

# **Cumbria County Council Disability Equality Scheme**

## **2006-2010**

## **Introduction: creating Disability equality in Cumbria**

Welcome to Cumbria's first Disability Equality Scheme. This document will tell you how we are planning to create disability equality in Cumbria.

In 2005 The Prime Minister's Strategy Unit produced a report called 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People'. This report sets out a long term national vision for disability:

'By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society.'

We take this statement to mean that we have under 20 years to remove all barriers in society that disabled people face. We aim to achieve full disability equality by:

- Working with disability groups to lead the changes.
- Working jointly with partners to share the solutions.
- Influencing public attitudes to disabled people.

Critical to success is the full involvement of disabled people. To make this happen Cumbria Disability Network and Cumbria County Council have jointly drafted this Disability Equality Scheme.

## **The New Disability Duty and what it means**

### **Inequality is a disability issue**

Disabled people experience inequality in everyday life and at critical moments such as reaching adulthood and old age. Repeated national studies highlight the inequality for disabled people:

- The Disability Rights Commission (2005) estimates that people with learning difficulties are 58 times more likely to die before the age of 50 than non-disabled people.
- The Disability Right Commission (2003) NOP survey found that 7 out of 10 disabled people with mobility and sensory impairments in Britain say that they have difficulty in accessing goods and services. The factors most likely to cause problems are steps at entrances, heavy internal and external doors, use of disabled parking by non-disabled customers, no lifts and inaccessible toilets.
- The Disability Rights Commission/Capability Scotland (2004) research highlights that almost 50% of disabled respondents had experienced abuse because of their impairment. The examples given range from serious physical assault, intimidation to verbal abuse.
- Nationally, only 50% of disabled people of working age are employed, compared to 81% of non-disabled people. For some impairment groups the rates are even lower – only 21% of people with long term mental health conditions are working.

### **What we must do to create equality**

From December 2006 The Disability Discrimination Act requires public bodies to address disability equality through the General and the Specific Duties.

The General Duty outlines key responsibilities all public bodies have to respect:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other persons.
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people.
- Promote positive attitudes to disabled people.
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- Take into account a disabled person's disability even if it means treating the disabled person more favourably.

The Specific Duty states what each public body must do to respect the General Duty.

- Publish a Disability Equality Scheme.
- Include a three year action plan in the scheme.
- Publish the results of the scheme each year.
- Involve disabled people in all stages of the scheme.
- Carry out impact assessments of policies and procedures to make sure that disabled people are not being treated unfairly.

### **Social and medical models of disability**

One of our key goals is to challenge the view that the inequality faced by disabled people is down to their medical 'problems'.

The medical model has fed negative stereotypes held by non-disabled people such as:

- Focusing only on what a person cannot do.
- Making assumptions about what is best for the disabled person.
- Thinking that disabled people lack intelligence.
- Feeling embarrassed among disabled people.
- Bullying and harassing disabled people.

These negative stereotypes show that improving access is only one part of the story.

The table below contrasts the two models. The questions in the left hand column are adapted from questions asked to disabled people as part of their assessment up until the 1980's.

<b>Medical Model</b>	<b>Social Model</b>
Can you tell me what is wrong with you?	Can you tell me what is wrong with society's attitudes to you?
What complaint causes your difficulty in holding, gripping or turning things?	Are there problems in the design of everyday objects that give you problems in holding, gripping or turning things?
Does your disability mean that you need to live with carers.	Are community services so inflexible that you need to rely on carers?
Does your disability make it hard for you to use public transport?	Does inaccessible transport make it difficult for you to use the available public transport?
Does your disability affect your ability to work?	Do you have problems at work due to the environment and the attitudes of others?

The Disability Equality Scheme firmly places public bodies within the Social Model. The key priorities in the scheme, and the action plan at the end, show what we need to do to make it happen.

### **What is a disability and how many disabled people are there in the UK?**

Disability is any condition that affects a person in their day to day life for more than 12 months. In the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) this is called an impairment.

The DAA now recognises around 400 impairments including:

- Mobility impairments (requiring aids such as sticks or wheelchairs to move about).
- Sensory impairments (hearing or sight loss).
- Mental ill health (including depression, stress, Alzheimer's disease and schizophrenia).
- Cognitive developmental impairments (including learning disabilities, dyslexia, and autism).
- Muscular impairments (including spinal injuries).
- Asthma
- Cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Phobias
- Arthritis

- Acquired brain injuries.

This list shows that those claiming disability benefits are a minority of disabled people.

Using the DDA criteria in 2002 the General Household Survey was able to suggest that 11 Million people in the UK have rights as disabled people.

### **What will this disability scheme cover?**

To make this scheme work we have developed key priorities.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Key activities</b>
Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality Impact Assessments</li> <li>• Monitoring uptake and outcomes</li> <li>• Setting targets and objectives</li> <li>• Procurement</li> <li>• Complaints and comments</li> <li>• Embed within Equality and Diversity activity.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information in alternative formats</li> <li>• Accessible buildings</li> <li>• Accessible transport</li> <li>• Access to streets and open spaces</li> </ul>
Prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incident reporting</li> <li>• Myth busting and working with the Media.</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Employment monitoring</li> <li>• Recruitment and selection</li> <li>• Reasonable adjustments</li> </ul>
User involvement and advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Level Agreements with Disability Groups.</li> <li>• Promoting advocacy services</li> </ul>
Cumbria Strategic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed disability equality in the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership.</li> <li>• Build disability equality into the Local Area Agreement.</li> <li>• Joint training and public disability equality events.</li> <li>• Disability mapping through data sharing.</li> </ul>

## **Key Priority I: Service Delivery**

As public bodies our starting point has to be the services we provide for the public. This will vary from emergency services, to housing provision and education. The key point is that a disabled person may use the full range of services in their lifetime, and like other consumers they deserve the highest standard of service.

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

An equality impact assessment is a risk assessment of a strategy, policy or procedure. The purpose is to see if there is anything in the way a service works that discriminates against disabled people.

#### **Example**

The Local Authority's Highways Department uses the Authority's Corporate Consultation Policy to consult with the public on proposed road works in a town.

Pedestrian diversions are put in place following consultation, but many blind and partially sighted people complain, because they cannot access the town. Investigation shows that no provision for partially sighted people was made in the consultation or in the publicity and signage for diversions.

This issues are addressed in the Equality Impact Assessment of the both the Consultation Policy and the Highways Department procedures for putting signs in place for pedestrian diversions.

Under the Disability Equality Scheme we will carry out equality impact assessments of all our strategies, policies and procedures over a three year cycle. We will publish the results of our equality impact assessments in our annual equality report.

All draft Equality Impact Assessments will be sent to disability organisations who will have an opportunity to influence the content before a final version of the assessment is completed.

### **Monitoring uptake and outcomes**

To develop a consistent approach to service delivery we need to ensure that all services have reliable information on:

- Overall numbers of disabled people using a service.
- Breakdown of usage by disability group and locality.
- Mapping service uptake against the background disabled population.
- Comparing outcomes for disabled people against non-disabled people.

### **Setting targets and objectives**

Each of our services will use the Equality Impact Assessments and the monitoring of services to set annual objectives and targets relating to disability equality. These will say what we want to achieve and how we will measure it.

Objectives and targets will be developed during annual service planning round. They will be included in service plans produced by each of our services and published in our annual equality report.

Disabled groups will be involved in agreeing the highest priority area for objective and target setting.

### **Procurement**

Procurement is when we have a contract with another service to carry out some of our work. Although the work is carried out by another service we still have responsibility for making sure that they are not discriminating against disabled people.

This means that we will include procured services within our equality impact assessments, service monitoring and objective and target setting.

We will expect procured services to involve disabled groups in how they carry out their services. Where this is not possible we will engage with disabled groups and feed back their views to procured services.

### **Complaints and comments**

We see disability equality as a part of our wider work around improving services for everyone. For this reason it is important that we actively promote our complaints and comments procedures with disabled people who use our services.

We will use complaints and comments when carrying out equality impact assessments, and they will help us decide on targets and objectives for disability equality.

We will also share feedback on complaints and comments with disability groups, as part of their involvement in our service planning and review. All information will be anonymised to protect the identity of people who have complained or commented.

**Embed within Equality and Diversity activity**

We will ensure that all disability equality work in our service delivery links with the work we are doing on equality and diversity.

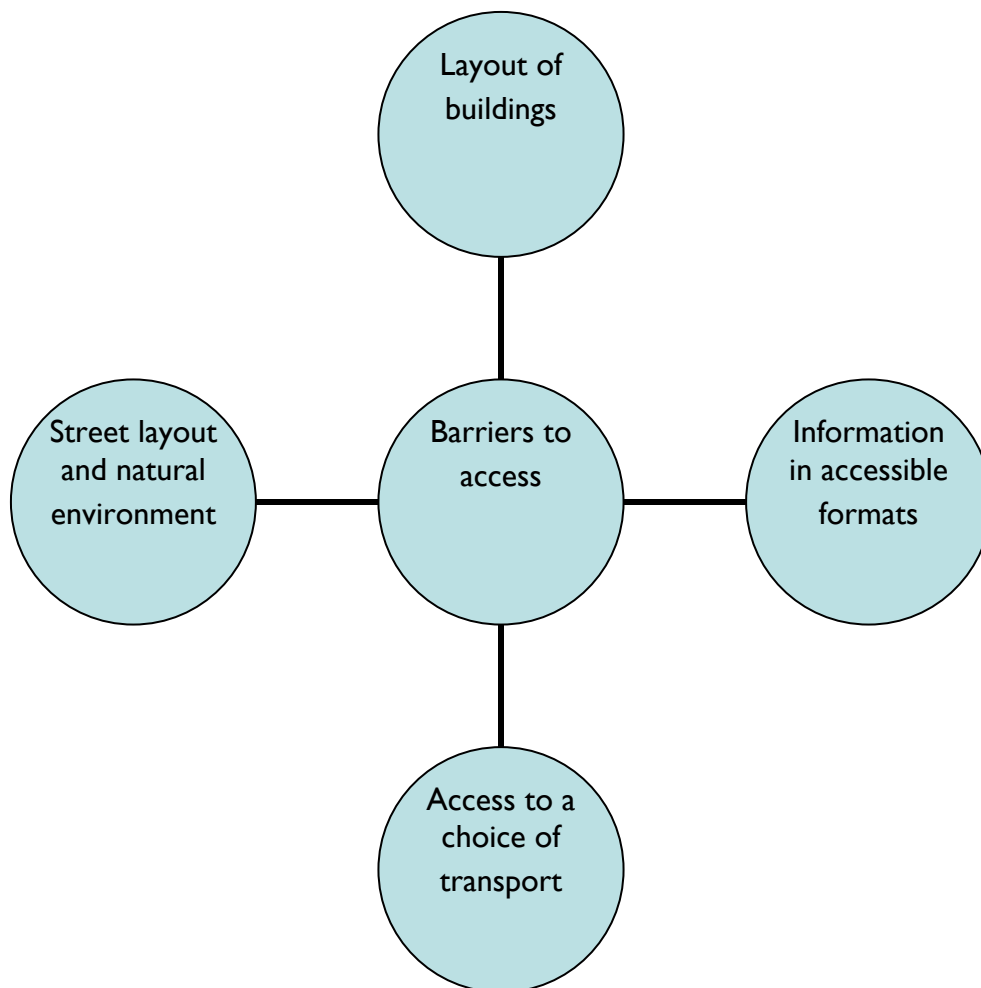
We will ensure that all of service policies and actions plans relating to equality and diversity make reference to disability issues.

## Key priority 2: Accessibility

For many disabled people access is the barrier that most affects their daily lives. Access is not a simple physical issue but affects all aspects of daily life.

### Barriers to access

This diagram shows the types of access barriers disabled people face.



### Access to information

We will make sure that all information aimed at the public can be made available in a full range of accessible formats.

This will include:

- CD's and tapes
- Web-based downloadable versions of information.
- Braille
- Change Picture Bank versions for people with learning disabilities.
- Access to British Sign Language interpreters.

These will be available in response to customer requests, though in some cases we will produce accessible versions of documents in advance.

We will work with disability groups to make sure that information on how to request accessible versions is publicised.

Our corporate communications team will develop links with specialist providers of accessible information, and will work with services to ensure that information is available in accessible formats.

Our communications team will also provide guidance on making mainstream documents more accessible. This will include:

- Removing watermarks from draft documents.
- Setting standard font sizes and types.
- Setting standards on colour contrast.

Disabled groups will be involved in reviewing our accessible information and deciding on priority documents which need to be available in accessible formats prior to customer requests.

### **Access to buildings**

We will ensure that buildings we own are reviewed for accessibility to M-standard. Where buildings are not up to M-standard level we will produce costings and action plans for addressing the barriers.

Where action cannot be taken within a three year horizon, a detailed plan of alternatives will be agreed. This will include a database of accessible venues throughout the county to hold meetings and conferences. In the first year of the Disability Equality Scheme we will commit to producing a database of accessible buildings in the county.

We will make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff who are working in inaccessible environments.

We will publish annual reports on building access work carried out, and at the end of this first Disability Equality Scheme we will publish targets to achieve full building access in line with the 2025 vision.

Disabled groups will carry out mystery shopping exercises to feed back their experiences of using our buildings.

**Access to transport**

We will work with transport providers to achieve the full target of accessible transport by 2017.

We will ensure that disabled groups are fully involved in developing spatial and transport plans. This will include:

- Priority areas and routes for accessible transport.
- Developing alternatives to accessing goods and services.

**Access to streets and open spaces**

We will work with disability organisations and partners to ensure that streets and open spaces are made accessible to disabled people.

## **Key Priority 4: Prejudice**

Prejudice, bullying, harassment and hate crime forms one of the most unrecognised aspects of disability inequality.

### **Incident reporting**

In the first year of the Disability Equality Scheme we will extend to disability the methods we use for capturing racial incidents. This will include providing information and support for our staff to identify and report disability prejudice.

In defining a prejudicial incident relating to disability, we will use the criteria used by police in identifying hate incidents and hate crimes. We will monitor incidents that come to our attention as employers, service providers and in our partnership working.

We will publish information and involve disability groups in identifying trends and best practice in addressing anti-disability prejudice.

We will also work with partners to map prejudicial incidents by type and location. In year two of the Disability Equality Scheme we will develop objectives and targets for addressing prejudice.

### **Myth busting and working with the Media**

To complement our work on prejudicial incidents we will develop information that aims to rebut common myths about disabled people, and will use these to inform the way we work with the media to create positive images and stories relating to disability.

We will work with disabled groups to identify good news stories, and review treatment of disabled people in the local media.

## **Key Priority 4: Employment**

Access to a range of employment opportunities is one of the great barriers to disability equality. As public services have a major responsibility to address this. In Cumbria the public sector is one of the largest industrial sectors and full disability equality will be never be a reality unless it is addressed in our own employment practices.

### **Training**

We will ensure that all our staff receive disability training as part of their equality and diversity training. We will also ensure that feedback on the disability component of the training is captured from participants.

We will work with disability groups and the training providers to review and develop the disability component of the training.

We will set annual targets for numbers of people to be trained and work with disability groups to identify which high priority staff groups to train.

### **Employment monitoring**

Disabled staff have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act, however disabled staff face a number of cultural barriers to declaring their disability.

We will collect and publish annual information on disabled staff. This information will include:

- Disabled applicants for jobs.
- Disabled staff by service and grade.
- Grievances and disciplinaries relating to disabled staff.
- Disabled staff access to training.
- Disabled staff leaving the organisation and reasons for leaving.

Our human resources and corporate communications teams will carry out an annual awareness raising campaign about the benefits of staff declaring their disability

### **Recruitment and selection**

We will introduce an annual review of the disability component of the recruitment and selection training.

This training will be backed up by disability guidance on recruitment and selection processes. Disabled groups will be involved in developing the guidance.

We will also compare applications and successful disabled applicants against the Cumbrian, North West and national statistics for different industrial sectors.

In the light of this information we will adjust our current targets for numbers of disabled staff in employed, and numbers of staff in the top five percent earners.

### **Reasonable adjustments**

We will proactively encourage disabled staff to declare their disability to their line manager. Line managers will be responsible for ensuring that disabled staff access requirements are met swiftly. This may include a range of adjustments including:

- Change of workplace
- Adjustments to office furniture
- Adjustments to computers and telephones
- Access to personal assistants or supporters
- Support with work-related travel.

## **Key priority 5: User Involvement and advocacy**

Many disabled people have a history of being subject to other people's judgements about what is right and best for them. Disability equality needs to be based on challenging this by involving disability groups.

### **Service Level Agreements with Disability Groups**

To ensure that disabled people are involved in our work we will have a three year Service Level Agreement with the Cumbria Disability Network. This will cover the lifetime of this Disability Equality Scheme.

The Service Level Agreement will be an agreement between ourselves and the Cumbria Disability Network which includes:

- Joint action on consultation.
- Objectives and targets on developing disability networks.
- Disabled user involvement in the implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme.

The Service Level Agreement will be reviewed annually.

### **Promoting advocacy services**

We recognise that advocacy plays a vital part in supporting disabled individuals to raise concerns about services they receive. Often issues encountered by advocacy services will differ from those raised in public forums due to the confidential nature of advocacy.

To promote advocacy we will produce a Cumbria advocacy plan which will:

- Map existing advocacy services available to disabled people.
- Identify models of advocacy delivery and costings.
- Identify gaps in advocacy.
- Benchmark Cumbrian advocacy provision against national leaders.
- Collect monitoring information on issues raised through advocacy services.
- Consult disabled groups on how advocacy should be delivered.
- Cost and plan for the delivery of a consistent advocacy service that would be available to all disabled people in Cumbria.

## **Key priority 6: Cumbria Strategic Partnership**

The Cumbria Strategic Partnership brings together statutory, voluntary sector and commercial organisations to provide a voice for Cumbria on key public issues. The Partnership is also

### **Embed disability equality in the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership**

The Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership is a sub-group of the Cumbria Strategic Partnership. The Equality and Diversity Partnerships includes representatives from the Cumbria Disability Network and other key disability groups in the county.

We will ensure that Cumbria County Council is represented locally and countywide on the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership.

### **Build disability equality into the Local Area Agreement**

The Local Area Agreement is an agreement between the Cumbria Strategic Partnership and national government on the key areas issues that need to be addressed by public services in Cumbria. The Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership will work with organisations involved in delivering the Local Area Agreement to make sure that they address disability inequality by:

- Identifying issues facing disabled people.
- Including disabled people's needs in actions.
- Monitor how disabled people benefit from improvements in services.

The Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership will raise unaddressed areas of disability inequality with the Cumbria Strategic Partnership Executive Board.

### **Joint training and public disability equality events**

The Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership will hold joint training events and public events. In the first year of the Disability Equality Scheme we will support the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership to put on a county wide conference on progress in implementing the Disability Equality Scheme.

**Disability mapping through data sharing**

The Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership will carry out a disability mapping exercise. We contribute to pooling data with other organisations so we can identify key needs, services and hot spots where there are gaps in provision. We will also pool prejudicial incident information with Police and partner data to identify hot spots of prejudice.