



Department for Work and Pensions

Sustainable Development Minister:
Lord Hunt of Kings Heath OBE

SDC Assessment



Checklist

Sustainable Development Action Plan

1	Does the plan specify the period of time it will cover?	✗	The timeframe of the plan is not made clear. Most actions are for 2006 but some are for 2007.
2	Does the plan specify which organisations it covers?	✓	Plan states it covers all of the department but does not specify which agencies are covered.
3	Has the organisation articulated what SD means for them?	✓	
4	Does the plan describe the benefits of having an SD approach to the organisation?	✓	
5	Does the plan acknowledge the Government's sustainable development goal?	✗	The plan does not refer to the sustainable development goal.
6	Does the plan acknowledge the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ? Does the plan mention one or more of the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓ ✓	Annex B highlights DWP's existing contribution to the priority areas.
7	Does the plan identify links to the priorities of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	The plan makes links between departmental core business/operational activities and the priorities.
8	Does the plan acknowledge the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ? Does the plan mention one or more of the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓ ✓	Annex A sets out the sustainable development principles as set out in <i>Securing the Future</i> .
9	Does the plan identify links to the principles of <i>Securing the Future</i> ?	✓	Plan explains how the department's core business contributes to some of the principles.
10	Have the organisation's relevant executive agencies produced their own plan?	✗	DWP have taken an active decision to always include EAs in their own plan.
11	Does the action plan contain a work programme?	✓	
12	Does the plan include actions relating to commitments from the SD strategy?	✓	Includes actions in some of the relevant areas such as skills, procurement and integrating the principles into departmental decision making.
13	Does the action plan cover government policy?	✓	
14	Does the action plan cover operations?	✓	
15	Was the plan publicly available by 13th January 2006?	✓	

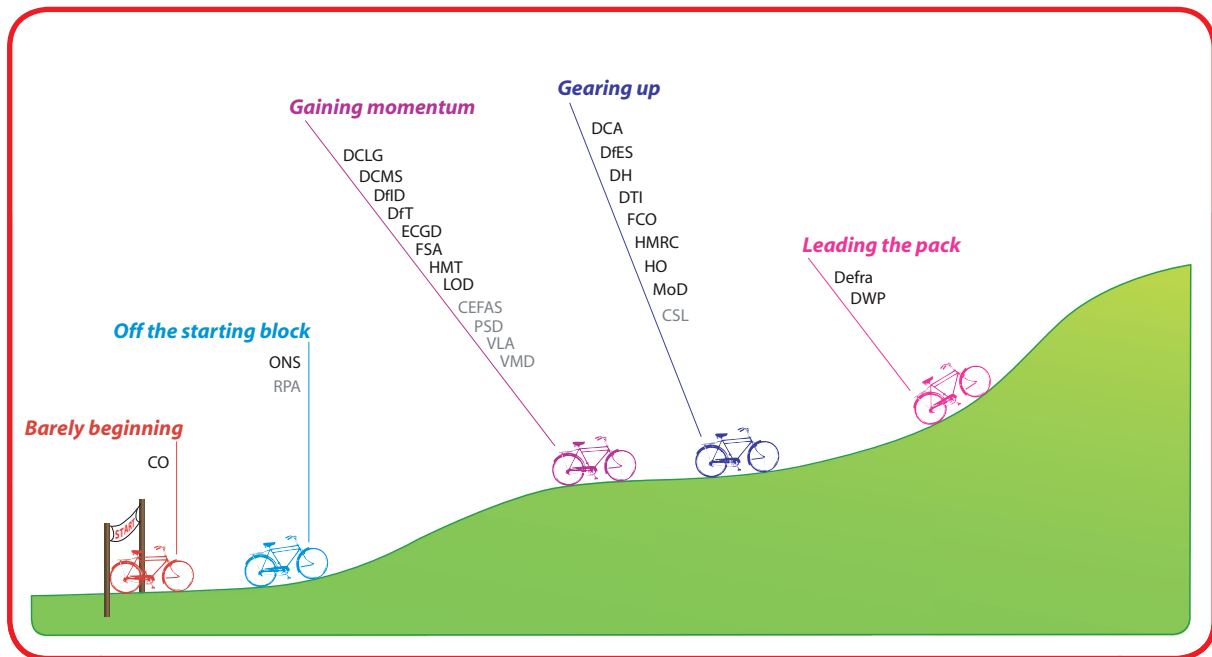
16	Does the plan outline any arrangements for strengthening SD capacity in the organisation?	✓	Sets out actions aimed at strengthening sustainable development skills for SD team as well as auditing skills of decision makers.
17	Does the plan describe the infrastructure in place to deliver the plan?	✓	Steering Group in place to ensure delivery of the plan.
18	Does the plan make it clear who signed it off?	✓	
19	Does the plan designate who is accountable for the delivery of the overall plan?	✓	Finance Director is accountable for the delivery of the plan.
20	Does the plan explain how the organisation will monitor progress against the plan?	✓	DWP will review data/evidence collection as well as external auditing.
21	Does the plan describe how the organisation will report against the plan?	✓	Will report on progress in Sustainable Development Annual Report.
22	Does the plan describe how it links in to other reporting mechanisms within the organisation? E.g. the annual report	✓	
23	Does the plan commit to reporting against the plan on a defined regular basis?	✓	Will report on progress on an annual basis.

Senior Accountable Officer: John Codling, *Finance Director General*

Status of Plan: Published 22.12.05

Please note that the SDC rating is based on a competency framework and not straight addition of the scores in the table above. Please see main report for full explanation of the methodology.

How is DWP doing?



Background

The Department for Work and Pensions exists to promote opportunity and independence for all, help individuals achieve their potential through employment and work to end poverty in all its forms.

Context

The Department has a Sustainable Development Steering Group in place which has representation from all corporate areas, Client Groups and Business. The Steering Group was used to engage with all parts of the department in deciding the policy priorities of their plan. DWP is one of the five departments to have published its action plan in time to meet the to the December 2005 deadline as set out in *Securing the Future*.

Coverage

The SDAP covers all of the department's executive agencies. These are: Child Support Agency, Disability and Carers Service, Health and Safety Executive, JobCentre Plus, The Pension service and the Rent Service. DWP has taken an active decision to always include their executive agencies within their own plan to ensure effective delivery, cohesion and co-ordination.

Departmental view of Sustainable Development

DWP's SDAP explains that the department's contribution to sustainable development is made through departmental aims to promote opportunity and independence for all. The plan explains that by tackling poverty and social exclusion, the department contributes to the development of a just society. The department also recognises the contribution it can make

to achieving a sustainable economy through its work to help people achieve their potential through employment. DWP acknowledges the significant environmental impacts of its business operations as a result of its large estate and workforce, and the impact the department can have on local communities.

Benefits of taking a sustainable development approach

The SDAP explains that by addressing sustainability, DWP will deliver policies that contribute positively to *Securing the Future* and will impact positively on local communities. However, the plan does not explain how taking a sustainable development approach will affect

the department's policy outcomes to achieve this.

The SDAP also explains that by taking a sustainable development approach to the way it runs its estate, it will benefit from a reduction in operational costs.

Link to *Securing the Future*

Guiding Principles

The SDAP describes clear links between DWP's core business and three of the guiding principles:

- Achieving a Sustainable Economy: through its efforts to help people achieve their potential through employment so that they are able to provide for their children and work and save for a secure retirement, the department is contributing to a sustainable economy
- Ensuring a Strong, Healthy and Just Society: the department's role of tackling poverty and social exclusion contributes to the development of a just society

- Living within Environmental Limits: through the department's efforts to minimise the negative environmental impacts of its estate.

Shared priorities for UK action

Annex B of DWP's SDAP provides a helpful outline of the way in which DWP and its agencies already contribute to the main priority areas for action as set out in *Securing the Future*. However, the plan does not indicate how DWP will make its contribution to the four priorities for immediate action in the future. The SDC would like to see future plans clearly set out how DWP will contribute to the four priority areas of *Securing the Future*, setting out future commitments with corresponding actions.

Policy priorities

DWP decided to concentrate its efforts on ensuring sustainable development principles are embedded into the decision making

process. The SDAP explains that with this approach DWP can improve their services, and maximize the contribution to communities at

a local and national level. This prioritisation is sensible. However, we would expect a key policy-making department such as DWP to set out in future plans how the department will contribute to the priorities and principles of *Securing the Future* through its core business.

Priorities for this SDAP include actions to investigate how sustainability is currently incorporated into policy making as well as actions to investigate the training requirement of decision makers themselves. The department is also reviewing the effectiveness of current arrangements and guidelines for all Programmes

and Projects. To complement this work, as well as benchmarking the department's performance, DWP will commission an independent external audit of their strategy and reporting.

The SDC welcomes the department's commitment to commission an independent external audit. This sends a positive signal to stakeholders that DWP's Strategy is a living and working document and help to assure stakeholders that DWP can provide reliable evidence on its progress to the satisfaction of an objective third party.

Leading by example

DWP achieved a two star rating in the SDC's 2005 review of government performance against the Framework for Sustainable Development on the Government Estate (SDiG). The department has one of the largest estates in Government.

The SDAP explains that the department operates in 1,680 locations but does not own its estate. Land Securities Trillium provide fully-serviced accommodation to the department and the management of the contract and the department's estate are integral to ensuring operations are managed in a sustainable way. The plan explains the need to have internal mechanisms and processes in place to ensure that sustainable decisions are made. The SDAP therefore commits to 'incorporating sustainability into the review of our Estate Strategy'.

The SDAP however does not identify specific operational targets or demonstrate how it plans

to improve its operational performance.

DWP explained in bilateral discussion that the department did not identify specific areas of their operations on which to focus their attentions on in the SDAP, as it was felt that all areas of the Framework for the Government Estate are significant due to the size of DWP's estate. The department did not wish to duplicate the Framework targets in its SDAP.

The SDC would not expect plans to list all Framework targets. However, plans should clearly set out its operational priority areas and acknowledge any SDiG weaknesses that the department is aware of, with associated actions to improve these. For DWP this would mean tackling issues such as water consumption across the DWP estate, waste arisings, as well as including actions aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Strategy commitments

Departmental commitment

DWP has one commitment in *Securing the Future* for which the department has the lead across government. Whilst the SDAP acknowledges the department's commitment 'to empower Jobcentre Plus managers to tailor targeted

policies for particularly disadvantaged groups or areas', the SDAP does not set out specific proposals aimed at taking this forward or indicate how, or when, this might happen. The SDC views this commitment as an important area of work for sustainable communities and would expect future plans to set out specific

proposals clearly setting out how the targeting will help to overcome disadvantage.

Cross-government commitments

The department refers to some relevant areas of the cross-government commitments but does not set out actions in the context of contributing to them. The plan makes a good attempt at integrating the five principles into departmental decision-making and addressing sustainable development capacity issues by investigating the training requirements for decision makers. DWP also recognises the significant potential for sustainability

improvements to their procurement and includes an action to incorporate the recommendations of the Government's Sustainable Procurement Task Force to their Procurement policies and strategy.

Target setting

DWP has made a good attempt at setting SMART targets. Most targets are outcome based and Annex C of the plan clearly sets out the timescales for completion, as well as where responsibility for delivery lies. However, none of the actions contain milestones for delivery.

Policy making

Sustainable development 'proofing'

DWP has set out a comprehensive set of proposals for mainstreaming sustainable development proofing within the department. The SDAP explains that DWP is currently carrying out sustainability assessments of policies through RIAs and has asked all those who engage in policy and decision-making to confirm in writing their processes for integrating sustainability within their organisation. These actions are aimed at ensuring sustainability issues are taken into consideration.

The SDAP aims to integrate sustainability into DWP's core business by:

- ensuring all business-planning activities consider sustainable development
- integrating sustainable development into the delivery of the Department's Five Year Strategy and Delivery Plan
- reviewing the effectiveness of current arrangements and guidelines for all departmental programmes and projects

In order to ensure all these commitments are being delivered effectively, DWP will undertake a sustainable development audit within business planning by September 2006.

The SDAP commits to ensure that all future policies and strategies will be developed using the UK Strategy's five guiding principles, and

will publish guidance for decision-makers in line with Cabinet Office guidance. DWP will build impact screenings and mitigations into the next CSR which will ensure the department's PSA targets align with the objectives of *Securing the Future*. The department intends to integrate sustainability into the delivery of its 5 year plan.

Sustainable development skills

The Sustainable Development Steering Group is currently undertaking a skills audit. The Group will identify the training requirements of decision-makers and match specific training to the needs identified. The bilateral revealed that the department is awaiting further cross-government guidance on training for policy-makers (perhaps through NSG).

The plan sets out steps to ensure that those who work within the Sustainable Development Team continue to improve their skills and understanding of sustainable development issues. The department intends to require all team members to be Associate members of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and managers in key designated posts will be studying for full membership.

In order to recognise and reward the success of staff in delivering sustainable improvements,

the department has set itself an action to examine the viability of introducing a specific scheme to recognise appropriate sustainability qualifications and good working practice.

Achieving Sustainable Development outcomes

Infrastructure

The plan sets out the departmental infrastructure in place to ensure and manage the integration of sustainable development into its work. All corporate areas, Client Groups and businesses have a representative on the Sustainable Development Steering Group, which has devolved responsibility from the Departments Executive Team for DWP's sustainability strategy as well as the action plan. The plan contains a departmental organisational chart which illustrates the departmental groups and reporting lines. Bilateral discussions revealed that the infrastructure was used to decide on the policy priorities for the plan and ensure ownership of the plan across the organisation. DWP explained in the bilateral that meeting the deadline for publishing the action plan was an important test of the internal processes in place to achieving sustainable development goals.

Engagement

Discussions with DWP revealed that the department made an attempt to engage with all sections of the organisation in production of the plan through the Sustainable Development steering Group. The plan makes a commitment to examine how the department

interacts with its wider stakeholders (NGOs, customers and clients) 'for example regarding the inclusion of sustainability issues within consultation documents'. The SDC welcomes this commitment and would like to see the department consult widely on these issues as it has done previously on issues such as race (see DWP website).

The plan sets an action to develop a comprehensive, corporate communication strategy reflecting existing and individual business communication plans. It was explained in the bilateral that the strategy will provide a high level overview of communications and will sit within DWP's Sustainable Development Strategy. The communications strategy will address communicating sustainable development at all levels of the organisation.

DWP explained in bilateral discussions that a sustainable development conference was held to launch their plan. The conference was attended by the Permanent Secretary, the Sustainable Development Minister and DWP's representative on the Cross-governmental Sustainable Operations Group. The plan was also launched on the intranet and copies were sent to senior officials and all DWP Ministers. However, the department has not made clear how it intends staff to use the SDAP.

Monitoring and reporting

DWP explained in bilateral discussions that the timeframe of the plan is between 2006-07. The plan states that DWP has built sustainable development issues into Internal Assurance mechanisms and is undertaking the first specific audit to concentrate on policy and strategic

decision-making. DWP will also undertake a further audit of sustainable development within business planning later on this year. This information will be used to help ongoing development of guidance and processes within the department.

DWP is committed to commissioning an independent external audit of its strategy and reporting by the end of the financial year. The Sustainable Development Steering Group will monitor and report on progress against this plan to the Senior Accountable Officer. The Department acknowledges that operational

data collection remains a challenging area for DWP and the department will therefore review their data collection and management.

The department will report on progress against this plan in its Sustainable Development Report.

Strengths to build upon



Set future actions to tackle emerging gaps as identified by the skills audit.



Work to identify the training requirements for decision makers.

Challenges for 2007



Engage with external stakeholders in the production of the plan building on the wide consultation process carried out by the department on race issues.



Set out specific proposals aimed at tackling the department's *Securing the Future* commitment to 'empower Jobcentre Plus managers to tailor targeted policies for particularly disadvantaged groups or areas' and clearly set out how the targeting will help to overcome disadvantage.



Ensure all targets are SMART and include milestones for delivery.



Clearly set out how DWP will contribute to the four priority areas of *Securing the Future*, setting out future commitments with corresponding actions.



Be clear which priority SDiG areas the department is seeking to improve.



Include specific actions aimed at improving the department's data collection and management.



Sustainable Development Commission

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