



**DVLA**

**Equality and Diversity**

**Action Plan Report**

**2005 – 2008**

**Report on progress made between April 2005 and March 2008**

## Introduction

This report is on the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Plan for 2005 – 8** which can be found on our website ([www.dvla.gov.uk](http://www.dvla.gov.uk)). It provides an up-date on progress made, on all equality and diversity issues, by the Agency in the period to April 2008.

From June 2005 the Race Equality Action Plan and the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Action Plan have been combined to form **the Diversity Action Plan 2005-08**. This Plan also covers the 2006 – 9 **Disability** and the 2007- 9 **Gender Action Plans**, and also includes religion and belief, sexual orientation, human rights, transgender and age, in order to fulfil the aims of the **Agency's Diversity Policy** and its legal responsibilities. It also includes action to widen the scope of diversity in the Agency with the addition of other groups, such as carers.

The DVLA believes that this combined scheme allows the Agency to have an effective integrated approach to managing diversity and equality. This holistic approach offers the opportunity for considering people in the round and better use of resources, in terms of managing the plans and actions.

## 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 Race Equality Duty, the Gender Equality Duty and the Disability Equality Duty. The specific and general duties for each of these clearly describe the actions required and set out the framework within which they must work. Within the scope of this framework organisations can set their own objectives and activities relating to the needs of their business, staff and customers. This has been done by DVLA and is described in the DVLA 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 and Human Rights actions have been included in the DVLA 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 strands in any actions, as well as the transgender strand. Therefore the DVLA Impact assessment process and Diversity Action Plan includes all diversity strands.

## **Race**

The **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2001 General Duty** requires that as a public body in carrying out our lawful functions we have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity and
- promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.

## **Gender**

The **general duty** came into force on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and requires us, when carrying out all our functions to have due regard to the need:

- to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex
- to promote equality of opportunity between women and men

The duty requires organisations to take action on the most important gender equality issues within their functions. The promotion of equal opportunities between women and men requires public authorities to recognise that the two groups are not starting from an equal footing and identical treatment will not always be appropriate. Under the duty authorities also have an obligation to eliminate discrimination and harassment towards current and potential transsexual staff. This duty has extended to trans-sexual service users from December 2007.

## **Disability**

The Disability Equality Duty came into force on 4 December 2006 and requires all public bodies to actively look at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally. The **general duty** sets out what public authorities must have due regard to in order to promote equality of opportunity.

## **Human Rights**

Public authorities in the UK have obligations to promote and protect human rights, and all public authorities must act in a way that is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. This means treating individuals fairly, with dignity and respect, while also safeguarding the rights of the wider community.

## **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)
- 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 1800 in its local office network throughout the UK. The Post Office acts as an agent for the Agency, under contract, for vehicle re-licensing 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 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.

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. Representatives from the PCS are part of the Diversity Steering Group.

## **Leadership and Management of Diversity Actions**

We have appointed Simon Tse as a Diversity Champion. He is responsible, with the Chief Executive, Noel Shanahan and other Executive Directors, for ensuring that diversity is recognised and promoted as a positive business driver and that the requirements of legislation are met and they provide the lead on all equality and diversity issues throughout the Agency. We also have also appointed an IT Accessibility Champion, David Hancock, who has responsibility for overseeing improvements in access for staff and customers.

We have made structural changes in the HR Department that aim to improve how we deliver activities across all our HR activities, including how we carry out our actions under the Diversity plan. Disabled Persons Officers now form

part of the HR Caseworkers and carry out their support to staff across all the diversity strands as needed, providing a more holistic approach.

The newly formed Policy, Reward and Employee Relations group (PRER), has responsibility for supporting compliance with equality legislation and promoting diversity throughout the Agency including: 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; 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.

The Diversity Steering Group has a remit to 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. This group has representatives from all directorates of the Agency, the TUS and staff focus groups and meets regularly to consider equality issues, propose policies and discuss progress on diversity initiatives. The three time yearly Diversity Steering group (DSG) meetings have continued to discuss and monitor actions to meet activities under all Diversity Action Plans and the Impact Assessment timetable. The membership and terms of reference of the DSG are being reviewed and the new group will be meeting October 2008.

### **Assessing Policies and Functions**

We assess all policies and functions for their relevance to the public sector duties (known as a “test of relevance”) and carry out impact assessments upon those that are relevant, as well as any new policies or functions. In carrying out impact assessments we have considered not only the effect that these policies/functions may have upon different ethnic groups but also in respect of 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.

Impact assessments have been carried out on some significant HR policies, such as the closure of Luton Office and the new procedures for Managing Under Performance.

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 **Test of Relevance** and **Impact Assessments** that have been undertaken are available on our website.

## **Consultation and developing links in the Community**

We use several approaches for consultation: the Diversity Steering Group brings together individuals from all Agency Directorates, TUS and networking groups for consultation, discussion and dissemination of information.

We consult with a number of partners and equalities groups when developing Agency policies and functions and best practice in promoting equality and diversity. These have included: RNID, RNIB, the Commission for Race Equality (CRE), the Equal opportunities Commission (EOC), membership of the Welsh Equality Exchange network group, Stonewall Cymru, Race for Opportunity (RFO), Swansea Bay Race Equality Council (SBREC), the Minority Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN), the Multi-Agency Forum Swansea, Job Centre Plus, Remploy, Shawtrust, 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. We also have a wide circulation list of organisations that we consult according to the nature of the policies we are planning to introduce in respect of drivers and vehicles.

Unfortunately, a reduction in HR resource has reduced capacity to maintain contacts with external groups, such as MEWN (Minority Ethnic Women's Network) and NASS (National Asylum Support Seekers).

However, the DVLA has recently joined Race for Opportunity and will be able to use these organisations to help with contacts and consultations.

Consultation with disabled staff has been in part through the Speakeasy group – now renamed Ability. 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 the education process. In addition, we have held three diversity conferences for managers and staff with a variety of external and internal speakers. The conferences in 2006 and 2007 were used to develop the Disability Action Plan and consider disabled customer issues. Another conference, in 2005, focussed on race. These conferences enabled us to involve staff in consultation and also provided a means of training and education.

The DVLA is a member of the Employers Forum on Disability, the Employers Forum on Age and the Employers Forum on religion and belief. 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.

## **Surveys**

The annual Customer Survey seeks customer's views on satisfaction with the service we provide and information provided from this has been used to improve customer service. Recommendations arising from the survey have

been included in the Diversity Action Plan 2008-11 and a summary of the findings of the **Customer Surveys** for **2006** and **2007** are available on the website. Evidence from the last analysis suggests that disabled customers 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 year on year progress via our bi-annual Staff surveys. The 2006 Staff Survey showed staff had considerable interest in forming networking groups and they wanted these to be used not only to help contacts with other staff but so they could be consulted on relevant issues. The 2005 survey has also been used to inform impact assessments and the Diversity Action Plan 2005-08. A summary of the findings of the **Diversity Staff Survey 2006** is available on our website.

A **Disability Staff Survey** was undertaken in **2006** and again 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. The information from these surveys has also been used to update our staff monitoring records and provide assistance to those who indicated a need.

The Disability bi-annual staff survey took place in March and the results are being analysed at present. 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.

This year we have undertaken an RNID Louder than Words audit to identify issues on accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing staff and customers. Work to implement their recommendations has been started.

## **Monitoring**

One of the specific duties of the RR(A)A, DDA and gender regulations requires us to monitor our employment functions, to evaluate trends, assessing 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.

For the period 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2008, we used comprehensive monitoring templates to capture information on groups of staff. These include information in respect not only of ethnicity but also gender, disability and age.

Where monitoring information is incomplete we have made recommendations, contained in the 2005-08 Diversity Action Plan, to improve our records. New procedures for collecting information on disciplinary actions and grievances, harassment, verbal abuse and discrimination will be established.

The monitoring of disabled staff has been effective, as there was a 95% response to the 2006 Disability Survey and responses have been high in the current 2008 survey, still being analysed.

A review of the sickness absence procedures is currently taking place and training for managers will form part of the implementation process.

As part of this programme, for improving monitoring, we have sought information from staff on their disability status

There is no conclusive evidence of an imbalance or adverse effect on any of the target groups reported as a result of analysis but it is noticeable that women continue to be under-represented in higher grades. Monitoring will continually 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.

Problems with the SAP system will be addressed to try and improve collection of staffing statistics needed for monitoring.

**The 2004-05 Monitoring Report** is available on our website.

### **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 may obtain hard copies of these documents from the DVLA.

#### **Access to information is provided to the public 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 minicom 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

**Leaflets and Forms** which are available 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.

**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 Human Resources 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 conferences.

**Internal communications and magazines** including the development of notice boards and plasma screens, leaflets and articles published in Licence Magazine, DVL today, a2b magazines.

**Consultation** with Trade Union Side and staff focus 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 top ten forms and leaflets are being redesigned in plain English with improved information about contacting us and how to get information in different formats.

### **Customers**

Greater access to information in local offices is being developed for people whose first language is not English. In this respect the use of Language Line, which provides translation services for customers who require them, has been reviewed. 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. This will be further developed, as detailed in the 2005-08 Action Plan, to include opportunities for staff to develop their foreign language skills and basic sign language.

As a result of the Charter Mark assessment undertaken in 2007 further recommendations have been made to improve access to information and these will be developed in the coming months. The recommendations include increasing the use of posters and articles on the website, newsletters and greater public consultation.

The Agency annually undertakes 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. Evidence from the last analysis suggests that customers find the use of meeters and greeters and reduced waiting times is helpful for parents with children, as is the availability of toilet facilities, where premises have these. The availability of on-line licensing helps people with caring responsibilities.

A customer standards group has been set up and is reviewing how we provide our services, to identify further improvements. A Customer Liaison Manager provided leaflets giving guidance to customer facing staff on working with disabled customers.

## **Staff**

People managers have been appointed throughout DVLA who are tasked with managing staff issues specifically. Task managers manage the work-related targets and issues. Through people managers, 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.

These trained people managers are able to provide support and guidance which helps retain staff at work through positive management of attendance and other activities.

We have increased the range of flexible working opportunities aimed at improving staff work-life balance and reducing 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. More work on this is in progress.

We ensure our network of Harassment Contact officers receives refresher training each year to help them support our staff and we also recruited

additional new HCO's in February 2008. Contact details for Harassment Contact Officers have been issued to all staff and are published on the DVLA Intranet and all internal communications boards.

The calls received by HCO's are monitored to look for trends, including gender related bullying and harassment and a report is published.

We have a large number of declared disabled staff – 13.5 % from the last monitoring exercise. They have a variety of needs, ranging from little or no adjustment to more extensive needs, requiring IT and other technical or equipment, or changes in tasks or jobs.

The Disabled Persons Officers have provided guidance for these staff and their managers on disability. They have also provided general information and guidance to managers at all levels. They have attended meetings, used the Intranet, run conferences and distributed publications to promote knowledge of disability and help ensure equality of opportunity.

There are just under two hundred live cases being managed by the HR caseworkers and more than another 200 have been worked and closed. As part of the restructuring of HR, these Disabled Persons Officers are being replaced by caseworkers, who will manage disabled casework, as well as other cases.

The Disabled staff network needed to be refreshed, as membership was reducing and it was becoming less effective. The group was therefore re-named and relaunched and has increased its membership significantly. The new name 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 last meeting. The relaunched group helps support equality of opportunity.

### **Recruitment**

The policies for recruitment and selection are being reviewed as part of the grades to levels work that form part of the new Pay and Reward changes underway in DVLA.

All our recruitment process and procedures are open to all candidates who have the skills and competence to apply for a job. Staff Candidates can apply via the internal email recruitment schemes managed by the Shared Service Centre (SSC). SSC are responsible for collating all our recruitment and selection statistics. Under e- recruitment data collection is part of the process. When we run open competitions for external recruitment we inform all the necessary parties and advertise in the local press and job centre.

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.

### **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 as detailed in the 2005-08 Action Plan. The Chartermark assessors have noted the improvements in facilities between old and new premises.

DVLA will be adopting the new Customer Excellence standards that replace Chartermark and will be assessed on progress in November 2008. The new standards include specific assessments on diversity and will annually provide evidence of DVLA performance for customers against these National Standards.

DVLA has undertaken an access audit for all offices in the Agency's 40 local offices in 2007 and put in place recommended improvements where possible. This has been limited in some cases by existing form, location of buildings or landlord agreements. New offices are compliant with recommendations from the audit. We have been working with the landlords to try and make adjustments and improvements.

The Access audit, led to a programme of refurbishment including the introduction of access ramps, automatic doors, handrails, low-level counters and hearing loops. When an office is refurbished the work is done to comply with any issues identified in the audit.

Members of the DVLA Disability Team and now HRBU caseworkers have continued to provide advice and support to Managers and disabled staff on all disability issues, arrange workplace assessments and purchase aids and equipment for disabled staff from the designated budget.

The Agency's work with Ability Net, Shawtrust, Remploy and the Department for Work and Pensions "Positive about Disabled People" initiatives (See Diversity Initiatives below) also continued support greater access to premises and facilities for staff and job applicants.

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 champion has been appointed.

### **Training and Developing Staff**

In accordance with our Equal Opportunities & Diversity Action Plans we will develop further diversity training to include all staff as part of our Diversity Training and Development Strategy from 2008 -9. A specification for the delivery of a range programmes, using a variety of training methods, to meet the requirements of the Diversity Training and Development strategy has been prepared. This includes mandatory diversity awareness training for all staff, 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 managers 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.

In 2005 - 8 impact assessment training sessions were held for key staff from different directorates to enable them to undertake impact assessments throughout the agency.

Local Office staff received training in customer service and Fair Treatment in Employment and the Diversity Unit provided Roadshow raining for staff in Bristol and Manchester in 2006 and 2007.

A workshop providing training on invisible disabilities, including Mental health issues was provided for a number of staff in March 2008. 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.

### **Diversity Initiatives**

Some of the other diversity initiatives, which have been developed as a result of the Agency's Action Plans and in response to staff views in the 2005 and 2006 Staff Satisfaction Surveys, are detailed below.

We use the following initiatives:

**Recruitment Plus Scheme** – This provides confidential help for disabled job applicants to make it easier for them to apply for jobs.

**Retention Plus Scheme** – This service assists the Agency and disabled staff to overcome difficulties in the workplace and has been extended to staff on long term sickness absence to aid their return to work.

**Work Taster Scheme** - This provides opportunities for disabled people to gain work experience and overcome barriers which may prevent them from finding or keeping a job.

The Disabled Persons Officers have also supported and developed membership of external bodies, such as Remploy Shaw Trust Scope and Job Centre Plus and there has been very close working with these organisations to support disabled staff. The work has included assessments and provision of advice, training of staff and recommendations on equipment or other reasonable adjustments. The Disabled persons Officers team has gained awards for its work on disability from Remploy and Job Centre Plus. The Disabled Persons Officers have won awards for the DVLA, in recognition of our efforts to support and encourage disabled employees.

We have provided work placement opportunities for disabled people, enabling them to acquire work experience.

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 via occupational psychologists and job coaches, where a need is identified.

A Line manager guide on disability is due to be issued to provide information and guidance and support managers in making reasonable adjustments where needed. The process of devolving HR functions to the line manager, currently underway, will be used to improve knowledge and promote equality by increasing management involvement.

As part of our commitment to work-life balance, we provide a 56-place staff nursery with the provider SchoolHouse Daycare Ltd. We also formally adopted the DVLA 40 place holiday play scheme play scheme to help working parents and carers balance the demands of their working and personal lives. A holiday play scheme for holiday periods and half-term is in place for our employees at the Swansea offices.

Flexible working arrangements have been reviewed and a new Flexitime system has been introduced to assist work-life balance for staff. The 2005 Diversity Survey of staff indicated that the new flexitime scheme had improved

working time arrangements for many. Managers are also actively 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 a report making recommendations for changes identified in consultation with staff and customers has been sent to the Chief Operations Officer for the Agency.

We have set up an Attendance Management group to target and reduce sickness absence and promote well-being at work. We are opening a new on-site gym at DVLA head office at Swansea. Analysis is underway to determine any gender related patterns in sick absence and a staff well-being review is also being undertaken and is currently being analysed. We will be issuing attendance management guides for managers, as well as specific guidance on helping support women experiencing the menopause, as well as a guide on pregnancy and maternity and paternity provisions.

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 and is posted on our website. 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.

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.

We have recently implemented a Rehabilitation Leave policy that may indirectly benefit female staff returning from sick absence. Monitoring of absence figures suggests that as the DVLA has a high number of young female staff, there may be also a proportionally greater amount of sick absence attributable to this group.

The DVLA had an Equal Pay Review in 2006 and is currently undertaking one for 2008. There will also be a pay review in 2009, 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. A five-year pay agreement was established in 2000 to implement equal pay and was completed by 2006. Further reviews of the pay system and agreements that follow will be equality-proofed before implementation.

Carers needs have been supported in conjunction with the Occupational health team and external support through liaison with Crossroads and Mentro Allen.

The DVLA supports the annual Ban Bullying day and it has a Bullying and Harassment policy and complaint and grievance procedures in place. We ran an anti-bullying campaign in both 2006 and 2007 to combine with National Ban Bullying day. 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.

## **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 2005 –8 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.

All of the above policies will be available on the Intranet following consultation and impact assessments.

## **Summary**

The DVLA's Equal Opportunities and Race Equality Action Plans have 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 RR(A)A and other 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 2008 –11 (which incorporates disability) will include a focus on customer service issues. 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. Work will continue 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.