

Press Release

Serco argues for ‘Diversity Dividend’ in private provision of public services

14 February 2006

Leading public service provider, Serco is calling for competition in public services to favour companies who invest in good diversity practices. Lucy Adams, HR Director for Serco Group, which provides public services in over 30 countries, argues that certain companies can often win on price under current procurement rules, by treating employees badly and ignoring the issue of equality.

At the Women in London’s Economy conference (sponsored by the Greater London Authority), she presented the argument for Government to drive equality of opportunity through its procurement policy.

Lucy Adams said:

“Serco is a responsible company. We want to create a level playing field of opportunities for all our employees, whatever their gender, whatever their race. But the way public services are currently put to competition can sometimes favour less progressive companies who don’t hold these aspirations - or who don’t put them into practice.

“Serco would like to be able to say that a commitment to diversity, to equal treatment for all employees, is good for business. It’s hard to claim that under the current situation where good employers can feasibly lose business to those without any real commitment to fair treatment of their people. Competitors can sometimes be cheaper as a direct result of them not providing decent terms and conditions and not driving the equality agenda.

(More)

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“If we can compete on equal terms, all employees will get a better deal. I’d like to see incentives for companies to invest in good diversity practices, through the procurement practices, for example:

- targets built into the service performance regime, in relation to trends in the reduction of occupational segregation, women into non-traditional roles, etc.
- plans agreed for the introduction of equality proofed pay systems, for all tendering companies
- reject tenders from employers who cannot demonstrate a track record and future commitment to diversity
- stimulate innovation in the private sector by rewarding progressive practices
- make it matter to the evaluation process

“No responsible employer can argue that equal pay is a bad idea. Everyone says they believe in it, and I believe the vast majority genuinely do. But making pay and opportunities equal in reality is not easy, it can be a complex and daunting issue. I believe that with the appropriate incentives from Government and other procurers, we can encourage a much wider commitment to diversity.”

(End)

Notes to Editors

Serco improves services by managing people, processes, technology and assets more effectively in the defence, education, health, home affairs, local government, science, technology, transport and commercial sectors, working in 37 countries.

Serco advises policy makers, designs innovative solutions, integrates systems and delivers to the public. More information can be found at www.serco.com.

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