

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **6 February 2007**
Report of: **Joint Report of the Executive Members for Social Inclusion and Culture and Improvement**
Subject: **Disability Equality Scheme**
Ward: **All**

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft Disability Equality Scheme (see Appendix A) to Working Executive for approval.

2. Consultation

2.1. The Disability Equality Scheme has been developed with the involvement of disabled people and disability organisation from across the District and the County as per the statutory guidelines in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

2.2. A County wide consultation event was held in conjunction with the other six District Councils, Durham County Council, Durham Constabulary, Durham Police Authority and Durham University. This event was held on Friday 21st July at County Hall, Durham City and was chaired by District of Easington Council. 150 people registered an interest in the event and over 70 people attended on the day.

2.3. The Equality and Diversity Officer has developed an "Improving Services for Disabled People" involvement group which consists of key officers from District of Easington Council and East Durham Homes and local disabled people and disability organisations. These meetings have been held initially to develop this Scheme. It is hoped that the group will continue in order to provide external challenge and scrutiny to ensure the Scheme provides the necessary outcomes.

3. Background

3.1. In 2005, the DDA was updated to place a statutory Disability Equality Duty on all public authorities. The main aim of the Disability Equality Duty is to get public authorities to think about disability equality issues and involve disabled people in decision-making. This is not just about physical/sensory barriers but also barriers that are created by the way services, policies or practices are designed.

3.2. The new duty means that we must:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons

3.3. To help us meet these duties, we have to publish a Disability Equality Scheme. This scheme has been developed with the involvement of disabled people and disability organisations in accordance with the DDA 2005. It is a practical framework that helps us plan, deliver, evaluate and report on our activities. It is a 'live' document

Item no.

that is subject to review every 12 months. The Equality and Diversity Working Group and the “Improving Services for Disabled People” group will monitor the progress of this Scheme.

- 3.4. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Office of Public Management (OPM) selected District of Easington Council to be one of only six ‘champion’ local authorities in the country for disability equality schemes. This national project looked at the practical aspects of developing a Disability Equality Scheme and action plan and the barriers to implementing and mainstreaming them. Our experiences, along with those from the other five ‘champion’ authorities went into producing a toolkit for other local authorities called “Beyond Good Intentions” which can be downloaded from the DRC website. The link to this site is http://www.drc-gb.org/pdf/Beyond_Good_Intentions_September06.pdf

4. Implication

4.1. Financial Implications

There are some financial implications in that the actions in the action plan will need to be owned and resourced by departments.

4.2. Legal Implications

This Scheme ensures compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the new Disability Equality Duty.

4.3. Policy Implications

The Disability Equality Scheme has implications for policy and service planning across the Council.

4.4. Risk Implications

If this plan is not implemented correctly, the Council is at risk of being issued with a compliance notice by the Disability Rights Commission.

5. Communications

- 5.1. Once this document is agreed, it must be published via our website, Infopoint, News and Views, public buildings and any other reasonable means.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1. Corporate Plan and Priorities

As this is a corporate document and affects all services, if agreed, this document will help to address all of the corporate objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan.

6.2. Service Plan

Actions from this document must be written into service plans in order to ensure actions are completed and to satisfy the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

6.3. Performance Management and Scrutiny

The Equality and Diversity Working Group and the “Improving Services for Disabled People” group will monitor the progress of this Scheme. An annual report will be produced by the Equality and Diversity Officer.

6.4. Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications.

6.5. Expenditure related to ‘well-being’ powers

This policy will promote the social and environmental well being of the District by

promoting disability equality and involvement.

6.6. Human Resource Implications

There may be some training requirements regarding duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 in order to help staff implement some of the actions in the document.

6.7. Information Technology

There are not any I.T. implications in relation to operation of this document. The document will be available to view and download from the Council website.

6.8. Equality and Diversity

This document ensures compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, it also helps us to progress the Equality Standard for Local Government and helps to mainstream equalities throughout the organisations.

6.9. Crime and Disorder

There are implications for crime and disorder in that we must actively address disability hate crime as part of the Disability Equality Duty.

6.10. Human Rights

If agreed, this document will have regard to Article 14: Prohibition of Discrimination of the Human Rights Act 1998.

6.11. Social Inclusion

If agreed, this policy will have regard to social inclusiveness by promoting good relations between disabled people and other people.

6.12. Procurement

In order to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Standard for Local Government, we must ensure our contractors and partners meet the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty and that we monitor their compliance on a regular basis.

7. Recommendations

7.1. It is recommended the draft Disability Equality Scheme be agreed.