



Department for Transport

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From the Permanent Secretary

Web site: www.dft.gov.uk

5 February 2016

Sir Jeremy Heywood, Cabinet Secretary
John Manzoni, CEO of the Civil Service
Rupert McNeil, Chief People Officer
Sent by email

Dear Jeremy, John and Rupert,

MY PRIORITIES AS DISABILITY CHAMPION

I have led the disability agenda for eight months and, as I have acquired greater experience and insight, I have become increasingly aware that this subject is highly challenging, rewarding and complex. Whilst other areas of diversity and inclusion tend to focus on one specific area, the disability strand covers individuals with diverse characteristics who can require customised, complex and often cumulative workplace adjustments to enable them to achieve their full potential and to fully be themselves at work.

In conjunction with Departmental Disability Champions Group, I have reviewed current progress on the disability agenda within the Civil Service and identified five areas as our top priorities going forward.

- 1. Improve the standard and consistency of workplace adjustment provision.** This can be accomplished by expanding and increasing awareness of the Civil Service Workplace Adjustment Service (CSWAS), and providing a strong benchmark for departmental workplace adjustment services. The CSWAS is currently providing full case support to five departments (DWP, DCLG, DCMS, GLD, and DfE) and provides a review route for disabled employees and line managers, which is available to all departments. Feedback so far has been positive, but uptake of the service has been low, indicating a requirement for further promotion and development. It is equally important to ensure very clear visibility of the quality and timeliness of departmental workplace adjustments services.
- 2. An ambitious target to halve the gap in engagement scores, and the gap in bullying and harassment scores, between our disabled and non-disabled colleagues, by 2020.** This will seek to address successive People Surveys which consistently show a wide gap in both engagement and bullying and harassment scores (10% points and 14% points respectively) between disabled and non-disabled employees.

3. **Improve the talent pipeline of disabled employees** by providing greater access to development opportunities and improving our existing recruitment practices. This could include a commitment from departments to support a greater number of disabled places on talent programmes, such as the Positive Action Pathway. Also, it could involve demonstrating a greater commitment to nurturing and bringing on talented disabled employees through mentoring and coaching.
4. **Improve the existing support on managing mental health within the Civil Service.** We have made some progress since publishing the Talent Action Plan, including the launch of a new Mental Health Awareness learning offer and development of guidance to support the implementation of mental health first aiders in every business unit.
5. **Engage the collective leadership, visibility and investment of Senior Leaders** in driving actions to improve the working experience of disabled colleagues. In departments where the data shows low engagement scores from disabled colleagues and low recording rates for disability status, there should be a clear and strong commitment from leaders at all levels of the business to make improvements. Specifically, individual managers should be held accountable for the wider culture within their departments, by praising and sharing best practice examples of inclusive leadership behaviour and challenging non-inclusive behaviours.

To enable progress in these priority areas and to achieve our wider aim to build a diverse Civil Service that is representative of modern Britain at all levels, it is imperative that departments underpin these actions with appropriate investment of resources and a strong programme management approach.

I look forward to your continued support in moving this challenging agenda forward and in delivering real and sustainable change for our disabled employees.

I am copying this letter to Permanent Secretaries, to departmental Disability Champions, to Lord Chris Holmes, and to Andy Heyn and Janet Hill in the Cabinet Office.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Rutnam