

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) has been amended; it now places a duty on all public authorities to promote disability equality. The DDA defines a disabled person as someone with 'a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. The Council recognises that disabilities can be wide ranging and will include sensory and mental impairment as well as mobility difficulties.

We are committed to eliminating discrimination and harassment and promoting equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons. In some instances giving due regard to disability equality may require additional, dedicated services to enable disabled people to access services on equitable terms. This scheme describes how we intend to fulfil this positive commitment and to meet our duty.

Functions and Policies

We have identified our functions and formal policies and given them a priority depending on their relevance to disability equality. We will use this review (appended) as a programme to assess all our functions over the next three years, as follows –

Year	Priority
2006/07	1
2007/08	2
2008/09	3

By functions we mean the full range of the Council's activities and services provided in accordance with our duties and powers.

By policies we mean formal and informal decisions, procedures, plans, strategies and objectives about how we carry out our duties and use our powers.

Strategic Aims for Disability Equality

Our Corporate plan – Growing Success - recognises that:

- ◆ Huntingdonshire is made up of many different communities;
- ◆ some communities have greater or different needs than others;
- ◆ equality doesn't mean doing the same for everyone;
- ◆ to make progress we must put more resources to meet the greatest needs;
- ◆ we can't afford to ignore communities with fewer needs; and
- ◆ everyone needs to feel involved.

Our Equality & Inclusion Strategy formalises our commitment to disability equality in providing high quality services and effective community leadership.

We intend to do this, through –

- ◆ planning and delivering services;
- ◆ monitoring and evaluation;
- ◆ consultation and engagement;
- ◆ developing & supporting employees;
- ◆ supporting our communities.

Planning and delivering our services

We will ensure that information about the Council and our services is available to all sections of our communities and that services are accessible to everyone. To do this we will –

- ◆ consider access to information and services when assessing and monitoring services;
- ◆ make sure our staff have the necessary skills, information and understanding to provide services and information equally and fairly;
- ◆ involve local communities in enhancing services and information they need and how they want them provided.

Monitoring and evaluation

In a three year cycle we will make a detailed assessment of all our functions and policies, both formal and informal, to ensure that, where relevant, the way that we carry out those functions –

- ◆ eliminates disability discrimination and harassment;
- ◆ promotes equality of opportunity.

Specifically, we will continue to examine each function and policy according to the priority given to it to identify whether there is evidence that people with a disability are affected differently. To do this we will –

- ◆ use disability monitoring to collect and analyse information about people's disability to assess fair access to and use of services;
- ◆ use national guidance and definitions to inform our assessments;
- ◆ use historical data, including any available evidence, complaints or public concerns, survey and research findings, ethnic data and census results or general or specific research to assess the effectiveness of our services in promoting disability equality;
- ◆ compare our policies and the way we carry out our functions with other local authorities and public bodies.

We will monitor and analyse our policies and functions for any adverse impact on the promotion of disability equality. We will use a range of methods to do this –

- ◆ statistical analysis of disability data;
- ◆ satisfaction surveys analysed by disability;
- ◆ random or targeted surveys;
- ◆ qualitative research.

We will use the same disability classification system as that used in the 2001 Census, except where research is targeted at specific communities where more detailed information might be required.

We will incorporate consideration of the duty into review programmes, including service reviews and performance management systems.

Policy Division

We will use the results of assessment, consultation and monitoring to ensure we avoid or minimise adverse impacts on disability equality. The information will be used to understand and meet the needs of different groups and to make new arrangements or change arrangements so that our policies and the way we carry out our functions promote disability equality. Any new arrangements or changes we make will be relevant to the nature of the policy or function and its possible effect on the public.

Consultation and engagement

We will undertake clear, representative and proportionate consultation, using a range of appropriate methods. Specifically we will try to engage disabled people to ensure that any new policy does not discriminate and promotes equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Developing and supporting our employees

To help us achieve our commitments and duty we will carry out monitoring of our employees throughout their employment cycle – from application to leaving. This monitoring will enable us to measure the progress in promoting equality of opportunity and achieving a representative workforce.

Specifically, we will –

- ◆ collect disability monitoring data for existing employees, applicants for employment, for training, promotion, performance assessment, for staff involved in grievance or disciplinary procedures and for employees who leave;
- ◆ analyse the data to look for any patterns of inequality;
- ◆ take any reasonable action necessary to remove barriers or discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity;
- ◆ publish the results of our monitoring each year.

The disability monitoring of employees will be combined with the monitoring of other data in our information systems to build on current practices to promote equal opportunity.

Policy Division

The disability monitoring of employees will be reported annually to the Council's Employment Panel.

The Council has commissioned a training and development programme for its employees to promote an understanding of equality and its implications for meeting the Council's goals and objectives. The programme will incorporate the requirements and benefits of meeting the duty and our commitment to promoting disability equality.

Senior management and employees who will be directly responsible for this Scheme will receive additional specific training.

The Council's induction programme for new employees will include initial training on the importance of equality and specifically promoting disability equality to meeting the Council's objectives.

Supporting our Communities

To ensure that we promote disability equality within our communities we will:

- ◆ Support Council Members to represent and support communities and individuals.
- ◆ Identify the needs of different communities.
- ◆ Promote activity in community based organisations.
- ◆ Identify socially excluded groups and develop measures to promote inclusion.
- ◆ Ensure that community and welfare rights information is easily available.
- ◆ Engage and support voluntary, community, charitable organisations and social enterprises.

Publishing Results

The results of our assessments, consultation and monitoring and reviews of this scheme will be made available in a way that is appropriate, accessible and proportionate.

Policy Division

A copy of the report compiled after each assessment will be available in full on our Website (www.huntsdc.gov.uk) or on request from the Policy Division, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN 01480 388032.

Where appropriate the Council will consider using or commissioning new methods of publication that are proportionate to achieving disability equality.

Complaints

Complaints about how we are meeting our duties or other complaints about disability equality will be dealt with through our established complaints procedure, which is available to all members of the public.