

Disability Equality Scheme

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Foreword

Aberdeenshire Council, in its vision, sets out our aim to provide excellent services for all. As part of this pursuit of excellence we strive to ensure equality of opportunity for all our citizens.

This Scheme, which involved disabled stakeholders in setting its priorities and guiding its development, provides us with the tools and direction to work towards this goal.

In response to the priorities of local disabled people, this Scheme contains commitments to:

- train our employees to assist them in providing a quality service,
- communicate more effectively with disabled residents,
- maximise the accessibility of our buildings and services,
- open, or build upon, dialogue with organisations of and for disabled people, and
- assess our policies and practices in order to ensure none of them unintentionally discriminate against our disabled citizens.

These underlying actions will provide us with a firm base from which to move forwards as our Disability Equality Scheme is updated and improved over time.

The Scheme is intended to assist us in making achievable and practical steps in improving our services, and the experience of using them, for the disabled residents of Aberdeenshire and those visiting or working here.

We want to see through the feedback we get from our residents, employees and disabled people's organisations, that over the next three years people with disabilities experience a noticeable and continuous improvement in their dealings with Aberdeenshire Council and their wider lives.

Introduction

Aberdeenshire

The size and nature of Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire is a predominantly rural area in the North East of Scotland. It has a land area of 6,313 sq km (2,437 square miles), representing approximately 8% of the Scottish land area. Aberdeenshire has the 6th largest population of the 32 local authorities in Scotland and one of the lowest unemployment rates in Scotland. Traditionally, it has been economically dependent on the agriculture, fishing and forestry industries. Within the last 30 years, the emergence of the oil and gas industry and the development of the service sector have broadened Aberdeenshire's economic base. It is a thriving area, with high development pressure on housing and industry in the Aberdeen travel-to-work area and lower but significant development in the extreme north, west and south of the area. It also has pockets of deprivation in some of its towns and rural areas.

Aberdeenshire Profile

Aberdeenshire had a population of 226,871 at the 2001 census. Below is a brief overview of the makeup of the population.

Gender

The gender profile of Aberdeenshire

| | Aberdeenshire population | Aberdeenshire % of total pop. | Scotland population | Scotland % of total pop. |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| All people | 226,871 | 100 | 5,062,011 | 100 |
| Females | 114,401 | 50.43 | 2629517 | 51.95 |
| Males | 112,470 | 49.57 | 2432494 | 48.05 |

The gender balance in Aberdeenshire according to 2001 census is 112,470 males and 114,401 females. This is in line with national figures.

Ethnicity

The 2001 Census statistics indicated a total population of 226,871 for Aberdeenshire and a minority ethnic population of 1,628, less than 1% of the total population. This compares with an average minority ethnic population of 2% in Scotland and 2.9% for Aberdeen City. About 2000 nationals of the European Union migrated to Aberdeenshire between May 2004 and May 2005. They have mainly settled in the Fraserburgh and Peterhead areas. This

is seen as an ongoing trend and has significantly altered the ethnic minority population profile of Aberdeenshire.

Age

The age profile of Aberdeenshire
(Based on total population of 226,871 in the 2001 census)

| | Aberdeenshire % of total pop | Scotland % of total pop |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Children 0 -17 | 23.7 | 21.7 |
| Adults 18 – 64 | 62.0 | 62.4 |
| Older People 65 + | 14.3 | 15.9 |

An issue both locally and nationally is the projected increase in the percentage of people who are aged 65 +. It is projected that the proportion of older people in the population is set to rise significantly. This is of special significance in Aberdeenshire where population forecasts predict an increase of 50% of people in the age range of 60 – 75 over the next 15 years. Significant increases are also predicted in the numbers of those over 85 years of age. (Living Life to the Full 2001).

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a person as having a disability if He or She has a physical or mental impairment which has an effect on His or Her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. That effect must be:

Substantial (that is, more than minor or trivial), and

Adverse, and

Long term (that is, it has lasted or is likely to last a year or for the rest of the life of the person effected).

The amendments to the legislation in 2005 bring out the issue of people with hidden disabilities (for example people with poor mental health, people diagnosed with HIV or Cancer etc.) and the operation of this Scheme should take full account of this.

This Scheme is guided by the “Social Model of Disability”. This model differentiates between **impairment**, what a doctor or other professional might see as being “wrong” with a person, and **disability** which is the disadvantage a person faces in their life due to the way in which we organise society. This may include failing to make work, education, leisure and public services accessible, failing to remove barriers of assumption, stereotype and prejudice and failing to outlaw unfair treatment in daily life.

The disability – limiting long-term illness – profile of Aberdeenshire
(Data taken from 2001 Census)

| | Aberdeenshire | Scotland |
|--|---------------|-----------|
| Total population | 226,871 | 5,062,011 |
| % of people with limiting long-term illness | 15.31 | 20.31 |
| % of working age pop (16-64 years old) with limiting long-term illness | 11.16 | 15.55 |

The 2001-02 Scottish Household Survey estimates that just under one in five adults in Scotland have a disability and/or a long-term illness (Scottish Executive, 2004). On this basis, it could be assumed (based on 2004 estimated population figures), that there are about 47000 adults and children affected by disability in Aberdeenshire.

Disability takes many forms and includes physical, sensory and learning disability as well as long term illness and mental health difficulties. In Aberdeenshire there are currently 429 people registered blind and 439 people registered partially sighted. There are 351 blind and partially sighted people who have an additional disability (from SWB return 06). As registration is not mandatory, these figures are unlikely to reflect the total incidence in Aberdeenshire. Adults with learning disabilities known to the Council in Aberdeenshire total 1,502 (2005). This figure is one of the highest of all Scottish Local Authorities at 8.1 adults per 1000 of total population but may be a reflection of more rigorous data collection or better service provision. People who received mental health service provision from the Council's Social Work Service in 2005 – 2006 totalled 1159.

Aberdeenshire and its administrative areas



Based on Ordnance Survey mapping. © Crown copyright reserved. Aberdeenshire Council 0100020767 2004.

Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire Council was established in April 1996, replacing 3 District Councils (Banff & Buchan, Gordon and Kincardine & Deeside) and Grampian Regional Council.

The Council's net spending was £424.1m in 2005/06 financial year. The Education and Recreation Service takes the largest share of expenditure (54%), followed by Social Work and Housing (19%), Transportation and Infrastructure (11%), Planning and Environmental Services (6%) and Joint Services such as Fire and Police (10%).

Aberdeenshire Council has 6 local administrative Areas – Banff & Buchan, Buchan, Formartine, Garioch, Marr and Kincardine & Mearns (see map). Each Area has its own Area Committee and there are Area Offices at Banff, Peterhead, Ellon, Inverurie, Alford and Stonehaven. Wherever possible, services are provided at an Area level to improve responsiveness to local conditions and priorities. Each of the Areas has its own character, arising from its local history and culture, economy, geography and urban/rural mix. The Council headquarters is at Woodhill House, Aberdeen.

Policy Committees

Aberdeenshire Council has five Policy Committees that agree the policies of the Council and oversee the delivery of services. The four Policy Committees are:

- **Infrastructure Services** – for roads, bridges, property, parks and public space, economic development, planning, waste management, environmental health, catering services, consumer protection
- **Education & Recreation** – for nursery and pre-school provision, primary schools, secondary schools, adult education, sports and recreational facilities, arts provision, youth and community learning and development, libraries, museums, public halls
- **Social Work and Housing** – for Local Authority housing, housing strategy, and services for young people, older people, offenders, and people with sensory impairment, physical or learning disabilities or mental illness
- **Policy & Resources** –deals with all corporate, personnel, finance and strategic issues. The Disability Equality Scheme is agreed and monitored by the Policy and Resources Committee

The four Policy Committees and the six Area Committees are under the authority of the **full Aberdeenshire Council**, which includes all elected Councillors.

Our vision

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – The very best of Scotland

The best area

Helping to create and sustain the best quality of life through

Happy, healthy and confident people

Safe, friendly and lively communities

An enterprising and adaptable community

Our special environment and diverse culture

The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by

Involving, responding and enabling

Finding new and more efficient ways of doing things

Providing elected leadership for our area

Working with our partners in the North East and beyond

Always looking to the future

The duty to promote disability equality

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 made it unlawful for any public authority to discriminate on grounds of disability when carrying out any of its functions.

The General Duty

The new duty to promote disability equality was introduced in 2005 (DDA 2005) and came into force in December 2006.

It placed a new enforceable positive duty on public authorities to promote disability equality. The new general duty to promote disability equality applies to all public authorities, including those only certain of whose functions are of a public nature. There are very few exemptions from this duty and Aberdeenshire Council is one of the bodies covered by the Duty. The Duty requires that every public authority shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encourage the participation of disabled people in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treated disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The Specific Duty

In addition to the General Duty named Public Bodies, of which Aberdeenshire Council is one, are also subject to a specific Duty. The actions required by this Specific Duty are:

- **Publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES)**
Every public authority listed in Parts I – III of Schedule 1 of the Regulations must prepare and publish a Disability Equality Scheme by 4 December 2006. The Scheme must explain how the authority intends to meet both its General and Specific duties.

- **Involve disabled people in producing their Scheme**

The authority must involve in the development of the Scheme those disabled persons who appear to the authority to have an interest in the way it carries out its functions. The Scheme should include a statement of the way in which disabled people have been involved in its development.

- **Demonstrate that they have taken actions and achieved outcomes**

The DES must contain an Action Plan – a statement of the steps that the authority intends to take towards meeting the general duty within the life of the Scheme 2006 – 2009 and every three years thereafter. Appropriate weight must be given to the six different elements of the duty. Actions must cover the needs of existing as well as potential employees, volunteers and service users.

- **Report on progress – annual public reporting on:**

- steps taken to achieve the disability duty i.e. targets achieved
- results of impact assessments, monitoring and other evidence gathering processes
- actions arising from information collected and tangible improvements for disabled people

- **Review and revise their Scheme by 4 December 2009 and every three years**

The Disability Equality Scheme sets out the steps that Aberdeenshire Council will be taking to meet the requirements of the Act.

Involving disabled people in the preparation of the Disability Equality Scheme

The preparation of the Aberdeenshire Council Disability Equality Scheme was the work of a Development Group established to gather information and draw up the Scheme. This group was, from the beginning, a partnership between representatives of the Council, disabled people and organisations of and for disabled people, being made up of approximately equal numbers from each.

The Group organised three “Involvement Events” held at Turriff, Aboyne and at the Council Headquarters in Aberdeen. There were 48 attendees, including disabled people, representatives of disability organisations and people working in the field of disability. The majority of the attendees had a personal experience of disability.

The events took the form of a welcome and address session with disabled members of the Development Group presenting most of the information. This was followed by small round table discussion groups, facilitated by members of the Development Group and guided by a series of questions. The views of the attendees were recorded and collated. The free flowing nature of the discussions meant that as well as direct answers to the questions being

considered issues and comments relating to services and more general disability issues were raised. These related comments were also recorded. All responses will be circulated to all Council Services, as these may well prove valuable when the impact assessment and review of individual policies and practices are carried out.

A further involvement workshop, bringing together those people attending the above events who expressed the wish to provide further input to the development of the Scheme and representatives of our Services, was held to examine outcomes related to disabled people's priorities and individual Service actions in the Plans.

Visits to organisations for groups not well represented at the events and an online survey of employee views were made and the results of these included in the process of producing Action Plans.

Six main priorities figured strongly in the results from the Public involvement.

1. Training/awareness/attitude change

Disability awareness training for our employees at a level appropriate to their roles and contact with the public was seen as crucial to eliminating discrimination and informing changes to our policies and practice. **Outcome** - this should result in improved services and opportunity for disabled people

2. Communication

How disabled people obtain information they need from the Council and inform us of needs and issues as they arise is sometimes unreliable and difficult. This was felt to be due to the size of the Authority and huge area it covered, as well as the range and complexity of services provided. This was seen as a problem for employees as well as residents. The idea of a single contact point or "One Stop Shop" for disability issues and information was well supported. **Outcome** - more effective communication between the Council and its disabled residents

3. Access to buildings and services

This is a fundamental need if disabled people are to get the services they need and be part of public life. **Outcome** - better access to services, increased involvement of disabled people and improved employment choice

4. Education

The role of schools in challenging attitudes to disability of future generations was considered extremely important. The role of disabled people working with schools in this area was also raised in discussions. **Outcome** - improved perception of disabled people by school age children. Reduction in harassment from this group

5. Involvement of disabled people in decision making

The knowledge and experience of disabled people and how these should be a part of the decision making process was strongly represented in replies. The role of disabled people in informing and monitoring policies and practices and evaluating the results was also considered important. **Outcome** - involvement leading to decisions and services that better reflect the needs of disabled people.

6. Awareness of the law (employees and public)

The need to ensure that the General Disability Equality Duty was widely known and implemented came up often in discussion. **Outcome** - greater awareness and implementation of the Duty

These main priorities will be used to guide the development of Action Plans for individual Services within the Council.

Following the online survey of employee views, disabled Council employees were invited to become involved in the development of the scheme through a request covering 4500 of our employees and an initial event run to allow those interested in this process to examine how we might address the main areas of the General Duty. Those attending, including Trades Union representatives, were also encouraged to consider the underlying issues that may have contributed to negative experiences in the past and how these might contribute to improving performance across the six strands of the General Duty. The information resulting from this initial involvement exercise was distributed to Services to inform their Action Plans. Employees involved in the event agreed to participate in a number of further ways on an ongoing basis including commenting on proposed policies, being involved in impact assessment and becoming members of the proposed Employee Disability Forum. The participants strongly supported the formation of an Employee Disability Forum as a structured way forward for involving disabled employees and tackling workplace disability issues.

All Elected Members of the Council were requested to indicate any personal experience of disability and a willingness to become involved in the development of the Scheme. Five Councillors (7%) declared that they had a disability and those willing were engaged individually to contribute to the views informing the scheme.

The Project Officer met with a group of disabled volunteers to determine their priorities for action with respect to the General Duty, their experience of volunteering and ways in which they could develop their volunteering or move into employment.

The Draft of this Scheme was widely circulated to organisations and individuals who attended the events and who requested draft copies, local disability organisations, Aberdeenshire Council Management Team. The draft was also placed on the Council Website for comment.

The Disability Equality Scheme is intended to be a “Living Document”; it requires an annual report on progress and must be reviewed every three years. The increased involvement of disabled people and improved dialogue with disability organisations will ensure that these priorities are confirmed or replaced as required to respond to the changing needs and expectations of Aberdeenshire’s disabled stakeholders.

Further information on our involvement process can be found at Appendix 3

Impact assessment

Aberdeenshire Council has developed a Multi Equalities Impact Assessment tool which will allow a single assessment to be made that covers the range of equality issues while giving due regard to the differences between the needs of the individual equalities strands.

Members of the Corporate Equalities Group have received impact assessment training and this is being extended to include all key policy authors and selected representatives from within the individual services and disabled people. To date approximately 120 employees selected by their Services have been given impact assessment training as part of a continuing programme.

Disabled people will be involved in the ongoing prioritisation of policies for impact assessment. This will take the form of an annual joint process to decide the group of policies drawn from across our services to be put through Impact Assessment in the coming year. An initial group of policies (one from each Service) will be used to pilot the process. This initial pilot group have been selected for relevance to disability and the range of equalities strands (this being a pilot of the Multi Equalities Impact Assessment), these are:

| | | |
|---|-------|--------------------------|
| Roads (Design, Maintenance, Public Transport) | ----- | T&I |
| Customer Care | ----- | Finance |
| Autism Strategy | ----- | H&SW |
| Service Plan | ----- | P&ES |
| Disciplinary policy | ----- | P&ICT |
| Service Plan | ----- | L&A |
| Strategic plan | ----- | Chief Executives Service |
| Attainment | ----- | Education |

The experience gained from the process of impact assessing these initial policies will inform the ongoing programme of assessment of new and existing policies.

All new and revised policies will be impact assessed to ensure they have no negative impacts on disability equality and to identify missed opportunities for promoting disability equality. In addition to this, a programme of prioritising our existing policies, functions and practices is underway and these will be impact assessed, and reviewed if necessary, as part of a rolling programme.

The prioritisation process will involve officers and disabled people evaluating policies for:

Relevance

Likelihood of impacting on disabled people

Degree of evidence or concern expressed by the public regarding the policy

These will be rated and the aggregate will decide if the policy in question is rated as high, medium or low priority in total. Policies will be impact assessed in order of priority. The input of disabled people and their organisations will be important in ranking the order of the policies to be assessed each year within these broader groups

As our existing policies, functions and practices number in the hundreds this will inevitably take some time. As the only true test of compliance is the full impact assessment itself all disability related complaints and comments received will, in the mean time, be copied to the Disability Equalities Group. If this group identifies a pattern that indicates that a particular policy or practice is suspect it may trigger an impact assessment as a priority.

The results of our impact assessments will be published on our Public Website and via hard copy and alternative formats as needed.

Further information regarding our Impact Assessment methods can be found in Appendix 4

Non-Policy impacts

A unique feature of disability equality that separates it from the other equalities strands is the huge impact seemingly small changes to the physical environment or working practices can have. Repainting a wall in a way that removes colour contrast or rearranging desks or other furniture can render a workplace or service inaccessible to some disabled people and impact negatively on their employment or access to services. The disability awareness training proposed for employees must ensure that those implementing these local decisions are equipped with the knowledge to avoid such problems and are aware of sources of advice from disability groups and other Council Services.

Information gathering

Aberdeenshire Council gathers information related to disability equality in a number of ways, these include:

- Gathering and assessment of national and local statistical information, such as Census information and research by national bodies such as the Scottish Executive and DRC (Disability in Scotland 2004). This is collected and collated by the Information and Research Team within Planning and Environmental Services and the Policy Officer (Equalities). This provides significant broad based information that is used for planning service provision and informing long term projections of need. By it's nature it is often based on research carried out some time in the past and may not indicate the current position in a fast changing situation (e.g. Service level monitoring has identified a doubling in demand on the Taxicard budget indicating a major change in use and, by association, the way disabled people interact with the community. This change appears to be related to the increase in accessible taxis post 2004 and would not show up in information sources of this nature until the next large scale information gathering exercise was undertaken)
- Service specific information gathering related to particular services, issues or initiatives such as the development of the Physical Disability Strategy etc. These are administered by Service teams and form a close-coupled link between front line information gathering and needs led responses in service provision.
- Employment monitoring processes designed to gather equalities information such as Personnel equalities monitoring forms and training records. These form part of the ongoing record keeping function of that Service
- Consultation and Involvement processes such as the involvement of Access Panels in identifying gaps in dropped kerb provision, disabled peoples involvement in developing the Physical Disability Strategy and the ongoing consultation with disabled people regarding the implementation of the Taxicard Scheme.
- Large scale Authority wide Surveys such as the recent Residents y and Employee Surveys, which yielded both qualitative and quantitative equalities based data highlighting differences of experience and attitudes. These are administered by the Residents and Employee Survey Team and carried out by independent researchers. Results and action plans are presented to the Corporate Management Team for approval and monitoring.

Residents Survey Equalities Report

Our large scale 2006 Residents Survey was circulated to 12,000 residents and was structured so as to provide information on equalities issues and allow us to examine the differential experiences of disabled and non-disabled people across a range of issues. The survey findings were collated into an independently produced Equalities Report and this formed part of the evidence informing this Scheme. The survey looked at a wide range of issues relating to Council services and attitudes to position statements on perceptions of services and community life.

There were large areas where there was close agreement in response from disabled and non-disabled residents. Areas which demonstrated a differential (positive or negative) between these groups were:

- Disabled residents were more satisfied with the Council as an overall service provider, were more likely to express satisfaction with individual services (significantly so with Council Housing) and more likely to think that services had improved over the last two years.
- Disabled residents were less happy with the handling of complaints
- Disabled residents had a preference for personal visits in their dealings with the Council over phone or e-mail.
- Disabled residents are significantly less likely to have Internet access at home and less likely to use public access points.
- Disabled residents are less likely to use leisure facilities such as swimming pools and sports facilities though library usage was more balanced.

Employee Survey Equalities Report

The corresponding Employee Survey was circulated to all our employees. It was organised under the headings:

You and your work
Your health at work
Consultation and communication
Leadership and management
Ensuring equality for everyone
How the Council performs

A number of questions designed to bring out key issues were asked under each heading and a short summary of significant findings was included at the end of each section. These summaries highlighted areas where disabled employees had less satisfactory experiences than those without disabilities. Of note here were issues around recognition and support from managers and the public, availability of equipment and training, career opportunities, clear understanding of roles, belief that their work is valued and that equal opportunities are taken seriously by the Council

- Employees with disabilities were less likely to believe themselves to be in good health.
- There were no significant distinctions regarding consultation and communication.
- Disabled employees were slightly less likely to believe that staff are treated fairly.

- Perceptions of the prevalence of discrimination are low across the board but are slightly higher for some equalities groups including disabled employees notably those with a sight impairment.
- The perception that harassment was quite or very widespread was low across the board with those without a disability being more likely (5%) to consider disability harassment widespread than disabled employees (1%). 8% of disabled people say that they have been harassed on the basis of their disability.
- There was slightly less perception that the council was committed to equality and diversity amongst disabled employees.

Recording of disciplinary and grievance procedures, training and employee development which may relate to harassment and flag up inequality of treatment. These form part of the ongoing record keeping and reporting of the Personnel and ICT Service

The Council has a duty to collect information relating to the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees.

We will review our monitoring process so that it will enable us to identify any differences in the incidence and experiences of disabled and non-disabled people in the areas of:

- those who apply for and obtain employment with us
- those who apply for and receive training
- those who apply for and obtain promotion
- those who are involved in grievance procedures
- those who claim bullying, harassment or victimisation
- those who are subject to disciplinary action
- those who end their service with us

We will take action to redress any discrimination or missed opportunities to promote equality for disabled people that may be indicated by this monitoring process

There are currently 187 Employees who have identified themselves as disabled and disclosed this through our monitoring system. This represents less than 2% of the workforce, which is low when set against the % of working age population (16-64 years old) with limiting long-term illness of 11% in Aberdeenshire and 16% in Scotland. Although this is recognised as not being

directly comparable data, it suggests that this is an area requiring further exploration.

In order to improve the perception of our complaints procedure amongst our disabled residents and gather information relating to user experience of our services we will actively promote our “Have Your Say” comment, compliment and complaint system to disabled people via disability organisations as well as more general information outlets and make sure it is readily and accessibly available in our receptions and public areas. This will be complemented by the disability awareness training of employees handling complaints.

We will maintain positive and supportive contact with disability organisations and will adopt the National Guidelines for Community Engagement to inform this process. This contact will provide a strong mechanism to inform any impact assessment or review carried out.

We will work with employee representatives to set up an Employee Disability Forum to act as a focus for gathering information and views on employment and disability issues in the workplace. This group will be involved when action relating to employment issues and the working environment is planned

The provisions for collecting and using the information specifically required of Education Authorities is laid out in the Disability Equality Scheme produced separately by the Education, Leisure and Learning Service and included in Appendix 2.

Known Gaps in Information

We will gather qualitative evidence regarding the “softer” outcomes of such things as the improvements resulting from reception staff training, through a “Mystery Shopper” programme to practically assess and feedback on the real experience of using our services. This will be carried out by members of the disabled community working to an agreed template to ensure completeness and consistency in the user evaluation of what is one of the less easily evaluated “experiential” measures of the success of this Scheme.

Reactive recording of harassment via grievance alone is inadequate and will be supplemented with a robust structured procedure for use inside the Council and by the public equivalent to the Race related incident Reporting/ Recording system.

Our data regarding the incidence of disability in our workforce and how this relates to the wider community is acknowledged to be inaccurate, relying as it does on voluntary disclosure and self-evaluation to different perceptions of disability held by individual employees. Confidence in the organisation as an equal opportunity employer, lack of understanding of our current position and changes in legislation may all contribute to this. We will work to improve understanding of current legislation, definitions of disability and our position

regarding our disabled employees in order to improve the take up of equalities monitoring relating to disability. Disability awareness training for line managers will stress the crucial part confidence in a positive response from managers has in enabling disabled employees to disclose disability. Training for all employees will ensure those undertaking it understand the value of disclosure of disability in providing positive outcomes for the Employee and the Council. Personnel and ICT will undertake a workforce wide initiative to promote disclosure of disability and an understanding of the scope of the DDA definition of disability via e-mail, Arcadia (intranet) and Personnel Briefings.

Our information gathering is often localised and serves specific Service needs. We have recently appointed an Information Manager part of whose remit is to develop an Information Strategy aiming, amongst other things, to promote information sharing. This will allow those Services with less experience of disability issues to benefit from the expertise of those who have traditionally had disability issues as a core part of their day-to-day business. This Strategy will take due account of the requirement for information gathered by the Council to be structured so as to meet the need to provide information on disability equality as well as that of other equalities strands.

Using the information gathered

The gathering of information about disability is a sensitive issue for many disabled people and we acknowledge that information should not be requested if there is no clear benefit to be obtained.

The results obtained from the “Residents Survey “ will be used to identify areas for improvement to services and specific areas of concern to disabled residents. This will form part of the feedback used to inform the reviews of our policies and practices after impact assessment, update the Scheme during its life and inform the review at the end of the three years.

The results of the “Employee Attitude Survey” will be used to identify areas for improvement in the experiences of our disabled employees. The proposed Employee Disability Forum will be used to consider the implications of the information from the survey. The Forum may also provide questions for future surveys that investigate the response of the wider workforce to issues the Forum considers important to disabled employees.

The information received via the “Have Your Say” system may be more immediate and responsive to issues that arise. It will not only be used as above in updating and reviewing the Scheme but disability related complaints will be copied to the Disability Equality Group and may trigger and inform a review of a particular policy or practice.

The ongoing contact and partnerships with disability organisations is vital to the exchange of information and views between the Council and the disabled community of Aberdeenshire. These partnerships can allow the Council access to information on specific and general disability issues and enable disabled people to influence and guide policies and practice through

involvement in their development and reviews resulting from impact assessment. These partnerships will allow the updating and review of the Scheme to take place in a climate of ongoing dialogue rather than relying on one-off snapshots of disability opinion.

There is currently no employee disability forum. We recognise this as a missed opportunity to have a direct dialogue between the Council and its disabled employees, a dialogue that would be more productive and immediate than information gathered at a remove via questionnaires etc. The Forum would be involved in bringing forward and resolving workplace disability issues as well as carrying the views of disabled employees into the wider workplace.

The gathering of information on disability and employment within the Council is a requirement of the Disability Equality Duty. This information will enable us to ensure that no unintentional discrimination results from our policies or practices when people are employed and during their employment.

A more accurate measure of the experience of disability within our workforce will enable us to better plan access, training and adjustments and help in ensuring that barriers to progression and achievement of potential are identified and eliminated wherever possible.

The “Mystery shopper” will enable us to evaluate and review the practical experience of using our services and identify and rectify shortcomings. This will also enable us to monitor the impact of awareness training on the actual experience of using our services thus giving us a measure of the success of that training.

Implementing the Scheme

The path of responsibility for implementing the Aberdeenshire Council Disability Equality Scheme is as follows;

The **Policy and Resources Committee** is responsible for agreeing the Scheme and receiving and monitoring reports on the implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme.

The **Corporate Equalities Group** is a Council wide officers’ group, which is responsible for developing, monitoring and reviewing the Council’s Equalities Plan.

The **Disability Equalities Group** is proposed by the Action Plan contained in this Scheme. This Group will be made up of members representing the Council’s Services, representatives of Disabled People and a representative of the recognised trade unions. The Group will monitor implementation of the Scheme, review the Scheme at the end of the three year period and act as a “Focus of Expertise” to advise the Corporate Equalities Group on disability issues.

The **Chief Executive and Directors** are responsible for operational implementation of the Scheme within their Services and ensuring that all employees are aware of the General and Specific Duties under the Scheme and fulfil them.

All **Employees** are required to implement the Disability Equality Duty and fulfil their obligations under the General Duty.

Each Service will provide a four monthly report on progress towards meeting the Actions laid out in the Scheme. This will ensure that the annual report on progress towards meeting the targets laid out in the Action Plan can be accurate and complete. This will also give the opportunity for remedial steps during the year should actions not be progressing as expected. The Annual Report will be published on the Council Website and circulated to Disability Organisations and other interested parties. These four monthly Service reports will be discussed and agreed at Service Management Team Meetings. These reports, along with the Annual Report will also be discussed and agreed by the Corporate Equalities Group and Corporate Management Team to ensure engagement with the process at senior management levels.

The inclusion of a strong, independent disability interest element in the Disability Equalities Group will ensure involvement by disabled people at the heart of the implementation process.

Procurement

Aberdeenshire Council enters into contracts and service level agreements with a variety of suppliers and organisations. In order to meet our obligations under the General Duty it is necessary for us to consider how we manage these. We will use our position as a purchaser and commissioner of goods and services to promote good equalities practice and compliance with the General Duty in our suppliers.

Many of our standard service level agreement documents already require that a supplier or partner undertakes not to discriminate on the grounds of Race, Gender, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Age or Religion. We will review and update all of the relevant documentation to ensure we include this provision.

The Action Plan includes the impact assessment and review of all our procurement policies and practices as part of the rolling review programme to ensure they are not unintentionally discriminatory.

Agreements and contracts will be adjusted to require suppliers and organisations to inform us if they are subject to any adverse judgements under the Disability Discrimination Act. Suppliers and organisations will be given a designated time to address and rectify the non-compliance and the contract/agreement may be terminated if they fail to satisfy us that they have done this.

The Equalities Officer, working alongside the central purchasing unit, will select an annual random sample of 6 suppliers and contractors doing business with us in excess of £10,000 each year to receive a monitoring questionnaire evaluating their status regarding disability (and other) equalities issues. Those without appropriate measures in place will receive guidance on improving their practice.

Our Comments, Compliments and Complaints system returns and the experiences of our employees will be monitored for indications of problems related to services or goods that are externally supplied. Where these occur they will be investigated and the contract/agreement reviewed.

Annual reporting

The Specific duty includes the requirement to report annually on progress towards meeting the actions laid out in the Action Plan, results of our information gathering process and what has been done with the information gathered.

Each Service has an Action Plan and will report on progress at 4 monthly intervals to The Corporate Equalities Group and the Disability Equality Group. The Corporate Equalities Group will provide 6 monthly reports to the Policy and Resources committee. These reports will enable a comprehensive picture of progress on the Action Plans to be compiled. The 4 monthly reports will give the opportunity for remedial action to be taken if issues arise in the carrying out of actions.

This Action Plan progress report and the results of our information gathering and subsequent action will form the Annual report. This will be compiled by the Disability Equalities Group. The report will be published on the Council website, intranet system and distributed to disability organisations and other interested parties. The report will be available in different formats on request.

Reviewing the Scheme

The Disability Equality Scheme must be reviewed after three years. A number of the actions laid out in this first scheme are aimed at putting us in a better position for the production of the updated scheme in three years time. The setting up of contact and dialogue with disability organisations will be particularly important in better understanding the needs and aspirations of Aberdeenshire's disabled residents through their membership and outreach into the wider disability community.

We will begin the process of reviewing the scheme in November 2008 and we intend to adopt the National Guidelines on Community Engagement to inform the involvement of disabled people in this process as well as in our ongoing contact and dialogue. We expect to have learnt a lot in the period between producing this first scheme and the next one. The results of our information gathering, impact assessments and ongoing involvement with disability organisations will all be used to produce a second scheme that will

build on this one. The Scheme will be updated under the guidance of the Disability Equality Group. The nature of this group, a partnership between officers and disabled people, will ensure that involvement remains central to the process.

This Scheme is seen as a “Living Document” and will remain responsive to disability issues. Better information resulting from partnerships and monitoring, better feedback and experience may all contribute to the development of the plan during its life and the production of an improved plan at the end of it.

This Scheme and the Actions laid out in it are intended to be practical and achievable. Aberdeenshire Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and providing the best possible quality services for all its residents. The UK Government has committed to ensuring a “Level Playing Field” for disabled people by 2025. This first Aberdeenshire Council Scheme provides for training and awareness raising, better communication with our disabled residents and organisations of and for disabled people, greater involvement of disabled people in the decision making process, improved access to our services and premises and the impact assessment and review of all our policies, practices and functions.

We feel this Scheme to be a strong first step towards that “Level Playing Field” and will provide us with the tools and outlook to build on this first step at each three year review. The desired end result is clear, we want to be able to see, through our information gathering and feedback from our disabled residents, that this scheme and those that follow it have made a noticeable and positive difference to the experience of disabled people in Aberdeenshire in their dealings with us and their wider lives.

Action Plan

This Action Plan lays out the steps Aberdeenshire Council will take to meet the requirements of the General Duty. The Action Plan runs until December 2009 and will be monitored, and if necessary updated, during its life. In December 2009 a reviewed and revised Action plan, omitting those actions completed and incorporating new actions, will be produced as part of the Disability Equality Scheme for 2009 – 2012.

The Actions reflect the priorities of disabled people, the requirements of the General Duty and the themes of the Aberdeenshire Strategic Plan.

The Action Plan is in three Sections:

- A summary of those Actions which are common to all Services.
- A Service by Service Action Statement laying out what each Service will do towards the Authority’s duty to meet the requirements of the General Duty.

- An Appendix (1) that lays out in table form the Actions and supporting actions which the Services will take forward in more detail including start and completion dates, who will be responsible for ensuring the Action takes place, a measure of completion and which of the priorities and duties the Action meets.

Summary of actions common to all Services

We will ensure that all employees have disability awareness training that includes knowledge of the General Duty and their part in complying with that duty. Employees who have regular contact with the public or whose duties have a strong impact on disability issues will receive further training appropriate to those duties.

We will ensure that Services that operate from those of our buildings yet to be adjusted under our rolling programme of access improvements keep the plans for alternative methods of providing their services complete, up to date and relevant.

We will improve our communication with disabled residents by reviewing the quality and availability of our information, forms and other material in alternative formats. We will also develop a “one stop shop” available via phone, e-mail, minicom, text etc for disability related enquiries and information. This service will also be available to employees from all Services who have a need for disability related information in the course of their work.

We will form positive links with organisations of and for disabled people to allow us to involve them, and through them the wider disabled community, in assessing and monitoring our existing and proposed policies practices and functions

We will identify and train impact assessors to ensure our proposed and existing policies, practices and functions do not unintentionally discriminate against disabled people.

We will prioritise our existing policies practices and functions with the involvement of disabled people, and apply our impact assessment process to ensure they do not discriminate against disabled people and that there are no lost opportunities to promote disability equality. Those identified as having the most chance of affecting disabled people and the most severe consequences if defective will be assessed first. Policies that generate significant adverse comment via our “Have your Say” process will be examined with a view to being be dealt with as a priority.

Four monthly and Annual reports on the progress of Action Plans will be discussed and agreed by the Service Management teams, Corporate Equalities Group and Corporate Management Team to ensure that disability issues and the implementation of the Scheme are an ongoing part of the management process.

These underlying actions will form part of the Action Plan for each Service ensuring that these essential tools are part of the basic preparation each Service makes for the assessment and review of the services they provide.

The Service Action Plans will contain these and other actions to address the six provisions of the General Duty as well as actions relating to the individual nature of the services they provide. The actions contained in the Service Action Plans combine to provide the overall response of the Council to the requirements of the General and Specific Duties.

Action Plan

Chief Executive's Service

Who we are and what we do

The Chief Executive's (CE) Service is one of the support services of the Council.

Vision of the Service

Leading the Council's services, supporting Councillors, and working in partnership to make Aberdeenshire the best council and the best area in Scotland.

The Chief Executive's Service is made up of 3 sections:

The **Chief Executive** and **Area Managers** provide support to the Council's administrative structures, which include all councillors, policy committees and the 6 Area committees. They also support the Council's corporate management structures and liaise with councillors on corporate matters. As corporate leaders, the Chief Executive and Area Managers provide a focus for dealing with the Council and a route for 'Customer Feedback'. The Area Managers are the main points of contact with the Council for the people and communities of their areas. Area Managers also play a vital part towards enhancing the co-ordination of service delivery at area level and contribute to a number of other priorities, for example *community wellbeing* (community safety activities) and *jobs and the economy* (Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership projects).

The **Policy Team** serves the Chief Executive by providing support for his role in leading corporate policy and supporting councillors and for his day-to-day work. The Team also provides support for a number of important Council-wide and partnership initiatives including Equalities, Audit of Best value and Quality and Improvement issues, Community Planning and Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy. The Team actively promotes continuous improvement and partnership working both internally and externally.

The **Corporate Communications Team** supports councillors in their dealings with the media and by projecting a positive image of the Council and the work of councillors. The Team provides a service to the corporate management team by giving managers communications, publicity, marketing and media relations' support; by facilitating communications with employees and residents; by developing and implementing new and improved intranet and web tools and by promoting the corporate identity.

The **Chief Executive's Service** has a leading role in a number of major issues, which have significant impact on the Council:

- Implementing and promoting the Equalities agenda
- The Local Government in Scotland Act encompassing a duty of Best Value, a statutory commitment to community planning and a power of well being for councils
- The Local Governance (Scotland) Act which introduces the Single Transferable Vote system and multi-member wards for local government elections in 2007
- The Antisocial Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004 which aims to improve community well being
- The Scottish Executive's developing agenda for the reform of the public sector
- The Efficient Government initiative

In doing this, the service relates to:

- National bodies – the Scottish Executive, the Scottish Parliament and COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities)
- Public agencies – Communities Scotland, Scottish Water, Scottish Natural Heritage
- Regional agencies – Grampian Police, Grampian Fire Brigade, Scottish Enterprise Grampian, NHS Grampian and adjacent local authorities
- Local agencies – Rural and Area Partnerships, Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership and Councils for Voluntary service
- Community groups – Community Councils, Community safety Groups, Education forums and locality community planning groups.

Some of what we do already towards disability equality

Equalities

The **Chief Executive** has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that Aberdeenshire Council fulfils the various equalities duties and for council-wide implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme and all other equality schemes.

The Policy officer – Equalities, is responsible for managing the development and implementation of the Council's equality agenda including disability equality and other equality strands.

The CE Service is committed to producing all new and revised documents in accessible formats and to meeting individual user requirements when required.

Corporate communications

“Have Your Say”

This is a leaflet, which gives members of the public guidance on how to provide feedback on Council services.

In June 2006 the Corporate Communications Team worked with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to promote “Shades Day”.

We work with other Services to promote relevant initiatives and activities within the Council and to the public.

There is an on-going **publications audit** to ensure all future publications are relevant, properly designed and accessible for everyone.

Community planning and partnership working

"We provide some services through partnership of various sorts with other public bodies, voluntary organisations, businesses and community councils. We need to make sure that all these partners and providers meet our own standards in disability equality in their work with us."

Aberdeenshire Council, as the democratically elected local authority and leader plays a leading role on the Community Planning Partnership, facilitated by the Policy Officer (Community Planning). Nine public and voluntary sector organisations and groups have joined together as partners with a vision of **“working together for the best quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire”**. More importantly, the partners have pledged to work together with the communities and people of Aberdeenshire to achieve this.

Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership’s commitment to equalities is expressed as follows:

“Community planning involves working with all communities in Aberdeenshire. The Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership is aware that certain groups or individuals may be more disadvantaged or vulnerable for reasons such as age, disability, gender, race or ethnicity, religious or political beliefs or sexual orientation. We will strive to improve the quality of life for all people of Aberdeenshire and will not discriminate for any of the above reasons”.

The current Community Plan covering the period 2006 - 2010 contains contact details of local community planning groups to make it easy for citizens who either want to get in touch or to become more involved with their local community planning groups. The Plan can be downloaded here:
<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/communityplanning/plan/index.asp>

Kaizen

The Service leads the use of Kaizen in the Council. Kaizen is a way of improving work that uses the skills of employees working in teams. We have been careful to ensure that both venues, which will become the permanent home of Kaizen events, have wheel chair access and accessible toilet facilities.

We link the participant list for each Kaizen with the Employee Monitoring Information System – EMIS. In effect, we are collecting data that would enable us to track any trends and ensure that we are not excluding employees with disability.

What we will do during the next three years to improve equality for disabled people

- We will train policy authors in the Service in the new process of equality impact assessments. The Policy Officer (Equalities) and the Garioch Area Manager will support these developments
- We will prioritise and undertake disability impact assessment of our policies. The Council is addressing the growing body of legislation on equalities matters. The cross-service Corporate Equalities Group is adopting a 'Multi Equalities' approach in order to develop a single Equalities Scheme. As part of this development, Disability Impact Assessment will form part of the Equality Impact Assessment of policies and functions in 2007 and beyond. This means all our policies and functions will be tested to find out if they have any adverse or positive impact on equalities target groups. We believe this process to be the most effective tool for awareness raising and mainstreaming equalities.
- We will work with the Council's Development and Training team to provide appropriate disability awareness training for councillors, employees and volunteers.
- We will involve, consult and engage with various communities including disabled people on all relevant issues. The evolving equalities legislation has placed a lot of emphasis on consulting, involving and engaging with communities. The Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) and the Race Equality Group (REG) are jointly taking proactive steps to identify and engage with all appropriate sections of our community.
- To improve communication, we will update and promote our "*Accessible Communication Guide*", promote use of accessible formats including a standard minimum font for Council communication and publications do our best to ensure that our customers receive information in their preferred formats.

- We will raise awareness of the need to ensure that all equality statements advising on availability of accessible formats appear at the beginning of documents.
- We will send copies of future News Releases to **Talking Papers** and other appropriate media.
- We will target specialist media and organisations to promote disability initiatives such as the Disability Equality Scheme (DES).
- We will liaise with the Education Service, Aberdeenshire Disability Action (ADA), etc to institute disability awareness sessions in schools.
- We will include a paragraph in the standard invite to Kaizen as follows:
 “If you have a disability for which we could make special provision, such as hearing/visual impairment please let us know in advance”.
- We will monitor and track any trends in Kaizen participant list to ensure that disabled employees are not excluded.
- We will support the Corporate Equalities Group and our Personnel service to form disability equality group(s).
- We will ensure that the new Council Strategic Plan (2007-11) is designed and formatted in a way that is accessible to disabled people.
- We will reinstate the Core Brief (for employees), ensuring that it is in an accessible format, and including information for employees regarding the disability equality scheme (DES).
- We will make sure that all our partner organisations and providers meet our own standards in disability equality in their work with us.
- We will ensure that local community planning groups provide opportunities for representation by disabled people and/or for their issues to be fed into our Community Planning Partnership.
- We will request Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership to review membership of its Citizens Panel to ensure representation by disabled people.
- We will develop closer links with relevant bodies such as the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), Commission for Equality & Human Rights (CEHR) and Department for Work & Pension (DWP) regarding ongoing issues for people with disabilities.
- We will promote the Council’s customer feedback guide, “Have Your Say”, to disabled people and their organisations through appropriate media.

- We will ensure effective monitoring and implementation of the DES.

Action Plan

Finance

Who we are and what we do

The Finance Service has the following principal functions:

**Accountancy
Payroll and Payments
Revenues and Benefits
Internal Audit
Corporate**

Aberdeenshire Finance is one of the support services of the Council and includes the following main activities:-

Accountancy

- Preparation and monitoring of Revenue Budgets
- Preparation of Final Accounts
- Provision of Financial Advice

Payroll and Payments

- Payment of Salaries and Wages
- Payment of Invoices
- Travel and Subsistence
- Administration of HCI Childcare Scheme

Revenue Services

- Collection of Council Tax
- Collection of Business Rates
- Collection of Sundry Debtors

Internal Audit

- Undertaking a rolling programme of planned audits of Council activities and additional audits as requested by Services
- Investigating matters of suspected financial irregularity

Corporate Finance

Revenue Budget Consolidation
Preparation and Monitoring of Capital Plan
Development and Support of Financial Systems
Treasury Management
Provide support and advice to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee

**More information about all the above services can be found on:
www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk**

Some of what we do already towards the priorities of disabled people

We apply Aberdeenshire's equal opportunities policies in our recruitment and employment processes and in our dealings with our staff and the public.

We have standardised on 12 point non-serif font for our letters etc and give a larger print contact number for people requiring other formats. We supply Council Tax bills in large print and Braille on request

What we will do during the next three years

We will:-

- Review our leaflets, forms and other material for clarity and ensure it is available quickly and easily in alternative formats if requested.
- Ensure that all our employees receive disability awareness training appropriate to their duties and contact with the public.
- ensure that our buildings are assessed for access by the Property Service and changes will be carried out as part of their prioritised programme. Until these changes are made and prove effective we will plan and implement alternative ways of providing our service for those who may not currently be able to access them or who find using them unreasonably difficult.
- formalise links with disability organisations where appropriate in order to ensure improvement to our services and promote Disability Equality.

- assess all our Policies functions and practices for the possibility of them discriminating against disabled people and the likely severity of the consequences of that. We will prioritise them so as to Impact Assess and, if necessary, review the most urgent first in a rolling program covering them all.
- Identify employees and train them to enable us to carry out Impact Assessments of all our Policies, functions and practices and review those that are identified as discriminatory or missing an opportunity to promote Disability Equality.
- Continue to review documentation to ensure they comply with Aberdeenshire policy and ensure they are available in alternative formats within reasonable timescales.
 - Undertake a feasibility study into the enhanced use of existing CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to provide a dedicated 'one stop shop' specific to the needs of disabled people.
 - Review and monitor disability training for front line staff to make sure it remains appropriate and relevant.
 - Ensure that disabled people are enabled to communicate effectively at reception areas, e.g. use of loop system.
 - Ensure that employees are aware of the purpose of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Equality scheme.
 - Investigate ways in which small payments associated with community engagement might be paid more quickly and simply
 - Ensure that we monitor and review the action plan on a 4 monthly basis.

Action Plan

Housing and Social Work Service

Who we are and what we do

Housing and Social work is the second largest service in the Council. It is made up of six key services:

1. Housing
2. Community Care
3. Children and families
4. Substance Misuse
5. Criminal Justice
6. Support services

Aim of the Housing and Social Work Service

The Local Housing Strategy defines the key objectives for the Housing Service.

- To assess the levels of housing need across Aberdeenshire.
- To reduce homelessness, or the threat of homelessness, through prevention and to ensure that advice and assistance is given, including accommodation, to those who present themselves as homeless.
- To promote the principle of meeting the housing needs of people with special requirements and to become directly involved in the planning and delivery of effective solutions, in partnership with communities and the voluntary and statutory agencies.
- To protect and improve the standard and condition of existing housing provision and environment across Aberdeenshire.
- o ensure housing needs are met by the promotion and encouragement of tenure options and choice at affordable prices.
- To support and maintain the viability of rural communities and to ensure their sustainability.
- To provide efficient and effective housing services that meet the needs and aspirations of existing tenants and others seeking assistance.

Social Work is given duties and powers by many different statutes and Government directions. The over-riding responsibility, arising from the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, is to “promote social welfare”. Social Work does this by assessing individuals’ needs and arranging the provision of services to

meet those needs. The Council directly provides some services and purchases others from the independent sector.

Social Work assists a wide range of adults and children in need, including those who are older, need protection, have learning disabilities, physical or sensory disabilities, alcohol or drug problems, are offenders or are homeless.

The aim is to maintain people in their own homes, communities and families wherever possible and practicable.

**More information on housing and social work services can be found on:
www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk**

Some of what we do already towards the priorities of disabled people.

Attitude Change / Awareness Raising / Training

Training requirements are identified through the Employee Development and Review System. Information is collated and priorities are detailed in the Housing and Social Work Training Plan. Examples of the training offered to staff through out this year are:

- Sensory Impairment training
- Disability Awareness training
- Mental Health Act training
- Engaging with people with communication difficulties

Communication

Service provision for each of our service user groups are detailed in strategies e.g. Learning Disability Strategy, Brain Injury Strategy. The development of strategies involves service users and draft strategies go out for consultation to the wider public. On request, our plans and strategies are available in different formats.

Social Work has a policy of supporting and working with voluntary agencies in the provision of community care. They provide a range of services, including specified services on behalf of social work and specialist advice, information and research.

Access to Services and Buildings

Services are provided based on an individual assessment of need. In community care, budgets are delegated to front line staff so that service provision can be planned with service users and provided to meet individual needs.

Social work commissions Direct Payments Caledonia to provide information and support to individuals who are able to arrange their support themselves. Most Housing and Social Work buildings are accessible. For those where accessibility is an issue, staff will arrange to meet service users at home or in accessible premises locally.

Education

Social Work works closely with Education to implement legislation such as the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act. Planning and delivery of services by Social Work, Education, Health and the Voluntary Sector is driven by the continuous move towards integration reflected in Aberdeenshire's Integrated Children's Services Plan.

Involvement of Disabled People in Decision-Making

Disabled people are involved in the decision making process around their individual care and support needs through the assessment, care planning and review procedures. People can also be involved in strategic planning and development through participation on strategy groups and feedback to consultations.

The Housing service has a unique model of involving its tenants. The Tenant Participation Promotion Team (TPPT) is a working group of seven members from across Aberdeenshire who meet to consider issues affecting tenants in Aberdeenshire and to look at ways of dealing with them. Tenants democratically elect TPPT.

There is also an Armchair Equalities group and tenants on this group have the opportunity to input to, comment on or suggest any information or improvements specific to equality issues.

TPPT, with the support of Aberdeenshire Council produces and issues a quarterly newsletter to all Aberdeenshire Council tenants.

TPPT organises Tenants Events at least twice a year, staged around specific topics of interest.

Awareness of the Law

The provision of social work services is determined from a number of legal frameworks therefore staff must be competent in their knowledge of relevant legislation. Child protection, mental health and adults with incapacity are a few of the legal frameworks that social work operates within.

Through the Training Plan, there has been a commitment to training staff in Diversity and Equality Awareness.

What we will do during the next three years

The attached Action Plan details what the Housing and Social Work Service will do during the next three years to address the priorities identified by disabled people.

In Social Work:

- We will ensure that our employees receive the training they require to carry out their role in an efficient and effective way.
- We will identify employees and train them to enable us to carry out Impact Assessments of our policies, functions and practice and review those that are identified as discriminatory and where Disability Equality needs to be addressed.
- We will continue to support organisations that provide specialist information, support and other services.
- We will ensure that our printed information is available on request in alternative formats.
- We will complete the outstanding strategies and ensure that our existing strategies reflect the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty.
- We will ensure access to services based on assessment of need and eligibility criteria and promote different ways of receiving services.
- We will continue to work with colleagues in the Education, Learning and Leisure service to comply with legislation, achieve the aims of the Integrated Children's Services Plan and improve outcomes for children and young people.
- We will increase opportunities to involve disabled people through a variety of ways in our strategic planning and will work with parents and carers.

In Housing:

- We will produce and implement an Older Persons' Housing Strategy.
- We will produce and implement a Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Strategy.
- We will develop and implement an Assistive Technology Strategy.
- We will promote user involvement and identify new and innovative ways to enhance existing communication with disabled people.

- We will write a policy for Equipment and Adaptations.
- We will continue to develop better links with disabled groups and voluntary organisations.
- We will make most effective use of existing stock and identify suitable accommodation for those with identified needs through a flexible allocations policy.
- We will write a Communications Strategy including the specific needs of those with sensory impairment.

Implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan

We will review regularly our progress in achieving the Actions for Housing and Social Work through the Service Equalities group and other relevant management groups.

Progress will be reported to the Housing and Social Work Senior Management Team Executive on a regular basis.

Action Plan

Law and Administration

Who we are and what we do

The Aim of the Service

The Service aims to provide an excellent and timeous service to the Public, Councillors and colleagues; to develop the skills, knowledge and experience of its staff; and effectively to manage all the resources controlled by the Service

Services Provided

The Law and Administration Service can be divided into the following categories:-

1. Legal Services

- conveyancing
- Legal advice and Assistant to other Services of the Council
- General Litigation

2. Administrative Services

- Office Support
- Members' Support
- Printing Services
- Planning Gain
- Committee Services

3. Regulatory Services

- Licensing
- District Courts
- Children's Panel
- Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Liquor Licensing and Children's Panel are each subject to separate Disability Schemes and Action Plans. This Action Plan will concentrate on the other Services provided by Law and Administration. The Law and Administration Service will take cognisance of those Schemes and ensure that all relevant actions are carried out within the Service.

What we have achieved so far

1. All existing staff have received Diversity Awareness Training as part of the Council's Corporate Training Initiative on Equalities Legislation. All new Members of staff receive this training as part of the Council's Induction Training Package.

2. Law and Administration ensures compliance with all corporate Personnel policies and briefings with relevance to disabled people in the workplace such as those on Equality, Recruitment, Dignity of the individual, Health and Safety etc.

What we will do

1. We will ensure that our employees receive disability awareness training appropriate to their duties and contact with the public. This will include employees dealing with members of the public as well as those that are involved with the setting of policies and procedures.
2. We will develop and undertake a programme of disability equality impact assessments to enable us to carry out impact assessments on all our policies, functions and practices, review those that are identified as discriminatory or missing an opportunity to promote equality and review our action plan to ensure that our policies, functions and practices meet the six strands of the general duty
3. We will standardise all our correspondence, forms, leaflets and literature on the Arial 12 point sans-serif font.
4. We will review our literature and other material to ensure clarity and to ensure it is available quickly and easily in alternative formats, and are displayed appropriately. We will involve disabled people in this process.
5. We will provide appropriate training and systems for Monitoring Officers to ensure that all reports being considered at any Committee of the Council have been checked for compliance with the Council's duties under the Disability legislation
6. We will provide regular information updates for our employees and members of the public as to what we have achieved and what we still need to achieve
7. We will work with disabled people to produce information leaflets on the disability duties for persons issued with licences within Aberdeenshire.
8. We will ensure that the Equalities legislation and the disability Action Plan is integrated with the terms and actions produced under the Law and Administration Service Plan
9. We will establish a means of monitoring whether our actions have been successful, where they have not, and what we can do to achieve better results

10. We will liaise with the Transport and Infrastructure Service to ensure that access audits are carried out on all non-accessible buildings in order to keep staff and members of the public up to date with progress and access to our services.
11. We will establish more definitive links with disabled persons and disabled groups within Aberdeenshire to ensure the effect review of our functions, policies and procedures and to form an integral part of the annual review process of this Scheme and the Law and Administration Action Plan.
12. We will produce guidance for Services on the issues surrounding co-option and membership of community advisors for groups and committees.
13. We will develop an appropriate paragraph for inclusion in procurement documentation to ensure contractors and suppliers meet equalities commitments.
14. We will ensure that the Information Strategy currently under development reflects the Authority's need for equalities related information
15. The regular reports regarding the progress of the actions in this plan will be discussed and agreed by the Service Management Team

Action Plan

Personnel and ICT

Personnel and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has four operational sections within the Council

- Personnel
- ICT
- Health and Occupational Safety
- Development and Training

Personnel

We are led by the Head of Personnel who has overall responsibility for the provision of professional personnel and personnel support services and management services to the other Services of the Council.

The various teams within Personnel are responsible for providing professional advice to managers and employees of the Council in relation to the Council's employee policies and procedures. These include the following issues:

- Recruitment & Selection
- Discipline
- Grievance
- Dignity of the Individual
- Redeployment
- Redundancy, Voluntary Severance and Early Retirement
- Grading Requests
- Service Reviews
- Changes to terms and conditions or ways of working
- Equality, discrimination and harassment

Personnel Officers are also involved in researching for, drafting and implementing new and revised personnel policies.

The recruitment team are responsible for developing recruitment policies and practices. The main aims of the team are to:

- Design a first-rate application and recruitment process that is modern, accessible and cost effective
- Widen the recruitment pool
- Raise awareness of the recruitment website
- Improve the image and branding of all recruitment related material
- Provide up to date advice and information on any advertising queries and requirement

Management Services provide a service to management in the following areas:

- Job Design/Re-design
- Job Sizing;
- Process Improvement Support;
- Employee Management Information;
- Organisational Design;
- Staffing Budget Preparation;
- Organisation Chart Production;
- General Improvement Project Work

ICT

Provides services covering:

- Friendly front line customer care from the Help Desk
- Expert technical support for computer systems, large or small
- Careful management of communications links and networks
- Sympathetic software advice and development
- An experienced view on how to make the best use of information
- Objective analysis and forward looking strategic guidance

Health and occupational safety (HOSS)

The H&OSS Section is responsible for advising the council, councillors, directors, managers and employees of their responsibilities for the health safety and welfare of all the council employees and those persons who may be affected by the Council's activities.

Development and training

We are the Corporate team responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of employee development and training in support of service delivery. It operates from a number of bases including Aberdeen, Fraserburgh and Huntly.

Our main activities include:

- The provision of training (either directly or through sub-contractors/partners) arising from corporate initiatives or management requirements
- Ad-hoc advice on training needs analysis, the development of training plans, training providers, training methodologies and venues.
- Provide a programme of development support accessible to all employees.
- Seeking and managing external funding for development and training
- Contributing as members of working groups throughout the Council and beyond.

Some of what we already do...

Personnel

Aberdeenshire Council is currently recognised under the Two Ticks Symbol, a Government initiative which recognises employers who have agreed to meet the following five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees:

- To interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities
- To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss with disabled employees at any time, but at least once a year, what can be done to make sure they can develop and use their abilities
- To make sure every effort to ensure that when employees become disabled they stay in employment
- To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work
- To yearly review the five commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways of improving them and let employees know about progress and future plans.

We use standardised 12 point non-serif font in our documentation and provide access to a variety of media and support where required, both during the recruitment process and whilst in employment.

We monitor statistics to establish representation of disabled employees in applications for employment, new starts, applicants for promotion and leavers,

employees involved in disciplinary, grievance work performance and Dignity of the Individual and will soon monitor the number of applicants for attendance to Council training courses.

We work closely with our Occupational Health provider and external support agencies to try and ensure continued employment for disabled employees and for those who become disabled whilst in employment.

We obtain feedback from employees on a variety of disability issues via our bi-annual employee survey.

ICT

We test our website for accessibility.

Our New Starts process asks new employees if there are any special IT equipment or software requirements.

Health and occupational safety

Provide information and support for line managers when dealing with disability issues.

Provide information and help on Support Plans, behavioural issues, transport issues, lifting and movement implications, personnel personal hygiene, to enable fuller integration, within the council and its services.

Provide information and support to managers on accessibility, design and alteration of buildings to include facilities for disabled people.

Advice on Ergonomics.

Setting employee exposure levels in high risk activities, monitoring and surveillance of employees health.

Occupational health issues

Return to work issues, work from home specifications, specifications for specialist equipment to assist persons to remain in active employment.

Emergency procedures for workplace and leisure activities,

Maintenance procedures for equipment to comply with regulations and ensuring monitoring and reporting procedures are in place.

Employee development and training

Our training base in Aberdeen has been adapted to provide accessible training space with loop systems, level/platform lift access etc. Adjustments can be made at our premises in Fraserburgh and Huntly to meet a broad range of requirements but it is acknowledged that they are not as well equipped as the Aberdeen resource.

Our training is responsive to stated requirements and we adjust programmes to enable people with disabilities to access them.

We developed the Corporate Diversity Training Package that includes disability awareness. This training is delivered to all induction course attendees and is in the process of being cascaded to employees and Councillors.

The Council's Recruitment and Selection training programme includes a section on Equalities including disability issues.

We also make our materials available in appropriate font size and style to meet the needs of clients with visual impairment.

What we will do...

All

Ensure our employees receive disability awareness training. Those employees with duties that impact significantly on disability issues will receive enhanced training appropriate to those duties.

Review the access to our buildings to ensure that the services we provide from them are directly accessible or can be provided in a planned and appropriate alternative way.

We will review the quality and availability our information, forms and other material to ensure it follows good accessibility practice and can be provided in alternative formats as quickly as is practical.

We will form links with disability organisations to ensure our policies and practices reflect best practice when generated or reviewed.

We will identify and train impact assessors to assess our proposed and existing policies practices and functions.

We will prioritise and impact assess all our existing policies, practices and functions to ensure that they do not unintentionally discriminate against disabled people or miss opportunities to promote disability equality.

Identify a Service Equalities Champion.

Personnel

Build on our commitments made under the Two Ticks Symbol by reducing barriers for disabled people to enter and remain in employment within Aberdeenshire Council.

We will raise employee awareness of Council policies relating to disability issues including harassment and the Disability Discrimination Act and inform and encourage employees to improve take-up of our monitoring schemes.

Establish an Employee Disability Forum in order to establish an effective channel of engagement with disabled employees to:

- improve our knowledge of the needs of disabled employees
- identify additional support mechanisms required by disabled employees and
- ensure the involvement of disabled employees in the development of personnel policies and procedures

Improve the data that is collected and monitored on the recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees and to identify types of disabilities amongst employees.

Build on relationships with Occupational Health providers and Disability organisations to improve retention of disabled employees and those who become disabled whilst in employment.

Health and occupational safety

We will revisit the working group for maintenance of disability equipment organised with Education and Recreation and Housing and Social Work that lapsed in 2006.

ICT

We will, as part of our PC lease replacement programme, ask all PC users if they have any special requirements to ensure these are provided on an ongoing basis rather than only when joining the workforce.

We will implement a procedure to identify any request for provision of ICT advice or equipment related to Disability Equalities and, where possible, raise the priority.

We will seek formal accreditation for the accessibility of our corporate website.

We will ensure, as far as possible, that all our software systems are accessible.

Development and training

Develop an integrated equalities training programme, which captures requests from services resulting from this Scheme as well as the key issues identified by the involvement days.

Ensure that this programme is delivered by the most suitable means, which may involve a blend of in-house and external support.

Through existing mechanisms where possible, form links with organisations of and for disabled people to ensure that disabled people are involved in guiding our disability related training development.

Ensure that wherever possible training that is outsourced is produced involving disabled people. However it is noted that we must abide by the Council's defined policies and procedures in terms of purchasing. Review training facilities annually to ensure that the furnishings, equipment and software follow best practice wherever possible

Review our training and information library and other resources to identify alternative format/language needs and sources of these formats so they can be provided as quickly as practical when needed.

Ensure that our advice and support to other parts of the organisation recognises and promotes the consideration of equalities issues.

Facilitate the Annual process of involving disabled people in the prioritisation of Policies, Practices and functions for Impact Assessment.

Work to obtain the best possible benchmarking of Disability in the general and working age population.

Ensure the four monthly and annual reports on progress relating to the Action Plan are discussed and agreed by the Service Management Team.

Action Plan

Planning and Environmental Services

What we do and how we are organised to do it

Planning and Environmental Services comprises a wide range of functions which deal with the needs of the people of Aberdeenshire. There are four service delivery sections supported by a support services unit.

Development Management and Building Standards

These deal with; Planning Applications, Building Warrant Applications, Dangerous Buildings, Planning Appeals and Enforcement. Through Development Control the Council seeks to influence the location and quality of development in ways that comply with its objectives, policies and plans. The responsibilities of Building Standards cover all types of buildings to secure the health, welfare, safety and convenience of persons who live, work and play within the built environment.

Planning Policy and Environment

Maintaining an up to date development plan which deals with broad strategic issues while providing the detail to control and promote development at a local level. This part of the Service also works to maintain and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage of Aberdeenshire through the work of our archaeologists, country rangers and staff who protect listed buildings, access, historic sites and protected trees.

Environmental Health and Waste Management

Our Environmental Health staff carry out a range of duties including Food Safety enforcement, Health and Safety enforcement, private housing conditions and private water supply regulation, animal health and welfare including dog warden unit and environmental protection. Our waste staff are responsible for waste collection and disposal, recycling, street cleaning and the village orderly scheme, management of contaminated land and waste issues related to travelling people.

Consumer Protection and Support Service

Our consumer protection service provides Fair Trading advice, consumer advice, product safety and scientific support services and metrology. Our support services provide public conveniences, building cleaning, school and other catering and school crossing patrollers.

**More information about the above services can be found on:
www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk**

Some of what we do already towards the priorities of disabled people

We apply Aberdeenshire's equal opportunities policies in our recruitment and employment processes and in our dealings with our employees and the public.

We have standardised on 12 point non-serif font for our letters etc and give a larger print contact number for people requiring other formats.

We have piloted training for our Planners and Building Control Officers in Disability Awareness, Access and the Disability Discrimination Act. The first group, including officers from all six Council areas, received this training in April 2006.

Disability organisations are amongst those consulted for our Structure and Local Plans

We support Aberdeenshire's four disability led Access Panels in their work of examining the plans for public access developments we receive applications for. This support is in the form of a grant to cover their day to day costs and a dedicated part time Co-ordinator.

What we will do during the next three years

- ensure that all our employees receive disability awareness training appropriate to their duties and contact with the public. Front line reception staff and those meeting the public often will receive enhanced training and officers influencing access will also receive Access and further Disability Discrimination Act training as appropriate. This training will be maintained so as to be up to date and relevant. Strong and sustained leadership reinforcement of this training will ensure robust adherence to required standards.
- review our leaflets, forms and other material for clarity and ensure it is available quickly and easily in alternative formats if requested and conforms to Council Policy.
- our buildings have been assessed for access by the Property Service, and changes will be carried out as part of their prioritised programme. Until these changes are made and prove effective we will keep our plans to implement alternative ways of providing our services for those currently not able to access them or who find using them unreasonably difficult up to date. Designated staff will use their Access training to ensure that our premises are managed so as to remain accessible for the Public and Employees in the future.

- We will ensure that required access is achieved to proposed developments through the robust and consistent use of the relevant legislation
- We will deliver awareness sessions to customers/stakeholders highlighting the requirements of disability access and promoting access issues.
- we will formalise links with disability organisations to improve their involvement in the production of our Structure and Local Plans so that these appropriately reflect disability issues. We will also use these links to involve disabled people in assessing new initiatives and all reviews of services carried out as a result of Impact Assessments.
- we will include information about the Disability Discrimination Act and the General Duty with all Business Planning Application packs. We will also include information about the work and contact details of Aberdeenshire's four Access Panels.
- we will assess all our Policies functions and practices for the possibility of them discriminating against disabled people and the likely severity of the consequences of that. We will prioritise them so as to Impact Assess and, if necessary, review the most urgent first in a rolling program covering them all.
- we will identify employees and train them to enable us to carry out Impact Assessments of all our policies, functions and practices and review those that are identified as discriminatory or missing an opportunity to promote Disability Equality.
- with the help of the local Access Panels we will assess the accessibility or otherwise of our public toilet provision across Aberdeenshire and publish this information along with other relevant information such as where to obtain a "Radar" key. We will explore practical ways of improving their accessibility. In addition we will work with Transportation and Infrastructure to introduce changing facilities for adults with disabilities in 3 locations across Aberdeenshire (north, south and central) identifying suitable premises by the end of November 2007.
- We will investigate the possibility of setting up a home visiting service to provide development management and building standards services to disabled people unable to travel to Council premises and we will pilot such a service if feasible by the end of 2008.
- we will review our use of signage to ensure that in future it is appropriate to the needs of as many people as possible.
- we will monitor this action plan and report on progress towards achieving the actions in it and remain alert to the need to add to actions which are

brought to our attention through our dialogue with disabled people and their organisations.

- We will audit best practice nationally on the use of “Access Statements” to improve the accessibility of significant projects.
- The four monthly and annual reports on the progress of this Action Plan will be discussed and agreed by the Service Management Team.

Action Plan

Transportation & Infrastructure

Who we are and what we do

Economic Development provides the Council's main link with the business sector which includes the following areas:

- agriculture
- business services
- community economic development
- European services
- fishing
- food and drink
- forestry
- information and communications technology
- marketing
- rural diversification
- Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership
- Building Buchan
- tourism

The Operations Service aims to procure and deliver its various functions in accordance with Best Value principles whilst maximising the direct employment of locally based staff, covering the following:

- bridge maintenance and construction
- burial grounds
- caravan parks
- country parks
- footpath maintenance
- parks and open spaces
- quarries
- road maintenance
- sign manufacture and maintenance
- street lighting
- vehicle procurement and maintenance
- winter maintenance

Property aims to provide a service which is responsive to the needs of all Council functions on property related matters in the following areas:

- asset management
- professional advice and support
- management & development of the Council's industrial/commercial property portfolio

- valuation, acquisition and disposal of land and property
- design services for new and existing buildings
- cost planning and cost control
- electrical and mechanical engineering services
- energy management
- repair and maintenance of the Council's properties

The Roads Service aims to manage, and deliver as appropriate, the following functions for which it is responsible in the most efficient and effective way possible:

- abnormal loads
- bridges and structures (inspection, register, policy and maintenance)
- capital programme of road works
- car parks
- coast protection
- development control
- flood prevention
- guidelines and specifications for new roads
- harbours
- monitoring financial and technical performance of Operations
- park and ride facilities
- reservoirs
- roads and footpaths (policy and standards)
- statutory functions of a Roads Authority
- statutory list of public roads
- street naming
- traffic management
- facilities for the disabled
- development of cycling facilities

The Transportation Service aims to promote the development and delivery of an integrated, sustainable and efficient transportation system, which supports economic growth and prosperity and an inclusive society in Aberdeenshire and northeast Scotland for:-

- Local Transport Strategy for Aberdeenshire
- contribution to Regional Transport Strategy through NESTRANS
- Road Traffic Reduction strategy
- contributing to European transport policy development
- transportation studies and assessments
- travel planning and travel awareness
- road safety and accident investigation
- Safer Routes to School and School Travel Plans
- support for local bus services
- development of demand responsive transport services
- public transport infrastructure and information
- local concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people
- promoting community transport
- promoting bus ticketing schemes

- procurement of school transport

What we have already achieved

1. We apply Aberdeenshire's equal opportunities policies in our recruitment and employment processes and in our dealings with the public.
2. We have standardised on Arial 12 point sans-serif font for our documentation and give a larger print contact number for people requiring other formats.
3. We have completed equalities awareness training for all staff. New staff are provided with the training through their induction programme.
4. Awareness training has been provided for designers, including tool box talks e.g. improved design standards and auditor training prior to conducting access audits.
5. We have a policy to ensure compliance for external works e.g. requirement for access statements.
6. Works requiring planning permission are passed to the relevant Access Panel by the Planning Officer following our submission for approval; however, it is recognised that not all works require statutory permissions.
7. Access surveys on public buildings have been completed by Property and surveys are underway for streets.
8. Accessibility has been improved through door-to-door schemes such as demand responsive transport.
9. We work in partnership with bus operators to improve access through schemes such as low bus floor initiatives.
10. We administer the non-statutory Taxi-card scheme
11. We have set up bus forums in each area of the Council to which disability groups are invited.
12. We have produced a transport guide for people with disabilities to help raise awareness of services available for various modes of public transport.
13. Facilities management in the main public offices has improved the features available for particular needs e.g. signage, induction loops or access to portable ones.
14. The data collected for the asset management plans for properties enables us to determine a suitability rating for DDA purposes which enables us to prioritise future works programmes.
15. We undertake a DDA audit prior to carrying out any alterations to existing premises to determine what remedial works may be required (for internal and external features).

16. We have carried out an assessment of our policies and functions to determine where they have an impact on equalities issues so that we can develop a prioritised programme of Equality Impact Assessments.

What we need to do over the next three years

1. Ensure our staff receive disability awareness training appropriate to their duties and contact with the public. This will include staff dealing with members of the public as well as those that influence access such as design and maintenance staff. Such training will include:
 - additional auditor training
 - refresher training for design and maintenance staff
 - training to enable the completion of Impact Assessments
2. Develop and undertake a programme of disability equality impact assessments to enable us to carry out impact assessments on all our policies, functions and practices and review those that are identified as discriminatory or missing an opportunity to promote equality.
3. Review our literature (forms, leaflets, notices) and other material for clarity and ensure it is available quickly and easily in alternative formats if requested, and is displayed appropriately.
4. Review the weighting system for assessment of revenue projects/programmes and consider the implications for the procurement process and assessment of tenders e.g. to ensure that contractors are aware of the obligations when carrying out work on our behalf.
5. DDA audits must be incorporated into the asset management plan to inform future repairs and upgrades to the physical infrastructure and the remainder of the asset surveys to be completed.
6. Publish a list of public buildings with their associated accessibility features which will be updated on a regular basis, possibly as a live document on the web site with an opportunity to provide feedback.
7. Develop a protocol to formalise the consultation/involvement process (including Access Panels). This needs to take account of the workload issues for such groups and what the priority areas for involvement should be.
8. Complete ongoing programmes of DDA compliance works within the allocated resources.
9. Develop an asset management strategy (where we are the Client service) to identify future service provision needs. The asset management strategy is a list of physical assets describing the condition and usage and comparing it to the anticipated future needs for service delivery.

