

# Disability Equality Scheme

## 2007-2010 Summary





## Introduction

Woking Borough Council recognises that our community is made up of many different groups of people and it values this diversity. As an organisation, we need to think about our customers, consider how we treat them and ensure that we treat everyone equally.

In the government's Disability Discrimination Act 2005, a new duty for the public sector was introduced. This duty came into force in December 2006 and applies to all public authorities.

The basic requirement for a public authority when carrying out their functions is to have due regard to do the following:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires favourable treatment.

This document presents a summary of the ways in which Woking Borough Council will work towards ensuring that the points above are both considered and adopted within our organisation and when dealing with our community.

## What is the definition of a disabled person?

For the purpose of this scheme, Woking Borough Council recognises a disabled person as someone who has an impairment or a disability. An impairment is an injury, illness, congenital condition that causes, or is likely to cause, loss or difference in the way the body and/or mind works. A disability can be physical, sensory, learning or a mental health issue.

It is society that disables people who have impairments because the way it is set up prevents such people from taking an equal part in everyday life.

It is recognised that some people will have more than one disability, some will have a disability that is unseen and these can be compounded where there are communication and/or language difficulties.



## What is the purpose of the Disability Equality Scheme?

The aim of the scheme is to ensure that disabled people are able to participate fully and equally within the communities of Woking.

This will be achieved by:

- creating a culture within the Council amongst members and officers to ensure that equality is at the core of all its activities
- making services relevant and accessible to present and future customers
- targeting resources, where necessary, to groups and communities who are most at risk of exclusion
- ensuring that the Council's involvement in the voluntary and community sector supports the empowerment and self-organisation of disability groups
- building a workforce that is representative of the diverse communities of the Borough
- influencing others through good practice in service provision, employment and procurement.

## How do we intend to achieve our aim?

### By adopting the Social Model of Disability

In the 1970s, disabled people used their personal experiences to show that the disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their disabilities or medical conditions, but stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. They developed a **Social Model of Disability**, which recognised that while some people may have disabilities which affect who they are physically or mentally, it is the barriers in society that create or compound their disabilities.

The basis of the Council's policy and practices, in relation to disabled people and of the development of this Disability Equality Scheme and action plan, is about identifying and removing these barriers.

The Disability Equality Scheme aims to identify and dismantle the barriers which exclude and limit the life chances of disabled people.

Woking Borough Council commits to this Social Model approach and will take steps to ensure that this is embedded in all service areas. The Council will lead by example and influence others to achieve the aim of this scheme.

This will be achieved...

- **Through involvement** – by involving disabled people as a matter of course in Council activities, we will improve understanding of the range of barriers faced and also help avoid mistakes rather than having to solve problems after they have occurred.
- **By using Equality Impact Assessments** – the assessment is a simple tool that enables us to check whether any existing or proposed strategy, policy service or project is discriminating against any particular group or groups of people. By using Equality Impact Assessments, the Council will do its best to ensure that any strategy, policy, service or project does not unreasonably discriminate against any individual or group. It will assist individuals and teams within the Council to think carefully about the likely impact of their work on people in Woking and to take any appropriate action to improve our strategies, policies, services and projects.





## Developing an action plan

Over the summer (2006), Woking Borough Council held a number of focus groups with disabled members of the community and disabled members of staff. In addition, the Council sent out questionnaires to disabled people and groups in the Borough.

The information gained from the focus groups and questionnaires will be used in the development of an action plan in support of this scheme. The detailed activities and actions developed will form part of a Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP). This CEAP will be the Council's single action plan covering all equality issues and will be included in the Council's business planning process. The CEAP will be monitored and managed by both councillors and council officers and will be a living document, able to be modified appropriately should priorities change and/or new issues arise.

## Monitoring and reporting on progress

In order to check whether the Council is actually making a difference, and that our actions are having an impact, we need to measure our performance.

We will monitor our progress through an Equalities Forum. This will be created with representatives from all the different groups that are at risk of experiencing inequality and exclusion.

It will be essential that the Council's staff and members are equipped to deal with all customers in a manner appropriate to their needs and provide an appropriate, responsive and quality experience for the customer.

We will report annually on progress made with fulfilling the duty and whether the targets are being met.



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