



**Money and Pensions Service
(MaPS) Equality Objectives
and Information
2023/24**



**Money &
Pensions
Service**

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Background

In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, MaPS published its first Strategic Objectives for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in 2021. The objectives detail a four-year roadmap on how we will work towards building an organisation that is diverse, fair and inclusive, to help us achieve our vision of everyone making the most of their money and pensions.

This report details how we have progressed against each of our objectives since March 2023. It also demonstrates how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, by providing equality information on our people and those affected by our policies and services.

A separate report on MaPS Gender, Ethnicity, Disability and Neurodiversity Pay Gaps can be found here: [\(insert link\)](#)



Introduction



We want MaPS to be fully inclusive, attracting and retaining diverse talent where colleagues thrive and deliver their best performance.

We want to reflect our customers and communities to truly understand their needs. Of course, we can only achieve our ambition if we establish a firm foundation of compliance, knowledge and evidence-based actions. This includes complying with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that we do not discriminate against anyone because of their protected characteristics. As an arm's length body providing public services, we need to respond to the Public Sector Equality Duty and take steps to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations.

Equality Objectives



We value the diversity that we have at MaPS and see this as key to achieving our mission. We have developed a set of objectives which will enable us to address specific priority areas, in conjunction with improving and celebrating all areas of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) along with meeting the needs of our customers.

- 1. Build a comprehensive evidence base through collecting and analysing colleague diversity data, to inform actions and report progress.**
- 2. Address areas of under-representation including ethnicity at leadership level, disability & neurodiversity at all levels and explore opportunities to support early careers.**
- 3. Create a culture where all colleagues feel included and engaged.**
- 4. Design and deliver high quality services to our customers that take full account of their current and potential vulnerability and their protected characteristics.**

Internal Equality Objectives



This section of the report sets out the actions we have taken to progress our three internal-focused objectives and includes a breakdown of our workforce diversity data.

1. Build a comprehensive evidence base through collecting and analysing colleague diversity data, to inform actions and report progress.

The diversity of our workforce should represent the labour force market. Having a truly diverse and engaged workforce will enable us to achieve our vision of everyone making the most of their money and pensions.

To understand how well MaPS reflects the UK working population, the workforce profile has been benchmarked (wherever data was available), against the Labour Force Survey (December 2019), the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard (2020) and the DWP (Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20). The term 'working population' has been used to describe the ONS' definition of Economically Active Population (i.e. the population who are working, have sought work in the last four weeks and/or are available to start work in the next two weeks).

For the purposes of the current four-year cycle of reporting against our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategic objectives, our benchmarking has remained consistent throughout. For our next strategic objectives, which will be published in March 2025, we will update this benchmarking, utilising new data and up-to-date sources.

To build our evidence data, we encourage colleagues to share their diversity information in our HR system. This information is initially collected at recruitment level – as part of the onboarding process and new colleagues are encouraged to complete this information when they first set up their profile. Diversity data is collected at recruitment to understand the reach of our attraction strategy and where positive action needs to be taken to engage with targeted groups. Existing colleagues are encouraged to update their information on an ongoing basis.

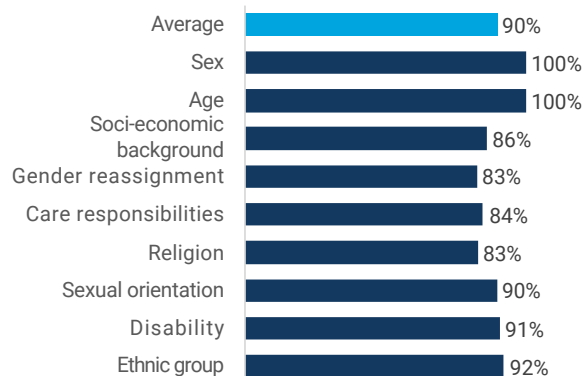
We are in the process of further maturing our approach to data analysis, which will align us with current good practice.

Data shared

We have ambitious aspirations for average level of diversity information shared by colleagues:

- 70% by March 2021 – this was achieved.
- 80% by March 2022 – this was achieved.
- 90% by March 2023 – this was achieved.

Declaration rates



Data includes permanent and fixed-term colleagues and secondments. Excludes contractors and board members. Data is correct as of 21 December 2023.

The current declaration rate is 90 percent. We will continue to encourage colleagues to update their information and will run targeted campaigns, where declaration is under 90 percent. We will also work to further understand why some colleagues do not want to or feel unable to provide their diversity data. We anticipate that the continued work we do to improve the outcomes of our third objective - Create a culture where all colleagues feel included and engaged – will have a positive impact on declaration rates.

This year, we completed recruitment analysis to understand the diversity of applicants, success rates of different groups (both between and within groups) within the recruitment process and have looked at where any unrepresentative outcomes require addressing.

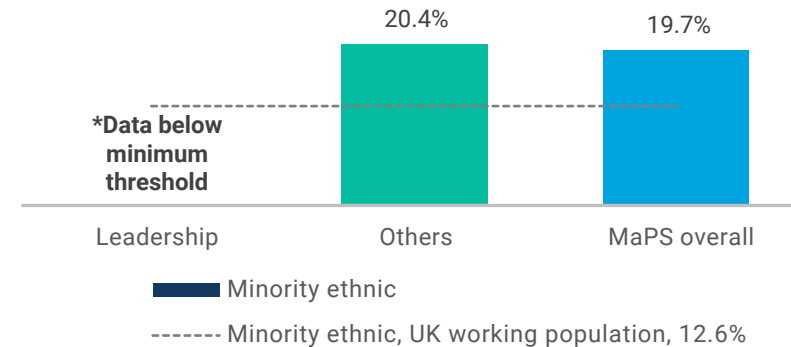
We will continue to use the data insights available on our HR system to help inform our plan, and future workforce planning, including recruitment, succession planning and the development of targeted training initiatives, and set specific key performance indicators in these areas.

Workforce diversity breakdown by characteristics

Ethnicity: The declaration rate for ethnicity is 92 percent (91 percent in March 2023).

Overall, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation is at 19.7 percent, which is above our benchmark of 12.6 percent. The Leadership level is comprised of our Executive Leadership Team (ELT), Senior Management Team (SMT) and Leadership Forum (LF). The data for this group is below the minimum threshold.

Proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic workforce

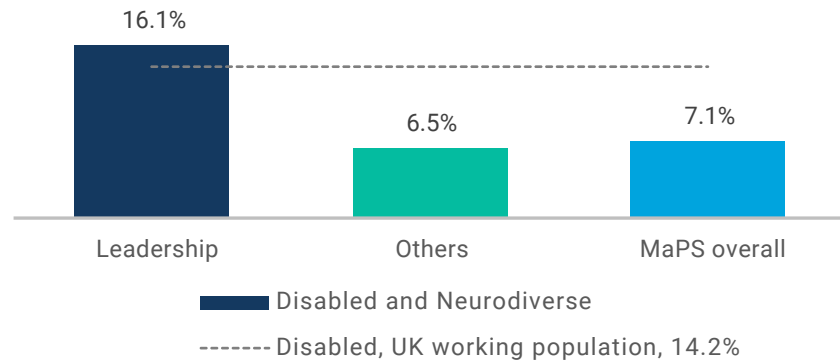


*To ensure we protect colleague anonymity, we will not report on any data where there are less than five colleagues within a protected characteristic.

Disability & Neurodiversity: The declaration rate for disability and neurodiversity is 91 percent (90 percent in March 2023).

Representation at leadership level is 16.1 percent, which is an increase from 13.9 percent in 2023. Comparatively, representation for other colleagues is 6.5 percent (6.1 percent in 2023) and 7.1 percent across MaPS overall (6.7 percent in 2023). This is lower than our benchmark of 14.2 percent.

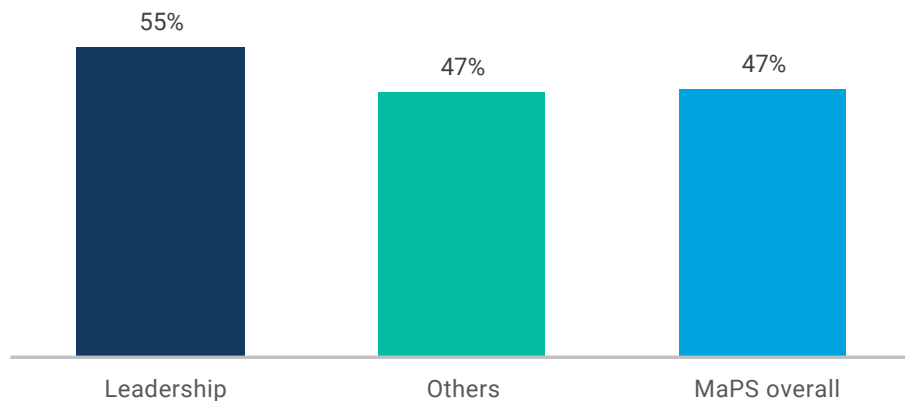
Proportion of disabled or neurodiverse workforce



Sex: The declaration rate is 100 percent (100 percent in March 2023).

There is good balance across MaPS overall. At 55 percent, we have a higher representation of women at leadership level; this is however, a minor decrease from 58 percent in 2023.

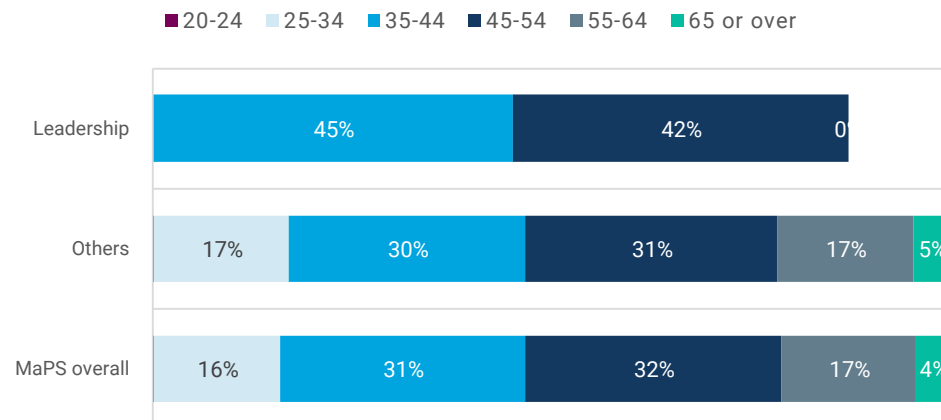
Proportion of women



Age: The declaration rate for age is 100 percent (date of birth is a mandatory field within our HR system, so declaration rate should remain at a constant 100 percent).

The age breakdown of our workforce is largely concentrated across the 35–54-year-old age range, which represents 63 percent of the organisation. There is no representation of under 24-year-olds. The 25-34 and 55-64-year-old age ranges are broadly similar at 16 percent and 17 percent respectively. The over 65-year-old age range has increased to four percent since the same time last year, which was at two percent.

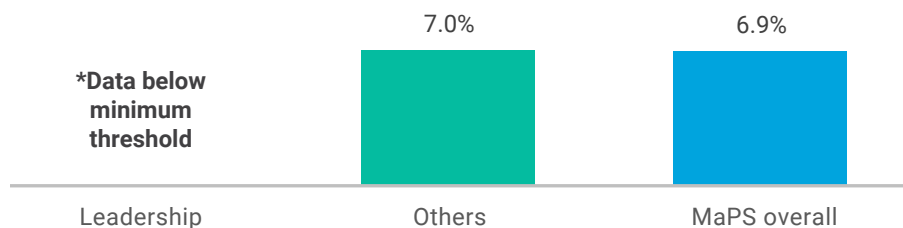
Age breakdown



Sexual orientation: The declaration rate for sexual orientation is 90 percent (90 percent in March 2023). For sexual orientation, we collect data for colleagues who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual and other.

Across MaPS overall, representation is 6.9 percent and has decreased marginally since 2023. Data for our leadership group is below the minimum threshold.

Proportion of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and other



*To ensure we protect colleague anonymity, we will not report on any data where there are less than five colleagues within a protected characteristic.

Gender reassignment: The declaration rate for gender reassignment is 83 percent (83 percent in March 2023).

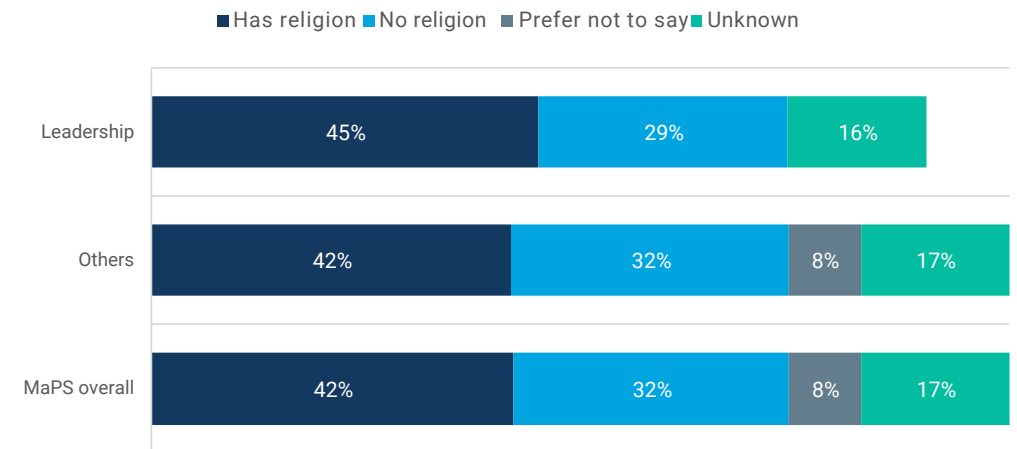
We have no representation of this group within MaPS but will continue to work with our LGBTQ+ & Allies Network to ensure that potential new starters and recruitment candidates view us as a potential good fit for their next role, where diversity and inclusivity are fundamental regardless of gender and gender identity.

Religion, Faith & Belief: Declaration rate for religion is 83 percent (83 percent in March 2023).

The proportion of colleagues with a religion, faith or belief across MaPS is 42 percent. Across leadership this is 45 percent and across all other colleagues this is 42 percent.

We still have a high proportion of employees who have not responded or prefer not to say, together this equates to 122 colleagues, so it is hard to draw clear conclusions before addressing this gap in data.

Proportion of religion, faith or belief

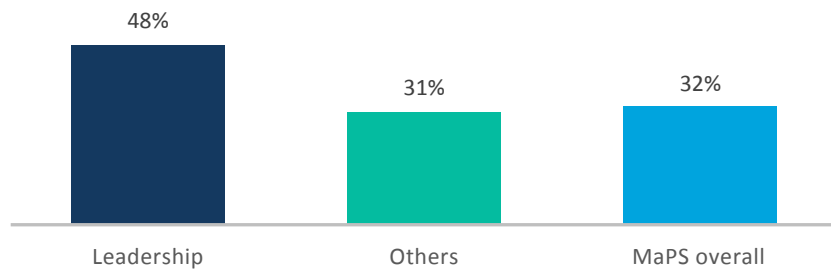


Caring responsibilities: Declaration rate for caring responsibilities is 84 percent (85 percent in March 2023).

Alongside the protected characteristics, we also collect data on whether colleagues have any caring responsibilities. This includes but is not limited to, primary or secondary care of children under 18 years, disabled children or adults, and/or older people over the age of 65. The overall data is not broken down by types of caring responsibilities but is analysed as a collective dataset.

For MaPS overall, 32 percent of colleagues reported that they have caring responsibilities, which is slightly higher amongst our Leadership level, which reports 48 percent caring responsibilities.

Proportion with caregiving responsibilities



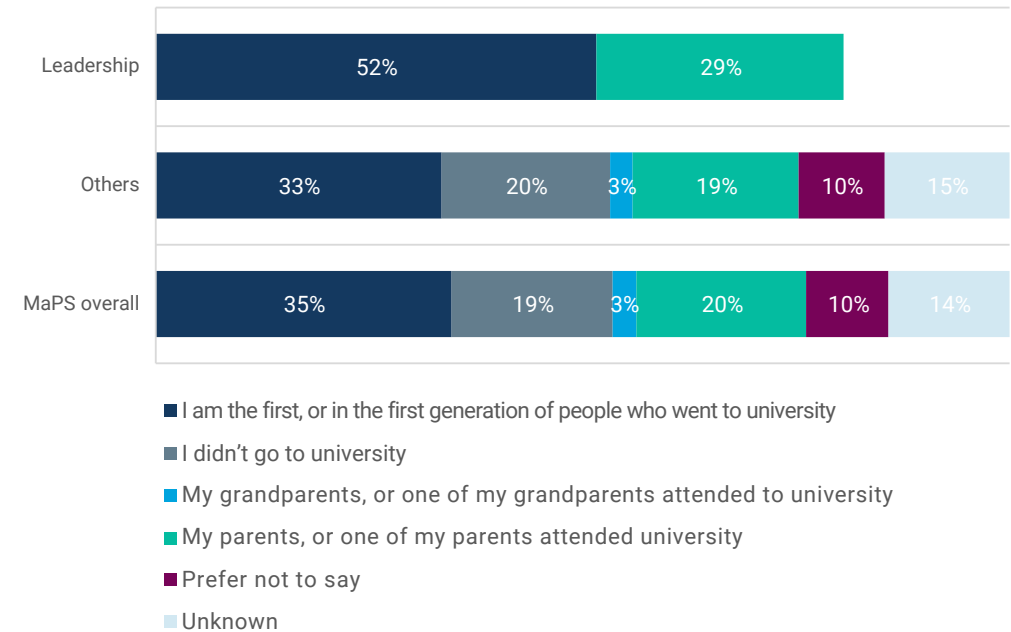
Socio-economic background: Declaration rate for socio-economic background is 86 percent (86 percent in March 2023).

As an indication of socio-economic background, we collect data on attendance at university, either as first-generation attendance, parental attendance, grandparents' attendance or no attendance.

The data shows that there is good social mobility at leadership level, with 52 percent indicating that they were the first generation to go to university. 29 percent of leadership and 19 percent of all other colleagues had one or more parent who attended university. The representation of colleagues who did not attend university is 19 percent.

It is important to continue identifying what has worked well to be able to expand on this to ensure continued representation and support of social mobility.

Socio-economic background



2. Address areas of under-representation including ethnicity at leadership level, disability & neurodiversity at all levels and explore opportunities to support early careers.

In early 2024, we published our first ever ethnicity and disability & neurodiversity pay gap reports alongside our mandatory gender pay gap report. You can read the reports here [LINK]

Ordinary pay gap	Ethnicity	Disability & Neurodiversity
Mean	0.5% (6.7%)	-16.2% (-4.7%)
Median	-5.1% (4.4%)	-16.9% (-3.7%)

Bonus pay gap	Ethnicity	Disability & Neurodiversity
Mean	11.6% (10.8%)	-19.1% (-9.6%)
Median	7.1% (2.4%)	-24.9% (-25.9%)

Ethnicity: The mean hourly pay gap is 0.5% and the median is -5.1%, which means it's in favour of black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues. The mean bonus pay gap is 11.6% and the median is 7.1%.

Disability and Neurodiversity: The hourly pay gap is in favour of disabled and neurodiverse colleagues for both mean (-16.2%) and median (-16.9%). The bonus pay gap is in favour of disabled and neurodiverse colleagues for both mean (-19.1%) and median (-24.9%).

Ethnicity at Leadership

Our ambition is to close the ethnicity gap in MaPS Leadership to the benchmark of 12.6 percent.

We have worked with our external recruitment partners to do a deep dive into our recruitment data – looking at the diversity data at leadership level. We are cognisant that more work is needed to attract and recruit a wider pool of ethnically diverse candidates at leadership level and to ensure that there are effective talent pathways and career opportunities.

Across 2023, we trialled a 12-month leadership programme, which is centred around women only. Our trial candidates included several members of

our Ethnic Diversity & Allyship Network (Edan) alongside members of our Executive and Senior Management Teams. The members of Edan are not part of the wider leadership team and so this is a great opportunity for them to connect with and learn from members of our executive and senior teams. We will be collecting feedback and reviewing the results of this programme to understand next steps.

We have started to develop a pilot mentoring scheme whereby executive and senior leaders will mentor members of the Neurodiversity Network and Ethnic Diversity & Allyship Network. The proposal has been signed off by our Executive Leadership team for a six-month pilot starting from April 2024. The purpose of the scheme is for mentors to support colleague development, provides exposure to the wider business, support understanding of personal brand, help to build confidence and provides mentees with the opportunity to connect with senior leaders as part of their mentoring relationship. This is with the overall ambition of increasing progression opportunities, either through career progression or skills/career development.

Disability & Neurodiversity at all levels

As part of our move to Bedford, we completed a focus group with disabled and neurodiverse colleagues and others, to review plans for our new offices and hybrid working environments. Several suggestions were provided as part of this focus group, of which we have taken into consideration and implemented. It is key that we used lessons from the past to help us implement an inclusive workplace and disability-smart environment and to enable us to attract and retain a diverse workforce regardless of our new locality and demographic.

We have developed guidance for supporting colleagues and line managers to implement workplace adjustments. The guidance has been developed to ensure that MaPS takes a consistent and proactive approach to supporting colleagues with a disability, neurodiversity or other needs. This is key, so that colleagues can thrive and be at their best. This guidance is currently being reviewed by key stakeholder groups, including our network groups to ensure that voices are heard. Once the guidance has been signed off, we will socialise this across the business with relevant training.

Our Women's Health Network has worked closely with our Executive Leadership Team and across the business to ensure that we have support in place for colleagues that are peri menopausal, actively in the menopause or post menopause. This has included signing the Menopause Workplace

Pledge, which commits us to recognising the impact that menopause can have at work, talking openly, positively, and respectfully about it and actively supporting our colleagues. As well as signing the pledge, the Women's Health Network have developed a Menopause Toolkit, which provides advice and guidance to those experiencing the menopause, as well as practical support for line managers on how to provide support and adjustments for direct reports.

Support early careers

We have continued to utilise the graduate scheme via the Civil Service Fast Streamer programme. This is an accelerated leadership development programme, which allows us to tap into future and upcoming talent, gain support for the organisation on key projects as well as showcase who MaPS are and the work MaPS does to financially support customers.

We hosted a graduate in March 2023 for a six-month secondment. We are currently in the application window, having applied for further graduates to join us in early 2024. Once this application window has completed, we will use feedback from across the business to assess if this is the best approach to continue with moving forward.

We have also explored how best to utilise apprenticeships at MaPS. With an imminent move out of London and into Bedford as part of the Government's levelling up agenda, the proposal is to commence further work once we have moved location in early 2024.

In 2024/2025, we will relook at our early careers strategy to understand how best to attract and retain young people. It is important that as an organisation, we have representation from young people, to ensure that we have a fully diverse organisation.

Recruitment

As part of all senior recruitment at MaPS, we have implemented a stakeholder engagement panel. This has been shaped around equality, diversity and inclusion, to ensure that potential leaders of the organisation have a good understanding of EDI and so that candidates are aware of how fundamental EDI is to the organisation. Additionally, the session also assesses the candidate's engagement, communication and leadership skills. We implemented these panels for six Director roles in 2023. We will continue to embed these sessions into all senior recruitment across 2024, and then explore how best to create a similar approach for all roles that we recruit for.



3. Create a culture where all colleagues feel included and engaged.

Personal EDI objectives

We have developed EDI objectives for everyone. Whilst EDI objectives are universal, there are important distinctions between the objectives for senior leaders, people managers, and our wider colleagues. This approach recognises the instrumental role of leaders in modelling behaviours and embedding approaches. Meeting our EDI objectives is considered a fundamental part of the day job, and not an 'out-of-hours' activity.

- **Executive Leadership Team:** Identify one or more of our Equality, Diversity and inclusion objectives and take accountability for embedding it within your Directorate.
- **Line managers:** Take responsibility for contributing towards and championing our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategic Objectives, and provide adequate support, such as providing allocated time, for your direct reports to actively engage and contribute towards EDI.
- **All colleagues:** Actively engage with and contribute towards one of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Objectives.

Colleague Network Groups

Our colleague networks help us to foster an inclusive workplace culture and promote a sense of belonging. We have established six colleague network groups who are working well and are embedded into MaPS. These networks include MaPS LGBT+ & Allies Network, Neurodiversity Network, Ethnic Diversity & Allyship Network, the Women's Health Network and Men's Wellbeing Network and the Interfaith Network.

Towards the end of 2023, the Diverse Families Network started, which is currently in the process of establishing themselves.

Each network has a Terms of Reference, co-chairs, a support member, and a Colleague Consultative Group (CCG) representative. Alongside the network's own objectives, the purpose of the Networks is to:

1. Design, facilitate, and deliver organisation-wide activities under three streams - events, education and social.

2. Work with the CCG to support the organisation's equality, diversity and inclusion objectives.

3. Encourage and support a culture of allyship at MaPS.

We are currently reviewing the process for recruiting senior and executive sponsors, and developing this role out further to ensure that each sponsor adds value.

EDI Forum

We implemented an EDI Forum in 2023, which brings together subject matter experts from across the business, this includes our Equalities Champions, colleague networks, union, the Colleague Consultative Group, along with other colleagues interested in EDI.

The Forum, which takes place quarterly, is chaired by the EDI Lead and the Employee Experience Partner for Inclusion and Wellbeing and sponsored by two Executive Directors. The Forum is the place where all aspects of EDI can be discussed, from how included colleagues feel, to how we ensure the design and delivery of our services truly reflects the diversity of our customers. Three forums were held in 2023 and an associated action log has been started, which is crucial as this forum has responsibility for driving forward progress against our EDI strategic objectives.

Awareness days and events across 2023

We have celebrated and recognised numerous educational events, awareness days and religious events across the year. This focus is integral to creating a culture where colleagues feel included and engaged and allows colleagues to embrace, celebrate and learn something new across a wide area. This has included, but not limited to:

- **National Inclusion Week:** theme: Take Action, Make Impact, launched EDI objectives for everyone, delivered an allyship webinar, Q&A with colleagues, hosted our second EDI Forum, delivered Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) training.
- **International Women's Day:** #EmbraceEquity campaign, video blog from Chair, video about why equity is important across mental health and financial wellbeing, video about raising awareness on the impact of menopause and pensions, poll, colleague anecdotes shared.

- **Mental Health Awareness Week:** activities included a session on Mental Health and Financial Wellbeing, breathwork and mindfulness interactive session, gentle yoga class, wellbeing drop-in session, video Q&A with an Executive Director.
- **Race Equality Week:** activities included guest speaker, colleague blog, dedicated intranet page, social gathering, visit to the Black Cultural Archives.
- **Neurodiversity Celebration Week:** activities included colleague blog, dedicated intranet page, sharing of resources and awareness raising content.
- **Pride:** activities included an Office Pride Day, social gathering, colleague blogs, dedicated intranet page, give as you earn – LGBTQ+ focus, Teams background.
- **Black History Month:** ‘Saluting our Sisters’ spotlight series focusing on black female colleagues and external guests, #WeMatter campaign, guest speakers, colleague blog, cooking class, and a social gathering.
- **Interfaith Week:** activities included dedicated intranet page, sharing of resources around different world religions and faiths, Q&A with colleagues and quiz.
- **Easter, Diwali, Christmas and Ramadan:** activities included colleague blogs, dedicated intranet pages, sharing of resources and awareness raising content.
- **Menopause Awareness Month:** Guest speaker, launch of the menopause toolkit and announcement of MaPS signing the workplace menopause pledge.
- **Windrush 75:** activities included colleague blog, guest speaker and dedicated intranet page.



Progressing our internal objectives: next steps

Our focus over the next twelve months is to build on strong foundations, continuing to use data to drive decisions and progress areas of improvement. Specific actions will include:

- Alongside partners, design and deliver a series of workshops or training sessions for colleagues across the organisation and targeted sessions for key stakeholders, including HR Business Partners, recruitment teams and external recruitment partners, frontline colleagues, etc. to include: conscious inclusion, inclusive language, cultural and racial awareness, psychological safety, hiring manager training, disability-smart recruitment, disability-smart customer experience, disability awareness and disability in the workplace.
- Work towards the Disability Confident Committed status to demonstrate our commitment to attracting, retaining and developing the talent of people with a disability or neurodiversity.
- Promote and encourage greater personal accountability of equality, diversity and inclusion at MaPS. We will do this through further embedding personal EDI objectives, ensuring that all colleagues have set an EDI objective and are making progress against it. We will also continue to work with our executive and senior teams to ensure that each directorate is focusing on tangible EDI actions across their teams.
- Continue to develop and roll out pilot mentoring scheme whereby executive and senior leaders will mentor members of the Neurodiversity Network and Ethnic Diversity & Allyship Network. The scheme will be measured when the pilot ends at the end of 2024 and will be reviewed with the aim of widening the programme out further.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion questions into our engagement survey cycle to understand how our colleagues feel, and to implement actions where there are areas of improvement. We have recently moved survey provider, so we are currently looking at how we can improve how we previously collected formal feedback and then implemented and measured actions.
- We will be implementing a tailored workplace adjustments plan to ensure that colleagues can be at their best when working. The plan will show a record of what adjustments have been agreed by the line manager and individual. Implementing this plan will help to break down any potential barriers, supporting colleagues and line managers to have conversations, this is especially needed when roles or line managers change.
- Work alongside CCG, Prospect (union), and our network groups to draft and publish an inclusive language handbook that takes into consideration all protected characteristics and will shape the language we use both internally and externally. This action was due to be completed in 2023, but due to capacity was deprioritised to 2024/25.
- In 2023, the Neurodiversity Network piloted a neurodiversity profiler tool and completed a neurodiversity maturity assessment for the organisation. The network has reviewed the data and outputs from this assessment and tool, and will implement relevant actions and put recommendations forward for utilising the profiler tool on a wider basis for colleagues outside of the network.

External Equality Objective



Our mission statement is.....“We help people – particularly those most in need – to improve their financial wellbeing and build a better, more confident future. Working collaboratively across the UK, we make sure customers can access high quality money and pensions guidance and debt advice throughout their lives, however and whenever they need it.” we understand that in order to achieve our mission, we must meet our fourth equality objective which is to **design and deliver high quality services to our customers that take full account of current and potential vulnerabilities and protected characteristics.**

Measuring financial wellbeing

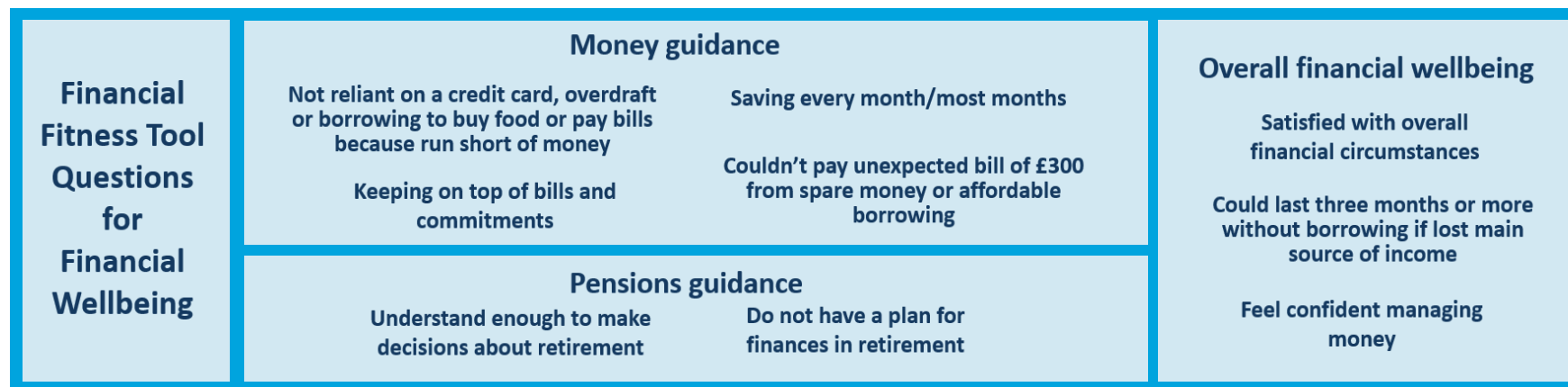
Understanding our customers’ needs is a crucial part of making sure that we design and deliver services which meet these needs. We do this through our large-scale surveys, which allow us to hear direct from consumers, so that we can build a representative picture of the state of the nation’s financial wellbeing. Our surveys are;

- **Adult Financial Wellbeing Survey** – covers money and pensions and is carried out every three years. It was last run in 2021 and is planned to be run in 2024.
- **Debt Need Survey and Quarterly Tracker** – covers the need for debt advice and is carried out annually.

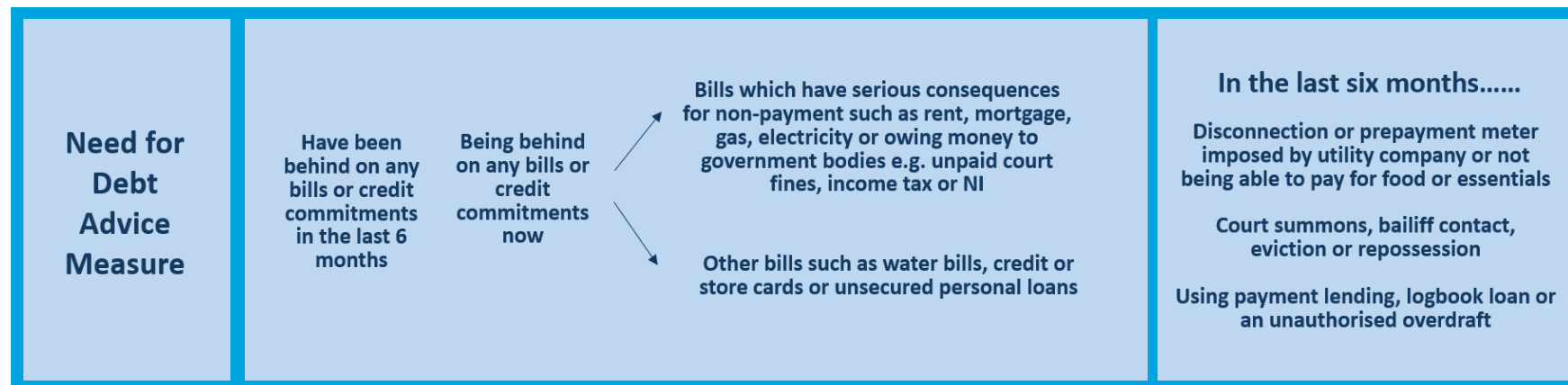
- **Children and Young People’s financial Wellbeing Survey** - covers children’s behaviours, attitudes and skills around money which was last run in 2022.

Key measures we use

We have developed a financial fitness tool which we use to quantitatively measure financial wellbeing. To do this we use 180 questions within our Adult Financial Wellbeing Survey, which we can then analyse and group into key building blocks which we believe are the most important drivers for adult financial wellbeing. When these questions are answered for an individual the tool gives a score out of 100 to describe their financial wellbeing. This helps us, or anyone else using the tool, to identify and target those who are most in need of support.



For our Debt Need Survey we have a set of questions which we developed in 2021, which we can use to understand whether someone needs debt advice. HM Treasury uses this measure, and our data to distribute funding for debt advice.



We have different measures for our two surveys because being in need of debt advice is a very specific circumstance to which you need to meet a certain threshold in order to access debt advice, whereas financial wellbeing needs to take into account a more rounded picture than just someone's need for debt advice.

Understanding those most in need

Adult Financial Wellbeing

Our data helps us to target the people who are potentially most vulnerable to poor financial wellbeing. Within each of our surveys we include questions which enable us to analyse data by respondents with any of the PSED protected characteristics.

The data from our most recent Adult Financial Wellbeing Survey (2021) shows that for every protected characteristic, there are differences in financial wellbeing between the different categories within that characteristic.

Protected Characteristic	Lower Financial Wellbeing	Around Average	Higher Financial Wellbeing
Age	18 – 44	45-54	55+
Ethnicity	Black, Mixed	Asian, Other, White	
Gender	Female, Non-binary		White
Gender reassignment	Transgender	Cisgender	
Sexual orientation	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual	Heterosexual / Straight	
Disability	Disabled		Not disabled
Marital Status	Separated, single	Divorced	Married/Civil partnership, Widowed / surviving civil partner
Pregnancy / maternity	I / my partner on maternity	I/my partner pregnant	
Religion (UK)	None		Any
Religion (GB)		Other religion	CoE/Anglican, Roman Catholic, Other Christian

For those with lower financial wellbeing we can gain further insights by looking at the key financial fitness tool measures. The table below includes the demographic groups which have shown to have lower financial wellbeing, this includes some protected characteristics, alongside other groups which we know have poor financial wellbeing. This table includes a comparison between these groups and the UK average.

	UK population	Single parent	Rented	Mental health	Low income	18-24 yr olds	Disability	Ethnic minority
% with Low Financial Wellbeing	31%	54%	52%	47%	46%	45%	40%	38%
Using credit for essentials	17%	33%	21%	32%	25%	30%	22%	30%
Struggling to keep up with bills / credit commitments	50%	80%	70%	74%	71%	69%	60%	67%
Don't save most months (rarely / never)	19%	29%	32%	23%	28%	12%	25%	12%
Couldn't pay unexpected bill	25%	47%	46%	37%	44%	37%	33%	32%
Don't understand enough to make decisions about retirement	53%	59%	63%	56%	61%	58%	58%	51%
Do not have plan for retirement	50%	60%	67%	56%	60%	60%	55%	49%
Not confident managing money	45%	64%	57%	63%	60%	71%	50%	59%
Couldn't last three or more months loss income	45%	73%	69%	67%	65%	65%	55%	58%
Not satisfied with overall financial circumstances	66%	82%	80%	78%	79%	80%	71%	74%

Highlighted in yellow are areas of note;

- 80% of single parents and 74% of those with self-reported mental health problems struggle to keep up with bills and credit commitments. This is far higher than the UK average of 50%. Whilst these are stand out statistics, we can see that for all groups in the table, numbers are similarly high.
- 63% of those in rented accommodation and 61% of those with a low income do not understand enough to make decisions about retirement. Again, this

is higher than the UK average of 53%

Debt Need

Our most recent debt need survey, carried out in 2023, shows that those groups who are most likely to have poor financial wellbeing, are also more likely to be in need of debt advice.

	UK population	Single parent	Rented	Mental health	Low income	18-24 yr olds	Disability	Ethnic minority	LGBTQ+
Need debt advice	15%	34%	27%	26%	28%	36%	22%	31%	21%
At risk of needing debt advice	24%	33%	31%	30%	27%	37%	22%	20%	28%

These statistics are similar to our 2022 results, which show that single parents and those in the 18-24 age bracket are most in need of debt advice, however, the situation for 18–24-year-olds has got noticeably worse than in 2022.

There are some factors which we believe have contributed towards this worsening. 18-24-year-olds make up a large proportion of the workforce in hospitality and retail which were heavily impacted by pandemic lockdown restrictions and recent rises in the cost of living. While most people in this age group do not need debt advice, those who do tend to live in deprived communities, come from ethnic minority communities, work in less secure contract-based or gig economy employment and rent their homes rather than living with their families. When overlaps between characteristics occur in this way it can make people particularly vulnerable, both in terms of financial wellbeing and debt.

It is also important to note that there are variations with the various demographic groups. If we look at ethnic minorities together we can see that 38% of this group have low financial wellbeing and 31% are in need of debt advice. However, these overall figures can mask bigger disparities. For example, those from Black and mixed backgrounds have lower financial wellbeing compared with those of Asian and other backgrounds.

Understanding Barriers and Motivations to Seeking Debt Advice

In 2023, MaPS commissioned and managed research into the Motivations and Barriers to Seeking Debt Advice. The purpose of this research was to better understand the needs of possible debt advice customers, particularly the most vulnerable, and inform the requirements for future commissioning, which very much supports our fourth objective to design and deliver high quality services to our customers that take full account of current and potential vulnerabilities and protected characteristics.

The research found that vulnerability, and in particular disability and mental health, presents real challenges when it comes to seeking debt advice due to a lack of knowledge of how some debts work and gaps in gaining general financial literacy and understanding of financial products, along with the burden of juggling multiple challenges and life events. Those in the middle of a crisis and dealing with anxiety feel that finding the energy and strength to find out about something they don't know anything about, means that it's easier to deal with the immediate (i.e. calling creditors) rather than dealing with debt problems. As one participant put it;

“Obviously my biggest worry wasn't my debts when I came out of hospital, it was getting myself better. I had really bad mental health issues and PTSD and everything else that came from the coma.” (Female, 28, London, Mental & physical health conditions)

The research identified nine recommendations related to the different barriers and stages of debt advice. These included making the debt journey more flexible, simplifying the process and giving people more control and flexibility, ensuring the process takes into account what customers want to achieve and by when. When embedded into service design, we hope that these generalised recommendations, will improve things for everyone seeking debt advice, and make it easier for those with protected characteristics and vulnerabilities who have additional needs.

Our Impact

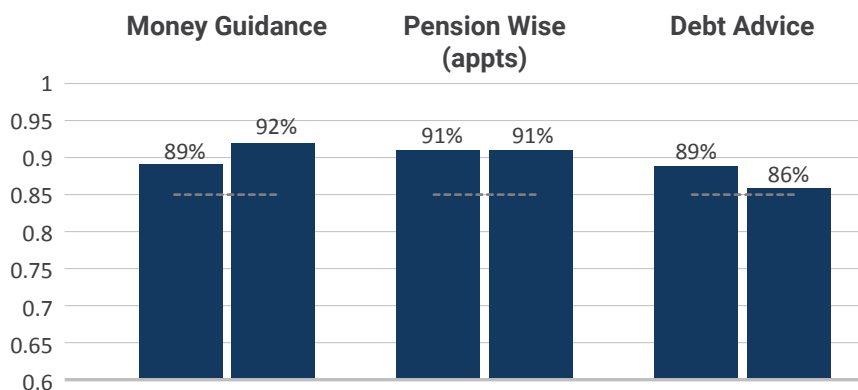
We also run two major ongoing evaluation surveys with customers – Ipsos' Customer Pulse (covering Money and Pensions Guidance) and Quadrangle's Debt Advice Evaluation. These help us to understand who our customers are and look at both satisfaction levels of the interaction as well as understanding longer term positive outcomes.

Who are our customers?

	Age and Gender	Other characteristics
Money & Debt Money Guidance Debt Advice	Mostly working age (35-55) with a female bias	More likely to be from ethnic minorities, or households with disabilities and single parents
Pensions Pension Guidance Pension Wise	Mostly pre-retired or newly retired (50-64) with a male bias	Much less likely to be from ethnic minority backgrounds or be disabled

Each survey has a suite of demographic questions covering protected characteristics enabling analysis by subgroup, and where possible questions are aligned to other surveys mentioned previously and standard Government wording. We aim to cover as much of PSED as possible – but it is impossible to have 100% coverage of all characteristics. Some topics (e.g. sexuality) may be particularly sensitive and are simply not appropriate for a satisfaction survey amongst those going through a complicated and stressful customer journey.

Satisfaction with our services is high;



Our insights show that our services help to drive positive outcomes, people understand the steps they need to take and this helps them reach a resolution.

Across money, pensions and debt, there are no notable differences between the scores for satisfaction, understanding and resolution between characteristics.

Using our Insights – Examples of Embedding Equalities Considerations into the Design and Delivery of our Services

Money and Pensions Guidance Contact Centre Service

MaPS are currently planning a new model of delivery for our guidance services, which are currently delivered in a hybrid model of insourced and outsourced. The new model would see an outsourced provider handle contacts for both money and pensions guidance at Tier 1, as well as triage and make appointment bookings for Pension Wise. The service aims to be holistic and if a debt need is identified, the agent would either signpost or refer to a free, independent debt adviser. It is planned that the new service will go live on 1st April 2025.

An Equality and Vulnerability Impact Assessment was undertaken in planning the procurement, in order to understand which groups might be affected. Using the findings from our Adult Financial Wellbeing Survey, along with deeper dives in deprivation, disability and ethnicity and mental health along with external evidence from the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, the project team identified that;

- Financial wellbeing scores are lowest amongst people who belong to all of the protected characteristics
- People who live in the most deprived areas (and therefore also experience socio-economic disadvantage) have the lowest financial wellbeing scores.
- Adults with disabilities have lower financial wellbeing scores than those without. However, even within the cohort of adults who live with a disability there is discrepancy, with those experiencing ‘cognitive’ disabilities (including mental health problems, learning disability and memory issues) having lower financial wellbeing than those with physical disabilities.
- There are a number of factors which particularly impact people from minority ethnic communities, including information about money matters needing to be provided in community languages, translation/interpretation services needing to be available and data to be collected to ensure appropriate outreach.
- There are particular barriers and challenges to retirement planning for people living with mental health problems which results in lack of guidance uptake and potentially poor customer outcomes.

These insights helped deepen the project teams understanding which groups might be particularly in need of money and pensions guidance services, and the importance of the availability of a range of channels - a free phone telephone number, WhatsApp, webchat, email and letter to meet people's differing needs.

MaPS also has started working with a research partner to gain further insights into how customers, particularly those with accessibility needs, navigate through the support journey across the multiple channels available.

The needs of those with protected characteristics will be factored into the service specification and scoring of tenders and we have included a requirement within the Statement of Requirements that the provider should ensure their agents are appropriately trained and able to support customers with a range of needs.

Pension Wise Digital

Pension Wise is a free and impartial service, delivered through MoneyHelper, which helps people aged over 50 and with a defined contribution pension, to understand the options available for using their pension pot, including the factors they need to consider when deciding on options before retirement.

The service is currently conducted through telephone and face-to-face appointments, alongside a self-serve journey which doesn't currently constitute an appointment. Our Pension Wise Digital service will deliver an online Pension Wise appointment which will sit as an additional channel alongside the current telephone and face-to-face appointments.

We already know that there is demand for Pension Wise guidance digitally, as the volumes to our current digital self-serve journey are increasing month on month. In order to best benefit our customers, we want to provide customers with the same guidance that is available through a telephone and face to face appointment, which they can access at a time and place that best suits their needs and circumstances.

At MaPS we recognise that not everyone's needs or experiences are the same and that equality does not mean always treating everybody in exactly the same way. For everyone to have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, they need to be free from any artificial barriers. By introducing a digital appointment, we want to:

1. Increase the reach and accessibility of the service
2. Provide more flexibility to customers
3. Ensure that we direct our operational specialists towards those with complex situations and those who may require additional support.

The project team carried out an Equality and Vulnerability Impact Assessment when they began considering the design of the service to gain a clearer understanding of the needs of customers and in doing so be able to minimise and remove barriers to access.

Insights from our Adult Financial Wellbeing Survey show that people with disabilities are among the groups who struggle with planning for retirement. The project team also reviewed evidence which showed that this group can face barriers with digital services.

Within the design phase, mechanisms were embedded to be able to signpost those with a vulnerability, which could arise from a characteristic, towards a different channel at the earliest possible opportunity (telephone or face-to-face, where appropriate). This is done with the intention of providing the best experience to those who are vulnerable, or who have additional access needs, ensuring that more complex cases can be dealt with in an appropriate manner, taking into account the customers individual needs.

The service was tested with the MaPS internal Neurodiversity Network to get informal learnings on the accessibility of the product. It was then further tested with other networks at the Money and Pensions Service (Interfaith, Ethnic Diversity and Allyship, Women's health). The project team onboarded a research partner, who have been conducting varied accessibility testing, including specific comprehension testing due to the financial nature of the product, as well as testing with users with physical accessibility needs and are due to conduct iterative accessibility audits on the product, once the build is finished.

Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty



Assurance Arrangements

Since our last publication we have continued to strengthen our assurance arrangements with regards to the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure a firm foundation of compliance.

Between January and March 2023 PSED training was delivered to 79% of the organisation. The aim of this training was to ensure that everyone at MaPS has a good foundation of knowledge on our obligations under the PSED. The training has now been embedded within our induction process for new starters and is delivered quarterly.

Since March 2023 we have recruited 23 Equalities Champions, this network has received specialist training on equality impact assessing and are able to provide advice and guidance within their teams, further improving the capability and understanding of PSED throughout MaPS.

Robust guidance and support are available to all staff on our intranet page. This includes MaPS specific templates and frameworks, along with further best practice guidance (e.g., from the Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission) on meeting the equalities duty.

Through our regular learning sessions, Making Financial Wellbeing for All, we invite internal and external experts to discuss the issues that different groups of people have with money, pensions and debt. The insights shared in these sessions help to increase our understanding of financial inequalities. In the past year we have heard from:

- The Islamic Finance Guru describing the disproportionate effect of the cost-of-living crisis on British Muslims

- Mind discussing the intersecting impacts of ethnicity and mental health on financial wellbeing
- Our insights and evaluation team presented findings from the Adult Financial Wellbeing Survey on protected characteristics and financial wellbeing
- Dr Peter Matthews from Stirling University presented his research on LGBTQ+ and financial exclusion
- Friends, Families and Travellers, the leading charity working with Gypsy Travellers in England discussed their research into the financial exclusion experienced by Gypsy Travellers in England.
- Academics from the University of Bristol, along with the Research Institute for Disabled Customers presented their research on the financial wellbeing of disabled people in the UK.

These sessions have resulted in improvements to the design and delivery of our services, including improved guidance on Sharia finances.

Our EDI Lead, and our Employee Experience Partner for Inclusion and Wellbeing provide bespoke advice, to help colleagues understand their obligations. This advice, along with the guidance and resources, training provided and support from Equalities Champions means that colleagues across MaPS have a good understanding of how equalities considerations are embedded within decision making.

We continue to audit compliance via our central repository for equality assessments and through alternative governance processes and seek to make improvements where necessary.



**Money &
Pensions
Service**