

Report

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Report to:	Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	10 December 2008
Report by:	Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Disability Equality Scheme - Annual Update 2008
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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 the progress 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 Services 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
- ◆ how the Action Plan will be reviewed

4. Our Progress to Date

- 4.1. Our work in the last year has focused on taking forward the actions identified in the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan. A summary of these is attached at Appendix 1 and will be published in December 2008 as part of our annual update.

This work has involved considerable engagement with disabled people and their representatives within the community and the workforce. This has led to our campaign “Be Fair”, encouraging proper use of Blue Badge Scheme and Disabled Parking Bays.

- 4.2. Engagement with the community has led us to undertake joint work with South Lanarkshire’s Access Panel.

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.

Examples of progress include:-

- ◆ small increase in public access Statutory Performance Indicator to 79% in 2008
- ◆ Council website has had the international standard of W3C Web Accessibility Initiatives applied to it and follows best practice in respect of web usability, particularly for those with a visual impairment

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 2009. The details of these are contained within the Annual Progress Report in Appendix 1.

- 5.2. Some examples of actions in the workplan for 2009 include:-

- ◆ to work with and encourage all employees to ‘self declare’ so as to remove the stigma of disability and ensure that we as an employer are meeting the needs of all our employees
- ◆ to consult and involve members of disability groups in the development of our Single Equality Scheme
- ◆ to develop a comprehensive work plan with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel to visit and review Council buildings to ensure accessibility needs are met

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.

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 will be met from existing resources.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. A further annual progress report will be produced in December next year. Our current progress report is also available on the Council's website.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This 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.
- 9.2. Consultation has been undertaken as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report..

Robert McIlwain
Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

19 November 2008

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- ◆ Fair and open
- ◆ People focused
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

Previous References

- ◆ 20 February 2008

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 2008

Introduction:

This has been yet another busy year in Scottish local government. In South Lanarkshire our programme of building, through the schools modernisation programme, community and care facilities, and the continuing refurbishment of our council housing stock, has continued to keep us busy across all of our communities.

This being said, the Council's commitment to the equalities agenda has remained a priority. Valuing all in the community and the workplace is at the heart of everything we do and underpins our Council Plan 'Connect', which sets out the vision of "working together to improve the quality of life of everyone in South Lanarkshire."

In our previous update 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 highlights 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. We are very aware that there is always more that can be done. Our partnership with disabled people, to ensure that services deliver their needs, is essential to all of the work that we do and to ensuring that we meet our vision. We look forward to continuing to work together and to improving the everyday lives of those who live within South Lanarkshire whatever their circumstances.

Archibald Strang
Chief Executive
South Lanarkshire Council

Action Plan Progress:

In our first annual update we highlighted a number of the key achievements made during 2007 in relation to our Disability Equality Scheme action plan. We were able to show that progress was being made but we were also very conscious of showing what further work was required and will continue to be, over the years ahead. In that update we set out our priorities for the coming year and this report notes some of the work that has been done across Resources that has made a difference to the services that we provide. To ensure that the work continues we also set some key action points for 2009.

Achievements to date November 2007 – November 2008:

Theme 1: Successful and inclusive communities

Use Council influence to promote disability equality across South Lanarkshire.

- Our good practice guide for funding to voluntary and community organisations has been updated to cover all equality groups and now includes arrangements for monitoring agreements.
- The new guide ensures that the Council's equality duties are understood by all those that it funds and that no-one is knowingly discriminating in the work that they do.
- The Council's procurement toolkit has been updated to cover all equalities legislation. The toolkit is regarded as national good practice and provides Resources with a practical monitoring tool that can be used with all contracts that are awarded to ensure equalities matters are being properly considered.
- The 'Be fair' public awareness campaign to highlight the misuse of Blue Badges and disabled person's parking places was run during November 2008. Through the use of posters, billboards, news articles and education days, the campaign asked motorists to think about the impact misusing such schemes has on disabled persons' daily lives and the positive results of leaving spaces for Blue Badge holders.
- The campaign was run in partnership with South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership, Access Panel, Strathclyde Police, the Procurator Fiscals office, local supermarkets and Shopmobility in East Kilbride and Hamilton.
- Backing for the campaign came from Jackie Baillie MSP who welcomed the proactive approach to raising awareness before her Disabled Persons' Parking Places (Scotland) Bill comes into force in 2009.
- Planning and building standards work with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel on an 'Inclusive Design' booklet was recognised at the annual employee awards. Since the booklets launch in December 2007 it has been widely distributed and made available to all organisations and individuals who submit a planning application.

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

- A new Equality and Diversity Strategy has been produced to replace the Council's existing Equal Opportunities Policy. The new Strategy ensures that equalities issues are mainstreamed across all Resource and service plans and links closely to the Council Plan 'Connect'.
- 283 members of staff from across all Resources have been trained in equalities impact assessment and an online form has been developed which publishes the outcomes of all assessments, on the Council's website.
- The Council's impact assessment relevance schedule initially identified 335 strategies, policies and functions to be assessed. On review this number has reduced to 289 as some policies have been combined or deleted. 289 policies have been assessed and are published on the Council's website.

- The action plans associated to each assessment will be used in the Resource and service plans to ensure that policy and practice development involves representatives of each equality group.
- Consultation on a local Accessible Information Strategy has taken place and as a result master-classes on Council services have been run to provide in-depth information to members of the community.
- The Council website has had the international standard of W3C Web Accessibility Initiatives (WAI) applied to it and follows best practice in respect of web usability, particularly for those with a visual impairment.
- Also a 'Text to Speech' translation facility for those with an acute visual impairment has been applied to the site.

Theme 2: Safe and healthy communities

Reduce disabled people's concerns about behaviour

- A wider inclusion post has been funded at Lanarkshire Links to reduce barriers faced by people in accessing mental health services.
- With inclusion in mind, South Lanarkshire has received funding to undertake a training programme which will highlight the issues of inclusion throughout not only the Council but also NHS Lanarkshire and Mental Health providers.
- Through the Choose Life agenda a programme is being rolled out across secondary schools in South Lanarkshire to promote mental health resilience to young people and to reduce the stigma of mental health problems. Work is also taking place with children and young people who are looked after and accommodated.
- Consultation with people with learning disabilities has taken place to develop the new Partners in Practice Agreement and ensure that the service meets individuals needs.
- The newly refurbished Fairhill Community Centre was opened in summer 2008 and became the Council's latest multi-purpose facility where the services of Social Work Resources, Community Resources, Education Resources and South Lanarkshire Leisure, can all be accessed in an inclusive environment that has been built with accessibility and cohesion in mind.
- The facility includes a ground breaking gym facility which ensures that the services available are accessible to all. The gym equipment selected was chosen on the basis of Inclusive Fitness Initiative accreditation (IFI). This means that all of the equipment chosen is accredited at stage 2 level, meaning that there are no restrictions on the users of it.
- In addition to the general fitness equipment, 2 specialist pieces of equipment have been provided in a Power Plate and Motomed passive cycle and these allow members of the community with limited or no mobility the opportunity to undertake exercise. Both pieces of equipment stimulate muscles without the need for physical movement.

Theme 3: Working and learning communities

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

- In March 2008 the Celebration of Success Awards recognised and celebrated all the participants of the Routes to Inclusion Programmes who had made life changes through overcoming personal issues and barriers to employment. Over 60 achievers were recognised as being outstanding examples of what could be achieved through personal determination and cross agency partnership support.

- The South Lanarkshire Multi Agency Racial Incident Monitoring Group (MARIM) ran its second annual diversity event to 100 members of staff from across the Police, Fire and Rescue, NHS Lanarkshire, Procurator Fiscal and the Council, highlighting issues surrounding visibility, mental health, domestic abuse and religious and cultural differences. The aim of the event was to provide practical day-to-day tips for meeting the needs of customers and was a great success.
- The 'Work it Out' vocational development programme has supported 45 young people with additional support needs into the world of work. The programme supports not only the young people but also prospective employers by providing one-to-one job support and coaching.

Theme 4: Modernising and improving

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

- A customer satisfaction survey designed by the Council's Continuous Improvement Steering Group was distributed in February 2008 to all 147,000 households in South Lanarkshire. The survey captured up to date equalities information on households to provide a clearer picture of the South Lanarkshire community. The overall satisfaction rating for the Council was 86.5%.
- To ensure accessibility to buildings, visits have taken place at the new Fairhill Community centre and Cathkin High School with the South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership and Access Panel. These visits allowed the opportunity for members of the public to comment on and give advice about new facilities before their official opening.

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 Jack Black Employers Event in December 2007 promoted employability services to people with learning disabilities. The event brought together beneficiaries, carers and employers and helped them to see their role and contribution they make.
- The event also helped to raise the profile of people with learning disabilities as valuable members of the workforce, and made participants think in terms of enablement and contribution.
- The Council runs a wide range of equality and diversity training and in the past year 778 members of staff have undertaken courses including British Sign Language level one and 2, Deaf Awareness, Disability Awareness, and Visual Awareness.
- The 'Equalities in Action' page in the Council's monthly employee magazine 'The Works' highlights the work of individuals and teams who make a contribution to promoting equality of opportunity in their every day work.

Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan 2009:

The good work that began in the first year of our scheme has continued, however 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 work must continue and we have set the following out as just some of our priorities for 2009 to ensure the disability equalities agenda continues to be embedded in our day to day work. These priorities are set out under the values of the new Council Plan 'Connect':-

- Fair and open
- People focused
- Working with and respecting others
- Excellent employer
- Accountable, efficient and effective
- Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

Priorities for 2009:

Fair and Open

- Work with and encourage all employees to 'self declare' so as to remove the stigma of disability and ensure that we as an employer are meeting the needs of all our employees.
- Use equality impact assessment to guide our equalities agenda and engage with community groups.

People Focused

- Consult and involve members of disability groups in the development of our Single Equality Scheme to ensure that the views of all members of the community are represented.

Working with and respecting others

- Continue with our programme of equality and diversity training to ensure employees are fully aware of and can understand the needs of others.
- Develop a comprehensive work plan with the Access Panel to visit and review Council buildings to ensure accessibility needs are met.

Excellent Employer

- Develop our disabled employee forum to engage with all parts of the workforce and develop the message that we are an employer of choice.

Accountable, efficient and effective

- Continue developing our equalities impact assessment relevance schedule to ensure that all strategies, policies and functions are assessed at both times of development and review.

Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

- Extend current provision for skills training, work experience and supported employment for disabled people to offer a wider range of experiences and opportunities for employment.

Conclusion:

In 2008 we have made 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 we have developed 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. To do this we must promote fairness and understanding.