

Disability Equalities Scheme And Action Plan

About the Council's Disability Equality Scheme

This Disability Equality Scheme is a strategy with a time tabled and realistic action plan. It states the functions, policies or proposed policies relevant to meeting the general duty and the Council's arrangements for:

- Assessing, consulting on and monitoring its functions and policies for any adverse impact on meeting the general duty under the Disability Discrimination Act. These processes will also be applied to other equalities target groups.
- Publishing the results of monitoring.
- Making sure the public have access to its services.
- Training staff in respect to the duties imposed in the general duty under the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Involving relevant equalities target groups.

The Disability Equality Scheme also incorporates the Council's specific duties with regard to employment, which are outlined in the Employment Duty Section of this scheme.

Purpose

The Disability Equality Scheme has been produced to meet Richmondshire District Council's legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act, which comes into force on the 4th December 2006. It also serves to communicate our commitment and intention to promote equality to all diverse groups, including disability groups within the population we serve, to our partners, the wider community and our staff.

Richmondshire District Council will proactively implement the general duty set out in this document in all its areas of work through our Disability Equality Scheme and action plan. These are intended to be used as a tool within the Council to support policymaking, design and delivery of services and will be updated on a regular basis.

Statement of Aims

Richmondshire District Council aims to:

- Provide services that are equally accessible to all sections of the community
- Develop services to meet the needs of all, particularly groups where it has been found that current services do not cater for their needs or place them at a disadvantage.
- Eliminate from its services, policies and decision making any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons.
- Eliminate from its services, policies and decision making any adverse effect upon particular disabled people or other equalities target groups.
- Work towards the reduction of health inequalities between equalities target groups and the rest of the population.
- Employ and retain a workforce at all levels which reflects the community it serves and promote opportunities for specific groups currently underrepresented within the workforce.
- Develop positive and productive relationships with all sections of the community within the district.
- Ensure that valuing diversity and the promotion of equality becomes a mainstream activity and continuous process within the Council.

- Develop a culture where an individual's cultures, beliefs and dignity are respected, whilst using the Council's services or in its employment.
- Develop an inclusive approach to promoting equality and involve groups who have traditionally been marginalised.

Delivering the Disability Equality Scheme

The Council has given strong commitment to promoting equality (including race and disability equality). The Disability Equality Scheme has the endorsement of the Chief Executive of the Council and the Member Champions for diversity and disability issues.

Specialist advice, support and guidance in developing and implementing the Disability Equality Scheme will be provided through the Equalities and Diversity Steering Group. We seek to mainstream this work throughout our policies and functions by building up the capacity of our teams to deliver on this agenda through a process of learning, supported by toolkits and processes to make it everyone's business within their daily work practices. We will also aim to incorporate this work into other forums and initiatives taking place within the Council.

Period Covered and Arrangements For Review

The Disability Equality Scheme will cover the period from 4th December 2006 to 3rd December 2009. The action plan for this scheme will be implemented over a 3 year period, with annual action plans developed to ensure the long term actions are achieved. A further scheme will be developed in December 2009 and as part of this process, this Disability Equality Scheme and action plan will be reviewed.

Assessment of Existing Functions and Policies

In order to meet the duty to produce a Disability Equality Scheme, the Council is required to identify relevant functions and policies. Functions are defined as 'the full range of activities carried out by a public authority to meet its duties' and policies as 'sets of principles or criteria that define the different ways in which an organisation carries out its role or function and meets its duties. Policies include formal and informal decisions made in the course of their implementation'.

In order to meet this requirement, the Council has undertaken an exercise to screen every policy, protocol, service and unit to identify which are relevant. That is, which have the potential to have an adverse impact on disabled people in terms of unlawful discrimination, access or consequences or in ensuring good relations between disabled people and the Council. When undertaking this exercise, the potential for adverse impact on other equalities target groups was also assessed. The initial screening of the Council's functions was undertaken using a questionnaire, which was completed by each individual service to identify if it was relevant to the duty and to prioritise them for action. Policies, procedures and guidelines have also been screened by using a standard questionnaire for each policy, which has been completed by the service that is directly responsible for reviewing and developing it.

Both questionnaires included identifying any actual or perceived adverse impacts and what has been done to address and monitor these. If there was insufficient information currently available to make this assessment, the function or policy has been regarded as potentially having an adverse impact and therefore potentially relevant. In this situation, the function has been prioritised based on potential for adverse impact until a full impact assessment is undertaken.

As well as undertaking individual screening questionnaires, use has been made of other information collected within the Council, and will continue to be collated, to identify if existing functions and policies are having an adverse impact on equalities target groups or relations between equalities target groups and the Council. These sources include:

- Staff opinion survey
- Residents Panel
- Information gathered from the complaints received.

The information gathered has also been used to develop action plans to address issues arising from this screening exercise.

Assessment Of Proposed Policies and Services

To facilitate this process a toolkit will be developed for those with responsibility for developing policies and services. This will include a screening assessment to identify if the policy is relevant to the general duty, guidance on meeting the general duty and a proforma to use as a checklist by those developing the policy to ensure appropriate action is taken prior to the policy being agreed. These checklists will be collated and reviewed by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group to ensure that this process has been undertaken appropriately.

Consulting On the Likely Impact of Proposed Policies

As well as assessing any future services, policies or procedures there is also a need to consult with and involve people who are likely to be affected by these changes. This is to gain feedback, identify possible adverse impacts to particular equalities target groups due to their circumstances, e.g. in accessing the service and how plans can be amended to eliminate these. To ensure the promotion of good relations with diverse groups it is important that consultation is undertaken with service users and community groups regarding the current services and policies provided. The Disability Equality Scheme makes it an explicit duty for authorities to involve disabled people who appear to that authority to have an interest in the way it carries out its functions. To achieve this successfully the Council will take into account the diversity of backgrounds of its staff and community to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all groups to be involved in this process.

Existing links with associated groups, such as Dair (Disability Action In Richmondshire), will be strengthened and a system will be developed to enable units to consult with these groups. This may be by sending draft documents for comment or inviting representatives of these groups to participate in project groups, forums, or residents panels. The extent of participation will depend on the policy or plan being consulted upon and the extent to which the group wishes to be involved.

Monitoring will also be undertaken on policies, which are relevant to the general duty, in terms of their impact on particular equalities target groups. This will be undertaken by individual units responsible for these policies. This data will need to be gathered from a variety of sources and be in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. Reports will be produced by the Information Services Team in the Information and Communications Unit at the request of the Equality and Diversity Steering group or individual units. These will be analysed by unit managers at regular intervals to identify areas where action is required and to monitor the outcomes of action plans.

Arrangements for Publishing of Assessment, Consultation and Monitoring Reports

The Council will produce an annual Diversity and Equality report outlining progress on implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme and on the 3 year and annual

action plans. This report will also include details of monitoring activity undertaken during the year, trends and conclusions drawn from this monitoring and actions planned or taken as a result of this. The report will be sent to relevant stakeholders and will also be available from the Council's intranet and internet sites. Copies will also be sent to members of the public on request. The Council will make arrangements to ensure that copies of this report are available in alternative language formats if required. Large print, audio and braille copies will also be available on request.

Ensuring Access to Information and Services

The Council will ensure that the public has access to the services and information which it provides. To achieve this, practical issues need to be considered as well as existing procedures or processes and marketing of services.

Training

A requirement of the duty to promote disability equality is to train staff in connection with the duty imposed by the Disability Discrimination Act. This means that the Council must train its staff to:

- be able to meet the Council's responsibilities under the general and specific duties by equipping them with the necessary skills
- to identify and train staff and others who will be responsible for managing and implementing the Council's Disability Equality Scheme.

The Council has previously recognised the need for diversity training and provides the following training courses for staff:

- Equality and Diversity For Managers
- Age discrimination workshops to be held in January and March 2007
- All staff were required to attend a drama-based Equality and Diversity Workshop June 2005
- E-learning module on Equality and Diversity for new staff
- Induction training for all new staff includes Equality and Diversity module

These courses will be reviewed to ensure that they include the Disability Discrimination Act where relevant, and staff's responsibilities under these. Further diversity training needs to be provided to ensure that staff are able to provide an equal service to users and promote good relations between diverse community groups (either between staff and users or between staff). An intranet learning package is currently being commissioned by the Council, which will include modules on the Disability Discrimination Act and individual responsibilities for staff arising from this. This learning will be supplemented by leaflets for new and existing staff and articles in staff communications such as Dispatch.

There is also a need to ensure that managers and policy makers have an awareness of diversity and equality issues and that these are considered and accounted for when developing services, policies and procedures. A workshop for managers was held and will be followed by further training on the Disability Discrimination Act and on the necessary skills to meet the Council's responsibilities under these, including undertaking impact assessments. The toolkit will also incorporate this information. Training on equality and diversity will be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that it achieves its aims.

Employment Duty

The Council has a specific duty with regard to employment to monitor by disability group the numbers of staff in post and applications for employment, training and

promotion. Additionally, under the duty to Promote Disability Equality, the Council is also required to gather information on the effect of its policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of its disabled employees.

The purpose of this monitoring will be to identify the mix of staff. If there appear to be adverse trends, these will be investigated and action plans developed to address these. The Council will also consult with staff and trade unions regarding the collection of other information relating to members of staff in terms of diversity.

Applications for Employment and Promotion

The Council currently monitors applications for employment in terms of ethnic origin, age, gender and disability. The Council will analyse the number of applications received, the number of short-listed candidates and appointed candidates, to identify if the proportion of applications from those with disabilities is proportionate to the local community. Analysis will also be undertaken to identify if the proportion of those applying from each category is proportionate to those being shortlisted and appointed. Any such information collated for this purpose will only be used for this purpose.

The Council's workforce information system has the capacity to enable identification of those staff gaining promotions and this information will be analysed to identify the proportion of staff with disabilities gaining promotion. There is currently no facility to differentiate applications for employment from applications for promotion and this will be developed as part of the action plan.

Monitoring Applications for Training and Training Received

The Council collates information on applications for training and the training received by staff on its computerised personnel system. This information will be analysed and reported upon on a regular basis. Information is gathered by racial group, disability, gender and age.

Monitoring Performance Assessment procedures

At present appraisals are undertaken throughout the Council, but these are not linked to incremental rises or pay awards. Monitoring systems will be developed to record progression and failure to progress through 'gateways' by age, racial group, gender and disability.

Grievances, Bullying and Harassment and Disciplinary Procedures

The Council monitors grievances and complaints of bullying and harassment brought by staff by racial group, gender, age and disability and analyses and reports on this on a regular basis. Monitoring of staff who are subject to disciplinary action is also undertaken using the same categories. This information will be analysed to identify if staff from particular groups are more likely to be subject to these procedures and, where relevant, investigate reasons for this and plans to address this.

Staff Who Have Left the Employment of the Council

The Council monitors staff leaving the organisation during the previous 12 months. This information is analysed by ethnic group, gender, age and disability. Further analysis of this information will be undertaken to identify trends in relation to reason for leaving the Council. Monitoring information will be used to assess the impact of the Council's employment policies and procedures and to identify any adverse impact for particular groups. The information will also be used to monitor progress towards equality targets and develop new targets where disability groups and other groups are under represented within the workforce and within particular occupations or levels within the organisation.

Publishing Monitoring Results

Details of the workforce profile for units within the Council are currently published in quarterly reviews for units. An annual workforce profile and key findings of other employment monitoring information will appear in the Council's annual Diversity and Equality Report.

Partnerships

The Council has developed partnership working with other public bodies. An example of this includes working the Local Strategic Partnership. The Council will actively promote diversity and equality within its partnership working and will aim to be recognised by its partners as a champion for disability equality.

Procurement

The Council commissions services from other public bodies and private sector organisations. A baseline assessment exercise will be undertaken to identify whether these public organisations have Disability Equality Schemes, or for the private sector, whether they have strategies or policies regarding equality and diversity. Requests for this information will be incorporated into the commissioning process.

The Council will ensure that its strategic objectives for procurement take into consideration diversity and equality issues and ensure that staff involved in procuring services on behalf of the Council are conversant with their responsibilities in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Council will encourage tendering for services by local contractors and suppliers that represent the local population and its neighbouring regions with respect to diversity.

Information Communication Technology

As part of the monitoring of its functions and services, the Council will monitor the diversity profile of its users with the local population on a regular basis to ensure that this is reflective of the population and to identify progress towards targets to be achieved. Advice on interpreting this information will be included in the toolkit for unit managers.

As part of a drive to increase awareness and knowledge of diversity issues, specifically disability, the Council will develop a resource of information on these areas, including statistical information, resources and examples of good practice. This information will be available on the Council intranet site. The toolkit for unit managers will also contain references to relevant information and sites.

DIVERSITY EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN

1. Identifying Relevant Functions and Policies

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Identify list of relevant functions and policies and prioritise these for Action in response to feedback received on the website.	March 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group/ All individual units and service providers	

Review functions and policies identified for action in year 1	March 2008	All individual units and service providers	
Review functions and policies identified for action in year 2	March 2009	All individual units and service providers	
Review functions and policies identified for action in year 3	March 2010	All individual units and service providers	

2. Assessing and Consulting on Likely Impact of Proposed Policies

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Identify new relevant policies and areas from business planning	Ongoing	Heads of Service	
Establish process and procedure for assessing and consulting	March 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Establish Member forums to enable consultation on Council wide basis	March 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Identify pool of user, voluntary and community groups for units/service providers to consult and procedure for contacting		All individual units and service providers	
Produce toolkit to enable unit managers/heads of service to conduct screening, impact assessments and consultations.	March 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Identify policies etc due for review in years 1, 2 and 3	March 2007	All individual units and service providers	
Assess and consult on impact of proposed policies to be reviewed in year 1	Ongoing to March 2008	All individual units and service providers	
Assess and consult on impact of proposed policies to be reviewed in year 2	Ongoing to March 2009	All individual units and service providers	
Assess and consult on impact of proposed policies to be reviewed in year 3	Ongoing to March 2010	All individual units and service providers	

3. Monitoring Policies for Adverse Impact and Publishing of Results of Monitoring

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Carry out baseline audit of current monitoring systems by relevant equalities target groups	March 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Establish system to enable monitoring of services by relevant equalities target groups	June 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Develop capacity to monitor by equalities target groups in user satisfaction surveys	June 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Review information from staff satisfaction survey for relevance	November 2007	Staff Panel/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Review results of monitoring from year 1 and re-prioritise action plan as appropriate	May 2008	All individual units and service providers	
Review results of monitoring from year 2 and re-prioritise action plan as appropriate	May 2009	All individual units and service providers	
Review results of monitoring from year 3 and re-prioritise action plan as appropriate	May 2010	All individual units and service providers	
Publish results of monitoring undertaken in year 1	May 2008	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Publish results of monitoring undertaken in year 2	May 2009	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Publish results of monitoring undertaken in year 3	May 2010	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Ensure published results can be provided in range of languages	May 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Ensure published reports can be provided in alternative formats	May 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Ensure appropriate mechanisms for users to request reports.	May 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	

4. Ensuring Access to Information and Services

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
---------------	--------------------	-----------------------	-----------------

Review physical access to Council owned buildings and develop a prioritised and costed programme of work to rectify areas where action required	March 2007	Technical Services	
Ensure system to enable potential physical barriers to access to be reported	May 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
At end of year 1, review comments received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for year 2	May 2008	All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 2, review comments received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for year 3	May 2009	All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 3, review comments received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for new equality scheme	May 2010	All individual units and service providers	
Review current provision of assistance/aids to facilitate communication for visitors/users (e.g. hearing loops)	March 2007	Technical Services	
Produce guidance for staff to access aids for users	May 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Review quality standards of interpreting service to ensure that they meet the required standards	May 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Ensure system to enable actual/potential barriers to communication to be reported	March 2007	All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 1, review comments received, identify	May 2008	All individual units and service providers	

priorities and develop appropriate action plans for year 2			
At end of year 2, review comments received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for year 3	May 2009	All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 3, review comments received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for new equality scheme	May 2010	All individual units and service providers	
Review marketing of relevant direct access services to identify areas which need to be improved to ensure equalities target groups are informed.	March 2007	Communications Officer/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Develop written communication/display materials in appropriate formats for target groups identified	March 2007	Communications Officer/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Develop links/consult with target groups to raise awareness of services	Ongoing to September 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group/ All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 1, review use of services, review feedback received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for year 2	May 2008	All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 2, review use of services, review feedback received, identify priorities and develop appropriate action plans for year 3	May 2009	All individual units and service providers	
At end of year 3, review use of services, review feedback received, identify priorities and develop appropriate	May 2010	All individual units and service providers	

action plans for new diversity equality scheme			
--	--	--	--

5. Training

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Commission internet diversity training package and ensure it includes modules on duties under Disability Discrimination Act	February 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Ensure all staff undertake diversity training package	Ongoing	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Review current in-house diversity training courses for staff and to ensure they incorporate relevant DDA requirements	February 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Develop toolkit for use by unit managers/heads of service to enable them to undertake screening, impact assessments and consultation	March 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
At end of year 1, evaluate training and develop appropriate action plans for year 2	May 2008	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
At end of year 2, evaluate training and develop appropriate action plans for year 3	May 2009	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
At end of year 3, evaluate training and develop appropriate action plans for new diversity equality scheme	May 2010	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	

6. Employment

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Undertake baseline analysis of staff in post within the Council by unit, staff group and pay banding	March 2007	Personnel	
Undertake consultation with staff regarding collection	July 2007	Personnel	

of other diversity information relating to staff.			
Undertake baseline analysis of job applicants in previous 12 months by disability	May 2007	Personnel	
Develop systems to monitor applications for promotion and collate this information	May 2007	Personnel	
Develop systems to monitor applications for internal and external training courses and collate this information	May 2007	Personnel	
Undertake baseline analysis of staff raising grievances, complaints of harassment or subject to disciplinary procedures by disability	May 2007	Personnel	
Investigate causes for disproportionality relating to above procedures and develop appropriate action plans	July 2007	Personnel	
Undertake baseline analysis of staff leaving the Council and reasons for leaving	May 2007	Personnel	
Investigate trends regarding leavers and develop appropriate action plans	July 2007	Personnel	
At end of year 1 publish workforce profile and key findings and develop action plans relating to issues raised by monitoring for year	May 2008	Personnel	
At end of year 2, analyse information collated and publish workforce profile and key findings	May 2009	Personnel	
Develop action plans relating to issues raised by monitoring for year	May 2009	Personnel	

3			
At end of year 3 publish workforce profile and key findings	May 2010	Personnel	
Develop action plans relating to issues raised by monitoring for New Diversity Equality Scheme	May 2010	Personnel	

7. Partnership

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Undertake baseline exercise to identify current partnership arrangements.	March 2007	All individual units and service providers/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Ensure that equality and diversity is an agenda item at partnership meetings	Ongoing	All individual units and service providers/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Develop action plans to address equality and diversity issues arising from partnership working	March 2007	All individual units and service providers/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Collate profile of equality and diversity work undertaken by the Council	Ongoing	All individual units and service providers/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Publicise work undertaken by the Council to promote equality and diversity	Ongoing	All individual units and service providers/ Equalities and Diversity Steering Group /Communications Officer	

8. Procurement

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Undertake baseline exercise to identify if public sector organisations from whom the Council procures services have a disability equality scheme	July 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Undertake baseline exercise to identify if private sector organisations from whom the Council	July 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	

procures services have strategies or policies regarding disability equality			
Incorporate requests for information regarding disability equality schemes or strategies/policies regarding equality and diversity into commissioning process	September 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Incorporate diversity and equality into strategic objectives for procurement	September 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Undertake training for supplies staff on their responsibilities under the DDA requirements	September 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	

9. Information Communication Technology

Action	Target Date	Responsibility	Progress
Develop reports to enable monitoring of take up of services by equalities target groups	July 2007	All individual units and service providers	
Provide information for interpreting information in toolkit and action plan for unit managers and heads of service	September 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Agree timetable for provision of monitoring reports	July 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	
Produce reports for use by Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	Ongoing	All individual units and service providers	
Establish area on Council intranet site to enable staff to access information on equality and diversity via internet	July 2007	Frances Hodgson	
Provide reference resources in toolkit for unit managers and heads of service	September 2007	Equalities and Diversity Steering Group	