

EQUALITY 2025 WORK PLAN 2008/9

Introduction

The proposed work plan outlined below has been established through engagement with disabled people; as a result of bilateral meetings with a variety of government departments and through careful consideration of how we might bring added value to government over the next year while making best use of the resources available to us.

Disabled people have given us a wide range of issues they wish Equality 2025 to be involved in. We have done our best to ensure that we are not proposing to duplicate the work of any other non-departmental public body, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and/or replicate any work currently being carried out within government. Our aim is to bring added value to government.

Through all that we do, we will maintain active and effective engagement with disabled people and will ensure that any advice we give to government is firmly rooted in the views and opinions of as wide a range of disabled people as possible.

We have divided our proposed work plan into four focused areas of work. We are aware that there is much more to be done but it is important that we are able to deliver effective advice which, inevitably, necessitates an acknowledgement of available time, energy and other resources. We believe that the proposed work plan detailed below fits with our strategic aims, is manageable and will support the work of Government in its aim of achieving equality between disabled and non-disabled people by 2025.

Headings:

1. Independent Living
2. Equalities
3. Human Rights
4. Engagement.

The first 3 of these contain the key areas of work. Each piece of work has the outcome Equality 2025 want to achieve, a reason for its inclusion in the plan, brief detail of methodology, and a timescale.

The fourth heading gives details of how Equality 2025 will engage with disabled people and Government, an on-going process which underpins all the work that Equality 2025 will do.

This work plan does not rule out the possibility of additional *ad-hoc* projects in response to events or policies that arise during the year.

1. Independent Living

1.1 - User- led Organisations project

Work with the Department of Health to support their project to establish User Led Organisations, based on Centres for Inclusive/Independent Living in every Local Authority area by 2010. (Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People report – Recommendation 4.3)

Outcome: A network of user led organisations is established to support disabled people and which Equality 2025 can access to enhance their public engagement work.

Why: This project is about implementing recommendation 4.3 in the 2005 Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People report and is very important to disabled people because its successful outcome (effective User-Led Organisations throughout England) will have a huge impact on the way in which services are delivered and monitored at local level.

How: Advice to government will be given via members' interaction with the Ministers involved in this work, including the Minister for Social Care. We will bring up to date information to disabled people through our public engagement meetings and feedback to key Ministers and civil servants through advice notes and more informal methods as this work progresses. We are also already engaged in key organisations, for example the National Centre for Independent Living, and with other pieces of work that cross-cut into this project (for example, the Independent Living Strategy).

Timescale: Throughout the year, then ongoing, until 2010.

1.2 - Improving Disability Employment & Adviser Services (IDEAS)

Work with the Department for Work and Pensions and contribute to their work to introduce improvements to the work-focused services available for disabled people to find, enter, and progress in employment.

Outcome: A more responsive service that recognises the needs of individual disabled people.

Why: Disabled people have said very clearly that current employment support does not always meet their needs.

How: We will work with officials from the Department for Work and Pensions to provide strategic advice, based on the views and direct experience of disabled people. In particular we will discuss the response to the recent consultation with officials and advise on the impact of the proposed policies.

Timescale: Ongoing, initially until the proposed new programme is introduced (October 2009).

1.3 - Aiming High for Disabled Children

Work with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, and the Department of Health, on implementing the programme to improve services for young disabled people.

Outcome: A more effective and equality-based experience of the services available to young disabled people than currently exists.

Why: It is vital that the views of disabled children and young people are heard during this project. Equality 2025 is in a unique position to give advice based on these views in the early stages of project planning.

How: Support and advise on the implementation of this Department for Children, Schools and Families / Department of Health programme through membership of the Ministerial Implementation Group and effective engagement with young disabled people, particularly on the issue of “short break” care. We will advise on the most effective ways of implementing the proposals in the various areas of the Aiming High initiative, and give rounded, informed advice based on the views of those who have first hand experience as service users.

Timescale: Throughout the year, then ongoing (“Aiming High for Disabled Children” is a three year project’).

1.4 - Independent Living Strategy

Working with the Office for Disability Issues on:

a) The consultation that is taking place with disabled people between 03 March 08 and 20 June 08 on how to implement and measure progress

and:

b) Involving Equality 2025 in the long term measurement and monitoring of progress towards independent living for disabled people, through membership of the Independent Living Scrutiny Group.

Outcome: Effective relationship with the Office for Disability Issues-led strategy implementation group, leading to improved implementation and tangible improvements in the lives of disabled people.

Why: The Independent Living strategy is based on a review undertaken during 2007. If implemented effectively, it will have a significant impact on the lives of many thousands of disabled people, including older people needing support services for the first time.

How: Equality 2025 will engage with disabled people to obtain relevant information which it will pass to the Strategy Implementation Group to improve the longer term implementation and monitoring of the strategy. It will also feed back progress to disabled people through communication channels and public engagement meetings

Timescale:

a) Throughout the initial consultation period (03 March 08 – 20 June 08)

b) Throughout the year, then ongoing. (The implementation of the strategy will continue long-term.)

1.5 - Reform of the Care and Support System

The Government believes that a radical rethink is required of the way the state supports people to gain and retain their independence. The Government intends to develop a reform strategy and set out a process involving extensive public engagement, ultimately leading to a Green Paper which identifies key issues and options for reform.

Outcome: A reformed care and support system which is firmly rooted in the social model of disability and based on the principles of Independent Living.

Why: There is a clear opportunity to engage with this piece of work in its very early stages in order to influence the design of these initiatives and ensure that they result in better outcomes for disabled people.

How: Equality 2025 and the Department of Health will work together to ensure that disabled people are able to participate in this crucial debate of how to build a sustainable care and support system, and that the potential impact on disabled people's lives is fully understood. We will gain membership of relevant project groups and give verbal and written advice based on consultation with disabled people carried out through our regional meeting programme.

Timescale: Initially focused on the period of public engagement which will be starting in the spring, then focussing on work towards a Green Paper, identifying key issues and options for reform.

1.6 - Getting a Life project

A cross-government project which seeks to pilot ways of getting employment, education and local authority day services functions for people with a learning disability to work together in an integrated manner. If successful, the project could make it easier for this group to recognise and achieve their learning and employment aspirations.

Outcome: That young people with learning difficulties going through transition can recognise and achieve their learning and employment aspirations.

Why: This project ties in with a number of Equality 2025's strategic aims and is a key government initiative to improve transitional experience of young people.

How: The project geographical pilot areas will be announced soon and Equality 2025 can add significant value to this project by working with other representative organisations, including the National Forum of People with Learning Disabilities, to advise government as the project develops.

Timescale: Throughout the lifetime of the pilot project (at least to the end of March 09).

1.7 - Individual budgets and employment

Work with the Department for Work and Pensions to increase employment opportunities for disabled people through the effective use of the individual budget principle – a more joined-up package of support to give disabled people more choice and control over the way they are supported.

Outcome: The employment opportunities of disabled people are improved.

Why: Disabled people have regularly told us that effective Access to Work funding is vital to their employment opportunities. Changes in social care have resulted in many more disabled people receiving self-directed support, for example individual budgets. There is a clear need to further explore the potential relationship between the individual budget principle and employment.

How: The Department for Work and Pensions have asked Equality 2025 to work with them to develop initiatives to improve the employment opportunities of disabled people. We will feed into policy development and submit both verbal and written advice which reflects the views of disabled people.

Timescale: The project will last 12 months, then be reviewed.

2. Equalities

2.1 - Equality Strategy

Work with the Government Equalities Office on producing a co-ordinated strategic approach to equalities across Government.

Outcome: An effective approach is embedded into the work of Government departments so that they have a solid equality-based foundation on which to build policies and initiatives which impact on the lives of disabled people.

Why: The Government Equalities Office is working to produce a co-ordinated strategic approach to equalities across Government.

How: We will work with the Government Equalities Office to help them to develop a first position paper reporting on progress since the Equalities Review, and drawing together current Government activity. We will ensure that disability issues and the rights of disabled people are reflected and addressed during this process.

Timescale: the position paper will be published by summer 2008.

2.2 - Equality Public Service Agreement

Work with the Government Equalities Office to review the evidence of the equality performance indicators in the Equality Public Service Agreement.

Outcome: That disability equality is adequately understood by key individuals in the Government Equality Office and that relevant and measurable performance indicators are developed and agreed.

Why: The Government Equality Office is responsible for devising a list of performance indicators through which Government will effectively measure the delivery of equality for disabled people.

How: We will work closely with officials within the Government Equality Office. Advice based on the views of disabled people will be submitted both verbally and in writing.

Timescale: Complete by end of June 2008.

2.3 – Equality Bill

Engage with the Government Equalities Office as the new Equality Bill is prepared.

Outcome: That the proposed legislation enshrines the rights of disabled people and will be effective in delivering those rights.

Why: Equality 2025 made a significant contribution to the consultation on the Single Equalities Bill during 2007, and we want to play a key role in the ongoing development of the Equalities legislation.

It is essential that disabled people's views are not marginalised as this bill is further developed. Our input is needed to ensure that the Bill reflects those views.

How: Equality 2025 will ensure that disabled people's views are taken into account by expressing their view to the Bill team about the inclusion of essential elements, including enforcement procedures.

Timescale: Dependent on Government Equalities Office timescales, and those of Parliament.

2.4 - Departmental Single Equality Schemes and Initiatives

Work with the Cabinet Office and the Department of Work and Pensions on advice to all government departments.

Outcome: Improved departmental single equality schemes which reflect and address disability equality issues.

Why: Many departments are developing a single equalities scheme with the aim of ensuring that equality issues are embedded in everything they do. Equality 2025 has been asked by both the Cabinet Office and the Department for Work and Pensions to provide advice on disability equality and how to effectively mainstream disability equality initiatives within a single equality scheme.

How: Equality 2025 will develop an Advice Note which will support government departments to formulate their single equality schemes. The Advice Note will be drawn up by working with the Cabinet Office and the Department for Work and Pensions. It will establish principles which will be disseminated effectively throughout government.

Timescale: Complete by end of September 2008

3. Human Rights

3.1 – United Nations Convention on Disability Rights

Work with the Office for Disability Issues on ratification of the United Nations Convention on Disability Rights.

Outcomes: Ratification with no reservations.

Why: Disabled people have told us very clearly that their view is that ratification with reservations could have a significant impact on the potential for the Government to achieve its aim of equality between non-disabled and disabled people by 2025. It is therefore important that Equality 2025 provides advice to government on disabled people's views of the implications of any proposed reservations.

How: We will gather evidence from disabled people on their views of the implications of any reservations that may be proposed on specific Articles of the Convention and advise Government, through the Office for Disability Issues United Nations Convention team, of our findings.

Timescale: Ongoing, until ratification takes place, expected by Dec 2008.

4. Engagement

To successfully accomplish the proposed work plan it is essential to engage with a wide and diverse range of disabled people throughout the United Kingdom. As a priority, we need to continue establishing an effective network through which we can maintain contact with disabled people and build on our engagement and communication strategy which is already proving to be effective.

Throughout 2008/09 we will undertake a variety of activities to ensure that any advice we give to Government is rooted in the opinions, views and advice given to us by disabled people.

We will be particularly focused on engaging with young disabled people, older people and hard to reach groups. We will regularly monitor the extent to which we are achieving our aim of being a conduit between the widest possible range of disabled people and government.

In addition we will make sure that disabled people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are engaged appropriately through our communication strategy on non-devolved issues. We are aware that many disabled people in these areas are particularly hard to reach due to their rural isolation, linguistic differences and their potential lack of connection with Westminster government.

During 2008/09 we will do the following:

- **Communications strategy**

We will further develop and publish our revised communication and engagement strategy. This will show how we intend to develop and maintain effective working relationships between Equality 2025 and disabled people and between Equality 2025 and government departments. The outcome of this will be clarity for all parties around the processes of communication and engagement.

We will publish a calendar of events for public engagement so that all relevant parties can establish appropriate timeframes for utilising Equality 2025 as an effective conduit.

We will also, within six months, compile and maintain a database of individuals and organisations who can be invited to meetings,

emailed with questions and encouraged to spread the word around their local areas.

- **Website and Internet Presence**

We will continue to develop and maintain an effective, accessible presence via the internet to enable quick access to Equality 2025 for those who currently use computer technology. By the end of 2008 we aim to have established an interactive site to be utilised for effective engagement with disabled people.

- **Public meetings.**

We will host a range of public meetings throughout 2008/09 with the primary purpose of engagement with disabled people. At least one event will be held in each region of the United Kingdom and the outcomes from each meeting will provide the basis for the provision of advice to government, based on the views and opinions of disabled people.

In addition, at least one public meeting will be a national conference which will become an annual event.

- **Profile within Government**

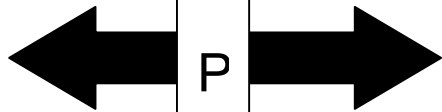
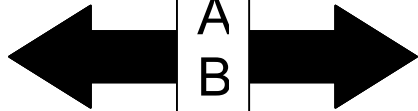
Throughout 2008/09 we will continue to attend key meetings and conferences which help to promote the existence of Equality 2025 across Government and throughout the Civil Service. This will continue to establish relationships and enable our advice to be received and acted on effectively. It will also maintain the message that equality for disabled people is an aim across Government as a whole and that Equality 2025 exists as a Non-Departmental Public Body to advise on the design and implementation of policies and initiatives which enable equality to become a reality by 2025.

In addition

Equality 2025 will continue to identify and be open to new initiatives and pieces of work that would benefit from the added value that Equality 2025 can bring. We will maintain capacity to be reactive whenever possible, although priority will be given to the successful achievement of the work plan detailed above.

At all times, the members of Equality 2025 will maintain a close working relationship with the Office for Disability Issues and will endeavour to bring added value to their work.

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- 1) INDEPENDENT LIVING**
- User-led Organisations Project
 - IDEAS
 - Aiming High for Disabled Children
 - Independent Living Strategy
 - Reform of the care and support system
 - Getting a Life
 - Individual budgets/employment

- 2) EQUALITIES**
- Equality Strategy
 - Equality Public Service Agreement
 - Equality Bill
 - Departmental Single Equality Initiatives

- 3) HUMAN RIGHTS**
- United Nations Convention on Disability Rights



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