

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET - 17 DECEMBER 2008

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME – PROGRESS REPORT 2008

Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with a progress report on the Disability Equality Scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting on 14 November 2006 the Policy & Resource Committee approved the Council's Disability Equality Scheme which outlined the Council's framework for meeting its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.
- 2.2 Under the legislation the Council has placed on it General and Specific Duties. The purpose of these duties is to put in place a framework for the Council to carry out its functions more effectively and to tackle discrimination and its causes in a proactive way.
- 2.3 The Council must, on an annual basis, publish a report containing a summary of:
- the steps it has taken to fulfil its disability equality duty (the action plan);
 - what the Council has done to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity;
 - the results of the information-gathering which it has carried out;
 - what the Council has done with the information gathered and what actions will be taken as a result of what the information indicates.
- 2.4 This report provides information on the matters identified in section 2.3 above.

3. PROGRESS

3.1. Eliminate Discrimination and Promote Equality

A number of developments were highlighted in the Disability Progress Report 2007, which Cabinet approved at the meeting on 19 December 2007. These developments have now been updated and are as follows:

DisabledGo: In September 2007 the Council and Community Planning Partners approved funding for the development of an access guide through an organisation called DisabledGo. DisabledGo is a social enterprise company which offers a web-based access guide on a wide range of specific venues in local areas to empower disabled people to enjoy the benefits of, and make contributions to, their local community and wider society.

Update: DisabledGo have concluded their audits of 1,000 venues in East Ayrshire. The soft launch was made available to all Community Planning Partners for comments and it is anticipated that the full launch of the DisabledGo East Ayrshire website will take place in January 2009.

See Me Pledge: The See Me Pledge is a national anti-stigma campaign relating to Mental Health which aims to make people 'see the person and not the label.'

Update: In 2006 East Ayrshire was the first local authority to appoint a Bibliotherapist. The Bibliotherpay scheme is aimed at helping people with mild psychological problems through the use of self-help books. Clients can be referred to the Bibliotherapist through GPs, health professionals or can self refer. Since the projects inception in 2006 over 500 people have been referred to the project and it is anticipated numbers will grow.

VIP Partners: In December 2006 the Council in partnership with a local carers action forum called KIN (Keeping Included) hosted two consultation days called 'Making Good Things Happen.' These days brought together people with learning disabilities, families, carers and key partners to examine practice and improve services for people with learning difficulties in East Ayrshire.

Update: The organisation has been supported by the Council to ensure that people with Learning Difficulties have a voice. With support from the Council, VIP Partners will hold their inaugural meeting in London Road in January 2009.

Merge Update: Merge was established in 2007 to deliver training and raise awareness of the issues that people with learning difficulties face. With support form Social Work, Merge have secured funding to produce a professional training video and hope to roll out a programme of training for Community Planning Partners, Voluntary Organisations etc. in 2009

Update: Merge received funding in 2008 to produce a professional training DVD.

3.2 Specifically in 2008 a number of new actions have been taken namely:

Equalities Forum: The Equalities Forum follows a similar format to that of the Local Forums; however it differs in that the Equalities Forum is supported by 4 Equality Networks covering Disability, Gender, Race and Age. The Equalities Forum is made up of representatives from each of the Networks along with Elected Members and Officers. The Equality Network membership consists of

local Community Representatives, Community Groups and relevant partners, where appropriate. The Equality Forum members are also members of the Local Community Planning Forums to ensure equality representation within the Community Planning process.

Equalities Event: In July 2008 the Council held its first Equalities Event which brought together council officers, community members and Elected Members to discuss issues concerning equality and the provision of Council services. The event brought together people from different backgrounds to discuss everyday issues they face when accessing Council services. As a result an agenda was formulated to take forward to the Bi-Annual Equality Forum. Due to the success of the Equalities Event it has been agreed that this will become an annual event to ensure that equalities remains a priority within the Council and that the Agenda is set by service users.

Disability Network: The Disability Network was established to ensure there were structures in place to engage and involve people with disabilities in the decision making process within the Council. Initial meetings were held in February 2008 to encourage people to come forward to work with the Council in ensuring that Council services were being developed and delivered appropriately. The success of the Disability Network stems from the commitment from its members; there are approximately 40 individual people and over a dozen local and national organisations registered as Network members. Meetings have been scheduled in line with the needs of members to ensure that full participation can take place. This takes into account location of venue, suitability in respect of access, requirements for visual and hearing impairments and timing of meetings. To date there have been 4 meetings which have been well attended since February 2008 and bi-monthly been scheduled for 2009. The involvement of people with disabilities in the work of public services in East Ayrshire, via the Network and Equality Forum, is helping to mainstream disability equality throughout all functions of the Council. The commitment from members cannot be overstated. From the initial meeting in February 2008 the Forum has steadily growing in numbers and it is anticipated that encouraging young adults onto the forum will be a focus for 2009.

Equality Training: The Council has committed to providing Equality Training for all employees. The course which will be provided in a number of formats, incorporating online training, toolbox tools and interactive group methods. The training will cover all six strands of equality and definitions of harassment, bullying etc in the workplace.

Shopmobility: Shopmobility is open to anyone with either a temporary or permanent mobility problem to enable easy access to the shopping and leisure facilities within Kilmarnock Town Centre. The service is free and offers manual and powered wheelchairs and powered scooters which are available on loan. The service also offers companion shopping escorts to assist in pushing wheelchairs and help with shopping.

3.3 Information Gathering

The Council has recognised that there is a need to develop robust mechanisms to collate information systematically to ensure that we capture specific information from people with disabilities who access our services. Therefore the Council is taking steps to develop a Corporate Equality Monitoring Form to ensure that the information gathered is consistent throughout the Council.

3.4 Actions Taken as a Result on the Information Gathering

The information collated through the mechanisms highlighted in 3.3 will be used to inform future actions.

4. **POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The approval of the revised Disability Equality Scheme Progress Report 2008 will enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations and its policy objectives in relation to the promotion of equality for all its citizens.

5. **COMMUNITY PLAN**

- 5.1 The Disability Equality Scheme progress Report 2008 will contribute to the achievement of all aspects of the Community Plan.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising at this time. Any future financial implications arising from action taken under the Disability Equality Scheme Progress Report 2008 will require to be considered in accordance with the Council's agreed budgetary arrangements either from departmental budgets or by specific consideration by Cabinet.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The Cabinet is recommended to approve the Disability Equality Scheme Progress Report 2008.

Elizabeth Morton
**Depute Chief Executive/
Executive Director of Corporate Support**
17 December 2008

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Disability Equality Scheme – Progress Report 2007 – Report by Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Corporate Support to Cabinet 19 December 2007

Introduction

The Council approved the current Disability Equality Scheme and action plan in 2006. The Scheme set out the ways in which we intended to remove the barriers faced by people with disabilities in order to create a working environment which promotes inclusiveness and equality.

A number of initiatives since 2006 and many of these were highlighted in our first Progress Report in 2007. This Progress Report provides an update on achievements since 2008.

The Council recognise the importance of involving people disabilities in the development and progress of not only our disability equality scheme but also in our everyday business.

As a result, in December 2007 the Council's community engagement structures were reviewed to ensure not only meaningful engagement but also to involve all our communities living and working in East Ayrshire.

While there is still much to do, significant progress has been made over the last year and it is hoped to build on this with the involvement of the Disability Network, who have helped develop this progress report

An Update on Our Achievements since December 2007

DisabledGo

In September 2007 the Council and Community Planning Partners approved funding for the development of an access guide through an organisation called DisabledGo.

DisabledGo is a social enterprise company who offer a web-based access guide on a wide range of specific venues in local areas to empower disabled people to enjoy the benefits of – and make contributions – to their local community and wider society.

Update

DisabledGo have concluded their audits of 1,000 venues in East Ayrshire. The soft launch was made available to all Community Planning Partners for comments and it is anticipated that the full launch of the DisabledGo East Ayrshire website will take place in January 2009.

See Me Pledge

The See Me Pledge is a national anti-stigma campaign relating to Mental Health which aims to make people 'see the person and not the label.'

Update

In 2006 East Ayrshire was the first local authority to appoint a Bibliotherapist. The Bibliotherapy scheme is aimed at helping people with mild psychological problems through the use of self-help books. Clients can be referred to the Bibliotherapist through GPs, health professionals or can self refer. Since the projects inception in 2006 over 500 people have been referred to the project and it is anticipated numbers will grow.

VIP Partners

In December 2006 the Council in partnership with a local carers action forum called KIN (Keeping Included) hosted two consultation days called 'Making Good Things Happen.' These days brought together people with learning disabilities, families, carers and key partners to examine practice and improve services for people with learning difficulties in East Ayrshire.

Update

The organisation has been supported by the Council to ensure that people with Learning Difficulties have a voice. With support from the Council VIP Partners will hold their inaugural meeting in London Road in January 2009.

Merge Update

Merge was established in 2007 to deliver training and raise awareness of the issues that people with learning difficulties face. With support from Social Work, Merge have secured funding to produce a professional training video and hope to roll out a programme of training for Community Planning Partners, Voluntary Organisations etc. in 2009

Update

Merge received funding in 2008 to produce a professional training DVD and are in the process of developing a Social Firm. The official launch of Merge is due to take place on 4 December 2008.

Community Learning & Development Disability Action Plan

In 2007 Community Learning & Development published their 'Disability Plan' with people with disabilities, groups that represent people with disabilities and carers.

Update

Community Learning & Development are in the process of reporting on their Action Plan in 2009 and will be updated through the Equality Strategy Group.

Our Achievements since December 2007

Equality Forum

With the introduction of new wards and issues identified in the Best Value and Community Planning Audit Report the Council agreed that there was an opportunity to develop the role of new Local Forums to maximise community involvement in Community Planning and Council/Partner Agency Services.

The proposed structures were subject to consultation and involvement with finalised proposals being implemented by 1 April 2008.

The proposed format of meetings of the Local Forums was to be totally different to what had gone before. The aim was to establish a format where everyone would be able to participate effectively. The meetings would be flexible for creative thinking and focus on strategic issues. This was to move away from the 'standard committee' arrangements and provide an opportunity for workshop activity, themed events and meetings on topics of interest/priorities that have been previously identified.

The Equalities Forum follows a similar format to that of the Local Forums; however differ in that the Equalities Forum is supported by 4 Equality Networks covering Disability, Gender Race and Age. The Equalities Forum is made up from representatives from each of the Networks along with Elected Members and Officers. The Equality Network membership consists of local Community Representatives, Community Groups and relevant partners, where appropriate.

The Equality Forum members are also members of the Local Community Planning Forums to ensure equality representation within the Community Planning process.

Equalities Event

In July 2008 the Council held its first Equalities Event which brought together Council officers, community members and Elected Members to discuss issues concerning equality and the provision of Council services.

The event brought together people from different backgrounds to discuss everyday issues they face when accessing Council services. As a result an agenda was formulated to take forward to the Bi-Annual Equality Forum.

Due to the success of the Equalities Event it has been agreed that this will become an annual event to ensure that Equalities remains a priority within the Council and that the Agenda is set by service users.

Disability Network

The Disability Network was established as stated above, to ensure that structures were in place to engage and involve people with disabilities in the decision making process within the Council.

Initial meetings were held in February 2008 to encourage people to come forward to work with the Council in ensuring that Council services were being developed and delivered appropriately.

The success of the Disability Network stems from the commitment from its members; there are approximately 40 individual people and over a dozen local organisations registered with the Network. This format has increased representation by members and new participants.

Meetings have been scheduled in line with the needs of members to ensure that full participation can take place. This takes into account location of venue, suitability in respect of access, requirements for visual and hearing impairments and timing of meetings etc. To date there have been 4 meetings which have been well attended since February 2008 and bi-monthly meetings will be scheduled for 2009.

The involvement of people with disabilities in the work of public services in East Ayrshire, via the Network and Equality Forum, is helping to mainstream disability equality throughout all functions of the Council.

The commitment from members cannot be overstated. From the initial meeting in February 2008 the forum has steadily grown in numbers and it is anticipated that encouraging young adults into the forum will be a focus for 2009.

Equality Training

A programme of equality training was developed to ensure that all Elected Members and the Corporate Management Team was successfully delivered over 2007/2008. As a result of this the Council agreed to roll out equality training to all 4th Tier Mangers which will be completed in early 2009. A programme for all Head Teachers will also be developed and delivered in 2009/2010.

The Council has also committed to providing Equality Training for all employees. The course which will be provided in a number of formats, incorporating online training, toolbox tools and interactive group methods. The training will cover all

six strands of equality and definitions of harassment, bullying etc in the workplace.

RNID Awareness Sessions

Two RNID Awareness sessions were rolled in June 2008 to Library and Local Office employees which was positively received. Another session was then commissioned in November 2008 to all Departments to nominate individuals who they felt may benefit from this awareness session, again this session was a success and as a result the Corporate Equality Strategy Group agreed to investigate the possibility of extending this programme for 2009.

Shopmobility

Shopmobility is open to anyone with either a temporary or permanent mobility problem to enable easy access to the shopping and leisure facilities within Kilmarnock Town Centre. The service is free and offers manual and powered wheelchairs and powered scooters which are available on loan. The service also offers companion shopping escorts to assist in pushing wheelchairs and help with shopping.

Our Progress and Challenges

What Steps Have we Taken to Fulfil our Equality Duty

In 2007 the Council set Objectives to fulfil in accordance with the disability equality duty.

We have fulfilled in the main our commitments set out in our action plan (Attached as Appendix 1). However, we acknowledge that there is work to do to maintain progress achieved to date.

The Results of the Information-gathering which we have carried out

The Council has recognised that there is a need to continue to develop robust mechanisms to collate information systematically to ensure that we capture specific information from people disabilities who access our services.

What have we done with the information gathered?

As stated in the Disability Equality Scheme the information gathered will be used by services in their performance management arrangements and regular reports will be submitted to the Chief Executive's Equalities Strategy Group and Cabinet.

In addition, the information gathered will be used in identifying priorities and actions within the Community Plan and will be monitored by the Community Planning Partnership Joint Officers Group and by the Partnership Board.

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME 2008-2010

**CORPORATE ACTION PLAN TO MEET GENERAL
AND SPECIFIC DUTIES**

Objective	Action	Outcome	Timescales	Update
Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons	To re-evaluate the Corporate Equality & Diversity Course to ensure the requirements of the DDA (Amended) 2005 are met	Employees will be aware of their duties in relation to the DDA (Amended) 2005	January 2008 Onwards	The course material has been updated and the course continues to be rolled out.
	To involve disabled people in the training of front line staff	Staff have first hand experience of issues affecting disabled people when accessing services and are therefore able to provide client centred service	April 2008 Onwards	A pilot course was developed and delivered in August 2008 which was well received. The possibility of a full roll out is being discussed.
Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA	Ensure disability equality is embedded in all Council policies and strategies	Council is compliant in all aspects.	February 2008 Onwards	New structures have been developed which will mainstream equality issues in general and disability issues in particular within Council policies.

	Ensure the Council's Procurement Policy is compliant	As above	February 2008 Onwards	Information on equality in procurement has been disseminated to the Procurement Team and incorporated into tender documentation.
	To ensure the Scheme is made available via the Council's website and summary information published via the Council's publications	Increased awareness of the Council's commitment to eliminate discrimination and promote equality	February 2008 Onwards	The Scheme is available on the Council's website and in different formats on request.
Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability	Re-evaluate training material to ensure employees are aware of the meaning of harassment	Training is updated	February 2008 Onwards	A new online training package will be rolled out from January 2009 for all employees incorporating all equality strands. This equality training package will be available in a number of modes including workbook, tool box talks, interactive teaching etc.
	To ensure employees are aware of their actions when	Employees are equipped with the tools and knowledge	February 2008 Onwards	The training mentioned above incorporates the

	harassment related disability is witnessed	necessary		definitions of bullying, harassment etc. The Corporate Equality Training which is currently being rolled out also addresses these issues.
Promote Positive attitudes towards disabled persons	To provide training to all employees	Employees are equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary	February 2008 Onwards	Training has been delivered to Elected Members and the Corporate Management Team. A package of training has also been implemented for 4 th Tier Managers and an equality training package is being developed for all Head Teachers
	To provide inclusive services for all members of the community	All service users are able to access services equally	March 2008 Onwards	The Equality Forum and the Disability Network are working with the Council to ensure that services are accessible. The Equality Forum will concentrate on access to services at its meeting in February 2009.

		Channels of communication and engagement are available to disabled people	March 2008 Onwards	The development of both the Disability Network and Equality Forum has allowed dialogue and involvement to take place. This will be enhanced over time.
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Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life	To establish a Disability Equality Network within the Council structures	Disabled people are equipped with the tools and knowledge to participate effectively	December 2007 Onwards	The Disability Network has been established and has met 5 times this year with approximately 25 members attending meetings. It is anticipated that the forum will meet bi-monthly in 2009.
	To support people to actively take part in the Forum	Disabled people are equipped with the tools and knowledge to participate effectively	December 2007 Onwards	The Disability Network allows community members to participate in a number of different modes from attending meetings to receiving minutes and contributing by e-mail.
	To ensure that barriers to participation are	Disabled people are equipped with the tools and knowledge	December 2007 Onwards	The meeting venues are rotated to ensure that there is a

	removed when consultation events are organised e.g. loop systems, access, signers etc.	to participate effectively		geographical spread. Meetings have been scheduled in line with the needs of members to ensure that full participation can take place. This takes into account location of venue, suitability in respect of access, requirements for visual and hearing impairments and timing of meetings etc.
Meet disabled persons' needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment	Include specific arrangement for disabled people when organising Council events	Disabled people are equipped with the tools and knowledge to participate effectively	December 2007 Onwards	As Above
Information Gathering	To ensure that all service units gather appropriate information that will inform and enhance practice	Services are appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities	February 2008	The Equality Strategy Group agreed to produce a corporate monitoring from to ensure consistency within the Council. This will ensure that information collated will be easily analysed in order to inform policy.
Involvement of	Establish a Network	Disabled persons are	December 2007	A Disability Network

disabled persons	for disabled people to ensure meaningful involvement of the disability equality Scheme	involved throughout the process	Onwards	was established and meets regularly. As stated above.
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