

East Devon District Council

Disability Equality Scheme and Policy

Reviewed

Nov 06

Policy Number

-

Policy Approval

-

Policy Statement

East Devon District Council aspires to improving its performance against the Local Authority Equality Standard (currently achieves Level 1). It has an Equalities Policy setting out its approach and basic stance. As part of its approach it will of course embrace the Disability Equality Duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended 2005).

The Council recognises that many people in its employ, its community, or visitors to the area have a disability (often not visible). Just over 20% of residents described themselves as having a limiting long term medical condition in the last census. (Higher than UK average).

We must ensure that people with disabilities have their needs met. Where it is proportionate and reasonable to do so we must make particular arrangements for people with disabilities. More favourable treatment of people with disabilities may be required to ensure that their opportunities are equal to those of other people.

We must of course ensure that any unlawful Discrimination against people with disabilities is eliminated within the Council (and where possible within the community), similarly we must not tolerate harassment relating to disability and look to this being eliminated. We must ensure we promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.

People with disabilities must be further encouraged to participate in public life.

Evidently people with disabilities may also suffer other forms of discrimination or prejudice (including that relating to their sexuality, gender, race or religion). The Council's Equality policy seeks to address such multiple issues.

Disability is one of the many diversity issues for the Council. In this respect it reflects our ambition and commitment to deal with every customer as an individual with their own particular needs.

The Council's Commitment

East Devon District Council does not, and will not, tolerate disability prejudice in any form and will strive to eliminate this and any inequalities that arise from disability. The Disability Equality scheme and policy applies to every Member and officer of the Council and to everyone contracted or commissioned to provide services on the Council's behalf.

What is Disability

A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (or has a severe disfigurement).

Thus any substantial mental or physical impairment which has lasted 12 months and is likely to recur over at least another 12 months is a disability.

The definition does include people with HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis, "Mental impairment" includes those conditions often referred to as "learning disabilities".

How we will tackle the issue

Context –

Involving people with disabilities in drawing up the scheme and policy

The Council actively seeks the views of people with disabilities and has sought to recognise these in drawing up the scheme and policy (which itself has also gone out to consultation).

Recent consultation seeking, or also identifying, views from people with disabilities about Council services and approaches include:-

- Housing Survey (and tenants surveys)
- Youth Survey
- Play Strategy Questionnaire
- 2 reviews on Access to Council services
- DDA review of Council buildings
- Seeking views through 'East Devon Talk'
- Employment survey (employers)
- Stress survey and staff survey (employees)
- Mail out to disability organisations asking about Council's approach (as part of Social Inclusion check)
- Through the Council's "Speak Now" forum – surveying people with disabilities about Council priorities for disability equality
- East Devon User Forum (through 'Living Options, Devon')

Impact Assessment of policies and practices

- The Council has carried out a self-assessment of impacts and service accessibility for people with disabilities via its Social Inclusion Checklist process
- The formal complaints process seeks specific feedback on matters relating to disability
- Disability access assessments of buildings have been carried out through a specialist contractor
- The Council's draft policy impact assessment tool (embedded in the Committee template) seeks to anticipate impacts of decisions on people with disabilities
- Recruitment impact is assessed by the Human Resources team

Gathering further information

- The Council will seek to continue to work with groups representing people with disabilities, and individuals with disabilities to identify shortfalls in good practice
- The Council will use information at its disposal including data on levels of specialist benefits, housing needs, and census data to help inform its approach
- We will actively seek customer satisfaction survey data, and review formal complaints relating to people with disabilities
- We will be continuing work as part of a Devon wide consultation consortium

Using the information gathered

The Council's Equalities Steering Group (all Council services, chaired by a nominated Member) will consider the information gathered, and impact assessment information, in order to shape and challenge current practice, future policy, and thus create the next Disabilities Equalities Scheme Statement and Policy (due December 2009).

This body will also produce the required annual review. This review will be published on the Council's website.

It will be recognised that people with disabilities may not always disclose their disability, nor the problems they encounter, so we will not regard low numbers as an indication of few issues.

Outcomes

The action plan at Appendix A1 will be delivered.

Who is responsible for delivery?

All staff.

Performance Monitoring

The Corporate Equalities Steering Group will monitor.

Policy Review

December 2008

Related Policies and Strategies

Equality and Diversity Policy
Consultation Strategy