



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

www.gov.uk/defra

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs Equality Objectives 2012-2016

Report under the Public Sector Equality Duty

Updated March 2015

© 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 www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/ or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or e-mail: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This document/publication is also available on our website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/about/how/diversity/>

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at:

Defra

Area 6E, 9 Millbank

c/o Nobel House

17 Smith Square

London

SW1P 3JR

Email: diversity.team@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Contents

Foreword by the Permanent Secretary	1
Departmental Equality Objectives Overview	2
Introduction	2
Our approach	2
People Objectives	2
Monitoring Performance	3
Customer Objectives	3
Accountability	4
Annex 1	5
Departmental People Equality Objectives	5
People Objectives 2012 - 2016	5
People Objective 1	5
People Objective 2	5
People Objective 3	5
People Objective 4	5
Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	5
Departmental Customer Equality Objectives	6
Service Delivery Objective 1	6
Service Delivery Objectives 2 and 3	9
Service Delivery Objectives 4 and 5	11

Foreword by the Permanent Secretary

The Public Sector Equality Duty is a great opportunity to drive forward our equality and diversity strategy and redouble our efforts to deliver positive outcomes for our customers. It is also about making Defra a good place to work for all our staff.

Defra, in common with many other Government departments, faces significant challenges of delivering better services and supporting Government priorities for economic growth within public expenditure constraints. Our Equality Objectives will help us build on our strengths and challenge us to do better and work differently to be the best department we can be.



Defra's work affects everyone - people and businesses, locally, nationally and internationally and the world in which we live now and in the long term. How we do what we do is important. We need to recruit, develop and retain the right people with the skills we need to meet the challenges we face.

I am committed to making sure that we use our Equality Objectives to make a real difference for our customers and our staff. I would encourage everyone to help raise our game in how we work together to achieve our goals.

Bronwyn Hill

Permanent Secretary

June 2013

Departmental Equality Objectives Overview

Introduction

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty, Defra and its Executive Agencies, has a specific duty to publish one or more equality objectives to help it meet the aims of the general Equality Duty.

This report updates on how we will implement [The Equality Act 2010](#); meet our legal obligations under the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) and how we will integrate action on diversity and equality into how Defra operates and does business. It sets out our People and Customer Objectives and how we will measure and report on our performance.

Our approach

The Department's aim is to ensure that equality and diversity objectives are aligned to the Defra Business Plan 2012 - 2015. To do this, we need to realise the potential of our people in improving organisational performance and achieving our goals.

The Department is committed to reviewing its diversity objectives regularly, monitoring our performance against them and updating them when needed to ensure they are relevant and meet changing business and customer needs.

People Objectives¹

The Defra People Strategy outlines the people goals we need to achieve over the period 2012-2015. We need to make sure we recruit and retain the right people with the skills we need, build capability to meet the challenges we face, develop, bring on and retain our most talented people and lead, engage and inspire our people.

Our objectives are based around the four pillars of our People Strategy and mirror the commitments in the Civil Service Diversity Strategy:

- **Capacity:** We will demonstrate clear leadership with senior commitment and accountability for mainstreaming diversity and equality into every aspect of our business.

¹ See People Objectives in Annex 1 for detail

- **Culture:** We will act with dignity, show respect for others and develop a workplace that is inclusive and confident, free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, where our staff are passionate about our goals, engaged and able to contribute fully.
- **Commitment:** We will make Defra a good place to work that attracts, develops and retains the most talented people from the widest range of backgrounds and
- **Capability:** we will ensure our people have the skills and tools they need to make Defra a high performing organisation that understands and responds to the needs of our customers.

They will also be an integral part of Defra's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, currently under development.

Monitoring Performance

Through our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and its action planning process we will develop performance measures aligned to the People Strategy and Business Plan, and report on these through the Department's business performance processes.

Customer Objectives²

Our policies and how our delivery partners implement them, affect our stakeholders and the lives of our customers and businesses. It is important that we ensure we are delivering good service standards and outcomes for them. To do this, our Customer Objectives must support the key priorities in our Business Plan, which focuses on Defra working in partnership with businesses, local communities and civil society. The Department has refreshed its current Business Plan in line with Ministerial priorities, which was published in June 2013.

Working collaboratively with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and Defra Rural Communities Policy Unit (RCPU), we have developed specific Customer Objectives and accompanying action plans to ensure their delivery, which we believe will have the greatest positive impact on our customers.

Customer Objective 1 - Rural Proofing

Defra is committed to Rural proofing to support the Coalition Government in achieving its vision of successful rural businesses and thriving rural communities in a living, working countryside. Our first Customer Objective relates to an aspect of the work that the Defra Rural Communities Policy Unit (RCPU) is undertaking. It aims to achieve this Objective by

² See Service Delivery Objectives in Annex 1 for detail

influencing Government Departments to achieve a stronger rural economy, better connected rural communities and a fair deal in provision of public services.

Customer Objectives 2 and 3 - RPA CAP Reform

The equality objectives of this Scheme are twofold and focuses on the RPA

- Further develop our knowledge of customers with the protected characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity, gender and religion or belief and monitor the services they access.
- We will provide an Assisted Digital (AD) Service to ensure all customers are able to access the services they require to undertake CAP activities without disadvantage. We will monitor the performance of this service in order to establish a baseline measurement of the outcomes for AD service users by January 2016.

Customer Objectives 4 and 5 – Defra Public Appointments

The equality objectives of Public Appointments are twofold.

- Increasing knowledge and awareness of Public Appointments.
- Making improvements to the appointments process.

Accountability

The Permanent Secretary, as Defra's Diversity Champion, is accountable to the Head of the Civil Service for our performance. Ensuring we achieve our People and Customer Objectives is the responsibility of our CEOs and Senior Civil Servants and everyone in Defra.

Annex 1

Departmental People Equality Objectives

Vision: Defra is a high performing, diverse organisation that delivers positive outcomes for our customers and is a good place to work for all of our staff.

People Objectives 2012 - 2016

People Objective 1

Capacity: We will demonstrate clear leadership with senior commitment and accountability for mainstreaming diversity and equality into every aspect of our business.

People Objective 2

Culture: We will act with dignity, show respect for others and develop a workplace that is inclusive and confident, free from bullying, harassment and discrimination, where our employees are passionate about our goals, engaged and able to contribute fully.

People Objective 3

Commitment: We will make Defra a good place to work that attracts, develops and retains the most talented people from the widest range of backgrounds.

People Objective 4

Capability: We will ensure our people have the skills and tools they need to make Defra a high performing organisation that understands and responds to the needs of our customers.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

We have developed a refreshed diversity and inclusion strategy that is aligned to and supports our overarching People Strategy and its four People Objectives. Based on analysis of key employee diversity data outcomes and their comparison with those in the Civil Service as a whole, we have identified three key diversity themes. These underpin a clearly focused and prioritised action plan that we will be undertaking over the next two years to help us meet our People Objectives.

Departmental Customer Equality Objectives

Service Delivery Objective 1

Defra Rural Proofing

Background:

The Government's vision is of successful rural businesses and thriving rural communities in a living, working countryside. We want rural people to have fair access to public services and to be actively engaged in shaping the places in which they live.

Rural Proofing requires policy-makers to consider the rural impacts of their policies and programmes and, where necessary, to make adjustments to achieve equally effective and successful outcomes for individuals, communities and businesses in rural areas. Rural Proofing does not require exactly the same outcome or the provision of exactly the same level of service in rural as in urban locations. This would not be practical in many cases, as the costs would be prohibitive, and in any case rural communities do not necessarily expect this. They do, however, rightly expect that all Government policies and programmes should be sufficiently flexible to apply fairly in their areas and to deliver quality services that meet their everyday needs.

The Rural Communities Policy Unit (RCPU) within Defra supports Rural Proofing by providing advice, guidance and support to policy officials across Government. The RCPU is committed to supporting Defra in meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and fully meeting its duties.

Defra will champion rural needs and interests across Government, aiming for fair access to public services and for communities to be actively engaged in shaping the places in which they live.

We aim to achieve this through influencing Government Departments to achieve a stronger rural economy, better connected rural communities, and a fair deal in provision of public services.

Underpinning activities:

Objective One: Champion rural needs and interests across Government, aiming for fair access to public services and for communities to be actively engaged in shaping the places in which they live.

Reviewed March 2014 :

Ongoing review of departmental business plans with a view to rural proofing the PSED Considerations.

Rural proofing is referenced in HM Treasury Green Book and is one of the impacts all Departments must consider when preparing policy impact assessments. Effective rural proofing means policy-makers across Government routinely identify what their policies should achieve in rural areas. In addition, all government departments have a responsibility to report on their rural proofing activities in their annual reports and accounts.

During 2013/14, Defra's Rural Communities Policy Unit (RCPU) has been actively assisting other government departments with their rural proofing responsibilities. The RCPU has reviewed departmental business plans and identified over sixty policy areas where rural dimensions should be appropriately and proportionately considered.

Key examples include government's support for rural growth networks, the RCPU's work influencing the shape of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and RCPU's work with the Community Transport Association and Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE). The government's commitments and ambitions in relation to the roll out of broadband and mobile infrastructure are also particularly pertinent to ensuring PSED Objectives are being considered and addressed.

Timescales: Objective ongoing from year to year.

Housing Benefit (specifically the Spare Room Subsidy): *We engaged with DWP last year as part of our rural proofing activity and subsequently the Housing benefit team approached us for rural proofing advice regarding the removal of the spare room subsidy which was implemented for the social rented sector on 1st April as a result of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. This policy has received considerable negative press and concerns from Ministers has initiated a brief departmental review. It should be noted that the original Impact Assessment indicated no rural impact – and evidence quoted has not been analysed at the relevant rural urban definition level.*

As a result of rural proofing DWP reviewed the Discretionary Housing Fund and has announced a package of £35m of additional in-year funding for local authorities, including an additional £5m to support those affected in the 21 least densely populated areas, of which twelve are in Scotland, three are in Wales and six in rural England. DWP is currently evaluating the impacts and realisation of benefits. Further to this, Defra recommended that evidence of lessons learnt from the funding could be gathered to show other Local authorities what mitigating measures could be undertaken. A workshop is to be held with the 21 beneficiary authorities in the first half of 2014

Support the independent Rural Proofing Implementation review, led by Lord Cameron, including reference to PSED considerations as appropriate

The aim of the Review is to provide an independent assessment of the extent to which Government departments have adopted and effectively implemented the principles and guidance set out in the refreshed package of Rural Proofing materials published in July 2012. The review will assess the extent to which Government Departments are designing

their policies in order to deliver effective outcomes in rural areas, including how well they are:

- Identifying the rural impacts of their policy responsibilities;
- Gathering and utilising evidence on rural opportunities and need in their policy-making;
- Engaging with Rural Stakeholders in their policy-making; and
- Ensuring that rural needs and interests are fully reflected in their policies and programmes.

Lord Cameron is holding a series of Ministerial level meetings with a range of government departments during the spring. These visits will examine the systematic approaches government departments are adopting around their approach to rural proofing. In addition, to explore how helpful Defra's advice is, from the RCPU and via our published rural proofing guidance, in relation to supporting government wide rural proofing activity.

Lord Cameron will report in Autumn 2014 and make recommendations on ways in which the Government can continue to strengthen its rural proofing approaches.

Timescale: Lord Cameron will report in the Autumn 2014

Encourage and equip departments to apply rural proofing principles and guidance to their policies and programmes.

In July 2013 the Rural Communities Policy Unit (RCPU) published new rural proofing guidelines. These guidelines are designed to assist national policy makers with their decision taking and to address the needs and interests of rural communities and businesses in England. The guidance presents clear principles of rural proofing in a straightforward manner, and emphasises practical examples of good practice.

Defra is seeking to continually improve its understanding of rural proofing and will be setting up a blog, during spring/summer 2014, to involve and update stakeholders on general news and priorities around rural proofing. As part of the blog we will set up a Q&A page on rural proofing (this will evolve over time depending on questions received from departments and stakeholders) and use it to promote the work of the RCPU, the policy work with other Government departments, and ministerial engagement with rural communities.

Fully cooperate with the EFRA Select Committee on its work to scrutinise the work of Defra in its role, ensuring that PSED Considerations are covered as appropriate. Defra's Ministers and the RCPU responds flexibly to EFRA Committee questions and enquiries.

The government welcomed the Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee's recent report on 'Rural Communities' with its particular focus on rural proofing activities. The Efra Committee noted the RCPU plays important roles in helping government department's to effectively "rural proof"

policies before decisions are made.

The report noted a number of areas where Defra has been effective in its role of rural proofing government policy ensuring that the needs of rural communities are given careful consideration. We were encouraged by the Committee's endorsement of the RCPU's approach to stakeholder engagement which is crucial to helping Defra to explore both rural proofing and PSED considerations.

However, the Efra Committee report also highlighted areas where it felt the needs of rural communities were not being sufficiently taken into account by government. It is important to point out that there is no single solution for solving the problems faced by rural communities across England. These challenges can only be addressed if all levels of governance recognise and address rural challenges.

Rural circumstances need to be understood by government departments making relevant national policy; local authorities need to deliver services more effectively on the ground; and communities need to identify and address their own local priorities.

See: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmenvfru/764/764.pdf>

Service Delivery Objectives 2 and 3

Rural Payments Agency Common Agricultural Policy Reform

Background:

To establish robust diversity monitoring of the new CAP Scheme and to monitor the performance of the Assisted Digital Service for customers who are currently unable to access online services independently.

RPA have embedded and mainstreamed equality analysis into the processes we use to develop, deliver and evaluate our policies, practices and services. This ensures that we continue to give genuine and proportionate consideration to the likely and actual effects of what we do, this in turn informs our decision making process.

In January 2012 we published the equality information we then held on our Single Payment Scheme customers and made a commitment to improving the information we collect. The development and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform and related IT system provides an ideal opportunity for us to consolidate this work.

In January 2014 RPA established and agreed how we will monitor the protected characteristics of our customers in the new Basic Payment Scheme (CAP Reform) to

ensure that we will have a measure of the outcomes achieved for customers with protected characteristics.

We have analysed complex cases and complaints received from our customers and taken information from our insight work on digital capability to inform the development of Assisted Digital for BPS.

We have continued to promote the appropriate, cost effective portfolio of services we currently offer to meet the particular needs of customers. Our work here has concentrated on transition to GOV.UK and aligning our service provision to complement and support the service standards for Digital by Default service delivery with a focus on the new Basic Payment Scheme to be introduced in January 2015 under the CAP reform.

We actively consider Customer diversity and equality in our day to day business. To ensure customer needs are a high priority throughout business change we have embedded equality consideration and associated guidance into to our project methodology. We are actively developing our Assisted Digital approach to support customers in the move to digital by default services.

We continue to provide appropriate education to Agency people to understand and communicate the services available to customers. We have mandated that all our Line Managers undertake Unconscious Bias training. Through Training needs analysis we will ensure our customer facing people have the right knowledge and skills to serve and support our diverse range of customers in the Digital By Default service delivery environment and will include training on identifying customers who are eligible for Assisted Digital services

RPA people are actively engaged in a cross-government working group to refresh the training on supporting vulnerable people to ensure the learning meets the needs of our customers and our people.

Our equality priority over the next 2 years is in relation to the implementation and monitoring of the CAP Reform in 2015, and in particular to supporting our customers through a period of considerable change with the introduction of new EU Regulation and the move towards digital by default services.

We are committed to the following key objectives during the 2014-16:

- **Further develop our knowledge of customers with the protected characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity, gender and religion or belief and monitor the services they access.**
- **We will provide an Assisted Digital (AD) Service to ensure all customers are able to access the services they require to undertake CAP activities without disadvantage. We will monitor the performance of this service in order to**

establish a baseline measurement of the outcomes for AD service users by January 2016.

Underpinning activities:

Objective Two: Further develop our knowledge of customers with the protected characteristics of age, disability, ethnicity, gender and religion or belief and monitor the services they access.
In January 2015 we will introduce the voluntary diversity monitoring of customers by the above 5 protected characteristics into our self-serve functions for the new CAP schemes. This will allow us to establish a baseline measurement by January 2016, of the outcomes these groups of customers achieve in relation to the new CAP services.
Objective Three: We will provide an Assisted Digital (AD) Service to ensure all customers are able to access the services they require to undertake CAP activities without disadvantage. We will monitor the performance of this service in order to establish a baseline measurement of the outcomes for AD service users by January 2016.

Service Delivery Objectives 4 and 5

Defra Public Appointments

Background:

The Public Appointments team is committed to promoting diversity and equality during the appointments process to ensure Defra’s Public Bodies’ Boards fairly reflect the people they serve. Defra recognises that a diverse make up of its Boards will ensure more effective governance, and will improve our performance. It will also enable them to be more adaptable to new situations, providing better services to customers and stakeholders.

We are committed to the following key objectives within the 2014 to 2016 period:

- 1. Increasing knowledge and awareness of public appointments.**
Increasing awareness will enable us to reach out to a wide range of groups, including those traditionally under-represented on public bodies.
- 2. Making improvements to the appointments process.**

Defra is fully committed to making improvements which will ensure the appointments process attracts the strongest and most diverse set of candidates possible.

Underpinning activities:

Objective Four: Increasing knowledge and awareness of public appointments.
a. Ensuring Public Appointments campaigns have a media strategy which reaches a diverse group of people
b. Working with others, including the Cabinet Office's Centre for Public Appointments, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend our understanding of the challenges to achieving board diversity and the barriers to candidates of all backgrounds applying for public appointments.• Improve the number of candidates from all backgrounds who apply for these roles.
Objective Five: Making improvements to the appointments process.
a. Taking every opportunity to explain why diversity matters.
b. Ensuring the job and person specifications reflect broad competencies, transferable skills, and relevant experiences with a view to attracting people from a range of different backgrounds.
c. Operating the guaranteed interview for disabled applicants.
d. Adopting the use of CVs and a personal statement as an alternative to an application form.
e. Investing in development activities for secretariat staff and Sponsor Teams to build diversity awareness and confidence in challenging inappropriate recruitment practice.
f. Reporting on diversity through the annual publication of statistics which we will use to review performance and make improvements where possible.