

**Category: Innovation****Case Study: HM Prison Service****Date: October 2007****EFA overview**

Despite the growing prisoner population and many competing priorities the Prison Service has evolved into a multi-disciplinary and diverse work-force. It has made great strides in its effort to recognise and promote the benefits of diversity, including promoting the benefits of a mixed age workforce. Success for the Prison Service is not just about meeting targets but also about how the organisation treats and values its 50,000 employees.

To help achieve this, the Prison Service has developed a Single Equality Scheme. Identifying and addressing age discrimination plays a significant part in the Scheme. The prime objective within the Single Scheme is to go beyond the statutory public sector duties on race, disability and gender and to include and assess age within Impact Assessments of all key employment policies and training.

**The initiative**

A single Staff Diversity & Equality scheme and action plan launched on 30 April 2007

**Aims and purpose**

To set out how HM Prison Service will achieve its corporate aims of addressing decency and equality of opportunity within employment and promoting diversity.

**Business drivers**

- The 3 year single scheme was developed in response to the three public sector equality duties on race, disability and gender set down in the Equality Act 2006. The Service decided to go further than the Home Office recommendation and the legal requirement by including sexual orientation, religion & belief and age.
- The Prison Service was also mindful that the Discrimination Law Review (summer 2007) would look at the possibility of a Single Public Sector Duty across all diversity strands.

**The approach taken**

HM Prison Service is a front-line Criminal Justice agency with over 50,000 staff, 80,000 prisoners and 125 public sector prisons within England and Wales. It is an Executive Agency to the new Ministry of Justice.

Success for the Prison Service is not just about meeting targets but also about how the organisation treats and values its 50,000 employees. Developing a single scheme asks the question – what benefits does a diverse work-force bring? - and provides a 3 year strategy on how best to recognise, support and reward talent irrespective of factors such as age.

Identifying and addressing age discrimination plays a significant part in the Single Scheme, as the Service recognises that it is moving towards an ageing

work-force both within senior management and operational uniformed staff. The scheme looks at age equality at every stage of employment and includes age within Impact Assessments of all key employment policies and training.

The scheme was coordinated by the HR Directorate's staff diversity & equality team. It involved key stakeholders during its development including a mixture of staff, prisoners, staff associations, unions, policy leads and external agencies via four equality task groups. Each group was chaired by a prison governor or senior manager and the employment regulations task group looked specifically at the non-legal public sector duty strands including sexual orientation, religion or belief and age.

## **Barriers**

The main challenge was presenting a business case as to why HM Prison Service should go beyond current statutory duties on race, gender and disability and include sexual orientation, religion or belief and age.

This was different to the Home Office approach and was addressed by galvanising support from the Prison Service Board to adopt an over-arching Single Equalities Scheme. By pushing this argument they made a business case that a single scheme would avoid the costs associated with potentially duplicating six specific schemes and individual impact assessments – and would substantially help to establish a co-ordinated approach to diversity.

## **Impact**

- The Service now has a single diversity scheme championed by the Prison Service Board.
- Early evidence suggests that staff no longer feel that one area of equality will be given priority to the detriment of another area. This was reflected in the overall positive response by staff to the Service's 2006/07 staff survey to questions about commitment to diversity.
- Even though the scheme is staff focused it was agreed early in its development that addressing decency and equality for staff would ultimately have a further positive impact on how they interact and work with prisoners. The scheme seeks to further instil values of decency and respect when working with individuals whether staff or prisoners, with specific needs and different backgrounds.

The Single Scheme is already helping to shape HMPS' approach on monitoring employment functions across a wider range of diversity strands. The Service is moving from producing a 6-monthly Staff Ethnicity Review that looks at Recruitment, Retention, Development and Progression of BME staff to that of wider diversity as part of a Staff Diversity Review.

Ensuring age is considered as part of impact assessing policies and procedures has begun to be built in and can be evidenced in the review of fitness policy and impact assessments on aspects of recruitment policies. A training session on age and recruitment was run for those in the High Security Directorate. It is being built into the Service's planned review of procurement.

## **Monitoring**

Information and statistics on employment across the diversity strands in respect of retention, recruitment, promotion, training and grievances will now be incorporated within the core business and functions of the Service's shared

service centre. The information will feed into the Staff diversity review where the data will be analysed for significant trends in any of the strands and highlight the priority areas for further investigation and action.

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