

our *equality and diversity* action plan 2010 to 2012

As a public-service provider, a statutory body and an employer, the Financial Ombudsman Service is fully committed to the fair and equal treatment of everyone we deal with.

We see diversity as an asset that helps deliver our vision of a service that meets the needs of *all* our users and stakeholders – irrespective, for example, of gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and belief, or socio-economic background.

Our commitment to diversity and equality is set out in our [equality and diversity policy](#). To help us monitor our progress in making this commitment a central part of our service, we have worked closely with a specialist equalities consultancy, to draw up an *equality standard* (which is on our website).

Our *equality standard* helps us identify any aspects of our service that could disadvantage customers (consumers and businesses). We believe we have made good progress in many areas in working towards this *equality standard*. But we recognise that we still need to do more, to ensure our approach remains up to date and relevant to the changing needs of our stakeholders and customers.

This is why we have drawn up this *action plan* – setting out the specific initiatives and actions that we are committed to completing in the period from 2010 to 2012.

In drawing up our *equality and diversity policy* and *action plan*, we have taken into account the work we also carry out as part of our commitment to [accessibility](#) and [outreach](#).

We always welcome feedback from the widest possible range of our stakeholders and customers on our approach to equality and diversity.

Natalie Ceeney CBE
chief executive and chief ombudsman
June 2010

leadership and strategy		
<p><i>actions</i></p> <p>A statement of policy linking our existing core values to our commitment to equality and accessibility will be developed by the board and the executive.</p> <p>Once the policy is agreed, this should be communicated across the organisation in a clear and meaningful way.</p> <p>Equality champions should be identified at executive level.</p> <p>Equality champions should be identified to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ leadership and strategy ▪ access and inclusion ▪ service delivery ▪ recruitment, procurement and workforce diversity <p>Targeted and appropriate training and support will be provided to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ members of the customer service group ▪ equality champions 	<p><i>timings</i></p> <p>published on our website</p> <p>Initial communication complete but repeat on regular basis</p> <p>Q2 2010</p> <p>Q2 2010</p> <p>Q3 2010</p> <p>Q3 2010</p>	<p><i>executive owner</i></p> <p>all executive directors</p> <p>chief executive</p> <p>HR director communications director</p> <p>communications director operations director HR director</p> <p>HR director communications director</p>

<i>actions</i>	<i>timings</i>	<i>executive owner</i>
<p>Review and develop existing working groups in order to establish a clear governance structure for managing and scrutinising future equality and diversity actions. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reviewing the current function of the customer service group ▪ developing its terms of reference ▪ reviewing its current membership ▪ reviewing the current function of the accessibility taskforce ▪ developing clear lines of communication between the customer service group, the accessibility taskforce, the executive and the board 	Q3 2010	communications director
<p>Agree the role that the Information and Consultative Council (ICC) will play in promoting and managing the equality agenda.</p>	Q3 2010	HR director
<p>Develop a system for assessing what equality data we collect, any gaps in the data, and areas where more data is needed to support our business planning.</p>	Q4 2010	communications director
<p>Establish a clear process for carrying out regular equality impact-assessments across key areas of the organisation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the customer contact division • casework – adjudication • casework – ombudsmen • complaints about the ombudsman service 	H1 2011	<p>operations director</p> <p>decisions director</p>
<p>The review and development of new policies, functions and business-planning processes will be aligned to our equality impact-assessment procedures.</p>	<p>major projects: Q2 2010</p> <p>all others: end 2010</p>	operations director

<i>actions</i>	<i>timings</i>	<i>executive owner</i>
Identify staff from each area across the organisation who will lead on carrying out the equality impact-assessments. Ensure appropriate training is provided.	Q3 2010	operations director
We will produce an annual report measuring our actions against our agreed equality and diversity aims and objectives.	as part of our annual review	communications director

access and inclusion		
Continue to review the outreach services we offer – and assess the impact these are having on potential customers.	Q4 2010	communications director
Undertake a review of communications, brand awareness and messaging – to assess their impact on customers, specifically socio economic groups D+E, young people and older people.	Q4 2010	communications director
Develop a more comprehensive system for gathering and using monitoring-data – to inform targeted community-outreach programmes.	Q4 2010	communications director
Scale up awareness-raising activities, specifically targeting young people, older people and groups within socio-economic groups D and E.	Q1 2011	communications director
Carry out an equality impact assessment of current outreach activities. Identify gaps in awareness-raising activities and actions to address these. Develop an evidence-based outreach and communications plan to implement the results.	Q1 2011	communications director

<i>actions</i>	<i>timings</i>	<i>executive owner</i>
Establish working groups of external partners to help in developing good practice and appropriate awareness-raising activities to those groups who are identified as under-represented in existing customer profiles.	Q3 2010	communications director
Undertake a mapping exercise to identify the types of financial products purchased across different socio-economic groups.	Q4 2010	communications director

service delivery		
Monitor relevant “equality strands”, including socio-economic groupings, at all key stages of the complaints process.	Q4 2010	communications director
Carry out equality impact assessments at the key stages of our complaints process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial complaints to CCD • “drop-out” rates • case outcomes 	HI 2011	communications director
Continue to provide customer-service training across the organisation (including training on identifying and handling customers’ different needs). Put into place regular review-systems as well as refresher options as and when required.	ongoing	HR director operations director
Undertake a review of customers’ preferred communication styles across the relevant equality stands. Embed any learning into customer-service training programmes.	Q2 2011	HR director operations director

<i>actions</i>	<i>timings</i>	<i>executive owner</i>
Train-up a range of specialist case advisers with expertise across all relevant equality strands.	Q2 2011	operations director HR director
Monitor complaints about the service across the relevant equality groups.	Q4 2010	operations director

recruitment, procurement and workforce diversity		
Agree a recruitment/workforce benchmarking framework to help assess performance against other organisations. This could include a mixture of demographic and company profiles.	Q1 2011	HR director
Based on any possible evidence of under-representation:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increase the range of publications currently used to advertise vacancies; ▪ target relevant partners to encourage a more diverse interest in working for the ombudsman service; ▪ expand the skills match programme and offer work placements to under-represented groups. 	Q2 2011 H1 2011 Q2 2011	HR director HR director HR director
Further analyse the reasons why some groups apply for work at the ombudsman service more than others, considering how different groups “read” the ombudsman “brand”?	Q2 2011	HR director communications director
All managers involved in recruitment continue to attend specific training sessions.	ongoing from Q2 2011	HR director

<i>actions</i>	<i>timings</i>	<i>executive owner</i>
<p>Strengthen equality issues within the procurement process. Specifically, assess the extent to which outsourcing partners apply equality standards, covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ recruitment and workforce monitoring ▪ diversity/equality awareness-raising training ▪ tackling bullying and harassment ▪ equal pay 	Q4 2010	operations director HR director
<p>Raise awareness across the organisation of specific equality issues, by organising a range of diversity talks and presentations by specialist organisations.</p> <p>Include age within the equal opportunities monitoring-form.</p> <p>Undertake an annual analysis of equalities-monitoring data to identify any gaps. Consider what trends the data highlights and act appropriately.</p> <p>Monitor the following for equality trends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ staff satisfaction surveys ▪ retention rates and “exit” interviews ▪ annual appraisals ▪ disciplinary and grievance cases ▪ bullying and harassment complaints ▪ “pay gap” <p>Consult staff to assess their appetite for taking part in project-based or standing groups involved in the delivery of equality and diversity initiatives.</p>	<p>Q4 2010</p> <p>Q1 2010</p> <p>Q3 2010</p> <p>ongoing from Q1 2010</p> <p>Q4 2010</p>	<p>HR director</p> <p>HR director</p> <p>HR director</p> <p>HR director</p> <p>HR director</p>