

## THE BRITISH LIBRARY

### DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

#### INTRODUCTION - THE SECOND THREE YEAR DISABILITY EQUALITY ACTION PLAN [January 2010 - December 2012]

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#### Foreword

*I am delighted to present our 2<sup>nd</sup> 3 year Disability Equality Action Plan which this year includes a 3 year plan for Mental Health Disability Actions.*

*As we come to the end of our current 3 year plan this month I am pleased to inform you that I remain just as passionate about ensuring that those who are disabled within our workforce or using our services and collections are given the same opportunities as non-disabled people and are able to fulfil their potential.*

*The public sector duty to promote equality for disabled people has really benefited the Library and all its disabled stakeholders in providing a constructive framework for promoting equality, addressing disability discrimination and tackling the barriers and prejudice that disabled people experience.*

*However, it is the commitment and energy of the supporters of the Library's disability equality plan that has helped deliver the plan. We have had a good deal of support from the disabled people who contributed to our internal and external consultations and information gathering and from our stakeholder partners to whom we say a huge thank you.*

*Also, over the past 3 years in particular, the work of the Library's HR Diversity Team, Disability Action Group, colleagues and union members across the Library, has*

*enabled substantial progress in embedding disability awareness in areas of activity as wide-ranging as employment, access to services, customer service, staff engagement and procurement.*

*This progress has been acknowledged in that the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) awarded the Library this October the top rating of 'Platinum Level' in the*



***Disability Standard Award 2009** – part of a major benchmarking exercise where organisations nationally were assessed on their progress in meeting the needs of people with disabilities. The EFD also ranked the Library not only in the top ten most disability-confident organisations but awarded the Library the **Disability Confidence 2009 Award** for its joint first positioning with BT out of the 106 organisations participating. The Library also received an EFD Award for the **Best Public Sector Employer Organisation**.*

*These awards were fantastic news for our users and our own staff. They demonstrate how we've really improved awareness of disabilities, and taken steps to improve access and services for researchers. It is also a great tribute to the hard work of all the staff at the British Library who have helped to make these improvements a reality – delivering a superb experience for users and visitors with disabilities.*

*However, we remain far from complacent as there remains much more to do. Our next big area to focus on is mental health, which is a hugely important area for all of us. We have established a dedicated group and a plan to take forward this agenda and, we anticipate delivery of tangible benefits to current and potential employees and users alike.*

**Phil Spence**

**Disability Champion -**

Director of Scholarship and Collections  
The British Library

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### **Our plans for 2010 -2012**

The Library reviewed its Disability Equality Scheme in 2008 when it brought together the generic areas of our Disability, Race and Gender Schemes into an umbrella document the Unified Equality Scheme which you will find at.

<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/unifyingdocument.pdf> There has not been a requirement for a subsequent or further review at this stage.

The Unifying Generic Equality Scheme holds a comprehensive framework for compliance across all Library functions and sets out how we planned to meet these requirements.

We have kept the bespoke areas of each strand of diversity separate so you will be able to find the Disability Plan for 2007-2009, the consultations in 2006 and the annual progress reports for 2007, 2008 on separate links under <http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/index.html>

The 2009 report on the final year and 3 years our current plan will be available shortly.

Our consultations in November 2009 and our new plans for 2010 to 2012 can be found under

<http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/diversity/schemes/index.html>

- External Disability Consultations – (1) Pan Disability and (2) Mental Health
- Internal Disability Consultations – (3) Pan Disability and (4) Mental Health
- Disability Equality Action Plan 2010-2012
- Mental Health Action Plan 2010 – 2012

We are looking forward to progressing this new 3 year action plans and thank you to all who helped to gather information to be able to produce these plans.

### **Mental Health Action Plan**

Alongside delivering the 2007 to 2009 action plan, additional work was taken on throughout the year where a key initiative was to look at the issues surrounding Mental Health. The Mental Health Sub-Group was set up at the instigation of the Disability Action Group (DAG). It has been taking forward work on this particular area of Disability in order to meet both the general and specific aims of the DED and national and Library strategy,

The group is chaired by Alasdair Ball, a member of the Disability Action Group, with representatives from the Directorates. The remit of the sub-group is to examine current employment and service arrangements in regards to mental health across the Library and to implement actions in regards to best-practice (with approval from the DAG).

The underlying drivers for the group are:

- To raise the profile of mental health issues within the British Library and to reduce the negative, stigmatising attitudes that are a barrier to the development and

successful implementation of a mental health policy and hence to the improved mental health of staff.

- To support the work identified and building mental health actions into the next 3 years of actions that will commence January 2010.
  
- The following priorities were addressed in 2009;
  - The formation of the MHSG and chair / champion (completed)
  - Quarterly meetings in time with main DAG meeting and ad-hoc additional meetings as required (in progress)
  - Organising support from experts – (completed)
  - Uplift of group awareness on MH issues for employers, employees, service users and other stakeholders (in progress)
  - Linking for internal support for the group from the HR Wellbeing team and the Employees Assistance Provider (in progress)
  - Commissioning in house research into other organisations performance levels and best practice (in progress)

The group started by auditing some of the best practice that exists externally to the British Library, through attendance at conferences and workshops, through work with organisations such as Shift and by the commissioning of research on the landscape for mental health provision. It is working with the Library's Employee Assistance Provider to ensure best practice in the provision of support for staff affected by mental health problems.

“The sub-group is looking forward to ensuring that issues relating to mental health become an integral part of wider Library policies and procedures. It is looking to build on its positive start and aspires to catalyse positive changes in attitude and assumptions towards mental health across the organisation”

**Alasdair Ball**

**Chair of the Mental Health Sub-group**

