

Together we can make government work better

Creating a Diverse Cabinet Office: An Action Plan



Our commitment TO YOU

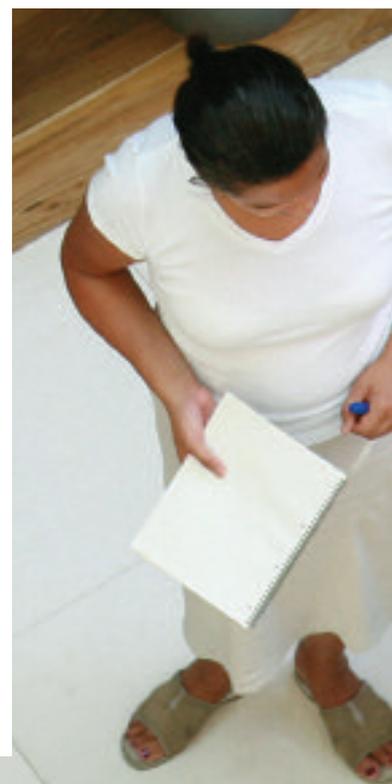
The Cabinet Office Diversity Strategy sets out the policy framework to help us all work together to create a more diverse Cabinet Office.

This action plan sets out the steps we will take over the next year to help us meet our main objective of developing a workforce that, at all levels, is representative of the population it serves. It is structured around five strategic priorities:

- improving accountability for diversity outcomes;
- changing behaviours right across the Department, fostering more visible leadership and more inclusive managers who understand the benefits of diversity, and developing a culture of greater openness on sensitive diversity issues;
- creating a more diverse workforce, particularly by encouraging recruitment and promotion on merit of individuals from under-represented groups and by extending flexible working opportunities to all;
- embedding equality and diversity in all human resources (HR) policies and processes, such as recruitment,

induction and performance management. This will include proactive talent management and a wide range of appealing learning and development options; and

- delivering clear and consistent messages on diversity by managers at all levels.



Making it HAPPEN



Management units

The diversity policy framework and action plan set out a common framework for everyone in the Cabinet Office. Management units will be responsible for integrating this into their unit plans and all staff will be responsible for carrying this work forward.

Corporate owners

Each of the strategic priorities has a corporate owner: Alexis Cleveland for accountability; Sarah Cox for behavioural and cultural change; Helen Dudley for a diverse workforce and embedding equality and diversity in HR processes; and, when appointed, our new Director of Communications for communications.

Diversity champions

Our departmental Diversity Champion is Alexis Cleveland, who also has a leading interest in disability issues, which includes supporting our network for disabled staff. We have additional senior diversity champions with a special interest in particular groups and the relevant staff networks: Sarah Cox for women; Howell James for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff; Roger Marsh for black and minority ethnic staff; and Paul Britton for carers. Members of the Senior Civil Service (SCS) Diversity Team will also act as champions within their groups.



Accountability

We want our diversity policy framework and action plan backed up by clear and strong accountability to set the Cabinet Office on the path to becoming a more diverse organisation.

We will achieve this through:

- senior accountability for progress: a Board-level champion for diversity; senior corporate owners for each of the strategic priorities; and enthusiastic champions in the Executive Management Group or on the Board for women; for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff; for staff with a disability; for black and ethnic minority staff; and for carers. All of these will be supported by a full-time diversity manager in HR; and
- an expectation that all staff and managers will be accountable for their behaviour, by embedding the Cabinet Office values firmly into the performance management and reward systems.

In the short term (in 2007), we will:

- appoint senior champions to work closely with the diversity networks to help them decide and achieve their objectives; and
- improve the diversity management information available to the Executive Management Group to include quarterly recruitment and promotion data as well as workforce profiles, at unit level.

In the medium term (first half of 2008):

- corporate owners and network champions will report twice yearly to the Board, through the Diversity Champion, on progress in their areas. The Diversity Champion's report will be posted on CabWeb;
- the senior champions' line managers will seek feedback from the relevant networks as part of their performance reviews;
- heads of management units will report annually to the Diversity Champion on the actions taken by their unit to improve diversity. These reports will include a list of the diversity objectives agreed with each SCS member in the unit and a summary of progress towards meeting them;
- the Executive Management Group will have a challenging discussion on diversity issues at least twice yearly on the basis of quantitative and qualitative evidence of progress at group level and across the Department;
- the SCS Diversity Team will review the Diversity Champion's report and provide a challenge function where progress is poor; take the lead in implementing the five strategic priorities within groups; exercise a challenge function within groups, for example at critical points such as recruitment, promotion, performance management and restructuring; continue to drive forward progress; share best practice between groups in promoting diversity; and provide good examples of diversity objectives, which staff can use as models in their performance agreements; and
- the HR Diversity Manager will monitor the recruitment and progression of minority staff and develop initiatives to address any identified issues.

Behavioural and cultural change

We want to engender new behaviours right across the Department, with more inclusive managers and a culture of greater openness on sensitive diversity issues.

We will achieve this through:

- well-supported, business-focused diversity networks;
- accommodation and working practices better suited to the needs of under-represented groups; and
- higher expectations of appropriate behaviour through the Cabinet Office values and underpinning behaviours.

In the short term (in 2007), we will:

- give each diversity network an annual budget for seminars and other activities. A business case will not be required to claim the budget, but networks will need to account at the end of the financial year for how the money was spent;
- provide support to the networks through their senior champions and the HR Diversity Manager to hold awareness-raising events, linked to Cabinet Office business wherever possible;
- encourage line managers to use their discretion on the dates of privilege holidays (which would, for example, allow Muslim staff to take the two days for Eid as their privilege holidays);
- include diversity in the Cabinet Office values and behaviours and pilot a values and behaviour scorecard; and
- roll out the Trading Perspectives reverse mentoring scheme, making clear that it is intended to spread better understanding of diversity issues among the SCS. All SCS at director level and above should aim to take part in the programme.

In the medium term (first half of 2008), we will:

- review the availability of prayer rooms in all Cabinet Office buildings;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the diversity element of the values and behaviour scorecard; and
- introduce advances of salary for religious festivals other than Christmas.

In the long term (remainder of 2008):

- the HR Diversity Manager will work with managers who make key decisions about recruitment, promotion, appraisal, development and restructuring, so that they know how to eliminate bias from these decisions, value diversity in their teams and actively support people from under-represented groups.

A diverse workforce

Our objective is a workforce that is representative of the population it serves, at all levels, with working practices that suit a range of lifestyles.

We will achieve this through:

- a new longer-term overarching objective to make the Cabinet Office representative of the population it serves, at all levels;
- our existing targets for women, black and ethnic minority staff, and staff with a disability in the SCS and Band A;
- specific targets for particular minority groups if our monitoring exercises to capture information on religion/belief, ethnicity and sexual orientation indicate that any are under-represented;
- a better understanding of equality of opportunity practices during all recruitment exercises and implementation of those that work well;
- greater proactivity in recruiting and developing staff from under-represented groups; and
- a wide range of flexible working practices that support good work/life balance and help the significant proportion of our staff that have caring responsibilities (currently around one in five).

In the short term (in 2007), we will:

- provide ongoing training for the Cabinet Office Recruitment Team in equality of opportunity practices and have its procedures equality proofed;
- pilot the blind-sifting of job applications. This means that selection boards will not have access to people's names until the interview stage;
- raise the profile of the Cabinet Office as a diverse employer through advertorials in specialist media; and
- make all posts (but especially in the SCS and feeder grades) available on flexible working packages, unless there are strong reasons why this would not be appropriate.

In the medium term (first half of 2008), we will:

- conduct further analysis of recruitment and promotion data at SCS and Band A level and put in place action to address the barriers faced by different groups;
- give guidance to all recruiters on diversity issues within the centrally provided recruitment pack. The training for first-time recruiters will include a diversity element; and
- publicise the flexible working arrangements available in a booklet to be given to all staff, incorporating examples of staff at all levels benefiting from these arrangements in practice. These will include opportunities to work from home one day a week, using remote-working technology supplied by the Department; part time; compressed hours; during term times only; and as a job-share arrangement.

In the long term (remainder of 2008), we will:

- take at least two black and ethnic minority graduates on placement from the Windsor Fellowship scheme each year; and
- participate in the Civil Service Summer Development Programme and Summer Placement Programme for black and ethnic minority people and people with a disability, and encourage them to apply for the Fast Stream.

Embedding equality and diversity in HR policies and processes

We want equality and diversity to be embedded in all HR policies and processes, including a wide range of appealing learning and development opportunities, provided both centrally and through well-supported diversity networks.

We will achieve this through:

- the integration of diversity issues into all leadership and management training, including the Cabinet Office induction course;
- the integration of diversity issues into other key HR policies and processes, including recruitment and performance management; and
- development activities specifically targeted at under-represented groups.

In the short term (in 2007), we will:

- introduce a structured mentoring/coaching programme for all staff to help them progress, but market it particularly at under-represented groups. Those being mentored will get coaching in identifying their career goals and help in achieving them; mentors will get training in their role and will commit to a mentoring partnership for a period of 12 months;
- publish revised performance management guidance that takes full account of equality and diversity issues, including how to recognise and reward network convenors;
- provide support to the diversity networks through their champions, who will help them agree a governance structure and strategy; and
- evaluate the pilot Shadow Executive Management Group as a development tool which aims to give talented Band As in under-represented groups the experience of senior collective decision making.

In the medium term (first half of 2008), we will:

- provide training in harassment and discrimination issues for one member of each network, so that they can provide effective help to any network member who is facing problems. We will revitalise the network of harassment contact officers and ensure that they meet regularly to raise issues with HR;
- offer positive action training for all staff, including assertiveness, challenging inappropriate behaviour and awareness of rights and legislation. We will market this particularly at under-represented groups; and
- support potential candidates for the National School of Government's Leaders Unlimited programme for talented staff who are women, black and ethnic minority or disabled.

In the long term (remainder of 2008), we will:

- make disability awareness training available to all staff and distribute a Disability Toolkit (modelled on those used by other government departments) to managers.

Communication

Our objective is for clear and consistent internal and external messages on diversity to be delivered by managers at all levels.

We will achieve this through:

- a clear communications strategy; and
- spreading best practice.

In the short term (in 2007), we will:

- post clear and consistent messages on CabWeb at regular intervals and make the diversity pages on CabWeb more vibrant;
- provide support from HR and the Communications Group to help networks individually and collectively to communicate effectively;
- expect Board members and diversity champions to take personal responsibility for reinforcing messages on diversity as part of their daily business;
- encourage groups to post examples on CabWeb of what they are doing to promote diversity;
- post messages on CabWeb reminding all staff of religious festivals, noting that some staff may be fasting or taking leave; and
- develop a calendar of diversity events which is inclusive and coordinated.

In the medium term (first half of 2008), we will:

- have an established, coordinated calendar of diversity events, designed to link to our strategic diversity priorities, that are promoted and actively supported;
- have an established core brief on diversity for senior champions and managers to use, regularly updated by the HR Diversity Manager; and
- participate in external accreditation and benchmarking schemes, such as Opportunity Now, Race for Opportunity, Employer's Forum on Disability and Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index.

In the longer term (remainder of 2008), we will:

- have gained recognition in the external accreditation schemes described above; and
- put forward strong nominations for diversity in the 2008 Civil Service Awards.

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Publication date: October 2007

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Prepared for Cabinet Office by COI Communications

