

**House of Commons Service
Single 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 action plan to address race, gender and disability equality. Although the general duties apply to the three groups outlined above, the House of Commons Service values all staff. Principles of equality of opportunity and promoting positive attitudes apply to everyone on the Parliamentary Estate, regardless of race, disability, sex, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, or any other irrelevant factor.

The Scheme has been approved by the House of Commons Commission. We actively seek involvement of interested parties. If you would like to comment on the Scheme, please contact the Corporate Diversity team:

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this Equality Scheme is to put into action the commitment of the House of Commons Service to equality, diversity and inclusion. The Scheme supports the work of the House Service, linking into the Corporate Business Plan in its objectives and should result in:

- making the House Service an employer of choice where everyone feels motivated, engaged and valued for who they are and what they bring to the organisation
- making Parliament more accessible for the widest range of people
- improving service delivery for Members, staff, visitors and the public.

We believe that this planned approach will take us forward in a more co-ordinated manner, and by mainstreaming equality and diversity work already in progress we will make the best use of resources, deliver value for money and keep in line with best practice.

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 direction and as an example of good practice in operation.

'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

¹ Equality and Diversity Statement, House of Commons Staff Handbook, June 2009

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

2. Background and Context

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 Director Generals 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 Service

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 Service Single 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 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 2008 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 its work.

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

3. 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 Diversity Facilitator. Its approach has been to embed the principles of equality and diversity in everything we do, ensuring they are considered at the inception stage of policies, procedures, practices and projects. 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 in areas which would make the most difference – 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

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.

Completed actions in this area include:

- guidance for staff and managers was 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
- 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 has been 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 were run to ensure returns on ethnicity 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*' policy⁴ 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 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

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

2005 and revised in 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 sifted 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 Resource Management & Development 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 for managers (‘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 and December 2009. We try to ensure we maintain the Standard and will undergo further assessment. 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 encouraging equality and diversity within these processes, we seek to encourage suppliers to promote fair employment practices. Assessments of suppliers' practices are carried out by the Diversity team following submissions of pre-qualification questionnaires.

4. Gathering evidence: diversity monitoring in the House

The House of Commons Service currently collects and analyses diversity monitoring data on ethnicity, disability, gender, age and work patterns 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 and catering groups.

4.1 Ethnicity

At the time of writing the scheme⁵ the number of House Service staff is 2,122 and of these, 1,850 have disclosed their ethnicity:

- 21% of those disclosed are of ethnic minority origin which includes staff from Asian, black, Chinese, mixed and other backgrounds

⁵ Statistics are of 23.11.09 unless otherwise stated

- representation of ethnic minority staff varies across departments, with the Department of Facilities having the highest percentage (34%) and DCCS the lowest (9%)
- outside catering bands, most ethnic minority staff are in the lower pay bands: 61% at pay band E, 24% at band D, 17% at band C, 17% at band B and 7% at band A. There are currently no ethnic minority staff in SCS bands
- within catering bands, ethnic minority staff in the lower pay bands, E - C is 46%, with much lower representation in the more senior pay bands A – B (6%).

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 people who are from an ethnic minority currently stands at 32%.

4.2 Disability

Disability status information has been requested from House staff only since December 2007. After several campaigns, information is now available for 1,382 staff (65%)⁶:

- 75 staff have identified themselves as having a disability, which is 5.4% for whom the information is available
- 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 Service staff. Currently, however, there is a slightly higher percentage of men than women in the organisation.

- The workforce is currently 54% male : 46% female

⁶ House staff statistics 23.11.09

- There is departmental variation, with the lowest percentage of women in PICT (31%) and the highest in Resources (64%)
- Representation of women varies across the pay bands, but generally women are most highly represented in the lower pay bands: 58% of band E staff are women, 42% of band D, 52% of band C, 50% of band B, 45% of band A. Female representation drops to 30% within the Senior Commons Service bands
- 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

52% of staff in the Civil Service are women with 33% at Senior Civil Service grades (against a target of 39%)

4.4 Age

There is a full spread of ages within the House Service from under 19 years to 65+. 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 0.4%
- 11% of staff are 60+ although this is lower in Resources and PICT. This has increased since the House has moved to a no retirement age policy (retirement age of 65 remains for SCS staff)
- 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.

- 223 (12%) of permanent staff work part-time⁷
- 81% of this figure are women

⁷ This sample includes permanent and fixed term staff only.

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.

5. Development of the House Service Single Equality Scheme

5.1 Consultation

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 has been supplemented by **public consultation** on the draft scheme. Public consultation took 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 were 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 Parliamentary 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 visitors is currently not permissible anywhere on the estate, unless under extremely exceptional 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 currently form 45% of the workforce, the percentage of female senior staff (band A and upwards) is only 27%
- following recommendations by the Tebbit Review to restructure, 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 in this area are few. Consequently, 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 Service 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.
- The number of staff recruited aged under 25 is disproportionately low.

5.3.5 Findings: Religion and belief

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.

There is an Anglican chapel on the premises in which services from other denominations can be held. A quiet/contemplation room has been made available to everyone and is used as a non-religious facility. This could be promoted more.

Provision is made for a range of dietary needs in the various catering outlets.

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.

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

6. 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, being willing to proactively engage with equality and diversity issues, challenging inappropriate behaviours, 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 Service 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 more widely available as usage has reduced since congestion charges began (although car parking for disabled staff of all pay bands is made available) 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. a House-wide flexible working strategy, access to professional qualifications
 - 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.

7. 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 and training will be given to action owners.

8. Arrangements for ensuring public access to information and services

Information for the public is a priority for the House of Commons Service. It will promote and continue to develop a culture of openness, transparency and customer focus both internally and externally. To demonstrate the House Service'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 Service 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 Service 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 Service'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.

9. Feedback on the implementation of the Single 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

10. Plans for publication of the Equality Scheme

The House of Commons Service 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.

11. Monitoring and review of the House Equality Scheme

Progress against the House Service Single 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.

12. House Service Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

Introduction

This first draft of the House Service Single 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 individual equality areas.

Section 1: 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
1.1 Communicate the Equality Scheme throughout the organisation and ensure its visibility through a variety of publications, articles etc. Equality and diversity messages must be clear, easy to understand and in a variety of formats to reach the widest possible audience.	May 09 then ongoing	OCE and departmental Communications teams	House-wide comms; Staff Survey/IIIP Action Plan; Speaker's Conference	Visibility of articles and messages in different formats
1.2 Improve websites (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 and includes information on facilities and job opportunities for people with disabilities.	Work to begin Jun 09	Internet and intranet project managers; Hays Recruitment	Corporate Business Plan Internet and intranet projects; Recruitment strategy; Disability Standard	Internationally accepted access standards met. Positive feedback particularly from disabled users/disabled job seekers

Section 1: Accessibility and communications

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
<p>1.3 Continue work to improve access and facilities across the Estate for people with disabilities; clarify and publicise provision for vehicles drop-off points, exceptional car parking, emergency procedures.</p> <p>a) Repairs which would hinder accessibility and facilities for disabled people to be prioritised.</p> <p>b) Temporary measures while work is taking place.</p>	Ongoing	DDA Project Board; SAA; PED; Fire Safety Manager	DDA Project Board work; Disability Standard Fire safety; Visitor Services review; Policy reviews for legislative changes	Positive comments from visitors, the public, Members and staff; emergency plans in place; repairs carried out as priority
<p>1.4 Improve experience of disabled visitors by ensuring individual, particular needs are met. This can be achieved by</p> <p>a) providing assistive technology such as induction loops, mobility aids, etc</p> <p>b) setting up a staff volunteer scheme to greet visitors and liaise with other teams to meet visitors' requirements</p> <p>c) consider specific points made during the consultation with disabled people regarding disability access to the buildings</p>	Oct 09 April 2010	DDA Project Board; Dept of Facilities	DDA Project Board work; Visitor Services review; Disability Standard; policy reviews for legislative changes	Volunteer Scheme in place; database of assistive technology set up and in use;
1.5 Organise training to provide a pool of British Sign Language interpreters. Publicise scheme to Members and staff	Oct 09	Diversity team	Visitor Services review	Interpreters trained, available and in use.

Section 1: Accessibility and communications

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
1.6 Ensure police and security staff consistently provide quality service and welcome to disabled customers passing through security. Disabled visitors treated appropriately.	Ongoing	SAA Directorate; Met Police	Visitor Services review; Disability Standard; policy reviews for legislative changes	Training in place ; mystery customer satisfaction
1.7 Improve communications of the availability of staff quiet/contemplation room through staff notices, newsletters and appropriate equality action group.	Jun 09	Diversity team	Staff Survey Action Plan: cross-reference with fairness and respect	Usage numbers and awareness increased (surveys)

Section 2: 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
2.1 Engage the local and wider community through: a) outreach work, work experience schemes (such as Mr Speaker's Apprenticeship) voluntary activities, etc. b) promotion of the House of Commons as a potential employer to the wider, diverse population through placements, open days, career fairs.	Dec 09	DIS Outreach team; Parliamentary Education Service; Diversity team; Recruitment team	Outreach strategies; corporate social responsibility (Diversity team); rcruitment strategy	Increased involvement in these activities. Increased interest in recruitment campaigns from under-represented groups
2.2 Improve signage and information around the Parliamentary Estate a) visitor leaflets available in a variety of formats including large print b) Braille, large print and easy to read signage beside works of art, tactile and printed c) signage outside clearly directing visitors from	Dec 09	PED; Visitor Services	DDA Project Board work; Visitor Services review; Disability Standard	Accessible signage in place at strategic points. Positive feedback from disabled visitors.

Section 2: Public access to information about services

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
<p>both directions d) signage inside clear, consistent, in good repair while complying to English Heritage standard e) improvements to signage and directions from outside Visitors Centre to Westminster Hall</p>				
<p>2.3 Tours a) Consider targeted tours for disabled people, exploring the options for tours outside normal hours: touch tours for visually impaired people, slower moving tours for mobility challenged and deaf people, giving them time to rest or consult information leaflets. b) Provide opportunities to rest or sit down at specific points c) Ensure that there is always a supply of tour brochures and leaflets d) Make available a written transcript of any audio tours e) Ensure adequate accessible toilets available and well signposted f) Update the 'touch' model of the Palace of Westminster and move to an accessible area</p>	Apr 10	Visitor Services; PES; Diversity team; PED	Visitor Services review; Disability Standard	<p>Some targeted tours offered, with an initial pilot providing feedback.</p> <p>Positive feedback from disabled visitors.</p>
<p>2.4 Explore provision of some facility for people with hearing impairments in the Chambers (public galleries). For example, screens</p>	Oct 09	Dept of Facilities; SAA;	Visitor Services review	Screens or other facility in place

Section 2: Public access to information about services

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
displaying 'headlines' of discussions.		DCCS		
2.5 Improve advice to Members about services available for use with their disabled visitors, such as a signing service and translation services; provide expert advice from the Diversity team.	Oct 09	Members' Centre; Diversity team	Visitor Services review	Advice in place. Positive feedback from Members and visitors (Services to Members' survey)

Section 3: 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

Policies and functions				
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
3.1 Establish the process for equality screening and impact assessment (See Annex 3). a) list all policies and prioritise in terms of high, medium, low relevance for equality b) set up centralised system to monitor and collate results of equality screening, impact assessments and actions taken.	Oct 09	Diversity team; HR Policy team	Risk management; Disability Standard; HR strategy; Common Ground work	Process in place and piloted in a sample of departments
3.2 Officer Status Working Group – re-assess findings in view of changes such as congestion charge affecting use of car park	Oct 09	Diversity team	Staff survey action plan; IiP action plan	Any recommendations reported to RMG.
3.3 Establish a mechanism for addressing harassment between people in different groups on the Parliamentary Estate.	July 09	Dept of Resources	Member/ staff relationships project	Procedures in placed; behavioural policies such as

Policies and functions				
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
				Valuing Others extended as required
3.4 Consider extending HR recruitment advice to Members – drafting advertisements, forming job descriptions and interviewing (this action may need reviewing on establishment of Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority)	July 09	PAS	Improving services to Members	Members' satisfaction improved
3.5 Carry out an updated childcare provision feasibility study for Members	Sept 09	Diversity team Admin Committee	Improving services to Members	Study carried out; recommendations presented to Commission
3.6 Further build on current good practices in ways of involving all sections of the public in consultations and submissions of evidence to Committees	Nov 09	DCCS – Committee Office	Corporate Plan	Evidence of inclusion of diverse groups in consultation.
3.7 Seek evidence that equality principles within the procurement vetting process are leading to the selection of suppliers who promote fair employment practices.	Sept 09	Commercial Services Directorate	Procurement pre-qualification questionnaire; Disability Standard	Equality practices standard part of procurement criteria
3.8 Carry out the key steps required to participate in Employers' Forum for Disability Standard: a) internal information gathering b) external diagnostic	March – Sept 09	Diversity team; Diversity Champion; Action Owners	Corporate Plan	Performance in Disability Standard meeting own target set.

Policies and functions				
Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
c) assisted action plan d) assessment.				Action Plan in place.
3.9 Prioritise the needs of disabled Members and staff who require particular equipment, facilities, computer programmes, etc. to ensure that they can carry out their work	Jun 09	PICT; Dept of Facilities Departments	Corporate Plan	Procedure in place, communicated & implemented. Increased satisfaction of users.

Section 4: 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
4.1 Establish and communicate that career development opportunities are fair to all and encourage under-represented groups to participate.	Sept 09	CLD; Career Adviser; line managers	Corporate Plan L&D strategy; Staff survey/ IiP Action Plan; Capability agenda	Evidence of increased diversity in development programmes and career coaching
4.2 Ensure when opportunities for temporary promotion arise, that policy and procedures are adhered to, to ensure fairness towards permanent posts.	Apr 09	Recruiting Manager; Senior HR advisors	HR strategy; workforce planning; management guidance	Evidence of policy and procedures being applied.
4.3 Provide staff in Catering & Retail Services and cleaning teams with opportunities for access to work experience in other activities	Apr 10	Diversity team; Dept of Facilities;	Corporate Plan; Capability programme;	Examples of these development opportunities

Section 4: Staff responsibilities and training

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
		Senior HR Managers	Dept of Facilities business plan	taken place.
4.4 Explore opportunities for training bands for existing staff who may wish to progress.	June 10	Director of HR; Resource Management Group	Corporate Plan - Management Board initiative: cross-dept moves	Scheme in place across the House with evidence of take-up.
4.5 Review all training to ensure appropriate equality and diversity messages: induction, generic and management training. Leadership and management development to contain equality and diversity elements as well as the principles being integrated into programmes.	Jan 10	Corporate Learning and Diversity	Corporate Plan; Learning & Development strategy; Capability programme	Review conducted and recommendations implemented
4.6 Develop series of 'Toolbox Talks' on diversity issues, e.g. managing time off for religious holidays; equality legislation.	Oct 09 – Dec 11	CLD; Diversity team	Learning & Development strategy	Programme of talks in place; improved Staff Survey rating
4.7 Introduce new equality, diversity and inclusion workshops for managers and non managers. Ensure all staff participate	April 09	CLD; RMG Line managers	Staff Survey Action Plan; HR remodelling.	Programme of workshops in place; improved Staff Survey rating
4.8 All members of selection boards to have undertaken appropriate training and practice with regular refreshers.	Dec 09	Recruitment manager; Corporate Learning &	Corporate Plan; Recruitment review;	All participants in recruitment undertaken full training or

Section 4: Staff responsibilities and training

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
		Development		refresher
4.9 Disability awareness training to be mandatory for a) customer facing staff b) line managers c) security and police managers (own providers) Offer training to Members and their staff Provide other support and guidance such as tailored workshops and guidance	Oct 09	CLD; line managers; SAA Directorate	Corporate Plan Learning & Development strategy; HR remodelling	Policy and programme in place; customer service improved
4.10 Check equality values are mainstreamed into job descriptions	Apr 10	Recruitment team; Senior/dept HR teams; Diversity team; Line managers	ASR briefings and guidance	Equality and diversity embedded into job performance.
4.11 New appraisal system will be a purposeful dialogue with measurable objectives. Equality values discussed as part of regular performance reviews. Managers should be appropriately trained	Apr 10		HR remodelling	Equality and diversity embedded into job performance; positive feedback on new system.
4.12 Line managers educated to encourage under-represented groups to take advantage of development opportunities. Consider providing development aimed at specific job categories where there is relatively	Mar 10	Line managers; Career Adviser; CLD; Comms team.	Corporate Plan; Learning & Development strategy; Capability	Increased take-up and successful completion of development

Section 4: Staff responsibilities and training

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
<p>high representation of ethnic minority staff and limited movement or progression. Publish positive examples of people who have been successful in progressing in the organisation especially those from 'non-traditional' backgrounds.</p>			<p>programme; House-wide comms</p>	<p>opportunities by under-represented groups; increased numbers within under-represented groups changing job/being promoted; role models publicised</p>
<p>4.13 Equality and diversity awareness to be included in the induction programmes for staff of Members.</p>	<p>Sept 09</p>	<p>Diversity team; DR Operations; Training provider</p>	<p>Corporate Plan primary objective 2</p>	<p>Included, with positive feedback.</p>

Section 5: 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
5.1 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.	Ongoing	Pay Policy team; TUS	Pay Policy equal pay reviews; HR strategy; Corporate Plan	Findings and recommendations acted upon. Gender pay gap narrowed
5.2 All parts of the recruitment and selection processes to be diversity tested: a) investigate reasons for low response rates from ethnic minorities and disabled people b) remove inadvertent barriers from advertisements and use Plain English c) eliminate all but necessary written element d) only include professional qualifications where necessary.	Jan 10	Recruitment Manager; Diversity team; Recruitment agency.	Recruitment review; HR strategy; Corporate Plan	Process demonstrated to be non-discriminatory <i>and</i> promoting equality and diversity; Increase in applicants from

Section 5: Employment cycle

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
e) consider flexibility to take into account applicants' particular needs, e.g. autistic candidates.				under-represented group
5.3 Ensure adherence to policy on make-up of recruitment panels - mixed panels in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability, age range, where possible.	Jun 09	Recruitment team; Diversity team	Recruitment review	Improved diversity on panels
5.4 Include images in recruitment literature to ensure recognition of diversity amongst Members and staff (ethnicity age, gender, disability and religions)	Jan 10	Recruitment team	Recruitment review	Recruitment literature positively reflects diversity
5.5 Positively engage in recruiting from non-traditional areas. Extend outreach work in colleges, schools and diverse communities: a) set up Open Days for Black and Asian students b) form links with special educational needs schools c) continue participation in Civil Service fast stream positive action programmes	Ongoing 2009 - 2011	Diversity team; Outreach team; Director Generals	Outreach initiatives	Outreach work producing applications for work placements, internships or posts. Diverse recruitment within fast stream
5.6 Check the current mechanism for providing information about the requirements of any new disabled staff to the line manager is effective. Systematically and comprehensively follow up all new starters who have a disability, or staff	Jan 2010	Safety, Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWS)	Induction policy; SHWS review of policies	Policy in place. Evidence to show that all starters and staff with

Section 5: Employment cycle

Action	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
who have acquired a disability in-service, to ensure that any access or reasonable adjustments required have been addressed.				disabilities, are followed up.
5.7 Consider extending the use of the Toucan Employment Scheme or similar, with more ongoing support for supervisors of Toucan Scheme participants.	Aug 09	Diversity team	Outreach initiatives; Corporate Social Responsibility	Increased opportunities for adults with learning difficulties; active support for supervisors
5.8 Ensure that there are positive messages to staff and managers about the benefits of a) part-time working and b) flexible working, and that procedures are consistent across the House.	Oct 09	HRM&D Senior HR managers	Management development; Corporate Plan; Common Ground project; Staff Handbook	Monitoring data shows take-up at different levels in the organisation.
5.9 Set a reporting goal for staff with disabilities and report and review regularly.	Jan 2010	Diversity team HRM&D	Management Board initiative; Disability Standard	Reporting goal set and monitored regularly
5.10 Set a reporting goal for achieving ethnic minority staff in senior pay bands and increasing the number of women in senior pay bands.	Jan 2010	Management Board; Diversity team; RMG	Management Board initiative	Goals set and regular monitoring in place to review progress.

Section 6: 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
<p>6.1 Extend equality monitoring data to:</p> <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. <p>These should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-tabulated by department and monitored for inconsistencies • analysed more regularly • used to monitor progress and review actions • reported at regular intervals to senior management • benchmarked with other relevant organisations or sectors 	Jun 09 and ongoing	Diversity team; HRM&D; Office of the Chief Executive; Central Tours; Education Services; PICT	Services to the public; Visitor Services review; Staff survey responses; Workforce Planning team	Monitoring in place with regular analysis and reporting, leading to action taken to address any under-representation or specific needs identified. Action taken to address any inconsistencies of concern.

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• used in conjunction with the Balanced Scorecard | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|

Section 7: 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
<p>7.1 Consult (via focus groups and one-to-one interviews) wide range of staff and sample of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPs and MPs' staff • staff with disabilities • ethnic minority staff • female staff • public consultation, including specific involvement of people with disabilities. 	<p>Feb 08 – Apr 09</p> <p>Complete Complete Complete Complete</p>	<p>Diversity team</p>		<p>Consultation with staff, Members and Members' staff feeding into development of Equality Scheme. Recommendations made which are included in Equality Scheme.</p>

Section 8: 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
- Three-year review

Section 8: Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme

Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
8.1 Issues log to be kept by Diversity team on confidential equality issues arising.	Apr 09	Diversity team	Implementation of the scheme and actions	Issues log in place and reviewed every three months
8.2 Select diversity representatives to lead 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. Groups to be set up to advise and remove any barriers at work on disability, gender, race, age,	Jun 09 and ongoing	Diversity team; Diversity Champion	Diversity team; Corporate Plan supporting task 1; Disability Standard	Diversity leads in place and acknowledged widely as having a positive impact on equality and diversity; individuals and groups to be identified to provide information and support the Diversity team.

Section 8: Implementation, monitoring and review of the Equality Scheme

Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
religion and sexual orientation. Groups to be convened as required during the period covered by the Equality Scheme, and beyond as appropriate.				
8.3 Prepare an interim and an annual report on progress of the action plan. Produce a three-year review of the plan at the end of March 2011	Ongoing	Diversity team	Diversity team; Commission annual report	Reports produced and published. Three-year review with further recommendations published
8.4 Take responsibility for the corporate administration and monitoring of the scheme	Ongoing	Diversity team working with OCE	Corporate Plan; Commission Annual Report	Successful implementation of the scheme and actions achieved.

Section 9: Plans for the publication of the Equality Scheme

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

Section 9: Plans for the publication of the Equality Scheme				
Equality Area	Date	Action by	Links to current work	Measures of success
9.1 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.	Jan 2010	Diversity team; OCE; Web Centre	House-wide communication; information for the public; Web Centre	On website and information available in different formats

13. 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

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

- 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
- 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:

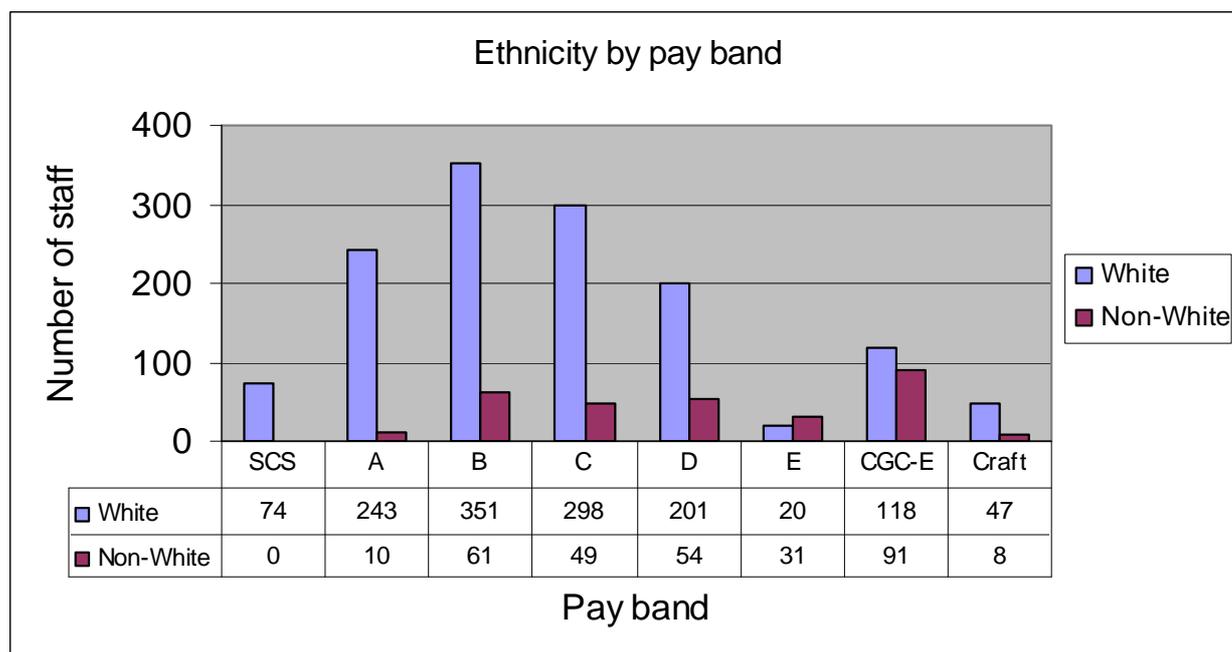
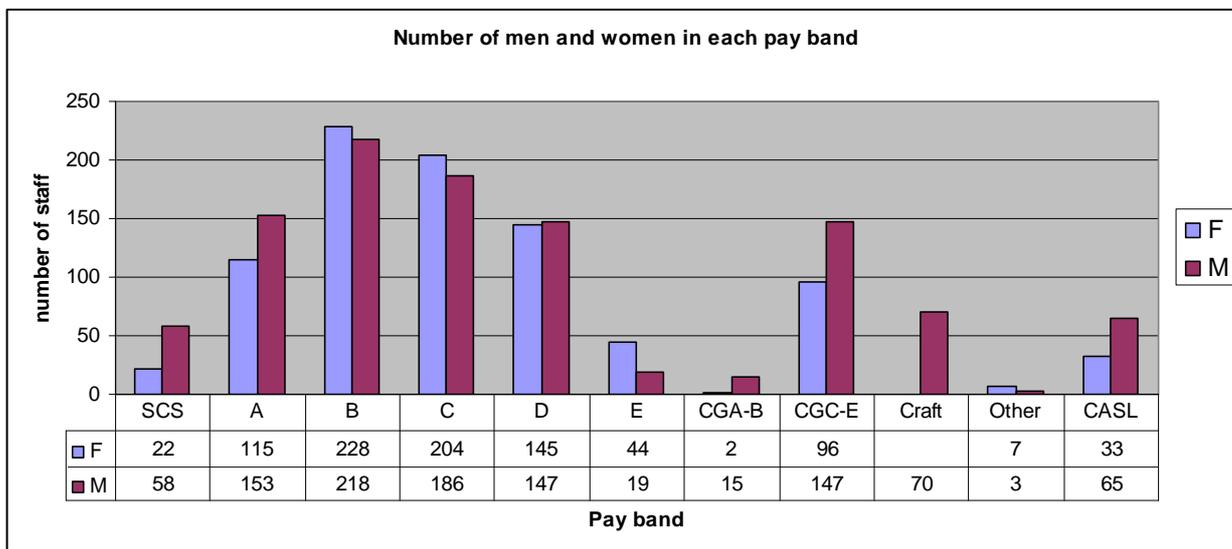
- identify gender equality goals and show the action that will be taken to implement them
- consult employees and stakeholders as appropriate in drawing up the Scheme
- publish the Scheme, setting out goals and planned outcomes
- monitor progress and publish annual reports on progress
- review the Scheme 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).

14. 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.



15. 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.