

DWP Employee Discount Scheme

Equality Impact Assessment

December 2011

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Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions has carried out an equality impact assessment on the DWP Employee Discount Scheme, assessing the proposal in line with the current public sector equality duties.

This process will help to ensure that the Department has paid due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and
- foster good relations between people from different groups.

The equality impact assessment will show how the Department has demonstrated it has paid due regard when developing new services or processes to on the grounds of the protected characteristics. These are; race, disability, gender, age, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and marriage and civil partnerships (in terms of eliminating unlawful discrimination only).

Purpose and aim of the DWP Discount Scheme

The Department has been running this scheme via an external service provider for the last three years, and has recently conducted a competitive tender exercise to re-let the contract 1 December 2011. The number of DWP employees registered as users of the scheme at August 2011 was 69,872 which is approximately 67% of headcount.

The DWP Employee Discount Scheme is an integral part of the Department's Reward and Recognition framework designed to enhance employee engagement. The service is available to all DWP employees to facilitate the purchase of goods and services at discounted rates either on-line, in-store or by telephone. It is therefore of benefit to all employees. No group of DWP employees are excluded and membership is entirely voluntary. There is no compulsion to join or pressure to participate.

In the current economic climate the continuing provision of the DWP Employee Discount Scheme will maintain its positive impact on the levels of employee engagement and morale, and remain an important recruitment and retention tool.

In both the public and private sectors increasing emphasis has been placed on the overall reward package as a means of improving the levels of employee engagement and morale. With approximately 50% of DWP employees earning less than £21,000 per annum, and with a 2 year pay freeze in place for the majority, being able to offer

everyone the opportunity to save money on everyday items such as food and petrol is considered to be an important and much appreciated benefit.

Access to the Scheme

All DWP employees are able to access the scheme via a unique and individually branded DWP URL created by the new service provider. Access is through a secure server with each individual employee having a unique user ID and a password of their creation. The new DWP portal is designed for ease of access and navigation with full approval rights given to DWP.

Access is either via the DWP Intranet for employees accessing the service at work using DWP computers in accordance with the Electronic Media Policy, or via the Internet for those accessing it outside the workplace.

The provider operates a Helpdesk with Textphone for employees who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Consultation and involvement

The new service provider has stated their commitment to seek the views of users of their scheme through out the life of their contract with DWP.

They will conduct an annual survey to measure whether their service is in line with user expectations. There is a feedback button on the website for employee feedback, (good and bad), or to report problems they may be having in using the service. This feedback is collated and reported back to the Department each quarter. Employees are also be able to ask the supplier to add specific retailers to the service.

An in-house Helpdesk and a 24/7 Service Centre for back-up out of hours support and assistance is provided.

Feedback from the most recent survey undertaken in 2010 by the current supplier provided ample evidence that this is a valued and appreciated benefit. Headline data from this survey was that:

95% of users would recommend the scheme to a colleague;

52.5% of users login on at least weekly;

80% of users login at least monthly;

85% of users value the scheme positively.

The new provider will work closely with DWP Communications Directorate to regularly publicise the goods and services available, and to maintain interest levels and draw attention to special features throughout the life of the contract.

There is a comprehensive Complaints Procedure that all employees can use to use to raise any matter of dissatisfaction or concern. The supplier aims to resolve verbal complaints within 1 hour and written complaints within 24 hours.

Any employee experiencing difficulty in accessing or using the website, for whatever reason, has access to a Telephone Helpline as a means of getting one to one help. 90% of calls will be answered within 5 seconds and 95% of phone messages will be

responded to within 30 minutes. 95% of emails will be responded to within 1 hour – with an immediate out of hours automated response service.

Access to the Internet and on-line shopping in the UK

In August 2011, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) report showed that 77% of households in the UK have Internet access (an increase of 4% since 2010). 45% of Internet users connect via a mobile phone.

In 2011, 32 million people in the UK (66% of all adults) purchased goods or services over the Internet - clothes and sporting goods being the most popular items.

Assessing the impact of the DWP Employee Discount Scheme

The Invitation to Tender for this service specifically directed bidders to ensure that the range of services and products they provide would appeal to the Department's diverse workforce. This point was emphasised again and explained in greater detail at a Supplier Presentation Event held with potential bidders prior to the submission of Tenders.

The new supplier is committed to sourcing a diverse range of products that will appeal to diverse communities, so there is no reason to believe that different groups of people could be negatively or unduly impacted by this scheme. Although some people may find themselves more restricted than others in terms of access – (ie; because they do not have access to the Internet outside the office, or are lacking in the necessary skills/confidence to shop on-line) – they can still avail themselves of the benefits available at work using DWP equipment or shop in-store or by telephone.

DWP supplied the provider with a list of all staff numbers and the names of business units and Government Office Regions at the start of the scheme for validation purposes – ie; to verify entitlement to register to use the scheme. This was supplied via an EMAAT approved process (PGP Encrypted File). In addition, a PGP encrypted list of “starters” and “leavers” staff numbers (including diversity codes) is sent to the provider on a monthly basis. The supplier does not know what these codes represent.

The diversity codes provided for each staff number comprise of a series of numbers to represent the diversity make up of the employee concerned. The supplier provides the Department with Management Information broken down by each of the codes, which can only be interpreted by the HR Data Analysts.

Gender and Gender Re-assignment

Since September 2009, diversity data has been collected about DWP employees who have registered with the scheme. The number of male employees currently registered with the scheme has remained marginally lower than the number of women. This may be due to the fact that there are more women (68%) than men (32%) employed in this Department. The Office of National Statistics figures at August 2011 show that nationally 84% of men are regularly purchasing goods or services online as opposed to 80% of women.

The full range of goods and services available is designed to interest and appeal to all gender groups. Within the current headcount 32% of DWP employees are male and 68% are female. More of our female employees have a part-time working pattern than male employees, which could be to accommodate parental or other caring responsibilities. They may therefore value the opportunity to be able to shop on-line more than those without such responsibilities. On line shopping might also be of benefit to an individual who is undergoing gender re-assignment.

Race

	Jan 11	Feb 11	Mar 11	Apr 11	May 11	Jun 11
Ethnic minority Group	58%	59%	60%	60%	59%	61%
White	42%	42%	43%	43%	44%	44%

The figures in the Table above show the percentages of DWP employees in an ethnic minority group who have registered to use the scheme in comparison to those in the majority group. Based on these figures awareness levels appear to be good and the scheme is being well used by this group of employees.

Age

Management Information as at June 2011 shows that employees in the younger and middle age groups are well represented as active users of the scheme. Those in the older age groups – ie; 50–60 years – are slightly lower than the percentages for the younger age groups, so we will work with the new provider to identify ways of targeting this group. These lower levels of usage might be connected to the number of employees in this age group who have left the Department via the exit schemes being run by the Department. Usage in the 60’s and over age group is the lowest, but this is most likely due to the fact that the number of employees employed in this age group is significantly lower.

The range of goods and services available via the scheme cater for the wide range of age and salary levels that exist across the Department. This helps to ensure that younger employees (ie those in 16 – 24 age bracket) are not excluded from participating because the goods/services are all in the top price brackets. There is a very wide range of high street stores and supermarkets designed to appeal to all income levels..

There should therefore be no negative impact on people of different ages in relation to use of the scheme. However, employees under the age of 18 may have difficulty purchasing goods online as they may not have access to a credit card.

Although Financial Services Authority Regulations do not allow anyone under the age of 18 to have a credit card in their name, employees will be able to use a debit card to pay for goods online. As at June 2011 the Department’s Resource Management System (RMS) showed that no-one under the age of 18 was employed by this Department.

Disability

	Jan 11	Feb 11	Mar 11	Apr 11	May 11	Jun 11
Disabled	54%	55%	55%	55%	55%	56%
Non Disabled	48%	48%	49%	50%	50%	51%

6.5% of DWP employees have declared a disability on the Department's Resource Management System (RMS).

The figures in the Table above show the percentages of this group of employees who have registered to use the scheme. This illustrates that awareness levels are good and that the scheme is well used by this group of employees.

A recent survey by The Employers' Forum on Disability found that 54 per cent of disabled people consider Internet access essential, compared with only 6 per cent in the general population.

Accessibility Standards

The new supplier has committed to providing an accessible service that gives all users equality of opportunity through its normal use.

The new supplier has provided a framework of consultation principals to maintain and improve accessibility standards throughout the life of their contract;

They will maintain the accessibility standard of the website by;

- testing existing and new components of our website against the W3C guidelines;
- testing with users, including those individuals who are challenged and generally referred to as disabled people;
- surveys with users.

They will keep their skills and knowledge of building accessible websites current and up to date with additional regard for:

- communication – language linked to ethnic background, age, cognitive awareness;
- age – young persons aged 16 -24 and those aged 55 – 64;
- disability – recognising hidden groups;
- remote access – stationed provision for those without personal access to online facilities.

Accessibility Testing Timetable

A combination of various testing techniques were used to test for Accessibility compliance. In particular, testing was carried out at four key stages throughout the website's design lifecycle:

- requirements gathering;
- design;
- build;
- maintenance.

Accessibility User Testing profiles

Disabilities were considered during the development and redevelopment of content on the website to include a mixture of mild, moderate and severe:

- vision impairment;
- mobility problems;
- cognitive and learning problems;
- hearing loss.

Consideration was also given to other users who will benefit from improved online accessibility, including:

- people with slow internet connections;
- people with low bandwidth quotas;
- people using hand-held mobile internet-enabled devices;
- people with English as a second language;
- people from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds;
- people from different generations.

Accessibility User Testing techniques and technologies

A combination of techniques and adaptive technologies that disabled users may employ were tested, including:

- screen reader and text-to-speech software;
- keyboard only operation;
- adaptive hardware and input devices;
- changing text size and formatting.

Accessibility across different operating systems, internet-enabled hardware and web browsers were also tested.

Accessibility User Testing tasks

Accessibility user testing involved completing core tasks that users should be able to achieve on the website. The criteria for determining the success of accessibility user testing of the website included:

- effectiveness;
- efficiency;
- satisfaction.

In-House Accessibility Testing

Accessibility Testing was undertaken in-house by DWP Testers to ensure the new web portal was compatible with the main assistive technologies used by disabled DWP employees. The Testers accessed the site using Jaws, Dragon, Supernova, and Zoomtext and were able to report back that they had not experienced any problems either in accessing or using it.

Management Information

The new supplier provides comprehensive Management Information at quarterly and annual intervals.

They also maintain a comprehensive suite of reporting options for DWP's own use which are sufficient to provide the Contract Manager with ad-hoc management information when required. This includes a breakdown of use and activity by diversity groups as this will have been captured anonymously during the registration process.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Diversity data will continue to be monitored going forward. If any issues are identified the Project Team will work with the supplier to address them and if, as a result, any policy changes are made, a revised Equality Impact Assessment will be completed.

Communications Plan

The supplier has committed to working proactively with the Department to market this service. They see this as something that should continue throughout the life of the contract and not be limited to the launch phase.

They will provide a range of marketing tools designed to appeal to all groups of employees. This will include a dedicated new joiner pack for new recruits to DWP with suitable offers and an introduction to the online scheme. They will also aim to target those employees who are not registered with the scheme to encourage registration.