

# Case study



## The Pensions Trust

*The Pensions Trust already had a substantive commitment to equality and diversity. However, Acas were able to put together a bespoke training programme which helped to bring together the organisation's work in this area<sup>1</sup>. The training used techniques to facilitate discussion and debate, and enhance staff commitment to diversity. This has helped to strengthen the effectiveness of The Pensions Trust's diversity strategy for the long term.*



## Background



The Pensions Trust is a leading occupational pension scheme for the charitable, social, educational, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors. It is a mutual organisation run by an elected board. All profits from the company are distributed to its members, which includes its employees.

The Pensions Trust has one hundred and eighty employees based across three sites in Leeds, Edinburgh and London. More than half the workforce is based in Leeds, which is the main administrative centre. The Pensions Trust has a very young workforce, with a large part of the workforce at the administrative level. The company is perceived as a fair, friendly and responsible employer and results from a recent staff survey have indicated that morale is at a good level.

## The Decision to use Acas

The Pensions Trust has a fairly diverse workforce. However, they are committed to equality and diversity and keen to ensure that the workforce fully reflects the characteristics of their local communities. They, therefore, wish to increase the proportion of ethnic minorities, older people, and people with disabilities among their staff. They have already engaged in initiatives to encourage diversity within the organisation, with positive results.

In terms of developing their work in this area, the Pensions Trust wished to ensure that their recently developed policy on equality and diversity was up to date with current legislation and drawn up in accordance with best practice. It was for this reason that Acas first came to mind as an organisation that could offer them advice with this.

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<sup>1</sup>. This case study is based on interviews carried out by Turnstone Research and Consultancy with a senior Acas adviser for Acas Equality Services, the Head of HR and Facilities for The Pensions Trust as well as a member of The Pensions Trust's staff Consultation Forum. Interviews took place in Leeds at Acas and at The Pensions Trust's offices on the 21st April 2005. We are grateful for interviewees' assistance and reflections on the Acas project.



## How Acas can help

Acas Equality Services conducted a programme of work with The Pensions Trust on equality and diversity. This involved the following elements:

- Initial advisory work on The Pensions Trust's new equality and diversity policy to ensure it complied with current anti-discrimination legislation;
- Diversity training with line managers and staff to promote best practice in equality and diversity and to help them understand the implications of the new policy;
- Post-training advisory work with regards to evaluating The Pensions Trust's progress in implementing their diversity strategy.

## Success factors

The Pensions Trust felt that all the Acas trainers were all of a high quality. Furthermore, the methods that the Acas adviser used worked in synergy with the culture of the organisation to stimulate thought and debate. The outcome was training which was able to generate enthusiasm over what could have been regarded as a low priority issue.

## Outcomes: A renewed enthusiasm for diversity

The training Acas conducted was well received and has made an impact in terms of engaging the workforce's thoughts and feelings on diversity. Management and HR feel that staff have a heightened awareness of diversity and are better equipped to recognise what does and does not constitute best practice. They were especially pleased that Acas were able to provide tailored training to meet their needs. As a senior manager at The Pensions Trust commented:

*The training went really well...it was very different to the kind of off-the-peg equal opportunities training you get where it just tells you about the law. It went much wider than that looking at diversity in society and how we can use that. We were really pleased with it... I think it's been a significant factor in changing the mentality on diversity within the business.*

Head of HR and Facilities, The Pensions Trust

Looking back at the process, management at The Pensions Trust believe that Acas' involvement has been significant in reinforcing the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity. In the longer term, The Pensions Trust are confident that their goal of increasing the diversity of the workforce will be achieved and that line managers will be more likely to recruit people from diverse backgrounds than they were before.

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