>SCS & A grade</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7% 	<u>House of Commons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% • Unknown 62% 	<u>House of Commons</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% <u>SCS</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38%
<u>Civil Service</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12% 	<u>Civil Service</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% 	<u>Civil Service</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54%
<u>Economically Active Population</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally 13% • London 38% 	<u>Economically Active Population</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12% 	<u>Economically Active Population</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47%

Achievements – 2015-2018

The 2015-2018 D&I Strategy focused on six priority areas identifying key objectives. The achievements have included:

Leadership and Management

- Introduced D&I objectives for the members of the Commons Executive Board.
- Introduced D&I objectives into staff Individual Performance Reviews.
- Delivered on the Speaker's BAME Challenge Initiative by working with 50 external organisations on a practical toolkit to support BAME careers.
- Progressed five places in the 2018 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index to 23rd. Named 4th within the Government Sector section of the index.
- Signed up to the Stonewall Trans Allies Programme.
- Listed in the Business in the Community's Best 100 Employers for Race.
- Received the National Autistic Society's Autism Friendly Award.
- Re-accredited with the Action on Hearing Loss Louder than Words Charter Mark.
- Accreditation in the Business Disability Forums, Disability Standard Silver Award.
- In July 2016, the Commission recognised the House's collective responsibility for enhancing representation and inclusion by formally taking note of the *Good*

Parliament report. The Speaker established the Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion to lead on the recommendations from the report.

- In July 2017, the House established the Women and Equalities Committee as a permanent select committee of the House.
- The House is supporting an Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit.

Achieving Representation Targets at Senior Levels

- Tackling the barriers for women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people moving into senior roles through the Diversifying Senior Leadership Programme.
- Introduced the Press Pause process for recruitment of members of the Strategy Delivery Group.
- ParliREACH Workplace Equality Network introduced the Reverse Mentoring initiative.
- In June 2018, the Liaison Committee recommended that “for Committees represented on the Liaison Committee, other than in circumstances where there are compelling reasons for an all-male panel, a panel of three or more witnesses should normally include at least one woman, when the witnesses involved are not specific office-holders such as Ministers or heads of key public sector organisations falling within the remit of the Department the Committee is scrutinising. Our aim is that, by the end of this Parliament, at least 40% of discretionary witnesses should be female”.
- The EU Statutory Instruments Committee, established in July 2018, is the first select committee with a requirement for a gender-balanced membership.

Talent Management

- Delivered the Talent Management Programme pilot which has sought to accelerate staff development and support our drive for a culture of high performance and engagement, where staff can realise their potential.
- Further developed the Apprentices Programme.
- Extended the places on the Speaker’s Parliamentary Placement Scheme for people with disabilities.
- Continued support for the Operation Black Vote mentor scheme.
- Implemented the BAME Internship Programme.
- Piloted a new social mobility work experience in CCT, offering work experience to 20 school and university students in conjunction with the Social Mobility Foundation, Villiers Park charity and the City University.
- Implemented the second year of direct graduate recruitment in CCT with widening access partner, leading to greater diversity of applicants and successful candidates in fast stream placements.

Consistency across the House Service

- Rolled out unconscious bias training.
- Continued and expanded the annual Diversity and Inclusion Awards for the House.
- Co-ordinated the work of the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse and its 200 members.
- Launched our fifth Workplace Equality Network, ParliON, whose aim is to raise awareness of issues round socio-economic inclusion.
- Continued the support for the Workplace Equality Networks.
- Developed a new workplace adjustments process for Members, Members' staff and staff of the House of Commons and Digital Service.
- Piloted BSL live interpretation, conducted in Westminster Hall alongside testing of live subtitling by the broadcasting team - lessons learnt from the pilot will be taken forward.
- The Select Committee Engagement Team has embedded good practice by engaging people with disabilities in the inquiry process, ensuring their voices have been heard.

Wider Organisational Culture

- The House agreed on a new Behaviour Code, Bullying and Harassment Policy and Sexual Misconduct Policy.
- In March 2017, the Commons Reference Group endorsed Mr Speaker's approach to allowing children up to the age of five in the division lobbies and into and through the Chamber whilst a vote is underway.
- The House passed a motion in February 2018 in favour of allowing Members who have had a baby or adopted a child to vote by proxy. The Procedure Committee has recommended an approach and during a General Debate in September the Leader of the House promised to bring forward a substantive motion "as soon as possible".
- A review was undertaken for the provision of a crèche facility on the Parliamentary Estate. An emergency childcare service is being piloted until December 2019.
- In July 2017, Mr Speaker allowed male members to be called in the Chamber without ties and introduced a business dress regime: Table Clerks ceased to wear court dress and wigs in the Chamber.
- Production of an accessible Guide to Procedure is underway and has been published on the website. The Procedure Committee has published proposals for gender-neutral Standing Orders.
- The '10-year dead' rule was revised by Mr Speaker in July 2016, whereby only individuals who have been dead for at least a decade are represented in artworks in the Palace.
- Three series of the Your Story, Our History films have been delivered over the last three years focusing on Race, LGBT and Women's legislation. They have had over 1.4 million views to date.

- Delivered a community outreach programme focusing on the young and marginalised – raising our delivery rate from 45% to over 80% with these groups.
- Developed a Welsh language policy and employed our first full time officer based in Wales. One in five community sessions are now delivered in Welsh.
- Our Empower resources for adults with learning disabilities was relaunched and has been used with over 150 ALD groups.
- Key learning resources for schools have been reviewed and updated for SEND groups to make them more inclusive.
- We have held special SEND friendly days for schools in the Education Centre.
- The first six months of the Vote 100 Programme has engaged communities across the UK in conversations about the gender representation and equality in public office.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- Implemented the annual D&I monitoring report.
- Implemented the annual Staff Survey.
- Ensured the analysis of D&I data on recruitment campaigns.
- A breakdown of witnesses by gender is now published as part of the annual sessional return for each committee and consideration is being given to how this might be extended.
- Established a requirement for the House Service to provide D&I data on select committee witnesses at the end of each session and establish annual rolling targets for witness representation.

Our Objectives 2019-2022

Our commitment to D&I is grounded in, but not limited to, our responsibilities under the equality legislation. The Equality Act 2010 sets out the ways in which everyone is protected by the legislation. Our commitment to D&I is embedded into our strategic objectives and we will monitor and deliver the objectives through the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

Objective 1: Facilitating Effective Scrutiny and Debate

Action: Representation

- Increase the diversity of staff and public engaged in the work of the select and general committees, including monitoring the diversity of witness panels and specialist advisers, promoting mixed panels by drawing on the expertise and experience of engagement professionals across the House and Digital Service.
- Support the Speaker's Reference Group and proactively help it to identify actions to progress the recommendations identified in the 'Good Parliament' Report.

Action: Targeted Activities

- Ensure workplace adjustments for Members are in place in a timely manner.

- Ensure that the coverage of parliamentary proceedings take account of D&I with regard to content, language, accessibility and presentation and that any changes in coverage take account of D&I.

Action: Monitoring

- Monitor the diversity of a range of scrutiny and debate activities as identified by the IPU Gender Sensitive Parliament audit.

Action: Collaboration

- Set up a virtual Diversity and Inclusion Hub to enable us to both develop and share good and best practice.

Objective 2: Involving and Inspiring the Public

Action: Representation

- Continue to target hard to reach groups (young and marginalised) and communities across the UK to ensure that they are included in our Participation activity.

Action: Targeted Activities

- Ensure we are reaching a diverse BAME audience through our Participation activity, including through the development of our audience insight work.
- Build on the work on accessible tours to continue to take account of the diverse needs of our visitors.
- Building on the recent legislation, develop a programme which focuses on modern slavery and the supply chain.
- Review the Participation Welsh language policy to ensure that our services are meeting the policy.

Action: Monitoring

- Establish a monitoring framework to measure the breadth of our services to the public.

Action: Collaboration

- Build diverse partnerships to support UK Parliament week.
- Review key anniversaries to ensure a diverse audience are reflected.
- Harness the work of the Public Engagement Group to ensure that there is a consistent approach to D&I, and to share best practice and feedback on the experiences of engagement from diverse audiences.

Objective 3: Securing Parliament's Future

Action: Representation

- Ensure that consultation on Restoration and Renewal (R&R), the Northern Estate Programme (NEP) and other major programmes fully considers the needs and views of underrepresented groups and takes active steps to include them.

Action: Targeted Activities

- Measure our performance through the use of external benchmarking indices such as Stonewall and Disability Confident.
- Continue to develop the Speaker's Parliamentary Placement Scheme (SPPS).
- Build a strategy around supplier diversity and ensure that the money we spend through our procurement activities progresses diversity and inclusion.
- Identify opportunities to have more impact outside of London.
- Digital software and hardware radically remove workplace barriers and are a key enabler for all groups to work effectively. Building on their achievements, the Parliamentary Digital Service needs to continue to take account of D&I ensuring that it is mainstreamed into its strategy and delivery.

Action: Monitoring

- Take forward a programme of culture audits that help us to understand how culture and values are impacting on workplace behaviours, including reviewing the access restrictions on the Parliamentary Estate.
- Continue to support the R&R Programme, NEP and other programmes and projects, embedding the Inclusive Design Strategy and Standards and ensuring accessibility is a central consideration.

Action: Collaboration

- Further develop the Diversity and Inclusion Champion role, linking this to the D&I Strategy.
- Support the WENs and help to build their capacity so that they are able to offer the level of policy and implementation support that is needed by the House.
- Ensure collaboration with the House of Lords and Digital Service on D&I activities.

Objective 4: Creating a Diverse and Inclusive Working Environment

Action: Representation

- Set targets for representation of House staff with regards to diversity, benchmarking the data against the economically active population.

Action: Targeted Activities

- Implement the actions arising from the Dame Laura Cox Report.
- Target action to tackle underrepresentation at senior levels, including Band A.
- Continue to progress through the levels of the Disability Confident Scheme, guaranteeing an interview to people with disabilities if they meet the minimum criteria for the job.
- Target action focusing on staff with disabilities, in light of the Staff Survey results.
- Target action on gender identity, to build awareness.
- Continue our work to address the gender pay gap overall, including the SCS bonus pay gap.
- Work jointly with the WENs, TUS and the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service on mental health awareness.
- Improve faith and belief literacy so that people of all faiths and none are able to bring their whole selves to work.

- Continue to develop the Talent Management Programme and develop a leadership development programme.
- Use the lessons learnt from the Diversifying Senior Leadership Programme on recruitment to review recruitment processes.
- Respond to the findings and progress actions relating to the Equal Pay Audit.
- Further embed the implementation of the IPR review.

Action: Monitoring

- Establish measures of social economic status with the aim of monitoring the social economic status of staff.
- Continue to monitor and analyse discrimination, bullying and harassment and sexual misconduct through our Staff Survey results.
- Ensure that the Parliamentary Digital Service D&I data (within the parameters of the guidelines on publishing D&I data) is disaggregated from the overall data and broken down by protected characteristic and grade.

Action: Collaboration

- Ensure people can record their diversity information easily and create an environment where people can feel confident doing so. In line with good practice, we will set ourselves stretching targets for completion rates for diversity monitoring data.

Action: Inclusive Behaviours

- Establish quality standards for inclusive leadership.
- Further embed inclusive behaviours within individual performance measures.
- Further develop the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme in relation to bullying and harassment, sexual misconduct, culture and the Parliamentary Behaviour Code. Promote the positive behaviours we expect of all and an inclusive culture, challenging unacceptable behaviours.
- Learning from work of the Parliamentary Digital Service on sub-cultures, develop our cultural competence and general understanding of D&I and unconscious bias.