

FOI Release
Information released under the Freedom of Information Act

Title: Accessibility for employees with a disability

Date of release: 31 August 2016

Information request

1. Operating standards in relation to providing an accessible environment for employees with a disability, especially in relation to:
 - a. working environment (building services)
 - b. provision of specialist equipment/hardware
 - c. communication methods – eg websites, software, hard copy, documentation, fonts, British Sign Language,
 - d. training and education
 - e. recruitment
2. data sets relating to people in our employ who have a disability.

Information released

On 14 July 2016 the Prime Minister ordered the creation of The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). BEIS has been created from the former Department of Energy and Climate Change (former-DECC) and elements of the former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (former-BIS). At this early stage in our formation we do not yet have joint operating standards in all areas of our work, although there is commonality. This response is, therefore, a joint response covering the operating standards for former-DECC and former-BIS.

BEIS has a legal duty to consider the impact on equalities on all policy and decision making undertaken. Section 149 of the Equality Duty 2010 imposes this duty on all Public Sector Bodies. BEIS takes its responsibility seriously to consider the three aims of the duty and to have 'due regard' in all policy decisions and changes. It does this by undertaking Equality Analysis. Policy officials and decision makers need to understand the potential effects of their activities and how their decisions affect individuals (and groups) with protected characteristics.

1. Operating standards in relation to providing an accessible environment for employees with a disability, especially in relation to:

a. working environment (building services)

Former-DECC has used the Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) to assess accessibility into and throughout its premises under the provisions of the Equality Act. Examples of accessibility in the former-BIS HQ building facilities include braille on stair handrails and lift buttons, hearing induction loops in the conference centre and main reception, access to mobile hearing induction loops, wheelchair access to the building, automatic doors on floors where employees with a disability work, flashing lights on fire alarm equipment and provision for disabled assistance animals. This list is not exhaustive.

Further, former-BIS has a facilities management contract in place which provides advice on improvements that may be necessary to improve services and premises to meet users' needs. Where requested, the contract will provide access audits, equality impact assessments and the general Display Screen Equipment assessments and will provide the solutions to the assessments where appropriate. This contract also assists with the compilation of personal emergency evacuation plans for individuals who require assistance with evacuation. The contract also provides the ongoing maintenance and servicing of equipment which is in situ which supports appropriate working environments.

The Civil Service Workplace Adjustment Passport has been introduced to improve the ease with which employees with a disability or health condition can move jobs in the Civil Service.

b. provision of specialist equipment/hardware/software

Former-DECC has implemented the recommendations from the Access to Work reports for individuals with disabilities where they have been provided to the Department. For both former- BIS and former-DECC this includes, but is not limited to, the provision of assistive technology, appliances, aids, devices, equipment, software, awareness training, support workers and/or funding towards alternative transport.

c. communication methods – e.g. websites, software, hard copy documentation, fonts, British Sign Language etc.

The BEIS external internet sites are hosted on GOV.UK in a format managed by the Cabinet Office. BEIS publishes content and supporting files on GOV.UK (for example PDFs), for which they manage accessibility requirements. The link below from the GOV.UK website gives site accessibility information:

<https://www.gov.uk/help/accessibility>

Materials posted on the BEIS internal intranet site are designed to maximise the reach of the publication/document by making it as accessible to as many people as possible. This includes the use of accessible sans serif typeface such as Arial, Verdana or Helvetica, font size (minimum 12 points), minimal use of italics and avoiding excessive use of upper case letters, both of which are hard to read on screen in large amounts. All documents uploaded to the intranet are fully accessible and compatible with screen readers. All videos for staff are either transcribed or available with subtitles and staff can be invited to web chats in person.

From the former-DECC side, the Identity Guidelines recommend that the following accessibility statement is added to printed material:

'This document is available in large print, audio and braille on request. Please email correspondence@decc.gsi.gov.uk with the version you require'

This includes three of the accessible communication formats listed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

We do not hold information on employees who are trained in the use of British Sign Language (BSL). However, if an employee requires a BSL or other interpreter or note taker, we will arrange and pay for this.

d. training and education

As well as giving specialist training on the use of e.g. adaptive technology for a user, in former- BIS we have also delivered awareness sessions on a variety of disability issues e.g. deaf awareness and visual impairment. These sessions are open to all staff.

e. recruitment

All BEIS applicants are given the opportunity to identify accessibility issues and are contacted on an individual basis to enable us to accommodate their needs.

2. data sets relating to people in our employ who have a disability

All employees are encouraged to make a self-declaration regarding their disability status. This provides the option to indicate if they either have or do not have a disability but can also include an option that they would prefer not to say. As at the end of July 2016, 82% of BEIS employees had made a declaration regarding their disability status. Of those who have made a declaration, 8% have indicated that they have a disability. This is 7% of all employees.