

Disability Equality Duty for Public Sector, Steering Group

14.00 – 16.00, Wednesday 15th March 2006: 6 Middle Street

Notes of meeting

The Chair thanked those attending and welcomed new attendees.

Matters arising

Thanks were given for the notes of the last meeting (24th February 2006), and these were agreed. It was requested that future meetings would last approximately one hour. DK pointed out this may not be possible, depending on the nature of each month's Agenda e.g. April, plus two hours (maximum) per month to meet was appropriate as it is a Duty.

JC asked if there was anything to add to the action points.

DK said that some things were not yet allocated.

It was pointed out that the code of practice refers to issues like the redecoration of the offices.

- JEC There is a section in the Disability codes of practice that needs drawing to Paul's attention, but this is very general.
- PT explained that Paul currently works to Health and Safety guidelines, and there was a possibility that parts of the office might have to shut down in respect of access.

Introduction of the code of practice

DK said that an overview was in progress. On the introduction of the Code of Practice, she explained that Tim was not aware that this was coming. She thought each SMT member was taking the result of this meeting to talk to their own team members and how it would impact on their team. PT agreed this was the plan outlined to each SMT member.

JEC wondered if it would be better done individually or blanket-style.

PT thought that Action Plans could be shared with the staff.

JEC was not sure how much detail could be discussed in Team Meetings.

PT said she had done a general overview of the GLA scheme and, subject to this meeting's discussions, would then share the information with her team.

DK Regarding a general announcement at a staff meeting, DK thought it would be better to introduce this at team meetings as each SMT member has the lead for their area.

JEC said there would not be much to say to staff until the group has done more work.

BD could not say much to colleagues as he was starting from scratch.

PT The group would have to start with a general overview and discussion of the D.E. scheme to assist with forming policy in the future.

BD Drawing up a review - next month?

DK said this depended on the next External Relations Panel

BD This last one was last week so it would probably be in a few months.

JEC thought DK and BD would need to discuss this with Jo deBank.

A short summary of the last meeting

(1) PT gave a presentation of the related issues in respect of the DED.

She gave a definition of 'disability' under the DDA 1995

(2) Objectives of this in relation to the DED

- To actively look for ways to ensure that disabled people are treated equally
- To be proactive in the enforcement of this duty
- To include/maintain equality for disabled people into the culture of the organisation
- To include disabled people and disability equality from the outset – not on an individualised response basis to specific disabled people

To achieve these, time and commitment would be needed, but also budget for training and production of publications. This was mentioned to Rufus but, to date, no discussions have taken place re budget allocation.

JEC said that a new budget was imminent and that it was part of the allocation for the year from April 2006.

PT We will probably need money for the next financial year (2006/07). She and Paul would need to speak to budget holders to identify where money would be required.

JEC said it may have to take precedence over other areas. He did not think the group should be too apologetic for being reactive, as no one can think of everything.

(3) How far is the GLA on the DES

PT identified that the GLA already has a DES scheme and action plan in place. DK has a link for some good action points.

PT noted it would be sensible to use this as a starting point and that the GLA scheme refers to the deaf and disabled. DK would not give the actual definition as she preferred to obtain the correct wording first. JEC said that the code of practice doesn't make this distinction. Dolores Keane pointed out that we 'should' in that the GLA do in theirs.

PT The three areas covered by the GLA are the same as London TravelWatch, viz. policies, provision of services and employment of people. In March 2004 she asked whether the GLA offered any disability & diversity training. They said they had inbuilt this in respective jobs. Bridget de Souza was asked if LTW could have a person to liaise with re the GLA's DES.

DK said this is an example of a budget consideration, as is teleconferencing etc.

Highlighting some of the areas where work is needed, PT pointed out –
There is some legislation coming up in the beginning of the year,
Formatting and presentation of job description and in respect of the DES.
TP e-mailed PT in response to last month's meeting with certain issues with respect to accessibility meetings. She would be very happy to help us.
Teleconferencing could help, giving alternatives to make things easier for people with similar difficulties.

The GLA asks for a statement on how applicants see equality and how they see putting this into action, a good practice point that we may like to look at.

JEC asked what does this related to specifically. PT explained that it says that the GLA is we're happy to help and alerts the person to the fact that they can ask for assistance.

On the use of questionnaires, PT said that we don't have one. If we were to use one we would have to monitor this as good practice.

We do have an equality document that says if candidates meet the job specifications that we will give them an interview.

BD wondered what do to do if we find we have an under-representation of certain groups.

PT said this would allow us to look at who we target if we're getting lots of older people, for example.

BD said we have changed recruitment practice at different times. It seemed to him that we were doing it in terms of disability now and by something else at another time.

PT said it would be a problem if we were currently getting a significant skew of certain groups in returned applications. For example, we looked at going into job centres which turned out not to be feasible.

BD For a transport researcher we would obviously go to a research journal. The concern is that we slant the whole recruitment process on an equality agenda as opposed to what we actually need.

PT The DDA is clear that the best person gets the job.

BD thought we might not advertise in the right place.

DK said she understood that but the point was that we make a statement that we are aware of the issues, and that suppliers share the same values.

JEC It is a matter for horses for courses. We would expect those who were interested in transport planning jobs to look in the specialised press. If we are looking for more general jobs then we can look in wider areas for press.

PT said that is why it was good to have people such as TP who could let us know what they have tried, e.g. she saw our advert in *Disability Now*.

JEC was all in favour of making assertions but not if we don't actually follow the policies.

PT this would take time but we are willing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and we could possibly go further.

DK These things have a knock on effect. It may be all right at interview but the applicant's line manager needs to be aware of any issues - and handle them sensitively.

BD We actually had a complaint where a complainant could not talk to the operator without an interpreter. Therefore we can't say that we are fighting this if we are not doing it ourselves.

DK said we are still looking into this particular Appeal as there are cost implications.

JEC The duty covers everything we do across the board. If a situation occurs with operators then we need to show that we can act reasonably. Disability is linked by the GLA with diversity but we are looking at disability. I think if someone has a different language then this raises a different question.

PT Although we don't appoint members we have a responsibility to include them in induction training.

HR documents to be reviewed (not completed work) by July 2006 as a deadline for this because it seems to be reasonable.

BD The other issue is to make everyone has a revised version of this and that this is then put on the website.

PT Showed the GLA Monitoring form and suggested the group look at the GLA equality and diversity paper.

Points arising

JEC thanked PT for the considerable amount of work put into this and asked if there were any points arising from the discussion.

BD pointed out that the induction training tends to vary when people are recruited, eg. it is different when members are appointed *en masse*, than when they are trained part way through, and similarly with staff.

PT Diversity Equality Training - we carried out training 18 months ago and wanted to do stage 2 follow up but we didn't have the budget for it.

JEC Members are recruited by the GLA, however once they are appointed it is our responsibility to pick up these issues.

DK In nearly every organisation that I've come across people are not obliged to disclose that they have a disability or don't consider themselves as having a disability. This will be reflected in our figures.

PT We need to tell people that in order for us to help them we need to be told of any issues.

JEC said he knew of people who would not want to be singled out, for, e.g. a speech impediment, and would have found it offensive.

DK: We only need to be aware of disability for the practical matters of how it affects their job. She needs to go back over the whole document as soon as she can, so we can have our condensed version. We've initially invited Ron, Tracey and Lisa. We've talked about having all members involved to benefit from their expertise.

JEC said that we want to include certain members for specific reasons, i.e. those with an interest or declared disability, but a general invitation would not be wrong. The group should put out an all-points bulletin to members

DK said that there may be opportunities where this could be mentioned on panels

JEC pointed out that there is a senior member of staff on each panel who has the ability to draw attention to disability agenda when it's timely to do so.

DK said each team needs to consider the documents and the roles of their members, and suggested looking at the LDA equality and diversity document. She suggested Bryan on internal communications issues such as IT.

BD said that the important issues for him would be the phone system, IT and computers, and asked what the group expected of him.

JEC said discussing communication would be preferable with Jo. He suggested looking at accommodation issues with, say, Paul, and asked who the key people were who would deal with this.

PT explained that Paul was the Accommodation Officer and dealt with anything to do with the building, but that infrastructure was probably under communications. She said that fire safety came under HR, but fire safety would have a significant input into our DES. She mentioned the issue of meetings held in our buildings and the importance of H&S pre-meeting assessments (internal and external meetings).

BD thought that disability was covered in this.

JEC mentioned having people like Adam, Jane, Paul and someone from IT to talk about 6 Middle Street. They would not have answers but what we want is to get them talking about the disability dimensions of what they are doing. We would not have definitive answers by 12th April.

BD said that the issues for IT were massively resource related.

JEC asked if it could be limited to internal communications.

PT asked about the possibility of teleconferencing

BD explained that the system he was looking for had a teleconferencing facility.

Policies

DK said that the last page of the last meeting notes would be a good place to start, and that what she hoped for was a library of documents to be supplied to the group from each SMT member, via her, so there is one set of information to be considered.

JEC said quite a lot of information was on noticeboards, to which DK added that there should be a master policy.

JEC asked if the group could pencil in the contents of the following meetings. He suggested meeting elsewhere, perhaps the Communications area to discuss Committee policies for transport in general, or a subset of issues. He asked what processes we had in place to keep these issues in the forefront of our minds in the context of future discussions, and whether we want to have a routine reminder in policy documents to check that disability implications were covered.

DK said she had asked Tim to attend the June meeting, and asked BD if he wanted to cover casework in the May meeting.

JEC said May was pencilled in as Communication and Casework, and explained that casework brings up both how we deal with people who ask for help and policy issues in terms of our own work. He left the July meeting open for the time being.

The meeting concluded.

Actions

- To ensure the recruitment forms, literature and associated paperwork include what help/support is available for certain requirements/needs. **Rufus, Patti, Paul**
- To discuss the budget implications of the DED on the work of the organisation with a view to securing some funding for 2006.07 **Rufus, Patti, Paul**
- To invite all members not previously informed to be involved in the London TravelWatch DED process. **Dolores, John**
- To invite Adam, Jane, Paul and someone from IT & telecoms to discuss the disability dimensions of their current responsibilities at the meeting on 12 April. **Dolores**
- To continue liaising with the GLA regarding their Disability Equality Duty and what practices we can learn from this and to what extent we can tie in to their programme in, for example, training. **Dolores**
- To review the publication and communication practices. **Bryan and Jo** to meet and discuss this with a view to bringing the DED to the attention of the next External Relations meeting.
- To ensure Human Resources forms state that where help is needed we will give it. **Patti**
- To ensure appropriate budget holders use some of their money on the DED. **Patti, Paul**
- To complete a review of internal office communications with respect to how they are affected by the DED for the 12th April meeting. **Bryan**
- To consider how DED affects external communications, casework and public liaison **Steering Group**
- To have a Human Resources update in July **Patti**