



Progress in delivering the Highways Agency equality objectives (April 2012 - March 2013)

Gathering momentum



How we're making a difference?

As an organisation that takes equality seriously we are committed to being transparent about what we are doing and how we take account of the diverse needs of our customers and staff. We have produced this summary of progress against our high level equality objectives.

The objectives were determined after careful consideration of the findings from internal and external consultations via the National Road User Satisfaction Survey and our People Survey, as well as external research and reports. This is outlined on our web page, [Inclusion matters – evidence that shapes our equality and diversity priorities](#).

Service delivery equality objectives

Over the past few years, through our procurement processes, we have made it clear that equality is on our agenda and we want to work with suppliers who are committed to improving their performance in this area too. More than 90 per cent of our spend is through our supply chain so what our partners do and the way that they do it, is of real interest and importance. The two service delivery objectives seek to:

- capitalise on the commitment to equality that our partners have already made and harness their energies and expertise to drive performance improvements
- work with our partners to identify good practice and share it effectively across our supply chain
- encourage our partners to build on their previous best equality performance whether as an employer, service provider or supply chain manager.

Equality objective 1

To encourage our supply chain to take the next incremental step in improving equality outcomes.

Resourcing

A working group led by the procurement director.

Key tasks completed:

- Scoped and agreed a project initiation document, risk register and delivery plan to ensure the project delivers a four-year programme of targeted outcomes.
- Produced a presentation on our commitment to equality and expectations of the supply chain and tested this with our volunteer supplier diversity group.
- Conducted an initial analysis of partners already using available equality frameworks and engaged with them to shape minimum requirements for a Highways Agency/industry framework, resulting in the commissioning of further research.

- Expanded the Agency's volunteer supplier diversity group to include maintenance contractors, who expressed interest in being involved and consulted with this wider group on approaches to achieve a more powerful good practice forum.

Equality objective 2

To improve our understanding of, and responsiveness to, the needs of protected groups within local communities that are affected by our work on the strategic road network.

Resourcing

A working group led by a director from the Network Delivery and Development directorate.

Key tasks completed:

- Scoped and agreed a draft project initiation document, stakeholder analysis and communications plan, and project plan.
- Began to engage with our national vulnerable users committee and engaged with volunteer organisations to learn from their experiences.
- Identified a contracting partner and planned schemes that provide opportunities to gather intelligence on how effective current policies and procedures are.
- Carried out, through a contractor, an initial intelligence gathering exercise.

Employment equality objectives

We recognise that to deliver against our employment related objectives, we need ownership across the organisation, not just from within the Human Resources directorate. Therefore we took measures to ensure we appointed the right people to lead and corporately deliver each objective.

We wanted to:

- be clear that employment is a corporate responsibility
- secure people
 - with the capability to influence cross function and cross-directorate
 - who could bring a fresh perspective and professionally challenge the data and evidence available
 - who could gather and galvanise a voluntary cross-directorate group with potentially different views and interests.

To secure people committed to driving this forward we:

- developed an internal communications campaign to raise awareness of the objectives
- advertised the broader issues that the sector is facing in relation to attracting diverse talent into our ranks, and the voluntary work that colleagues were doing to engender positive change
- encouraged our senior managers to debate the issues and step up to the leadership mark.

As a result senior leads have volunteered to drive forward further projects.

Equality objective 3

To promote an inclusive culture where the needs of a diverse workforce are valued and promoted.

Resources

A working group led by a senior member of Traffic Management Directorate.

Key tasks completed:

- Scoped and agreed a project initiation document and risk register.
- Improved staff diversity declaration rates through a targeted campaign that was supported by the trade unions, which resulted in a 3 per cent increase in declaration rates.
- Consulted with access for all (our network group for colleagues with a disability) to gain a clearer understanding of our People Survey feedback, with agreement for a discrete survey and focus groups to explore solutions to areas of concern and results from the latest survey.
- Initiated mandatory unconscious bias training, which was undertaken by our middle and senior leadership grades.
- Introduced independent workplace conciliators as a pilot exercise in Traffic Management Directorate's East Midlands and West Midlands regions, which extended to the North East in November 2012. The conciliators offer support to staff with concerns about bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Promoted the Employee Assistance Programme as part of our health and wellbeing strategy.
- Worked with the trade unions to revise our 'Dignity at Work' policy, which was co-signed and relaunched during our programme of events to celebrate diversity week in December 2012, the focus being to create and maintain a fair and harassment-free culture.

Equality objective 4

To successfully encourage talented people from a broad range of backgrounds to join and progress through the Agency.

Resources

A working group led by the director of the Network Planning and Performance division.

Key tasks completed:

- Reviewed graduate recruitment to maximise application from all groups.
- Placed recruitment advertisements in a women's transport publication and ensured literature provided included profiles from a range of current employees.
- Generated publicity around international women's day which resulted in positive staff feedback.
- Ran a cross-sector seminar/networking event with McKinsey & Company as keynote speaker and Women's Transport Sector as partner.
- Retained accreditation for the fifth year running as an organisation that is positive about disability (two tick's initiative).
- Designed and delivered an anti-bullying and harassment course to line managers.

The Government are currently reviewing the Public Sector Equality Duty which could bring about further changes for the Highways Agency and other public bodies. Therefore we will keep a close watch on developments and ensure the Agency's work takes full account of any revisions.

If you need help using this or any other Highways Agency information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will assist you.

© Crown copyright 2013.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This document is also available on our website at www.highways.gov.uk

If you have any about this publication please email ha_info@highways.gsi.gov.uk or call **0300 123 5000**
Please quote this HA Publications code: **PR92/12**
Highways Agency media services Bedford S120482

