

DVLA Equality and Diversity Action Plan Report

Report on progress made between April 2008 and March 2009

Introduction

This is the first of the annual reports on the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Plan for 2008 -11**. It provides an up-date on the progress the Agency has made on all equality and diversity issues from April 2008 to March 2009. This report has been published internally on our Intranet for our staff, as well as on our external public website (www.dvla.gov.uk).

This will also be the only report on the 2008-11 plan, which has been replaced by a revised action plan, the DVLA Diversity Action Plan 2009 -12. The new plan includes actions to meet the requirements of the public sector duties and Civil Service Diversity Strategy. The new plan is easier to understand and, where appropriate, we have included actions from the 2008-11 plan.

Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) publishes **Disability, Race and Gender Equality Schemes** that incorporate all the individual action plans of its constituent agencies, including DVLA. The DVLA Diversity Action Plan therefore should be read as part of those schemes for context.

Background

The DVLA is a Public Sector Employer and has the following general obligations to consider under its Public Sector duties for all diversity strands:

- promoting equality of opportunity
- promoting good relations
- promoting positive attitudes
- eliminating harassment, and
- eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim of Equality legislation is to encourage organisations to set objectives to achieve these goals. These obligations are set out in the following acts: Race Equality Duty, the Gender Equality Duty and the Disability Equality Duty. They generally tell us what we need to do and how to do it. We can set our own objectives that relate to the needs of our business, staff and customers. We have done this and it is included in our plans.

In addition to the public sector legal duties relating to race, gender and disability, public authorities must uphold and promote human rights in everything they do. We have included human rights actions in our plans. The Regulations on Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief and Age do not have public sector duties attached but good practice would be to include these, and the transgender strand, in any actions we take. The DVLA Impact assessment process and Diversity Action Plan include all diversity strands.

We are also committed to the principle of equality and embracing and being proactive in encouraging and supporting diversity. We have tried to reflect this ethos in our plans and this report will show our achievements.

About the Agency

The DVLA is responsible for:

- setting up and maintaining accurate records of drivers and vehicles
- issuing licences to and withdrawing them from drivers
- issuing vehicle registration certificates
- collecting and enforcing Vehicle Excise Duty (road tax), and
- selling personalised registration marks and anonymised data.

The Agency operates across the UK and has approximately 40 million registered drivers and over 31 million vehicle records on its current database. As an employer it has approximately 5,000 staff at its headquarters in Swansea, Wales and 1400 in its local office network throughout the UK.

The Post Office acts as an agent for the Agency, under contract, for vehicle relicensing and other services at some 4,600 selected sites.

Joint Working

The DVLA works with the other Department for Transport (DfT) Agencies and in addition to publishing the equality schemes, the DfT shares best practice initiatives including:

- managing monitoring activities
- diversity training and communication, as well as
- issues such as making services more accessible.

DfT Diversity Network meetings are held quarterly and attended by all of the agencies involved, including the DVLA. These enable us to discuss diversity issues that affect our customers and staff and to develop corporate policies and responses. Senior management and diversity champions work with DfT and other Civil Service departments on strategic matters.

We have continued to actively work with and consult the Trade Union Side, (TUS) under the Partnership agreement between the DVLA and the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), on all issues involving staff.

Leadership and Management of Diversity Actions

Diversity Champions

Recognising that leadership on diversity is essential to stimulate and maintain action on equality issues, we have appointed Simon Tse as a Diversity Champion. He is responsible for ensuring that action on diversity is recognised and promoted as a positive business driver and that the requirements of equalities legislation are met. He and the other champions are all Executive Board members and provide the lead on all equality, human rights and diversity issues throughout the Agency. In addition to Simon Tse's overarching role, other diversity champions will provide leadership on specific areas of; equality, sexual orientation, bullying & harassment, race, gender and disability. The champions have agreed terms of reference and a calendar of activities to promote their strands.

Diversity Action Group

This group has replaced the Diversity Steering Group and intends to provide leadership and accountability at a strategic level. The group is made up of all the diversity champions. It will help ensure that all areas of the Agency are involved in meeting the requirements of the legislation and contributing to and making decisions that affect equality and diversity. It meets four times a year and has well defined action plans for each of the champions that describe their proposed activities as well as a means of measuring achievement against those actions.

HR Changes

We have made structural changes in the HR Department that aim to improve how we get things done. This includes how we carry out our actions under the Diversity Plan. Our HR Business

partners and advisers are now integrated into the business and support staff across all the diversity strands as needed. The role of the Disabled persons officers ceased in this period and responsibility for disabled staff was passed to HR Business Advisers and managers.

Impact Assessing

We ran workshops for staff doing impact assessments, reviewed and updated the impact assessment timetable and put it on the DVLA website. We also developed and publicised new guidance and templates.

PRER

The Policy, Reward and Employee Relations group (PRER), has responsibility for supporting compliance with equality legislation and promotes diversity throughout the Agency by:

- developing HR policies
- helping to monitor policies for adverse impact
- advising directorates on undertaking equality impact assessments
- providing specialist advice and a consultation resource
- advising on improving access to information and services
- recommending relevant training for staff, and
- pursuing equality and diversity initiatives including promoting good practice under race, gender and transgender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief, human rights and age legislation and publishing the results of these undertakings.

Activities in the reporting period include:

- working with the Workforce Development team in procuring Diversity training for all DVLA staff
- reviewing and impact assessing the annual pay award
- rewriting the diversity and equality policy, and
- starting work on reviewing and improving accessibility on all HR policies.

Assessing Policies and Functions

We look at all of our policies and functions to see if they are relevance to the public sector duties (known as a “test of relevance”). If they are we carry out impact assessments on them and on any new policies or functions. When we do an impact assessments we consider the effect that these policies or functions may have upon different ethnic groups, men and women, disabled people and, where appropriate, people of different ages, people with different religious beliefs (or no religious belief) and of different sexual orientation.

The majority of assessments have been initial assessments or tests of relevance, with two full assessments completed and a third full underway. Details of the **Tests of Relevance and Impact Assessments** that have been undertaken will be available on our new website.

Consultation and developing links in the Community

We use several approaches for an internal consultation:

- TUS and networking groups for consultation, discussion and dissemination of information
- groups of staff from different grades and work areas, and
- regular surveys, questionnaires and focus groups

These contribute information and give feedback, as described later in this report.

We consult with external partners and equalities groups when we develop Agency policies and functions and identify best practice to promote equality and diversity. These have included: RNID, RNIB, Carers Wales: Gofael Cymru: membership of the Welsh Equality Exchange network group, Stonewall Cymru, Job Centre Plus, Remploi, Shaw trust, SCOPE, WISE (Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment) Carers groups and Ability Net (a charity assisting with IT solutions for disabled people), the TUS, the Agency’s Ethnic Minority Awareness Group (EMAG) and, the group

representing disabled staff, Ability. Specific contacts have been made with customers representing groups with conditions such as dyslexia and deafness.

We also have a list of organisations that we consult depending on the nature of the driver or vehicle policy we are planning to introduce. These include groups that represent special interest areas, such as disabled drivers and so on.

The Ability Group acts as a networking group to provide staff with support, but also ensures that each meeting has a speaker who will give information and help educate staff.

The DVLA is a member of the Employers Forum on Disability, the Employers Forum on Age and the Employers Forum on Religion and Belief and Race for Opportunity (RFO). It uses membership as a means of accessing information, uses their newsletters to keep updated as well as using them as a source of advice on casework. The Department for Transport has consultation groups that provide information for all its agencies.

(Establish any other business consultations used)

Surveys

The annual **Private Motorists Survey** seeks customers' views on satisfaction and the service we provide, and information provided from this, is used to improve customer service.

Recommendations from the survey have been included in the Diversity Action Plan 2009-12 and a summary of the findings of the **Customer Surveys** for **2007** and **2008** are available on the website. Evidence from the last analysis suggests that disabled customers in particular prefer to use the phone as their main source of contact. Improvements have been made so disabled customer can make verbal complaints if they cannot put their complaints in writing. Although this policy is in place, more work is needed to ensure all staff are aware of it and can comply with it.

In January 2005 we undertook a Diversity Survey of staff that specifically addressed equality and diversity issues and included diversity monitoring questions. This benchmarking survey enables us to measure our progress each year using our bi-annual Staff surveys.

We did a staff satisfaction survey of all staff in October 2008. We provided analysis for all the agency as well as individual directorates. Our key findings relating to diversity and mental health highlighted issues for staff and included stress, bullying and harassment and verbal abuse, including from customers as well as internal. Each directorate is taking action to address issues raised in the survey.

The Agency Call Centre (CEG) did a Staff Satisfaction Survey in April 2008. The survey aimed to improve consultation with all staff and an action plan has been drawn up on the basis of the findings.

We did a Disability **Staff Survey** in **2008**:

- to ensure that we were meeting the needs of disabled staff, and
- to up-date our records to demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity and legal compliance.

We also use the information from the survey to update our staff monitoring records and provide assistance to those who indicated a need. The next survey will take place in 2010. This survey helps keep the declaration rate of disability at a high level, helping ensure disabled statistics are as accurate as possible and updates information on the range of disabilities and identifies new cases to be managed.

Monitoring

We monitor our employment functions, to evaluate trends, assess their impact on our staff and take appropriate action to ensure equal treatment. These monitoring reports include staff in post, training and development, recruitment, promotion, performance assessment, discipline and grievance, reports of harassment and discrimination and exit interviews. We also collect and analyse monitoring information on part-time staff for evidence of unequal treatment. The monitoring for year ending 31st March 2008 has been published on the DVLA Internet and Intranet. The research and analysis was conducted by IHAC, (In House Analysis and Constancy), a government agency that also completed monitoring work for all the DfT Agencies. This means that the same approach was used and comparisons can be made easily. There was also a significant saving through taking this approach.

IHAC has established specific requirements and worked with DVLA and SSC to ensure that data collection will be efficient and accurate. There were some issues that will be addressed as a result of this monitoring and these will be assessed following the completion of the 31st March 2009 monitoring. Monitoring will continue to be undertaken to identify any trends and results and analysis of this monitoring will be published annually. Any issues which arise as a result will be investigated, recommendations made and action taken to address any adverse impacts.

Publishing Results and Accessing Information

All of the information detailed above is published on our website. We will make information available and accessible using diverse formats. People who do not have access to the Internet can get hard copies of these documents from the DVLA.

The public can also get access to information by:

Personal service at our local offices, at the post office or at the Swansea reception desk, and for main services through the Post Office ® or third parties such as motor dealerships.

Telephone, Letters, Fax and email including textphone facilities to our Swansea HQ and local offices. The DVLA Call Contact Centre takes complaints by phone where this is a customer need.

Internet Advice and guidance and information is published on our Internet website as are Agency Business plans and other corporate information. The DVLA is linked to the DirectGov website for providing information.

E-recruitment is now in place via the Agency website.

Electronic vehicle licensing service is available and provides 24-hour access for customers.

Leaflets and Forms which you can get from all of our offices, the Post Office, Motor Dealerships and other third parties, and on our website. All DVLA forms are being reviewed in order to reduce the number of forms and their complexity and improve their accessibility. A review of the top ten forms took place in 2007 –8. check this and insert update from Paul Johnson?? Information leaflets and some forms can be provided in translation or alternative formats on request.

The Media including Television, Radio, Magazines, Newspapers and Posters

Access to information is provided to staff by:

The Agency's Internet and Intranet sites which contain a wide range of information in accessible formats including recruitment, diversity and all HR policies, procedures, guidance and up-to-date news items.

Meetings and conferences are used to brief staff throughout the Agency and include team briefings, Local Office Managers and Leadership seminars.

Internal communications and magazines including the development of notice boards and plasma screens, leaflets and articles published in Licence Magazine, you@dvla and corporate briefs.

Consultation with Trade Union Side and staff focus groups as well as information provided via these groups.

Making information and services more accessible

We have undertaken a number of initiatives, including the Customer and Staff Surveys, to establish our customers' and staff views and use them to provide increased access to information. The DVLA was successfully assessed in November 2008 for the new National Service Standards that replace Chartermark

Customers

Greater access to information in local offices has been developed for people whose first language is not English. We provide a translation service, both written and telephone, for customers who need them and we set up a new contract in this reporting period to improve staff and customer access to the telephone service. This is through a DfT framework agreement to reduce costs. Written translations are made via a new Home Office agreement. Touch screen technology has been introduced and is being assessed, with a view to providing information in other languages. In addition, a database containing details of staff who speak ethnic minority languages has been compiled to assist customers with translation needs.

The Agency annually does a Customer Survey. The results of the Survey are analysed and acted on, and in conjunction with the Chartermark assessments and an electronic complaints tracker, are used to identify issues to help improve customer service.

Staff

Health and Well Being

The Health and Well-being team have produced a number of initiatives to support staff wellness. Staff are made aware of policies on maternity, pregnancy, special leave provisions for parents and carers, and other HR policies put in place to support staff and are given every opportunity to put in place individual requirements. They work with the internal communications group and HR communications staff to use a range of media to make staff aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Call Centre

We have reduced absence in our Call Centre by a number of initiatives:

- Presents4Presence (small rewards)
- an attendance line that ensures that employees receive appropriate support
- an attendance letter, acknowledging 100% attendance, to thank, highlight and promote good attendance, and
- duvet days, to provide staff with increased control of their leave.

Flexible working

We have increased the range of flexible working opportunities to improve staff work-life balance and reduce absence statistics. We are offering carers of dependants, whether children, elderly or disabled, the opportunity to change hours to better suit their needs. Our Induction Programme ensures that staff are made aware of Agency policies and procedures and how to contact key support personnel such as the HRBU's, Occupational Health Advisor and Counselling Support

Services. The Intranet has been developed to make it more accessible to disabled staff including those with dyslexia. Staff can also customise Intranet pages by altering their size, background colour and resolution. The Staff Handbook has also been reformatted on the Intranet to make it more accessible for all staff. Work on this is in progress.

Harassment contact officers

- We ensure our network of Harassment Contact officers gets refresher training each year to help them support our staff.
- We issue their contact details to all staff and publish them on the DVLA Intranet and all internal communications boards.
- The calls they receive are monitored to look for trends, including gender related bullying and harassment and a report is published.
- Monthly HCO reports are created for senior managers to highlight areas of concern, whilst ensuring confidentiality is maintained. Managers are requested to feed back into reports to create action plans.

The harassment and bullying policy was reviewed in this period and consultation undertaken: the revised policy will be published July 2008.

Disability

We have a large number of declared disabled staff – 14.5 % from the last monitoring exercise. They have a variety of needs, ranging from little or no reasonable adjustments, to more extensive needs, requiring IT and other technical or equipment, or changes in tasks or jobs.

Training

We commissioned and piloted Diversity training for all staff up to and including the Executive Board in this period. The existing training provision continued on fair treatment at work, Disability and impact assessing. In addition, we reviewed courses to ensure issues of equality and human rights were included where relevant.

Training in our Call Centre focussed on the Aspire programme, a customer service centred programme that helped staff focus on meeting customers needs. All customers would have seen an improvement in service, as staff have been trained to improve their listening skills, to ensure that questions obtained the information needed and to continue the call until customers were satisfied. This included meeting the needs of disabled and elderly customers and those who needed help in translation. All staff were trained in the method of accessing Language Line. The programme reduced time waiting and average call handling time, for the benefit of all customers, and also resulted in improved staff morale for all groups of staff.

Networking Groups

Ability Group

The Disabled Staff network needed to be refreshed, as membership was reducing and it was becoming less effective. The group was therefore renamed and relaunched and has increased its membership significantly. The new name **Ability**, was chosen by competition and the involvement in this helped publicise the newly renamed group and gain involvement. Staff are kept informed and interested with regular **Ability** meetings with a variety of subjects and speakers. More than 60 people attended the February 2009 meeting. The relaunched group helps support equality of opportunity and has a new website that aims to promote the interests of our disabled colleagues at DVLA by providing details about the group and giving information to help disabled people in their working life at DVLA.

LGBT networking group

DVLA is a member of Stonewall Cymru and the LGBT group has attended their meetings regularly in this period. Information and contacts have been brought back for dissemination from these and other networking meetings. The membership of this group has increased in this period. The group was also active in promoting LGB history month and advertising through the Stonewall Recruitment Guide 2008. The group supports work to benchmark against the Stonewall Equality Index and during this reporting period, our submission narrowly missed being included in the top 100.

EMAG

The Ethnic Minority Awareness group has been kept going by the commitment of a small number of dedicated staff. However, it lacks support throughout the Agency generally and it's main activities have been to provide consultation support for agency policies and thorough the Diversity Steering Group and work with the TUS. EMAG members have been very active in the Community and one member received an award for her work in the 2009 honours list.

All networking groups provided feedback on agency policies and have been consulted in the development of the Agency Diversity Action plan and this report.

Recruitment

The policies for recruitment and selection were reviewed as part of the new Pay and Reward changes underway in DVLA. All our recruitment processes and procedures are open to all candidates who have the skills and competence to apply for a job. Removing formal requirements opens up vacancies for a more diverse range of candidates.

Staff Candidates can apply through the internal email recruitment schemes managed by the Shared Service Centre (SSC). SSC collect all our recruitment and selection statistics.

When we run open competitions for external recruitment we advertise through 'Jobs-online' and there is a link to the 'Jobs-online' web site, on our vacancy page. We advertise some vacancies in the Western Mail and on the Wave, a Swansea based radio station. Senior Civil Service vacancies are managed by the Department for Transport in London.

We have attended a 1/2 day workshop for Job Centre Plus - talking to long term unemployed about getting back into work and what an employer is looking for. Unfortunately, due to internal resource issues, we have not been able to attend any job fairs in the reporting period

Our use of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) positive about disabled people (double tick) symbol has been approved. This confirms that our policies and practices demonstrate our commitment to employing disabled people. As part of this initiative the Agency also operates the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for disabled applicants and staff. This provides a guarantee of an interview for disabled people who meet the minimum requirements for the post. All our recruitment is against the principle of the Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice on Employment and Occupation and open to all staff.

The CEG and COD directorates' recruitment schemes both offered different working patterns. CEG offered shift patterns and COD offered full time days and part time evenings. All other schemes are available to part time staff, dependent on the role advertised, and whether part time is appropriate to the role.

Accessing Premises and Facilities

Our annual Customer Surveys provide useful feedback on customers' views and on access to premises and facilities. Chartermark accreditation is held by DVLA and actions to comply with any recommendations made by their assessors have also been undertaken, or completed, where possible. The CharterMark assessments also highlighted some access issues and these findings have been used to further improve access to premises and facilities

DVLA has been assessed on the Customer Excellence standards that replaced Chartermark and was successfully assessed on progress in November 2008. The new, more rigorous standards include specific assessments on diversity and will annually provide evidence of DVLA performance for customers against these National Standards which include putting the customer at the heart of business. DVLA is the largest organisation to achieve the standard for the whole of the organisation Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Assessments.

Estates management group maintains Agency premises and is responsible for achieving the best possible access for customers and staff. Ongoing work in this period has included large-scale office refurbishment and improvements to make the Swansea offices more accessible, as well as network offices throughout the UK. They have also provided quiet rooms, facilities for staff health, such as fridge's, water coolers and other materials.

There are ongoing improvements being made in IT accessibility, including the redesign of the Agency Intranet and Internet. This is work in progress and some areas remain to be reviewed and changed to reach the approved British standards. . We are working toward compliance with WW3 standards for access. The content and scope of information available on Intranet will also be reviewed during this process. A Browsaloud facility has also been set up on the website.

An Agency Accessibility group has been set up to ensure standards are set and met and a full report on their activities will be included in next years report, as they were set up at the end of this reporting period.

Training and Developing Staff

In accordance with our Equal Opportunities & Diversity Action Plans we have procured diversity training for all staff as part of our Diversity Training and Development Strategy from 2008 -9. Mandatory diversity awareness training for all staff is being rolled out and this includes tailored training for staff with customer facing responsibilities, managers and the Executive Board.

The DVLA has a DDA half-day awareness workshop available for staff and a line manager's guide for managing disability issues.

A number of staff have received BSL training and the Open resource Centre (ORC) has several programmes of e-learning and CD-ROMS and books available for all staff. Finance has been provided for disabled staff to go on National School of Government disability courses. Call Centre staff have been trained on dyslexia. Meeters and greeters at the Local Offices have been trained in disability awareness.

Communications

Action plans and reports published both internally on the Intranet and externally on the DVLA website. Articles and guidance and other information is provided through internal channels, such as news@dvla, staff newsletters, corporate briefs, on-line guidance tools.

Diversity Initiatives

The DVLA is no longer able to use the following initiatives, due to headcount restrictions:

- **Recruitment Plus Scheme**
- **Retention Plus Scheme**
- **Work Taster Scheme**

Two Ticks

We have the Two Ticks symbol for Positive about Disability and can provide evidence to support retention of that symbol in the way we support our disabled staff and our recruitment process. We fund, through a designated budget and the procurement process, specialist suppliers for the provision of IT and other equipment as well as expertise through occupational psychologists and job coaches, where a need is identified.

Staff nursery

As part of our commitment to work-life balance, we provide a staff nursery with the provider SchoolHouse Daycare Ltd. New nursery premises were opened during the period of this report providing more places and improved facilities. A holiday play scheme for holiday periods and half-term is in place for our employees at the Swansea offices. Busy bees vouchers continue to be offered to staff.

Flexible working

Flexible working arrangements are in place and managers are encouraged to consider options for alternative working patterns. The largest DVLA directorate has introduced a new approach to flexible working, designed to allow both genders to alter work patterns to suit caring and family needs. Our Contact Centre has reviewed hours of opening and staff working patterns and changes identified in consultation with staff and customers.

Health and well-being

We have set up a Health, Well-being and Attendance Group that aims to encourage staff in a healthy lifestyle and help reduce sickness absence and promote well-being at work. As part of their work, initiatives have been undertaken such as a "Round the World" challenge. This has encouraged staff to clock-up miles by an activity of their choice e.g. cycling, walking running and complete against other teams in rounds so that a final winner will be the team that first makes the miles around the world. The aim is to encourage a healthy range of activities and get good publicity to help raise awareness of health issues. Nominated charities will also benefit from fundraising activities.

We have opened a new onsite gym at DVLA head office at Swansea that offers assessments and advice on use of the gym.

Counselling

The Staff Counselling Consortium provided support and advice to all our staff, for a range of complex issues including bereavement, illness and disability, debt and financial problems, family matters, bullying, transsexualism and mental health problems, such as depression and suicidal thoughts. The support provided helped staff practically and also helped the agency retain staff and maintain attendance where practicable.

This service was replaced at the end of this reporting period by an Employee Advisory Resource (EAR), which provides an employee- assistance service. It offers independent, confidential advice and support on resolving complex issues including debt, family matters and parenting, health and employment. An account of services we provided during 2009-10 will be made in next year's report.

Pregnancy and health

We have issued attendance management guides for managers, as well as a guide on pregnancy and maternity and paternity provisions. A range of health information is supplied on our Intranet, including advice relating to gender, age and disability.

Religion and belief

The development of our Religion or Belief Policy has made provision for religious observation in the workplace and a calendar of religious festivals has been distributed to all sites. Agency offices are able to offer a quiet room for prayer and a quiet room is provided when the DVLA runs conferences or other large-scale events.

Childcare

We have an on-site nursery at DVLA Head office in Swansea. This helps support parents in the workplace and is also a facility for mothers who need to breast-feed. Where this is a requirement elsewhere for staff, offices that have a quiet room make this available, if requested, for feeding or nappy changing.

Pay

There was a pay review in 2008, as we are restructuring the organisations pay and reward procedures. DVLA has a very short pay band structure; so all staff proceed within two years from the minimum to the maximum on the scale. Further reviews of the pay system and agreements that follow will be impact assessed before implementation.

Carers

Carers needs have been supported in conjunction with the Occupational Health team and external support through liaison with Crossroads and Mentro Allen. Consultation has taken place through a Carers event hosted in conjunction with Carers UK and F Crossroads in December 2008. DVLA remains part of the local carers network group, and has hosted a seminar to work on caring issues with that group. This enabled us to discuss main areas of concern for staff.

Dignity at work

We supported the annual Ban Bullying day in November 2008. This initiative has been supported by our Chief Executive and his Board, as well as the Trade Union. Information leaflets and desk guides were provided for staff as part of this campaign. There is a policy on bullying and harassment, as well as support provided through the Harassment Contact Officers Network.

Homeworking Policy

We started a pilot in the reporting period, to assess the feasibility of staff working from home and identify practical and technological requirements that relate to making this more widely available. This may be appropriate and helpful for disabled staff, as well as those with caring responsibilities.

Policy and Guidance

We have developed policy and guidance information on a wide range of diversity issues, to keep staff and customers informed of our intentions and obligations as an employer and service provider. In 2008-9 these have included:

- Disability Adjustment Leave (DAL) Policy
- Disability Policy
- Bullying and Harassment policy
- Rehabilitation Adjustment Leave policy
- The Stress Policy has also been up-dated during the period of this report.

Information about these policies is available on the Intranet following consultation and impact assessments.

Summary

The DVLA's Equality Action Plan has provided a challenging agenda for the Agency; however, much has been achieved.

We now have a stronger relationship with the DfT and other DVO Agencies and have developed more links with external organisations to share best practice and increase consultation. We have also established a comprehensive programme for addressing the requirements of the equality legislation as well as our wider diversity agenda.

We have discovered more about our customers and staff as a result of surveys undertaken and monitoring our human resources processes. Methods of communication have been extended and a programme of work to improve access to buildings and facilities undertaken. Training and development for our staff has provided more opportunities for under represented groups in the workforce and a greater awareness of equality issues throughout the Agency.

Harassment Contact Officers are now more competent in their skills and more accessible to staff. As a result we are now able to provide a better service to our customers and more opportunities for our staff to realise their potential.

Priorities for the new Diversity Plan 2009 –12 will include a focus on customer service issues. The plan is structured on the Civil Service Strategy and will provide delivery on that, as well as on the public sector duties.

Evidence suggests that some improvements are needed in the accessibility of our computer systems generally and we need also improve accessibility for dyslexic customers and others with difficulties in reading information on paper and on-line. We will continue working on making improvements in the design of leaflets, forms and IT and the availability of different formats for information. It may be difficult to provide changes in the forms used to capture driver and vehicle information as there are statutory provisions and the data processing procedures to be considered.

Further Information

If you would like further information on any of the issues raised in this report please contact PRER.