

Vale of Glamorgan Council Disability Equality Scheme 2007-2010

Annual Update Report 2007-2008

Introduction

In 2007 the Council developed its first Disability Equality Scheme in consultation with staff, the public and local organisations. The Council's scheme outlines key priorities for the 3-year period of 2007-2010 along with an action plan of steps the Council will take to achieve these targets.

The scheme has been developed on the principles of the social model of disability aiming to remove the barriers that society has put in place that prevent disabled people from accessing services and employment opportunities.

Progress with the action plan

Service delivery

Main service delivery aims:

1. To promote the Social Model of Disability so that there is an attitudinal and cultural change regarding disability
2. To encourage disabled people to become more involved in public life
3. To improve customer satisfaction for disabled members of the community.

Progress:

Policy Impact Assessments

The Council has carried out a number of equality impact assessments on key policies and strategies. Impact assessments include sections relating to disability and consultation with disabled people.

As a next step of this process the Council will carry out in-depth assessments of key policies identified as having a significant relevant to the equality duties and will incorporate the assessment process into the development of new policies/strategies. These impact assessments will be available on the Council's website (www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk).

Communication

As part of the development of its disability equality scheme the Council set up a disabled employees consultation group and a group of 'critical friends'

attended by local disabled people and organisations representing disabled people. These groups meet on a regular basis to provide feedback on the Council's progress with its disability equality scheme.

In 2007 the Council developed and launched guidelines to staff on writing documents in plain language and using accessible formats. The guidelines incorporated good practice advice included in the 'See it Right' guidance as well as looking at using clear English/Welsh avoiding jargon and using other accessible formats (for example audio and Braille) where appropriate.

The Council has developed its website to improve information for disabled people. You can now look under D for disability to bring up services aimed at disabled people. The Accessibility of the web-site has also been improved to include font size and colour scheme options. The Council is in the process of installing a read speaker facility on its web site.

The Council's Equality Section has produced an access checklist for organising accessible venues and meetings for disabled people and guidelines on consulting disabled people, which have been publicised to staff to improve consultation with disabled people and improve the involvement of disabled people in Council decisions.

Social Services

The Council's social services have recently been through a Joint Review by the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales. The judgment was that most people are being served well, but that the Council is uncertainly placed to improve. In response to the Joint Review and the budget issues, the Council has developed a Change Plan, which is being overseen by an internal Change Team, and an external Change Coordination Group.

Public Buildings

The Council has carried out a number of access work projects on its public buildings including the Civic Offices and leisure centres. This work is set to continue over the next year in line with a programme of priority work on a number of buildings. Access has been considered as a key issue in the development of the ground floor of the Civic Offices as part of the OneVale project.

Elected Members

To encourage disabled people to become elected members (and take part in the decision making role of the Council) the Council has published an article on how to become an elected member that encourages applications from underrepresented groups in the Council's free newspaper 'Vale Waves' and in Cardiff and Vale Coalition for Disabled People's newsletter.

Employment

Main employment aims of the scheme

1. To increase, retain and develop the number of disabled people we employ.
2. To promote the Social Model of Disability so there is an attitudinal and cultural change regarding disability.

Progress

Training

Training has been provided on disability equality, deaf awareness, visual impairment and British Sign Language. Senior managers have also received diversity training. We have increased the uptake on disability equality training by ensuring that equality training is considered as part of the staff development review sessions.

Disability equality training aims to ensure that staff are made aware of the Council's commitment to disability equality, the social model of disability, customer care and the provision of accessible services.

Recruitment and Selection

The Council is in the process of revising its recruitment and selection policy. We are using the Disability Rights Commission's Code of Practice on Employment to ensure access to disabled applicants. We are also looking for ways to encourage disabled applicants to apply to work for the Council. This has formed part of the discussion at the Council's disabled employees consultation group and the council's 'critical friends' group of disabled residents.

Priorities for 2008

Priorities for 2008 – 2009:

Identifying and publicising the support that is available for clients who cannot access services unaided.

Developing and publicising information on accessible services.

Carrying out the priority work on buildings identified in the access audit strategy.

Developing guidelines to project managers on consulting disabled people over access issues.

Carrying out and publishing an equality impact assessment on the recruitment and selection policy and on the managing sickness absence policy.

Consulting with disabled people over progress with the disability equality scheme.