



# The Highways Agency's public sector equality objectives 2012 to 2016

Making a difference



## Introduction

Our long-term public sector equality objectives start in April 2012 and will be implemented and monitored until March 2016. They were developed by utilising the expansive knowledge that our staff possess and through information that they have gathered as part of their day-to-day work. This has indicated what is important to our customers, the public and our supply chain.

Our senior staff, including the Highways Agency's executive board, agreed the objectives after considering [evidence](#); this was analysed in relation to our key functions, performance to date and how we give due regard to the need to promote equality, prevent discrimination and foster good relations between protected groups.

As a result, we believe our objectives are relevant, proportionate and focus on positive outcomes for our staff and diverse customer base.

Each objective contains a number of supporting activities that are managed by a senior responsible officer and delivered by a variety of people. We will work in tandem with our supply chain to deliver against our service delivery objectives, and we will liaise with the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure that our specific employment activities support the [department-wide employment objectives](#).

Progress will be monitored on an ongoing basis and reviewed formally by our internal diversity group and through our internal governance mechanisms. We will continue to consult customers and staff about our performance, and will consider emerging information and feedback in relation to our activities.

We will formally update the evidence we have considered on an annual basis.

# Service delivery objectives 2012 to 2016

## Service delivery objective one:

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

	Actions	Expected outcomes
<p><b>Why are we doing this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 90 per cent of our spend is through our supply chain; a supply chain that comprises multiple professional organisations employing thousands of people – more than 25,000 just within the first tier of the organisations we work with on major projects. If we can use the influence we have to best effect, we believe we can make a difference in terms of equality.</li> <li>• We already aim to select best fit partners to design and deliver a strategic road network that meets the country's needs. We aim to ensure that we contract with organisations whose organisational policies and performance in relation to equality indicate that they are good employers, and who have the capability to help us deliver against our equality duties.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence we have considered</b></p> <p>We know that achieving excellent equality outcomes in both employment and service provision is not something that can be done overnight. We also know that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our suppliers are at different stages on their journeys towards identifying and tackling inequality – though where they are on this journey is important to us, it's more important that they are committed to improving.</li> <li>• A significant number of suppliers have expressed interest in better understanding the agenda and how they can deliver it.</li> <li>• Equality and Human Rights Commission findings show that there is further work to be done on equality across the whole of the UK construction industry.</li> </ul> <p>This objective focuses on how the Highways Agency can best support our supply chain at the different stages they are at in relation to equality. While recognising that the Highways Agency and individual suppliers all start from different places and have unique journeys, we believe that having contracted with suppliers, we have an opportunity to encourage the sharing of best practice. We also believe that we can provide focused support to those organisations that are at the start of their equality journey.</p>	<p>To sustain and build on the good equality practice highlighted by suppliers that are scoring well against inclusion criteria such as through the <a href="#">strategic alignment review tool (StART)</a> and by developing a forum in which suppliers can share good practice and ideas for future improvements.</p> <p>To encourage all suppliers who state compliance with basic equality legislation to make incremental improvements in their equality performance by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and communicating a flexible framework which allows voluntary self-assessment and the monitoring of equality progress over time (potentially linking to existing equality frameworks).</li> <li>• Offering supplier leadership teams (based on StART or flexible framework assessments) a presentation to show the Highways Agency's perspective on the legislative/government requirements and the flexible framework.</li> <li>• Tracking incremental improvements in supply chain performance.</li> </ul>	<p>A supplier forum that meets at least twice-a-year to identify, share and record agreed examples of good practice, which is then published for the roads sector to tap into.</p> <p>A flexible framework being available to the supply chain.</p> <p>Presentations to interested/targeted suppliers. We will track the number we presented to, as well as their subsequent progress.</p> <p>Suppliers being able to evidence the incremental improvements they have achieved.</p>

## Service delivery objective two:

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.

Why are we doing this?	Actions	Expected outcomes
<p><b>Why are we doing this?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In areas where our roads affect communities or the accessibility of people, we understand the importance of designing and delivering schemes that take due account of the needs of road users and local residents.</li> <li>By putting a spotlight on this area over the next four years, we believe that we can get better at understanding the needs of particular community groups and responding better to their needs, whether directly or through our supply chain.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence we have considered</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disabled customers identified footpaths, bus stops and emergency roadside telephones as the three most important facilities to make more accessible.</li> <li>Our internal review suggests that while we include consideration of equality issues in our policies, procedures and contracts, we can benefit from gathering on-going examples of how this translates into practice and communicating these to decision-makers both within the Highways Agency and across our supply chain.</li> <li>Impact assessments are evolving to incorporate more information on how different groups in society are affected or will benefit from road schemes – this is an opportunity for the Highways Agency to learn more about community needs, in particular those of people with protected characteristics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To undertake a full review of the processes, procedures and guidance for understanding and responding to local community needs to identify improvements.</li> <li>To review our programme of work that improves accessibility for disabled people to ensure that available budget is spent on those facilities that will make the most significant difference to disabled people.</li> <li>To identify good practice for responding to the needs of protected groups within communities that are affected by our work on the strategic road network; and to promote these to relevant parts of the Highways Agency and our supply chain.</li> <li>To review of our maintenance and small improvement scheme selection process to identify any potential barriers to the promotion of schemes that positively impact on equality.</li> </ul>	<p>Published findings of the review and outcomes of any improvements made.</p> <p>The majority of budget being spent on accessibility is on either:</p> <p>a) Priorities already identified through engaging with disabled people.</p> <p>or</p> <p>b) Priorities identified through engaging with disabled people, or their representatives at a local level.</p> <p>Examples of good practice being published and promoted annually.</p> <p>A published a report on the findings of the review, including the outcomes of any actions taken to address identified issues.</p>

# Employment objectives 2012 to 2016

## Why are we doing this?

To deliver against the Highway Agency's challenging and broad remit, we need to attract, retain and make best use of talent from the widest labour market. We want to ensure that our organisational culture supports our diverse staff helping them to carry out their jobs to the best of their abilities. We are committed to being an equal opportunities employer, which is threaded through all of our employment policies. These objectives focus in on the areas of our employment practice that we believe will improve the experience our staff have in the workplace.

## Evidence we have considered

The central equality and diversity team in the Department for Transport (DfT) have considered data from across their family and determined [broad objectives for the whole organisation](#). The Highways Agency will deliver against these objectives, which focus on improving everyone's experience of: leadership and managing change, inclusion and fair treatment, learning and development and reducing the number of staff experiencing discrimination, bullying and harassment. We will aim to improve the engagement scores for each of these areas incrementally over the next four years.

In the Highways Agency we analysed our information for how our staff feel about working for the Highways Agency, and on the actual outcomes of our employment policies and practice. We have considered the 2010 and 2011 staff survey (People Survey), with further research being carried out in relation to People Survey priority areas, the equality monitoring reports for the past few years, information gathered through equality impact assessments, and trade union feedback on priority areas.

Having considered our information, we have concluded that there are a number of actions focusing on particular groups that will make a real difference in terms of equality. The data suggests that:

- The experience disabled staff have of our employment policies and practice is not as good as their non disabled colleagues. We need to explore this, find out what is happening and then plan a course of action that will see engagement scores increase.
- Although we are not likely to be doing a lot of recruitment, there will be posts advertised. We will work with the departmental resourcing group to ensure that our:
  - Recruitment attracts a diverse applicant base.
  - Selection processes are not unconsciously biased towards or away from any particular group, and focus on capability.
  - Development policies proactively look to identify and foster talent from within under represented groups.
- There is a particular gender imbalance in the senior ranks. We have already done some exploration in this area, for example we know that historically women have been less willing to apply for senior posts than their male counterparts. We need to understand more about why the gender imbalance exists, what we can do to address this, and then take action.
- We don't have enough information to determine whether or not our policies and practices are fair, particularly in relation to people of different religions/beliefs and sexual orientation, where declaration rates are at their lowest. We need to do more to explain what information is needed, how it is protected, what it is used for, and what the benefits are of declaring what we know can be very personal information.

**Employment objective one:**

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

Actions	Expected outcomes
To annually analyse People Survey results, and to develop and deliver action plans to address significant issues. These would be suggested within the themes of leadership and managing change, inclusion and fair treatment, learning and development, discrimination, bullying and harassment, or by other evidence or research.	Incremental improvements in scores for overall engagement in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership and managing change</li> <li>• inclusion and fair treatment</li> <li>• learning and development.</li> </ul> An incremental reduction in the number of staff stating that they have experienced discrimination, bullying or harassment.
To work with 'access for all' to gain an understanding of the experiences of disabled colleagues, and to develop and deliver an action plan to address issues identified.	An incremental improvement in the overall engagement score for staff declaring themselves as being disabled (or as having an illness or condition that limits their ability to work).
To develop and deliver a plan to encourage staff to declare their diversity information on Shared Services – the Department for Transport's human resources portal.	An increase in declaration rates for diversity information.

**Employment objective two:**

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

Actions	Expected outcomes
To work with the departmental resourcing group to maximise opportunities to recruit under represented groups.	People from under represented groups applying for vacancies. Selection (including assessment centres) processes being equality proofed (such as assessors trained in equality and diversity/unconscious bias, venues accessible etc).
To retain ' <a href="#">Positive about disability</a> ' (Two Ticks) accreditation.	Job Centreplus continues to authorise the Highways Agency to use the Two Ticks symbol.
To research key reasons for gender imbalance in senior ranks, developing a long term strategy to attract, retain and develop more women and implementing the relevant actions up to 2016.	Improved gender balance in more senior positions (pay bands six to eight and TM3) by 2016.

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