

**COMMENT:**

'WE SHOULD CELEBRATE THE FACT THAT WE LIVE IN A MULTI-RACIAL COUNTRY, WHERE ALL THE DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES MAKE A MASSIVE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR SUCCESS. IN TOO MANY CITIES, DIFFERENT RACES ... ARE LEADING VERY MUCH SEPARATE LIVES. THIS IS WORRYING ... AND WE OUGHT TO TRY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.

'ONE OF THE BIG CHALLENGES FACING THE COUNTRY IS HOW WE BUILD A MORE COHESIVE SOCIETY, HOW WE SHOW WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER, HOW WE HAVE A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, AND HOW WE NEED TO COME CLOSER TOGETHER ... I AM EXCITED BY THE IDEA OF SCHOOL EXCHANGES ... WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT IF CHILDREN FROM AN INNER LONDON BOROUGH SPENT A WEEK IN SCHOOL IN RURAL SCOTLAND, AND IF CHILDREN FROM RURAL SCOTLAND SPENT A WEEK IN AN INNER LONDON SCHOOL? I THINK THIS IS VERY POWERFUL: SCHOOL IS ABOUT MORE THAN LEARNING, SCHOOL IS ABOUT EXPERIENCE, PREPARATION FOR LIFE, AND TO GO INTO ANOTHER HOME, AND EXPERIENCE SOMEONE ELSE'S LIFE, IS A GOOD THING. THERE IS NO MAGIC WAND, IT IS NOT EASY, AND THERE IS VERY SERIOUS WORK TO DO.

'OUR REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND ETHNIC MINORITY COMMUNITIES IS VERY POOR, AND WE NEED TO LOOK MORE LIKE THE COUNTRY WE ARE TRYING TO REPRESENT. YOU NEED TO REPRESENT ALL OF BRITAIN, AND THAT MEANS MUSLIM COMMUNITIES AND BLACK COMMUNITIES.'

THE RT. HON. DAVID CAMERON MP,  
LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

# 10:

## COMMUNITIES, HOUSING & REGENERATION

THERE IS A NEED TO ACCEPT AND CELEBRATE BRITAIN'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN ORDER TO BUILD A MORE COHESIVE SOCIETY

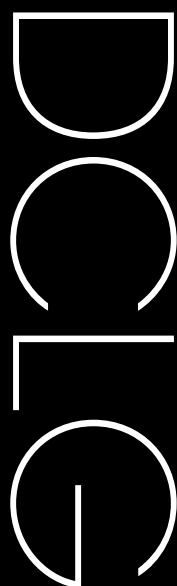
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**THE DEPARTMENT FOR  
COMMUNITIES AND  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
(DCLG) IS TASKED WITH  
GENERATING SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITIES AND  
PROVIDING PEOPLE WITH  
A FAIR DEAL IN THEIR  
EVERYDAY LIVES**



## FOCUSING ON COMMUNITIES

→ **AS A RELATIVELY** young government department, established in 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is responsible for the many different services that help to make England's communities safer, cleaner and greener, encompassing local government, urban regeneration, planning, and fire and rescue. The department leads across the Government on issues including:

- increasing long term housing supply, affordability and environmental performance, tackling homelessness and reducing repossessions;
- promoting cohesive, empowered and active communities and citizens;
- developing strong and accountable local governments that deliver high quality services;
- investing in and regenerating towns, cities, regions and neighbourhoods;
- ensuring effective and efficient land-use planning systems;
- the fire and rescue services, and regional resilience.

**'With its work concerning every neighbourhood in the country, the department's key priorities are to tackle obstacles that limit people's choice and control in their lives'**

With its work concerning every neighbourhood in the country, the department's key priorities are to tackle obstacles that limit people's choice and control in their lives; increasing participation in public life; and guaranteeing that public services are delivered without restrictions. Because the department's work is so wide-ranging, it is committed to promoting equality by creating strong and equal communities that accept and value diversity, and where prejudice and discrimination are actively challenged. DCLG's work also plays a crucial part in the delivery of the Government's commitment to social justice and economic inclusion, and promotes race equality and community cohesion in England.

### **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

As local authorities are DCLG's major delivery partners, and several other central government departments also deliver through them, they are important to its equality and diversity policies. The department encourages local authorities and other partners to work closely with communities to assist in creating an environment every resident can be proud of. In a recent speech on strengthening local democracy, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government John Denham supported this view: 'Councils are at the centre of decision making in each area across the country. They provide services, but they also act as community leaders in a way which other services providers can't. They take a broad view of the needs of local people and are uniquely placed to pull together the public, private and third sector bodies to tackle cross-cutting issues.'

To carry out this work, it is important that the department and its partners reflect the communities they serve. 'With such a diverse range of responsibilities, we can't afford not to have a diverse workforce,' adds Permanent Secretary Peter Housden. 'It would be very difficult to work with local authorities and communities themselves without appreciating the range of challenges they face, so it's vital that staff are able to understand and reflect a range of viewpoints.' DCLG ensures that equality issues are considered throughout the department with a number of sources of support, advice and good practice. Its equality and diversity team liaises with employees in other government departments, the department's equality champions' network and various staff networks to co-ordinate the production of equality reports, updates and schemes. A human resources-based team focuses on issues facing the workforce by guiding and raising awareness in staff, as well as supporting staff networks.

**'It would be very difficult to work with local authorities and communities themselves without appreciating the range of challenges they face, so it's vital that staff are able to understand and reflect a range of viewpoints'**

As a department that aims to nurture an environment where everyone speaks up and is heard, DCLG encourages its employees to communicate through these networks, which include the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Network, Disability Network, Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) Network, the Women's Network and the recently launched Carer's Network.

#### EMPLOYEE-CENTRED APPROACH

Mike Falvey, Director General for Human Resources and Transformational Change, agrees that diversity needs to be central to the department's operations: 'The business case for diversity is overwhelming: we need to recruit, retain and support the best staff no matter what their background. To me, diversity isn't just the right thing to do, it's the sensible thing to do. This is what we are responsible for, so it's essential that we practise what we preach.'

Employees in the department are encouraged to further their own development through traditional training and, particularly, coaching and mentoring schemes. Its Pairing for Performance programme engages those from underrepresented groups in mentoring to help them progress and it has recently introduced Moving On Workshops for under-represented groups in junior grades which incorporate a diversity module into management training. A number of employees have also participated in the National School of Government's Leaders Unlimited course – an intensive, continuous programme that helps people from minority groups in the Senior Civil Service to aim higher. All leaders within the DCLG are encouraged to value and promote diversity with in their individual departments; to understand and respect the differences in

their team is a clear objective for all staff with management responsibility.

Thanks to its practices informing employees and managers about promoting and raising awareness of diversity, the department has been named as an 'Exemplar Employer' by Opportunity Now. 'It's good to know that we are making a difference,' adds Falvey. 'As well as Opportunity Now, we work with organisations such as Stonewall, Employers Forum on Disability and Race for Opportunity, who all compare what we do here with other organisations. They recognise our successes, but also challenge us where we could do more.'

#### STREAMLINING STRATEGIES

Since 2008, and in the lead up to the proposed Single Equality Bill, the department has been developing its strategies and functions to ensure that equality and diversity is embedded in all operations. This includes making sure delivery partners are consistently updated on equality messages, screening policies for their impact on groups, collecting an evidence base to inform policies and strategies, and consulting, involving and engaging with all equalities groups and staff networks. To streamline its policies across all diversity strands, the department launched a programme which includes:

- developing and publishing a refreshed

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) tool that will operate across the department;

- rolling out a programme of EqIA training centred on key projects and programme managers;
- introducing an equalities E-awareness tool for staff;
- transforming internal procedures generate consideration of equalities issues in normal business processes;
- raising the profile of EqIAs through a programme of presentations and acting as a sounding board/stimulus of specific initiatives;
- streamlining the equalities reporting structure.

Underpinning a great deal of the department's work are its departmental values, created from consultations with staff over three months. The values of ambition and creativity; acting openly and as one department; giving people the chance to shine; and giving people a chance, aim to encourage staff to respect each other and promote awareness. Its 'Making It Happen' scheme utilises the values to further progress across the department and has seen employee satisfaction increase since it was introduced in May 2008.

With the introduction of the new Equality Bill streamlining existing legislation and including further strands relating to gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief, the Government has also proposed a duty focusing specifically on central government, local government and their key partners. It will prompt them to consider how strategic decisions can better tackle the socio-economic disadvantages faced by many black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

#### FUTURE FOCUS

With a commitment to producing its first Single Equalities Scheme in 2010, DCLG is in the process of mainstreaming its policies and rationalising the process. Areas it will look at when introducing its new scheme include sponsoring a series of events on planning for an aging population, publishing a revised race strategy, encouraging the prevention of hate crime before it happens, setting up a national tenant council, increase staff participation in schemes such as Leaders Unlimited and Pairing for Performance and capturing levels of engagement of women and those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

As the department looks build on past successes and build them into future developments, it is determined to become an even better place to work, and continue generating opportunities and prosperity in a diverse society. Housden states: 'I am proud that this department not only met but exceeded all the targets set by the "10-point plan", the Whitehall-wide initiative to make sure we have a representative and effective Senior Civil Service. But there is absolutely no room for complacency, and I want to ensure we keep making progress.'

#### REFERENCES:

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk), [www.johnndenham.org.uk](http://www.johnndenham.org.uk)