



Metropolitan Police Authority

Human Resources Committee - 6 November 2003

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1995 - UPDATE

Report by the Commissioner

Summary

This paper is provided at the request of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) and outlines the progress made in respect of the employment and goods and services provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA).

A. RECOMMENDATIONS - That

members note the progress made to date in respect of the employment and goods and services provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

B. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Strategic Disability Team

1. The Strategic Disability Team was formed in February of this year to give a focus to disability issues within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and to make the organisation fully inclusive for our own staff and those for whom we provide a service in London. The Team of four people is based within the Diversity Directorate.
2. In the six months since the Team was formed a number of initiatives have been pursued.

Actions being taken in preparation for extension of DDA to police officers October 2004

3. Work is continuing with the Home Office on the initial advice for the forthcoming changes in legislation in October 2004. Copies of this advice will be made available to members, together with a 'framework' document on implementation. This document is expected to be published by the Home Office later this month. There are several areas of potential tension that will be created by the changes and the Home Office is carefully considering these with input from the MPS and ACPO. Dilemmas may be created in connection with concern regarding health and safety issues where disabled police officers are involved. There is an existing issue regarding the non-sanctioning of medical retirements for officers who are deemed to be 'permanently disabled' for pension purposes and yet the Service wishes to retain

them in meaningful roles; the numbers of officers affected by this will increase post-October 2004. In addition, there is the HMIC drive for increased civilianisation thus removing a range of roles that may, in the past, have been used for officers on restricted duties. The Team will consider the implications of the Home Office advice for the MPS and will work with them to produce appropriate guidance for discussion with key stakeholders within the MPS, for example, personnel managers, unions and staff associations, including the Disabled Staff Support Association. More detailed advice is expected in April 2004. Work continues with Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Home Office into the implications of the DDA for recruitment and pensions.

Visits

4. A programme of visits to all police stations on all boroughs is in progress to discuss how the Team can support both police officers and police staff and to look at disability access at the various sites. The visits should be completed by mid-autumn after which a report will be produced covering the various issues which have arisen. The key themes emerging are as follows:
 - Concerns about the forthcoming changes to the DDA, which will bring police officers within the auspices of the Act.
 - The need for greater awareness of disability issues amongst staff, particularly front line staff.
 - Restriction on medical retirements is causing an increase in recuperative/restricted duties.
 - The lack of access to many police stations in the MPS estate.

Conferences

5. A conference was held in June for both police officers and police staff to try to find out the key issues for staff with disabilities within the MPS. As a result of this conference, a list of actions was drawn up and is currently being considered by the Team and by the Disability Programme Board. One action that has already been carried through, has involved the formation of the Disabled Staff Support Association with the principle aim of making the working lives of disabled staff more productive and valued and in doing so, by helping to create a focus on capabilities rather than disabilities. The Team will be working with the Association to further these aims.
6. The Team are planning two further conferences – the first was held on Tuesday 7 October 2003, at the Business Design Centre, Islington, was aimed at borough commanders, personnel managers, line managers and finance and resource managers. The conference focused on employment issues and a look forward to October 2004, when the Disability Discrimination Act will include police officers. Speakers included the Deputy Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, Linda Van den Hende, Director of the Strategic Disability Team, Bert Massie, Chair of the Disability Rights Commission, Lord Toby Harris, MPA, together with speakers from the Home Office, the Employers' Forum on

Disability, Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Police Federation.

7. The second conference will be held on Wednesday 26 November 2003, at the Abbey Community Centre, Great Smith Street. This will focus on Part III of the Act relating to the provision of goods and services to explore issues of service delivery for disabled people in our community. With effect from October 2004, we are required to comply with Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act and accordingly, we will need to ensure all of our services are accessible to all service users. The European Year of Disabled People, provides a further opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to disability matters. A significant number of those invited to attend, will be from the disabled community with an invitation also being extended to borough commanders, borough liaison officers and community support unit managers. This will ensure that the disabled community are able to work more closely with us in policing activity and, we will benefit from increased community support and a wider understanding of diversity issues.
8. The challenges faced by deaf and hard of hearing staff will be addressed at a conference in November 2003. Members of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID), and the Employers' Forum on Disability will speak at the event, which has been endorsed by the Commissioner's Disability Focus Group. Two RNID signers will assist with communicating. A number of issues affecting deaf and hard of hearing staff were raised at a Disability Seminar last summer. Whilst the Strategic Disability Team, set up in February 2003, is well placed to deal with these issues, it would be helpful for us to learn first-hand what difficulties have been experienced and obtain examples of good practice initiatives there are already. Subjects up for discussion include deaf awareness training within the MPS, the recognition of British Sign Language, managers' understanding of the Disability Discrimination Act, provision of communication support such as Textphone and Tynetalk, and health and safety issues such as fire alarms. Issues discussed at the conference will form the basis of an action plan to improve provision for our deaf and hard of hearing colleagues.

Training

9. Disability awareness training is a key issue for the MPS and discussions are in hand with key groups both within and outside the Service to decide the most appropriate form that this training should take.

Links with other departments and organisations

10. The Team has also been forging links with outside disability organisations in order to reach out to our customers and to discover how best to meet the needs of Londoners with a disability.

DDA Concept Office

11. The Metropolitan Police Service launched a new Disability Concept office featuring the latest technology in August. The specially designed office, situated within the C3i test laboratory at Cobalt Square, has integrated computer technologies and equipment for disabled staff who need to rely on computer access for their daily work.
12. The disability concept office has been created as part of the MPS commitment to the Disability Discrimination Act and Diversity Strategy, and this new interactive facility will create further employment opportunities.
13. Seventeen-year-old Stephen Menary who lost an arm and his sight when an incendiary device exploded in his hands at his Territorial Army barracks, has been involved in the testing of items in the Concept Office during a period of work experience whilst working in the Directorate of Information (DoI). MPS staff can now come and see the latest technology on offer in the Concept Office. Supported by Occupational Health advisors they will then be able to get what relevant equipment they need if they are themselves disabled, or if an office should employ a disabled member of staff.
14. Essential advice and support from a number of organisations including Access to Work (administered by Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department of Work and Pensions) and SchlumbergerSema (who have donated some of the equipment) has made this possible.
15. Computer technology available includes:
 - Zoom text - a special screen magnifier.
 - Nec-Multi flat screen - a larger computer screen for better vision.
 - TrackBall Mouse - a mouse with its tracking ball located on top of the body. It allows someone with limited hand movement easier control of the cursor.
 - Whale Mouse – a large mouse that aids people with restricted hand movement.
 - JAWS – a text reader software package aimed at people with restricted sight.
 - Dragon – a commercial dictation package, which helps people with upper limb disorders and dyslexia.
16. Essential advice and support from a number of organisations including Access to Work (administered by Jobcentre Plus, part of the Department of Work and Pensions) and SchlumbergerSema (who have donated some of the equipment) has made this possible.

Employers' Forum on Disability

17. A new chief inspector seconded into the MPS, has been appointed as police co-ordinator for the Employers Forum on Disability in order to strengthen links between the member forces of the Forum and to disseminate good practice. The MPS is involved in early discussions

with the Forum on the production of a distance learning CD-Rom to provide an opportunity for members of staff to test their knowledge of the Disability Discrimination Act and their level of disability awareness.

Disability Programme Board

18. The Disability Programme Board was formed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act, in time for the 2004 deadline and, to drive forward disability issues for the MPS. The Strategic Disability Team (SDT), working within the Diversity Directorate, will provide the main focus for disability issues and will seek to address issues concerning both employment and service delivery.
19. A key aim of the Board is to raise awareness of the SDT, both within the Service and outside, to ensure that all matters relating to disability are brought to the attention of the Team to ensure co-ordination across the Service.
20. The Board is chaired by Linda Van den Hende, Director of the Strategic Disability Team. The other members of the Team form part of the Board membership which is drawn from across the Service and includes representatives from Property Services Directorate (PSD), Directorate of Public Affairs (DPA), Directorate of Information (DoI), Legal Services, HR Directorate and the trade unions and staff associations.

C. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Equality and diversity implications arising from this report are covered within the body of this report.

D. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Many of the matters referred to are subject to their own reports and financial implications where applicable.

Report author: Linda Van den Hende, Director of the Strategic Disability Team

Background papers: None

