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**THE BRITISH LIBRARY - DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME**  
**DISABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH EQUALITY ACTION PLAN**  
**PROGRESS REPORT YEAR 1 – [January - December 2010]**

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## **Foreword**

*I am delighted to present our first combined disability and mental health annual report on the progress of our current action plans at the Library. As the Disability champion, I continually see the progress the Library has made in embedding and spreading ownership for disability throughout the organisation, which has enhanced our reputation as a Disability confident organisation.*

*This is the first year of our Mental Health action plan and a priority area is to raise awareness of mental health and to look at how to provide support and guidance to our employees and in the way we deliver our services. Our mental health activities carried out in 2009 and 2010 have given us a sound foundation for meeting our action points in this important area.*

*We are of course operating within an environment of reduced public sector funding. Nevertheless there is so much passion to address challenges from our staff and we have a strong platform for making continuous improvements, that I feel we can continue to make and improvements in supporting disabled people, and sustaining the measures that we've already successfully taken.*

**Phil Spence**

**Disability Champion -**

Director of Operations and Services  
The British Library

**Report Contents**

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## Introduction

### **Purpose of the Unified Generic Equality scheme; and our commitment to the statutory duties**

In 2008, we published our new Unified Generic Equality Scheme which included our specific focus and commitment to Disability Equality as well as our work on promoting gender and race equality for other public sector duties.

Our Unifying Generic Equality Scheme brings together into one document our commitment to equality across our public duties, (disability, gender and race) and the common generic areas that highlight the initiatives and interrelatedness across the diversity strands. However, it also importantly recognises the different and separate areas of disability, race, and gender which may require different approaches to achieve equality.

For more information see:

<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/unifyingdocument.pdf>

During 2010, the Equality Act 2010 came into force which unites and harmonises all previous equality legislation and conferred a new Public Sector Equality Duty comprised of a General and a Specific Equality Duty on public authorities. From April 2011, the new public sector duty replaces the separate Race, Disability and Gender duties, extending these to cover eight “protected characteristics” with: Age, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation. The duty also partially covers Marriage and Civil Partnership and serves

to extend current Age Employment Legislation to services.

The new requirements are broader, across more groups and expectations are higher, including provisions for procurement, and equality information. However, the Library has already made strong progress on work across the other protected characteristics for example, holding public consultations on Transgender and Sexual Orientation, delivering Religion and Belief training on employment and service provision, and reviewing the Libraries policies and practices on Age. Therefore, the Library is in a stronger position to meet the new broader legislative requirements.

## **Summary of Key Progress since January 2010**

Our mission, values, strategic priorities, and organisational values are consistent with, and have a solid basis for, meeting the expectations and responsibilities of the Scheme, Duty and the Act which cover broad areas from employment, goods and services, to facilities and other provisions.

### **Disability Action Plan 2010**

We have a detailed action plan to cover these broad areas, which can be viewed at: <http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/disabilityeqstatrep.pdf>

On this plan there were 64 actions out of which we have:

- 25 actions where we have completed our targets so far.
- 27 actions being implemented and;
- 12 are currently on hold / planning stages or planned for Year 2.

### **Mental Health Action Plan 2010**

The action plan can be viewed at: <http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/disabilityeqstatrep.pdf>

On this plan there were 27 actions out of which we have:

- 2 actions have been completed so far.
- 9 actions being implemented and;
- 9 are currently on hold / planning stages or carried over to the Year 2 (Actions 1-7 were completed in 2009)

### **Key Strategic Areas 2010**

The action plan covers the broad areas and services of the Library where we established further work was required to uplift service provision for disabled readers, visitors and for our disabled employees. Our 1<sup>st</sup> year's key areas of progress on our disability and mental health actions are below: These were:

- **Continued Leadership and commitment from the top**  
Our Disability Champion has championed the importance of Disability Equality and this is periodically discussed at Executive and Board level on an annual basis. Throughout the duration of the action plans, budgets are reviewed annually to ensure diversity initiatives from training, equipment and access to goods, to further embed disability equality are resourced from Directorate budgets.
- **Ascribing Leadership in the directorates – Business Planning Strategy**  
Ascribing leadership and accountability was deemed essential to the successful delivery of the action plans. We have maintained our strategic focus on achieving Disability Equality by ensuring our action plans are linked to our corporate business plan each year.
- **Engagement and communication across the Library and with our stakeholders**  
  
Our Directorates continue to engage externally with key stakeholders and disabled users to ensure we listen to the needs of our disabled readers and users. Internal communications continues to raise awareness of disability for example, highlighting World Mental Health Day on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010.
- **Development and People Strategy** – Developing our people was a major driver of the disability agenda for embedding equality and creating disability confidence.
  - **Disability Confidence** – Employees are now more confident of serving disabled readers, visitors to the Library. The adaptive equipment in our reading rooms has assisted in the accessibility of our collections. Our Disability Equality training has also helped to raise awareness and improve the skill-sets of our staff in delivering good customer service to disabled readers and visitors.
  - **Declaration of Disabled employees** – Since our disability declaration initiative in 2009 in which the representation of our disabled staff increase from 3.3% to 5.6%. At our six-monthly equal opportunities monitoring exercise, the representation of disabled staff had increased to 6.5% (30 September 2011). Indicating that our employees are feeling more confident in declaring a disability.

### **Overview and Main Outcomes on Progress**

These are samples of some of the highlights and achievements in our 1<sup>st</sup> year of our action plans. Further information can be found in the action plans at <http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/index.html>.

- **Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC)** – Continues to engage with disabled audiences and has targets within funding agreements with the London Development Agency to deliver an outreach strategy targeting the

- **Engagement** - The Oral History Team at the Library continues to work with the Heritage Lottery fund and disability organisations to promote best practice. The Team contributed to a Heritage Lottery Fund Disability History event which aimed to share good practice in disability heritage projects with disability organisations, heritage organisations and HLF grantees; and encourage disability and heritage organisations to consider new projects, either independently or in partnership.

Members of the Mental-Health sub-group have established links with Local MIND organisations and MIND were invited to present on Mental Health to the Disability Action Group. The presentation helped to raise awareness of Mental Health to the wide action group members.

Members of action groups based in Boston Spa presented to employees in Boston Spa the work of the action groups and also did a presentation on Mental Health to raise awareness.

- **Access to the Collections** – The aims of the new Integrated Request Management & Delivery System document supply (IRMDS project) part of the wider United Kingdom Research Reserve project is to:
  - provide a shared national initiative to secure the long-term retention, storage and availability of low-used printed research journals;
  - to provide a collaborative strategy for more efficient use of resources across the HE sector;
  - to provide enhanced access to information and resources for the researcher.

To ensure the system is accessible and functional for a variety of disabled users, the Library has partnered with the Shaw Trust to provide accessibility testing with disabled users including test scenarios with adaptive equipment. The Shaw Trust test team represented a broad range of common disabilities amongst internet users. The results of the testing did highlight some areas of the accessibility of the system which has been addressed which has resulted in system being accessible to both keyboard-only users and screen reader users.

- **Reading Room Operations** - A review of the Carrel booking system was carried out to ensure the system was accessible for disabled users. The review introduced a two hour limit on the use of the carrel and a limit on the number of collection items allowed in the carrel at any one time. The impact of this change was assessed on who might be impacted to ensure there was no disadvantage. The exception letter system was strengthened through consistency of operation to be standardised for all exception to policies such as liquids in the Reading rooms, equipment etc. Customer services are also allowed to take bookings over the telephone. Hidden disabilities such as mental health reasonable adjustments are accepted as a reason for booking the carrel. Feedback on the new system has been good so far. We have also found that the contact with readers helps us to create a dialogue with those who need assistance, giving the readers an opening for other requests or enquires they might have and allowing us to present the services we offer.
- **BL Conservation Centre** -- Visitor tours which include individuals and groups of disabled visitors. In 2010 (Jan to Dec) there were 53 tours. 444 people came on the tours and out of that 444, 22 people considered themselves as disabled.
- **4 Audio Podcasts** - were produced to inform disabled visitors and readers covering how to travel to the Library to what events and exhibitions are on. This has helped to make information about the Library more accessible and is a beneficial way to promote the Library. See below:  
<http://www.bl.uk/whatson/podcasts/audioguides/index.html>
- **Develop as an Organisation** - The Library vision, values and mission are supporting by our aim to develop as organisation in which diversity is viewed as a business benefit for the organisation.
  - During 2010, we successful received re-accreditation of the Disability Two-Ticks symbol by Jobcentre Plus. The symbol was award was for our commitment to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled staff. The Library was praised by the Jobcentre Plus and said: "We will be recommending the Library as an exemplary organisation to other employers involved in the disability symbol.
  - As recommended as best-practice and supported by the Library's Disability and Mental Health consultation in 2009, a Reasonable Adjustment Policy has been developed and reviewed by the Employers Forum on Disability which cover implementation of reasonable adjustments for visible and hidden disabilities.

- A new front-line staff training course has been developed which aims to provide a broad understanding of the British Library's equality and diversity policies and procedures for the participants; increase their ability to demonstrate confidence and awareness in dealing with a diverse range of readers and visitors and create a positive and accurate image of the Library as a service provider and employer. The course was devised to be practical and informative by enabling the participants to increase their awareness of accessibility and how to provide an inclusive service.
- The Library held an Equality and Learning at Work Day in May 2010 at Boston Spa, St. Pancras and Colindale for staff. Action Group members for Disability, Gender and Race had an opportunity to engage with employees and promote the work of the groups and achievements to date as well as raising awareness of Mental Health. MIND also were invited to have a stand at Boston Spa and St. Pancras. Complimentary feedback from staff who attended the events included the benefits offered.
- The Library continues to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to assess the impact of restructures or policies on equality groups.
- **Partnering Internally** - There has been increased partnering of HR, trade union staff side at quarterly Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) meetings, where EDWG continue to discuss, consult and share progress on Disability Equality. Service leads continue to liaise over diversity requirements and initiatives with increased networking and share of information to improve accessibility and inclusion.
- **Partnering Externally** - The Library employees have worked in partnership with disability organisations such as HR Forums and the Employer's Forum on Disability and MIND.
- **Monitoring statistics** - We currently monitor our workforce statistics annually by disability and use the findings to measure our performance against our HR policies. This includes staff in post, job applicants, promotion, training, performance appraisals, grievances, disciplinary action and leavers.

**NB: Further information about Library activities around disability and diversity can be found (a) in the Annual Progress Report to the Equalities Commission Northern Ireland ECNI – which can be found on the Library website under diversity; (b) in the Unified Scheme and bespoke areas for Disability.**

