

Report

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Report to:	Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 February 2008
Report by:	Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Disability Equality Scheme - One Year On
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise members of the progress the Council has made in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme in the last year.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that progress to date in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduced new duties on public bodies to promote equality for disabled people. Central to the legislation is the requirement to produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme every 3 years with an annual report each year.
- 3.2. The Council engaged with representatives of disability groups and published the first Disability Equality Scheme by the due date of 4 December 2006. There is a separate duty to publish a Disability Equality Scheme for Education Resources which was also completed by the required date.
- 3.3. The general duty of the Act specifies that in carrying out their functions, local authorities must have 'due regard' to:-
- ◆ promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
 - ◆ eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
 - ◆ eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability
 - ◆ promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
 - ◆ encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
 - ◆ take steps to take account of disabled persons disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than others
- 3.4. The specific duty requires that the Scheme contains information about:-
- ◆ how disabled people were involved in the development of the Scheme
 - ◆ how policies will be assessed for any adverse impact on disabled people

- ◆ the disability action plan
- ◆ arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment and, where appropriate, the delivery of education and its functions; and
- ◆ how the action plan will be reviewed

4. Our Progress to Date

- 4.1. Work in the last year has focussed on taking forward the actions identified in the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan. A summary of these is attached at Appendix 1 and was published in December 2007 as part of our annual update.
- 4.2. This work has involved considerable engagement with disabled people and their representatives within the community and the workforce.
- 4.3. Engagement with the community has led us to undertake joint work with South Lanarkshire's Access Panel.
- 4.4. Engagement with disabled employees has led to a development day for members of the Disabled Employees Forum. It has also highlighted a small number of employees who voluntarily declare themselves to be disabled.
- 4.5. Examples of progress include:-
 - ◆ 4.5% increase in public access Service Performance Indicator from 74% to 78.5%
 - ◆ increase in number of disabled employees from 94 to 127
 - ◆ Loops installed during 2006/2007 in all cultural venues

5. Priorities for the Year Ahead

- 5.1. We are not complacent about the work we need to do and as such have identified priorities and actions for 2008. The details of these are contained within the Annual Progress Report in Appendix 1.
- 5.2. Some examples of actions in the Workplan for 2008 include:-
 - ◆ new Good Practice Guide for organisations with whom the Council has a Service Level Agreement to ensure that equalities issues are monitored
 - ◆ review of issues for young people with disabilities and their families in accessing Council services
 - ◆ comprehensive local accessible information strategy will be produced in 2008; and
 - ◆ customer survey for all households in South Lanarkshire will ask for disability related information so that we have a clearer picture of the make-up of our community

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. The Disability Equality Scheme affects all Council employees as it applies to Council service delivery as well as to the Council as an employer.
- 6.2. A comprehensive package of training relating to disability equality is available to all employees and elected members.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. Costs associated with the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan and associated consultation are met from existing resources.

8. Other Implications

8.1. A further annual progress report will be produced in December 2008.

8.2. The current progress report is also available on the Council's website.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

9.1. The South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership has been involved in the production of the Annual Progress Report.

9.2. The Annual Progress Report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

Robert McIlwain

Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

4 February 2008

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- ◆ Working With and Respecting Others
- ◆ People Focused
- ◆ Excellent Employer

Previous References

- ◆ Corporate Resources Committee – 18 October 2006

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Disability Equality Scheme

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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South Lanarkshire Council Disability Equality Scheme

Annual progress report

Introduction:

This has been a very busy year in Scottish local government with not only the changes in Holyrood but also the changes in local representation arrangements. We have seen the introduction of larger multi member wards and the election of new councillors. And whilst this has been going on, our programme of building, through the schools modernisation programme, community and care facilities and the continuing refurbishment of our council housing stock, has kept us busy across all communities of South Lanarkshire.

However, all of that aside the Council's commitment to the equality agenda remains. Valuing all in the community and the workplace is still at the heart of everything we do. Last year I mentioned that our success would be measured by both visible and tangible improvements which make a difference to the lives of disabled people. This report draws attention to some of the specific actions that have been undertaken in the last year and which will continue to form the basis of our engagement with disabled people throughout South Lanarkshire's communities. There is always more to be done and our partnership with disabled people to ensure that services meet their needs forms a strong basis for the future. We look forward to continuing to work together and to improving the everyday lives of those that live within South Lanarkshire whatever their circumstances.

Archibald Strang
Chief Executive
South Lanarkshire Council

Action Plan Progress:

Our Disability Equality Scheme action plan was based on the Council's 6 priorities for change contained within the Council Plan "Fourcast". Some of the key achievements we have made in the past year from this are noted below. We are however keen to highlight that work is still to be done and will be an ongoing process over the years ahead. We have also highlighted some key action points for the coming year.

Achievements to date November 2006 – November 2007:

Theme 1: Creating successful communities

Objectives:

- Working in partnership with all sectors to promote a strong and diverse economy, involving all local communities in physical, environmental, economic and social regeneration
- Promoting local economies by supporting business improvement, providing the right conditions for growth, improving skills and employability.

Build a positive, well informed culture of disability equality within the Council

- Diversity champions identified for each Resource to raise awareness amongst staff and ensure we are delivering on the Scheme.
- All re-elected and newly elected members will have the opportunity to participate in a disability awareness course. This ensures all within the Council have knowledge of the challenges facing those in our community.
- Service Users Forum set up by Social Work Resources which meets on a 6 weekly basis to discuss experiences and issues faced by service users.
- Burning Issues Participation Advocacy Network (BIPAN) is a project co-ordinated by Social Work Resources' Children's Rights Service and Integrated Children Services. BIPAN aims to promote active participation of children and young people with additional support needs.

Use Council influence to promote disability equality across South Lanarkshire.

- DEAF Forum now represented on the South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership and sub groups as well as on the Access Panel.
- Joint Performance Information and Assessment Framework (JPIAF) assesses performance of partners working together to provide services within the community care groups. A response from the Scottish Government to South Lanarkshire Council's 2006/7 submission rated the Council as third in Scotland in terms of services and stated that progress was good.

Reduce barriers for disabled people to enter and remain in Council employment.

- Events and forums held throughout 2007 dealing with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) issues to improve the understanding and confidence of managers dealing with disability issues in recruitment (See training numbers under theme 6).
- Employment monitoring for the Council shows an increase in disabled employees:-
 - From September 2006 to September 2007 there was an increase of 33 disabled employees from 94 to 127.
- Further action required to highlight the importance of "self declaration" for those entering employment and already in employment with the Council.

Ensure that the information needs of disabled people are met.

- Corporate standards revised to include accessibility standards so that all new and existing documents are produced consistently. Resource-wide training has taken place to introduce the standards to all levels of staff.
- Customer care standards and corporate complaints reviewed and re-launched in May 2007 and now include accessibility. Corporate complaints process now includes a facility to capture an equality profile of individuals.
- "Communicating with Children" conference took place for all schools.
- Mainstream staff encouraged to shadow specialist staff in bases for pupils with additional support needs.

Ensure disability equality and access issues are built into all Council and regeneration projects.

- Together with the Access Panel, training is being provided for Council employees involved in design, for example architects and building standards officers.
- A guide has been created that provides advice for those carrying out design or those submitting plans for approval. This is a joint venture aimed at demystifying disability.
- In May 2007 under the public access statutory performance indicator (SPI), 78.5% of Council properties met the standard of all public areas being suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people. This is an increase of 4.5% on 2006.

Theme 2: Learning in the community

Objectives:

- Establishing high quality learning and training opportunities which support learners of all abilities and ages to achieve their full potential.
- Bringing up to date the way in which education and training is provided in our schools and in the communities; improving the way we teach; enabling all learners to meet the challenges of new and changing technologies.

Provide opportunities for skills and employment projects which support disabled people.

- Social Work Resources supports adults with learning disabilities through community support teams, colleges and resource centres.
- Work taster sessions are provided allowing people to gain experience that can lead onto full-time employment.
- Projects are run in conjunction with the Coalyard Café and Douglas Larder Café providing access to employment in catering.

Improve the quality of transition from school to further education and/or work for disabled young people.

- Pathfinder research ongoing to develop a planned approach with structured and continuous support for disabled young people.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) will visit to look at the good practice already happening within South Lanarkshire.
- Council supports young people with additional support needs in the transition from school to employment. This year 33 young people participated with 4 moving onto employment, 12 remaining at school, 9 moving into further education and 8 into training. There is a programme of aftercare for all who have not yet moved into employment.

Support the personal development of people with a disability.

- All libraries now have adaptive technology to support customers with particular needs for example:-
 - Ergonomic and cherry keyboards;
 - Trackerball mice;
 - Specialist software
- The schools modernisation programme is ongoing to provide 21st century buildings that allow access and have the latest technology for all.

Theme 3: Living in the community

Objectives:

- Working with our communities and partners to achieve quality of life improvements in local areas.
- Promoting the well-being of citizens through improvements in local service delivery and enhancements in general amenities and facilities.

Support disabled people to live independently in their own homes and communities.

- Housing information events held for carers of adults with learning disabilities in March 2007; an action plan was drawn up taking on board comments and concerns of those that attended.
- Work ongoing to revise the housing allocations policy and procedures to include effective arrangements for reallocation of adapted properties. The draft policy is being reviewed in conjunction with South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership.
- Articles about supported living have appeared in "Housing News" to raise awareness amongst Council tenants of the support systems that are available.
- A staff training session on learning disabilities has been piloted to raise awareness and to inform staff about the other support agencies that are available.
- Consultations undertaken with a wide range of key partners including the disability partnership and carers' network.

Improve accessibility to arts, countryside and parks for disabled people.

- A Loop Hearing system is provided in all cultural venues.
- At the time of booking patrons can request signers for a performance.
- Wheelchairs provided within venues for use by visitors.
- Disabled access is provided in each venue with seating allocated for persons with physical disabilities.
- Lifts installed in each cultural venue.
- Blue badge holders park free in all Council pay and display car parks.

Theme 4: Supporting our communities

Objectives:

- Working in partnership with others to promote the health and well-being of citizens and communities.
- Promoting safe and sustainable communities, addressing issues such as social inclusion, drugs and alcohol misuse.

Ensure that disability equality and access issues are built into the development, delivery and monitoring of Council services

- Impact assessment form designed by the Equal Opportunities Working Group and implemented.
- The form will be used online and will automatically publish summaries and conclusions of all assessments carried out on the Council website.
- Corporate training for impact assessments underway.
- Resources completed a relevance schedule exercise by August 2007 to highlight key policy, functions and services for assessment.

Theme 5: Modernising services

Objectives:

- Delivering services in a responsive, modern and cost-effective manner
- Delivering "Best Value" in all aspects of service delivery either alone or by working in partnership with others.

Ensure that Resources have arrangements in place to monitor disabled people's satisfaction with services.

- Customer care standards reviewed to include equality issues and the need to capture equality related information about service users and complaints.
- In the period October 2006 to September 2007 there were no complaints received by the Council either justified or unjustified under equal opportunities.

Ensure disability equality is embedded into South Lanarkshire Council standing orders on contracts and procurement practices.

- Standing orders revised and include duties under the Disability Discrimination Act (2005), completed in June 2007.
- A good practice guide for procurement has been produced to ensure that all companies contracting with the Council meet disability equality standards.

Theme 6: Resource management

Objectives:

- Maximising the potential of the workforce to ensure that the Council attracts and retains employees who are both valued and motivated.
- Maximising the use of properties and assets.

Raise awareness among Council employees that disability is not a drawback and disabled employees/people make a valued contribution to the work of the Council.

- 'The Way Forward' event held by the Employee Forum for Disability to discuss how to take forward their role as the voice of disabled people in South Lanarkshire Council. This event explored:-
 - How they can be a resource to inform others about issues.
 - How they can raise awareness of disability throughout South Lanarkshire Council.
 - How they can provide support and share information with others.

Ensure that there are effective support mechanisms in place for disabled employees in the Council.

- Role of Diversity Liaison Officers (DLO) re-launched with an article in the Council's in-house employee magazine 'The Works' highlighting who they were and how they could be contacted.
- Resource induction for new employees now includes a letter explaining the employee forums that run and how they can get involved.

Ensure that Council employees are 'disability aware' and given the necessary training and skills to deliver services in a way which meets the commitments to this scheme.

- A comprehensive range of training courses are offered covering:-
 - Deaf Awareness
 - Disability Awareness
 - British Sign Language Level One
 - British Sign Language Level Two
 - British Sign Refresher Training
 - Visual Awareness
- From the period January 2007 to October 2007 there have been 32 courses with 244 people attending.
- For the period November 2007 to December 2007 there are a further 7 courses with up to 105 attendees confirmed.
- The courses are a standard part of training offered to all employees in the Council and will continue to run and be developed on a yearly basis.

Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan 2008:

With all of the good work that has begun this year we are keen to keep learning about and developing the services we provide as a Council. We want to continue to promote the **"See me for what I am and what I have to offer"** message to all those living and working in our community. With this in mind we are aware that there is still work to be done and we have set the following out as just some of our priorities for 2008 to ensure the disability equalities agenda continues to be embedded in our day to day work. These priorities are set out under the new Council Plan's 4 themes.

Priorities for 2008:

Theme 1: Successful and inclusive communities

Use Council influence to promote disability equality across South Lanarkshire.

- An update of the good practice guide for funding to voluntary and community organisations will ensure that service level agreements with the voluntary sector include equalities issues.
- Monitoring of the agreements and organisations that have signed them, will take place to ensure compliance with the equalities requirements.

Ensure that disability equality and access issues are built into the development, delivery and monitoring of Council services.

- Impact assessment training will continue across Resources
- Impact assessment relevance schedule will be updated to ensure that action plans for policies are carried out.
- The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy is to be reviewed and a Local Accessible Information Strategy will be launched.

Theme 2: Safe and healthy communities

Reduce disabled people's concerns about behaviour.

- A review is currently underway by Social Work Resources to consider the wide range of issues facing young people with a disability and their families in accessing and using services.
- The outcome will be to ensure that services are appropriate and that young people are participating in the decisions on their future care, accommodation and needs.

Theme 3: Working and learning communities

Provide opportunities for skills and employment projects which support disabled people.

- Opportunities to extend current provision for skills training, work experience and supported employment for disabled people will be identified to offer a wider set of experiences and opportunities for employment.

Theme 4: Modernising and improving

Ensure that Resources have arrangements in place to monitor disabled people's satisfaction with services.

- A customer satisfaction survey designed by the Council's Continuous Improvement Steering Group will be distributed in November 2007 to all 135,000 households in South Lanarkshire. The survey will capture equalities information on each household to give a clearer idea of our community's make-up.

Raise awareness among Council employees that disability is not a drawback and disabled employees/people make a valued contribution to the work of the Council.

- An 'Equalities in Action' page in 'The Works' magazine is to be created to recognise and publicise the contribution made by all employees.
- We must campaign to encourage all employees to 'self declare' so as to remove the stigma of disability and ensure that we are properly meeting the needs of our workforce.

Conclusion:

In 2007 we have made much progress but the challenge still exists to involve and improve the lives of all in our community. As such, we look forward to continuing the partnerships old and new in the coming year to help us ensure that we raise the awareness of disability equality for everybody living in South Lanarkshire. We are committed to the continual improvement of the services we provide and the quality of life that we all lead.