

Fairness and opportunity for all

The UK currently has one of the best labour markets in the world, with employment rates at historic highs. Now we must meet the challenges we face in promoting fairness and opportunity for all, *says Jonathan Portes, DWP's Chief Economist and Deputy Director of the Work, Welfare and Poverty Division.*



In the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), we value the input **Equal** DPs can offer in pursuing this objective and look forward to collaborating with DP practitioners during Round 2 of the Programme.

A VISION FOR WELFARE

There are three main pillars of the government vision for welfare: employment opportunity for all, an end to poverty and an affordable support system. Today, we can toast our success in progressing towards these objectives. We have more people in work than ever before and unemployment is low. As a result, we spend less on the cost of economic failure and more on tackling poverty: child and pensioner poverty has reduced by a fifth.

We will now focus on the priority of securing fairness and opportunity for all. Our aim is to reach an 80% rate of employment, that is, a further 2.5 million people in work. This target

becomes ever more important as we find ourselves in an 'ageing' society.

KEY PRIORITIES

Three key areas of focus for the DWP are therefore older workers, black and ethnic minorities (BME) and those on Incapacity Benefit.

Employment rates continue to vary widely by ethnic group and gender and in recent years the number on Incapacity Benefit has peaked. We have developed a number of strategies to focus on these target groups and welcome collaboration from **Equal** DPs in further developing these approaches.

Our strategy to increase BME employment is built around three strands: building employability, connecting people to work and combating discrimination. We have also developed reform principles for Incapacity Benefit based around a strong work aspiration – while at the same time ensuring that adequate

support is there for those who need and want it.

COLLABORATION

I would like to emphasize the value we place on the work carried out by **Equal** DPs, and would urge you to continue to help us to achieve our aims. We continue to look for activities which target those who are the most disadvantaged, focus on work and have measurable and monitorable outcomes. As Development Partnerships and their supporters, you can help us to find and share solutions with a view to shaping an informed policy for the future.

We may have come a long way in changing the labour market, but there remain many challenges ahead. We in the DWP look forward to collaborating with **Equal** DPs to meet these challenges.

Equal News

Equal News is produced by the GB **Equal** Support Unit on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), European Social Fund Division. For further details contact the GB Support Unit, details on page 8.

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First round extended, second round starts in earnest

The last three months have been busy for Equal Development Partnerships (DPs) in Great Britain (GB). Many Round 1 DPs have opted to extend their activities until September 2005, allowing more time to complete their work programmes or deliver additional activities.

All Round 2 DPs have spent the last three months finalising their partnerships, both domestic and transnational, and agreeing work programmes for the next two years of project activity. Around 20 DPs are also looking to start their Action 3 work programmes from July, opening up dialogue with policy-makers and practitioners to maximise their influence on future developments.

Round 1 DPs in Scotland ended their Action 2 activity on 14 May

2005 and are now concentrating their efforts on the final stages of mainstreaming and dissemination.

Events are taking place throughout the country as DPs and their partners promote the successes and outcomes of their Action 2 activity to as wide and diverse an audience as possible.

In the second round in Scotland, the 11 approved DPs have breathed a sigh of relief after submitting their Action 2 applications and workplans at the end of April. Most have

developed links and entered into transnational agreements with DPs from new Member States, and are looking forward to the value that these links will bring to their domestic work.

You can find further information on all Scottish DPs at www.objective3.org/equal

ACE on the transnational trail

Finding the right transnational partner can be complex and time-consuming, particularly for DPs with target groups who are not widely represented in the Equal programme. At an Equal transnational conference in Birmingham in January, the Action for Carers and Employment (ACE2) DP identified a partner from Estonia working in the same field.

Having obtained details about this prospective partner from the Estonian National Support Agency (NSA), Madeleine Starr, project manager from Carers UK, and Linda Taylor of the European Institute of Social Services lost no time in visiting Tallinn.

Their visit coincided with Estonia's national Equal conference for DPs on 31 January 2005, and the Estonian NSA invited ACE to present on its experiences from Round 1. Although the conference language was Estonian, there was no difficulty in working out which session covered financial monitoring, from the look of

dismay on delegates' faces. The questions raised were also almost identical to those in the UK at the start of Round 1.

"It was a great opportunity for ACE to share its experience with new DPs in Estonia," said Madeleine Starr. "There was a lively exchange of ideas and plenty of opportunity to network over lunch. ACE now has transnational partners from Latvia, Estonia, Italy and the Netherlands that reflect the breadth of issues relating to carers and the pressure on individuals and society to manage the growing demand for care across the European Union."



Equal and the diversity agenda

Two hundred delegates attended a recent event dedicated to Equal's response to the 'diversity agenda'. The focus on four major themes – age, disability, gender and race – brought Equal's innovations to policy-makers from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI).

Introducing the event, Jonathan Portes, DWP's Chief Economist and Deputy Director for Work, Welfare and Poverty, highlighted three aims: employment opportunity for all, an end to poverty, and a support system which is affordable for the state. The challenge for the Government and all partners is to generate equality and opportunity for all; **Equal** has a role to play in providing resources to find new, better ways of helping some of the most disadvantaged people.

WORK UNTIL YOU STOP – AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE



Steve Billam, DWP Age Diversity Manager, opened the age workshop with a presentation on ageism in the workplace.

He outlined government programmes and initiatives such as New Deal 50+ and tax changes in the treatment of private pensions. Steve focused on the 'Age Positive' campaign, which aims to raise employers' awareness of age discrimination and remove barriers to employing older workers. This all forms part of the Government's support for new European Union (EU) legislation on age, which comes into force in October 2006.



Steve also previewed the National Guidance Campaign 'Be ready', which will target over a million employers with a newsletter containing fact sheets, tips and guidance.

The retail sector is a positive example of a proactive approach to older workers. Steve noted that retailers are more willing to take on older workers, and allow greater flexibility in working. Some larger retailers have even considered allowing employees a 'Benidorm break' during their January-March quiet period. The challenge is to help employers to prioritise skills and competence, not age. People should be able to "work until they choose to stop."

Three DPs' presentations underlined the contribution **Equal** can make to developing better policy on ageism. Irene Heller explained the rationale of *mēāāÉ ^Çî-āî-ŌÉ*, which is developing a multi-agency response to the needs of workers over 45, and the discrimination they face. Irene Potter, from *dbi-ÉdçîÉēā-āĀÉ*,

bā ēçî Éēā Éāî- ~āÇ- iÉ-ēāiāŌf explained that her DP aims to devise and test strategies to empower learners, and Ben Neild outlined the work of *ptllm* *Épçî iŪ- t Éēî-cçâî ā=çā- ^ŌÉ-~āÇ* *bā ēāçō-ĀāiŌfK*

Steve Billam acknowledged **Equal** as an important partner. He emphasised the importance of its focus on empowering older workers and in mainstreaming its outcomes.

GREEN PAPER CHALLENGE ON DISABILITY

Isobel Stephen, from the DWP's Health, Disability and Work Division, opened the disability workshop with an overview of the DWP's Disability Employment Programmes. She also outlined how **Equal** DPs can input into the Department's forthcoming Green Paper.

Current focus is on building legislation and frameworks to give disabled people comprehensive civil rights, employment opportunities and tailored support on demand. The Disability Strategy Unit's 20-year strategy focuses on improving opportunities for people with disabilities and promoting independent living.

People should be able to "work until they choose to stop."

Co-ordinated policy-making across the Government will be supported by the new Office for Disability Issues.

Isobel said that early results from current systems to support people with disabilities (Jobcentre Plus, New Deal for Disabled People and Pathways to Work pilots) have been encouraging.

The DWP's five-year strategy will now focus on reforming the benefits structure, working with the NHS and employers to implement change. The Strategy Unit will publish a Green Paper detailing this reform; DPs will be able to respond once it is released.

Matt Harrison and Rob Nicholls from the *mçêlâ-âÇ-m-êfâÉèÛé* DP talked about their work in supporting people with disabilities into employment, through tools to develop information technology, communication and basic skills. The DP has addressed a lack of suitable materials for people with disabilities, as current provision is often inappropriate in terms of level and age group.

The workshop then discussed the following questions:

- How can we engage employers more effectively?
- To what extent does this target group need specialist services?

- How do we get the maximum number of people into employment without neglecting those who are 'harder to help'?

- How do we enable disabled people to work without losing the minimum benefits they need?

Delegates responded to the issues raised, and identified useful outcomes and learning for policy-makers and other DPs.

PAY GAP PROBLEM STILL NEEDS WORK

Cathleen Pratt from the DTI's Women and Equality Unit opened the workshop on gender issues with an overview of the Unit's policy priorities, focusing on the gender pay gap and supporting 'women returners'. Cathleen defined the two million 'women returners' in the UK as "women who are economically inactive, but do not classify themselves as unemployed". These women are not benefit claimants.

The Government is responding with research and pilot programmes such as 'taster days' to encourage women back to work. Delegates provided useful feedback during a discussion on practical measures, such as looking at the problems of stereotyping and fairer recruiting practices for women returners.

Sheila Wild, Employment Policy Director at the **Equal Opportunities Commission** (EOC), noted that the gender pay gap is a key area of concern for the EOC. Over the last three decades, the full-time pay gap has closed considerably, but the part-time pay gap has only narrowed slightly. However, both gaps are now at their narrowest since the Equal Pay Act of 1975. At that time, the gap between men and women's hourly average earnings in full-time employment was 30 per cent, compared with 18.4 per cent today. Despite this improvement, the UK is still near the bottom of the European league table on equal pay. Sheila emphasised that **Equal's** work on job desegregation and pay equality could help to improve UK productivity, reducing skills shortages and creating a higher-quality labour force.

She described EOC initiatives to tackle these gender issues, including an equal pay review kit and code of practice. The Commission is also running a number of campaigns and will hold a gender and productivity summit with Gordon Brown.

Equal can help the EOC with its work in many ways, such as creating good practice networks, breaking down occupational segregation and opening up better opportunities to part-time workers.

Despite improvement, the UK is still near the bottom of the European league table on equal pay



Eve Light from *ḥāçî ãĒÇÖĒ= `ÉâîĕÉ=çâ=̂-Āâ=-âÇ j ãçâîîó= bîŪâîĀ= ḥî éâĀĒĕĕĒĒ Ēh`_j b_f* gave an inspiring talk about the work of this DP, which is based in the London Borough of Southwark. Its main objectives are to provide pre-employment support and post-employment training. The DP also works to retain women workers in construction, for example through mentoring, skills improvement and childcare provision.

CALL TO JOIN RACE DEBATE

Khamani Eze, from the DWP's Ethnic Minority Employment Division, spoke at the race workshop. He talked about the labour-market position for different minority ethnic groups, and outlined government policies and strategies to address minority ethnic employment.

Although the gap between the employment rate for ethnic minorities and the GB population as a whole improved by 2 per cent in 2004, Khamani observed that the gap always tends to close as employment rates go up, but widens when they fall.

Government actions in the area of minority ethnic employment include building employability, by raising educational attainment,

and connecting people to work through outreach activities and tailored labour-market programmes. The Government is also working to increase employers' awareness of equal opportunities. Newer 'demand-led' models, such as the 'Fair Cities' programme, are targeted to meet employer demand and map workforce requirements precisely.

Khamani stressed that DPs should join the policy debate through dissemination and mainstreaming, engaging with the DWP's research programme, building business case studies to help employers to understand the benefits of equal opportunity approaches, and participating in government consultations.

Vernon Barrett presented the *hâçî ãĒÇÖĒ= `ÉâîĕÉ=çâ=̂-Āâ=-âÇ j ãçâîîó= bîŪâîĀ= ḥî éâĀĒĕĕĒĒ Ēh`_j b_f* DP, led by Business Link for London. He focused on the importance of empowering minority ethnic businesses by following a targeted approach to address the needs of different groups and cultures.

The *l mbâ= eçrpb* DP was represented by Yasmin Khan. She explained how the DP is responding to a need in the housing sector, which has a lack

of black and minority ethnic staff and contractors. Yasmin talked of lessons she has learned through the DP's transnational work, where she found that many EU partners have not made as much progress as the UK in terms of race equality.

Yasmin also gave advice to practitioners by explaining the difficulties that *l mbâ= eçrpb* has encountered in engaging and sustaining involvement with local communities.

MOVING THE AGENDA ON

The energetic, positive tone of the workshop debates helped to further establish **Equal** as a major vehicle for developing policy and practice in the field of diversity.

Individual DPs and Thematic Networking Groups will take up the challenges posed by the speakers from the DWP and DTI. In the coming months, DPs will deliver their key outcomes and seek to embed them into policy and practice at local, regional and national levels.

For further details on this event and the **Equal** DPs mentioned, visit www.equal.ecotec.co.uk

You can also contact the GB **Equal** Support Unit by phone or email for more information: 0121 616 3660 or equal@ecotec.co.uk

Europe welcomes three-day Employment Week

Now in its twelfth year, a revitalised Employment Week remains Europe's premier event for employment, economic development, regeneration and training.



The 2005 conference explored Europe's employment goals and reviewed the 'Lisbon strategy', focusing on boosting EU gross domestic product and creating additional jobs.

The three-day event attracted 1,500 participants and 150 exhibitors. It provided opportunities to disseminate information, access the latest research and information on employment policy and trends throughout Europe, forge partnerships and network with European Commission (EC) representatives and MEPs.

The main conference topics included:

- the challenges to employment in Europe;
- EU financial support for job growth;
- employment issues in cities;
- partnerships and public agencies;
- innovations in education and training; and
- the future social policy agenda.

EC representatives led many of the plenary sessions, giving the latest information on the reality of Europe's employment situation. Keynote political speakers included: Vladimir Spidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; François Biltgen, Minister of Labour, Luxembourg; and Gabor Csizmar, Minister of Labour and Employment, Hungary.

Many other speakers discussed major employment challenges, such as gender pay gaps, services gaps, regional imbalances, long-term unemployment, skills gaps and age gaps. The plenary sessions looked at policies relating to these challenges and how EU institutions will continue to tackle them through programmes like **Equal**.

This year's exhibition featured a designated **Equal** area, in which a selection of partnerships from each of the participating Member States came together to showcase their results and source transnational partners.

BRITS MAKE AN EXHIBITION OF THEMSELVES

In all, 15 DPs from the UK exhibited at the event. Those that weren't able to make it were ably represented by Stuart Russon, Alan Thomlinson and Barbara Orthodoxou at the GB **Equal** Support Unit stand. Joined by colleagues Will Thompson and Ann Tune from the European Social Fund (ESF) Division, they provided information about the successes from Round 1 (2001-5) and informed representatives from all Member States about many of the

activities expected to emerge from Round 2 (2004-7) DPs.

With its mountain of brochures, booklets, CDs and other materials provided by DPs, the GB **Equal** stand was very well received, and – to the relief of our sherpas – only a small amount of material was returned to the UK.

Equal in Scotland came together with the Scottish Objective 3 programme to showcase good practice from Scottish partners. Northern Ireland's 13 Round 2 **Equal** DPs were also represented, as well as their Welsh counterparts.

Conference delegates had the opportunity to hear about activities across Europe, with individual projects showcasing their successes. UK **Equal** partnerships were well represented: presentations from 15 DPs covered a wide range of employment issues.

The GB **Equal** Support Unit's showcase focused on the programme's good working relations with national policy-makers. In this session, Toucan Europe's *bçÉã* DP explained how it encourages lifelong learning and inclusive work practices in Greater Manchester. The *t çéällçéÁÉ cì ñ éÉè* DP, led by South London Learning and Skills Council, discussed how it promotes the benefits of employing a diverse workforce to businesses.

f/t çää, led by Reading Borough Council, described the various innovative methods the DP is piloting to break down barriers to learning and employment. The *^ñ-è* DP, led by Glasgow City Council, showcased its employment innovations for asylum seekers.

“If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em”

NTP Ltd's *ci ñiÁÚ=qè-âééçèí* DP gave practical examples of how to address gender segregation in the transport industry.

The *^Çi ñi= `çáíáì ááÖ=bÇi Á-íáçá -áÇ qè-íááÖ* DP, managed by Gloucestershire County Council, gave a presentation on the key ingredients for community learning. The *bā Áö-ÁíáÖ= aít Éééíó* DP, led by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, discussed employers taking a lead in social inclusion.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) described how UK trade unions are enhancing employability, and used case studies taken from its **Equal** DP, *_i ñiÇiáÖ= l ééçèí ááíáÉè= qÚèçì ÖÚ t çéáéí-ÁÉ i É-éáááÖ*. On a similar theme, the *bi èçéÉ-á= t çéáJi ñiÉ ci ñi éÉè-m-éíáÉéèÜáè-* the transnational element of the *t çéállçéÁÉ-ci ñi éÉ* DP – provided examples of successful tools and practice to support employees' lifelong learning in the workplace.

HM Prison Services, representing the *fā é-Áí* DP, showed how innovative changes in prisons are increasing employment prospects for people on release. Also working with offenders and ex-offenders, the *t çā Éá= íáíç t çéá* DP, led by SOVA, discussed its innovative methods for engaging and nurturing women from prison into the community.

Kirklees Council's *`çā ā çā= dèçì áÇ* DP gave delegates the opportunity to discuss different approaches to common employment and human resource problems.

‘WEE DRAM’ BOOSTS SCOTTISH FORTUNES

Although all showcases were very well attended this year, by far the most popular was the ‘ESF in Scotland’ presentation, which gave an overview of **Equal** and Objective 3 programmes currently being delivered north of the border. Our intrepid reporter soon ascertained that this level of interest may have had something to do with the distilled refreshment on offer to delegates. However, in the spirit of cross-border co-operation, **Equal** News decided to apply the maxim, “if you can’t beat ,’em, join ,’em”.

WE’LL BE BACK

A straw poll conducted at the end of the event indicated that our UK **Equal** DPs felt that the Employment Week experience was worthwhile – and they’ll be back for more next year.

“Employment Week was an excellent networking opportunity for our DP,” said Robert Morrall from *l/t çéá*. “We were able to disseminate what we were doing under **Equal** and get ideas from people across Europe doing similar work. We spoke to a number

of policy-makers who were very interested in learning more about our activities.”

For further information on Employment Week, visit www.employmentweek.com



News publications websites events

DP news update

Pay gap media campaign launched

The *icêÉ=iŪÉ=d-é* DP launched its national media campaign at the beginning of March. This campaign highlights the continuing gender pay gap to employers, employees and trade unionists, and calls for Equal wages for equal work. Campaign materials refer people to a website at:

www.closesthegap.org.uk

There is also a dedicated advice line, hosted by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

icêÉ=iŪÉ=d-é will provide practical support and guidance to make sure that the pay systems in organisations are clear and fair. The DP is also working with trade unions to help them to support members and employers in carrying out equal pay audits.

Women Into Work

Lead Partner: SOVA
Contact: Nichola Cadet
Email: ncadet@sova.org.uk
Tel: 0114 270 3724

Close the Gap

Lead Partner: Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland
Contact: Rona Fitzgerald
Email: rona.fitzgerald@eoc.org.uk

PRISE (Planned Resettlement Into Sustainable Employment)

Lead Partner: RPS Rainer
Contact: Heather Loxley
Email: heather.loxley@raineronline.org.uk
Tel: 01959 561891
Website: www.rpsrainer.org.uk

NewLIFE (New London Initiative for Ex-Offenders)

Lead Partner: London Action Trust
Contact: Steve Thacker
Email: steve@lat.org.uk
Tel: 08454504890
Website: www.lat.org.uk

IMPACT (Innovation Means Prisons And Community Together)

Lead Partner: HM Prison Service
Contact: Denise Woods
Email: denise.woods@hmpr.gsi.gov.uk
Tel: 01925 605237
Website: www.Equal-Impact.com

Better recruitment for ex-offenders

Four DPs - *t çãÉâ=âáç= t çêâ*, *mofpb*, *kÉi ifcb* and *fãé-Áí* - have jointly developed an interactive CD-ROM to enable the safe recruitment of people with a criminal record. This product is being launched at the Local Government Association's annual conference in July, and disseminated to human resource managers in local authorities nationwide.

Peer research expertise shared

The *t çãÉâ=âáç= t çêâ* DP has developed a training programme on peer research methodology. To help in undertaking research and consultation, this programme assists organisations looking to use the skills and experience of the groups they wish to support. The training has been delivered to over 30 organisations so far, and the feedback has been extremely positive.

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Publications

Sustainable communities: settled homes; changing lives

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has published its five-year strategy for tackling homelessness. It includes reference to the work of Equal DPs.

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_homelessness/documents/page/odpm_home035965.pdf

Diversity and equality in planning: a good practice guide

Produced by the OPDM, and available at:

www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_planning/documents/page/odpm_plan_035786.pdf

Events

Creative Clusters Conference 2005

Help to shape the development agenda for the creative industries by contributing to the Creative Clusters Conference 2005. This international conference on regeneration and development projects that deliver both cultural and economic outcomes is being held in Belfast, Northern Ireland from Monday 24 to Wednesday 26 October 2005.

To send your proposals or find out more, go to:

www.creativeclusters.com

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