

THE PENSIONS ADVISORY SERVICE

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

MAY 2009

Disability Equality Scheme

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS) has been assisting members of the public to resolve pension problems since 1983 in various ways, either by telephone or written advice, conciliation or by involvement by one of our volunteer professional advisers.

We also offer a national telephone helpline, manned by pension professionals, who will provide information and guidance on any aspect of occupational, personal, stakeholder and state pension.

Equality and Diversity

TPAS is fully committed to promote equal opportunities within the organisation. TPAS policy ensures that we do not unlawfully or unfairly discriminate against individuals on the grounds of their colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, sex, marital status, age, disability, gender re-assignment or political affiliation/opinion.

Our commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity is taken into account in service delivery, employment practices and policy making. We will ensure that the human resources, talent and skills of all employees are maximised through the application of policies and procedures which are consistent and recognise the expertise and ability of each individual.

The Pensions Advisory Service and the Disability Equality Scheme

Disability Equality Duty (DED)

New legal duties have been placed on all public bodies to promote equality in employment and in the delivery of services in relation to disability, race and gender. Under our equal opportunities policy we already ensure that all our policies and practices are compliant with the public sector equality duties on race and gender.

In order to meet our requirements of the DED under this Scheme we will aim to:

- Include employees and customers in our planning, consultation and processes
- Collect and monitor data to inform our decisions
- Conduct reviews of relevant policy areas
- Keep our staff and customers informed
- Ensure our managers are skilled to take appropriate action to promote positive attitudes and also to tackle any discriminatory practices.

How will we do this

In order to ensure that our service is delivered in line with the generic and specific duties of disability equality and that our policies and practices take into account these provisions TPAS has involved disabled people and staff in the development of this Scheme.

We will continue to involve and consult with disabled service users and staff through regular meetings or forums to decide on how we can further improve our commitments to those with disabilities.

This Scheme outlines our commitment as well as an action plan with key target dates to continue to promote and develop this commitment. Our management team will monitor the progress of the scheme regularly by conducting impact assessments on service delivery, employment practices and policies and procedures.

2.0 OUR COMMITMENT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

TPAS aims to make disability equality part of the working culture of the organisation and will ensure that the Equality Scheme is integrated into all areas of the business.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring the Scheme is implemented and will report on the progress to the board. Specific elements of progress of the Scheme will be overseen and reviewed by the Director of Administration and Finance/HR Team Leader.

To achieve this we will:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people.
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is relevant to their disability.
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.
- Encourage participation of disabled people in public life.
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs.

3.0 KEY PRIORITIES

A. Involving & Engaging with people with disabilities

In November we began sending out a monitoring form with our monthly satisfaction survey. The form requested information on disability and related needs. We also made the same form available on our website for web users to complete.

We have received a positive response from the surveys and an indication of the level of disabled users that access our service.

19% of the respondents said they had one or more disabilities, this can be seen on the breakdown in the table below.

Disability	Respondent rate (%)
Physical	27
Sensory	12
Mental Health	17
Learning Difficulties	3
Long Standing Illness	25
Other	16

Only two people said they had specific needs. We will continue to engage with them and other customers with disabilities in the most meaningful way to explore how these needs can be best met.

B. TPAS information and service – accessible and available to the public

TPAS provides access to its services by the following media:

- Website
- Email
- Fax
- Letter
- Conferences and events
- Helpline and telephone
- Written guidance including publications and fact sheets

We will look at ways of obtaining feedback from service users on the extent to which our information and guidance are accessible and appropriate to disabled people. We will also look at other ways of engaging with disabled people in order to improve our service delivery for those with disabilities.

C. Recruitment & Employee development

We sent out an electronic survey to all staff requesting information on disability and related needs of which 35 staff responded. There is currently one member of staff that has a disability. We will continue to monitor the employee profile and provide appropriate support for any disabled employees.

Our recruitment policy ensures that when recruiting for new staff we welcome applications from anyone. All line managers have been issued with guidance on the recruitment process which includes details on the Disability Discrimination Act. All employees have equal opportunity for training and development. We engage with employees through day to day business interactions as well as team meetings and team briefings.

We will continue to review our employment practices and policies to ensure that disabled staff have full opportunities to develop and progress in the company and are not disadvantaged in any aspect of their job, as well as disabled people applying for posts within the company. This will be through monitoring staff profiles, applications for employment and advertising mediums used.

D. Being positive about Disabled people

We aim to ensure that all employees are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to promoting fairness within the organisation and that there is no direct or indirect discrimination against people with disabilities.

We will issue guidance to staff to make sure they are aware of the DED and how it affects them and their work. We will look at incorporating this in the induction process for new starters. This will also increase awareness of equality and diversity and ensure that staff are familiar with the methods of communicating with disabled people.

E. Procurement

Our current purchasing procedures are based on obtaining value for money. We will look at revising our procurement procedures to meet the requirements of the DED. In particular we will look at incorporating a specification in contracts that goods to be supplied should be useable by disabled people i.e. IT equipment and software, furniture or publications.

Tenders should also include a sign off procedure to indicate that the relevant provisions of the DDA have been considered by officers in the development and implementation of a procurement project.

We will, where appropriate, issue separate guidance to those who are involved in procurement and offer any training to staff to ensure they are fully aware of the requirements of the DED in relation to procurement.

F. Access

Our organisation is designed to be easily accessible to all. The building is designed so it is easy to use by disabled people, this includes:

- Three spacious lifts. Two of them are fitted with a delay that enables a wheelchair user to safely enter and leave in a comfortable manner.
- Disabled toilets
- Ramps
- Power assisted front door.

Our office entrances and floor surfaces are level and access is not difficult for wheelchair users. Our staff are happy to assist visitors who have any special request when visiting our building. Where it is reasonably practicable we will adapt our environment to make it more comfortable should the need arise.

G. Website

We are currently changing our website provider and will ensure that the website is more accessible and user friendly for disabled people. We will take into account the guidance published by DDA for making websites more accessible.

We will aim to obtain feedback on the new design and layout of our website from disabled people and implement any issues that are identified where practicable.

H. Policy review

Over the next 6 months we will review all our policies to ensure that they comply with the DED. The review will also incorporate impact assessments to assess the impact of existing or proposed policies and practices in relation to disability equality.

I. Results of assessments, consultations and monitoring

We will publish our Equality Scheme on our website, including a summary of the results of assessments and consultations. We will also publish any further developments to the Equality Scheme and a summary of the results of monitoring undertaken.

4.0 ACTION PLAN

The following action plan will be reviewed and monitored by the Director of Administration throughout the year and the actions will be implemented by the lead officer within the timescales defined.

Action	Lead person	Timeline
<p>Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To continue to monitor service users and staff in relation to disability. ➤ To continue to monitor staff profiles and interview candidates. ➤ Board to encourage applications from those with disabilities to the Board. <p>Senior management to review data quarterly</p>	<p>Finance/HR Team Leader and Director of Administration</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To improve our website in accordance with DDA guidance and the Public Sector Disability Equality Duty. ➤ Consider introducing Textphone as another means for customers to contact us 	<p>Technical Director and Deputy Director of Administration</p>	<p>Six months</p>
<p>Policy reviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review the following policies: Financial and Purchasing Procedures Recruitment policy HR Guidelines for Line Managers 	<p>Director of Administration</p>	<p>Six months</p>
<p>Training for employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will raise awareness of our employees on the issues surrounding equal opportunities particularly with regard to disability 	<p>Finance/HR Team Leader</p>	<p>Six months</p>
<p>Involving and engaging with service users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We will seek input from people with disabilities as to ways we can improve our service delivery 	<p>Director of Administration</p>	<p>Six months</p>