



Charnwood

Leading in Leicestershire

Disability Equality Scheme 2007 – 10

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communications@charnwood.gov.uk

Foreword

All people have the right to be treated respectfully and to lead an ordinary life. However, many disabled people are unable to reach their potential or participate fully in community life because of the barriers they face. The barriers range from physical to attitudinal.

We are committed to equality and diversity through everything we do. It is only through embracing and promoting these values that we will be able to provide quality services, become an employer of choice and develop more cohesion communities.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 has given us the opportunity to focus and strengthen the work we do on disability equality to improve the experience of people with disabilities when using our services.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved in developing this Scheme to ensure we are using our resources in an effective and targeted way.



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Further Information

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www.charnwood.gov.uk/community/equalityanddiversity.html

ਕੌਂਸਲ ਦੇ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ਾਂ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ

ਅਸੀਂ ਸਭ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨਾਵਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਲਈ, ਲਿਖਤੀ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਦੀ ਸਹੂਲਤ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਕਿਸੇ ਵਿਕਲਪਕ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੌਂਸਲ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ, ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 01509 634560 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

কোউন্সিলের ডকুমেন্ট (দলিলপত্র) অনুবাদ

আমাদের সকল প্রকাশনার অনুবাদের ব্যবস্থা আমরা করি এবং নিখিত ও অডিও টেপ অনুবাদ-ও নো আমরা প্রদান করি। বিকল্প কোন ভাষায় যদি কোন কোউন্সিল ডকুমেন্ট (দলিলপত্র) আপনি অনুবাদ করানো চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে 01509 634560 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন।

翻譯區議會的公文

為求翻譯所有的刊物，我們提供文字與錄音帶的翻譯設施。要索取其他語言版本的區議會公文請致電 01509 634560。

ક્રાઉન્સિલના દસ્તાવેજોનો તરજૂમો - ભાષાંતર કરવા વિષે

અમે બધાજ પ્રકાશનોના (પબ્લિકેશન્સ) તરજૂમા માટે લિખિત અને ઓડિઓ ટેઇપની ટ્રેન્સલેશન સગવડતા પૂરી પાડીએ છીએ. ક્રાઉન્સિલનો દસ્તાવેજ કોઈ બીજી કે વૈકલ્પિક ભાષામાં મેળવવા કૃપા કરી 01509 634560 ઉપર ફોન કરો.

काउंसिल के दस्तावेज का अनुवाद

हम सभी प्रकाशनों के अनुवाद के लिए लिखित और ऑडियो टेप अनुवाद सुविधा प्रदान करते हैं। काउंसिल के दस्तावेज का किसी वैकल्पिक भाषा में अनुवाद प्राप्त करने के लिए कृपया टेलीफोन नंबर 01509 634560 डायल करें।

تہ رجومہ ی ئوراقی کونسیل (تیاره وانی)

ئیمه ته رجومه ی مه کتوب یان له سه ر شریتی هه موو نوسراوه کانی کونسیل ئاماده ده که بن. بو وه رگرتتی ئوراقی کونسیل به زبانیکی تر، تکایه ته له قوون بکه بو ئه م ره قه مه: ۰۱۵۰۹۶۳۴۵۶۰

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Section I

I.1 Introduction

Many people with disabilities experience profound social and economic exclusion. This is often not the result of medical status but the environment, policies and attitudes they encounter that can raise institutional barriers. Exclusion is often intensified by other factors such as age, ethnic origin or gender. Much of this first Disability Equality Scheme will be working towards changing how we think about disability issues.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a disabled person as ‘people with a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. Normal day-to-day activities include mobility impairments, manual dexterity limitations, lack physical co-ordination, continence, the ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, hearing or eyesight impairments, loss of memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand or perception of the risk of physical danger. What this means is that people who have a disability or a long-term health condition and some others (such as people with a facial disfigurement) are likely to have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the DDA 2005.

I.2 Disability equality and the social model of disability

The Council recognises that work needs to be done to prioritise and promote disability equality. As our first step to achieving this, we have committed ourselves to formally adopting the social model of disability and moving away from the medical model of disability.

The social model of disability recognises that the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. These people are often disabled by the barriers that exist when society fails to take account of their needs. This excludes them from participation or independence because service design, accessible communication and access to information, buildings and attitudes make aspects of society inaccessible to them. The social model says that disabled people should enjoy the same freedoms and choices as those who are non-disabled and be allowed equal responsibility in making decisions that affect them. Exclusion is often intensified by other factors such as age, ethnic origin or gender. Much of this first Disability

Equality Scheme will be working towards changing how we think about disability issues.

This is in contrast with the medical model of disability on which the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 is based, which defines disability in terms of people with certain conditions or certain limitations on their ability to carry out 'normal day to day activities'. When we view disability in this way we focus on 'making amends' for people with impairments for what is 'imperfect' or 'wrong' with their physical or mental state.

1.3 Our Themes and Values

The Council has recently adopted 8 values that we hold as important and decide how we want to work they will provide clear guidance and an ethos throughout the Borough Council. They are:



Customer Focused – We will prioritise the needs and requirements of our customers and continually ask 'how can we make it better?'



Ambitious – We will strive to achieve ambitious targets, pushing boundaries and 'Leading' in all we do.



Diverse – We will respect and actively encourage diverse communities and working. We will respect and value all.



Accountable – We are accountable for all our actions and outcomes. As a Local Authority, Councillors and employees we answer directly to you – the residents and businesses within the Borough.



Develops Talent – We will ensure that staff, the organisations biggest asset, have the opportunity to develop their skills and in turn improve the services the Authority provides.



Innovative – We will constantly look for new ways of working, pushing boundaries and looking to pioneer new and creative ways of working to ensure the best outcome.



Adds Value – We will add value to all our services, continually improving the quality of the service at a level which fits the public purse. Reducing the 'red-tape' and setting our sights higher are key.



Open – We will provide an 'open door' for people wishing to know about the services, procedures and policies of the Borough Council. We will be straight and clear in all we do.

These values will have a significant impact on the way we work, the services we provide and the way in which we provide them. Customer focus and diversity are highlighted as being important to us. It is the aim of this Scheme to reflect these values and show how they will be put into practice.

I.4 General and Specific Duties

In December 2006, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 was amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. This imposed a new duty on all public authorities to proactively promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. It requires us to make a positive shift in our approach from being reactive to disabled people complaining about individual cases of discrimination, to one where we are proactive and preventative agents of change. We will need to take active steps to remove barriers and develop a new agenda, which builds disabled people and disability equality into everything we do from the outset. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 sets out a general duty and specific duties. The main requirements of the new duty are set out below.

I.4.1 The General Duty

The General Duty states that public authorities must, in carry out their functions, have due regard to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other people
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people in public life
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- Take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where it involves treating people more favourably than other people.

The General Duty builds upon the duties of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 including the duty to make reasonable adjustments to make sure people with disabilities can access employment, goods, facilities, services, functions and premises.

Disability Legislation includes:

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Building Regulations 2000 and Part M requirements – building regulation amendments 2004

In meeting the General Duty, we will need to consider how we tackle the effects of any of our previous decisions which failed to give due regard to the promotion of disability equality.

I.4.2. The Specific Duty

The General Duty is supported by a Specific Duty to prepare a Disability Equality Scheme which sets out:

- How we will gather and analyse evidence to inform actions and track progress through our action plan,
- How we will assess the impact of existing and proposed activities on disabled people,
- How we will monitor and review progress every year,
- How we will involve disabled people in the development of the scheme ,
- Arrangements for fulfilling the general duty – our action plan.

The Disability Equality Scheme is a living document and whilst the aims will remain the same, we continuously review our progress making sure that our action planning reflects changes and progress the council has made.

I.5 What we are already doing

Although this is our first dedicated Disability Equality Scheme we have a long history of working to improve our services and employment for people with disability. We also provide a number of important services for people with disability.

Some of our work so far includes;

- Bringing all the public areas of our buildings up to the DDA requirements. This has included closing one of our buildings within Loughborough town centre that didn't meet requirements.
- Production of a video and guidance covering accessibility issues in local shops and premises across Charnwood to raise awareness of the barriers faced by people with disabilities during the European Year of the Disabled (2003) in partnership with Charnwood Disability Forum.
- Development of an accessible shopping guidance by the Town Centre Team to help raise awareness with shop owners and people with disabilities.
- Significant investment to improve our playground facilities to ensure ease of use.

- Recording the disability status of respondents to consultation and service feedback or requests for service to ensure that people with disabilities aren't experiencing a different level of service.
- Production of a 'Making it Easy' Spatial Planning Document for developers by our Development Directorate.
- Improvements in our Customer Service Centre, website and telephone contact centre to make it easier for people to contact us and receive services.

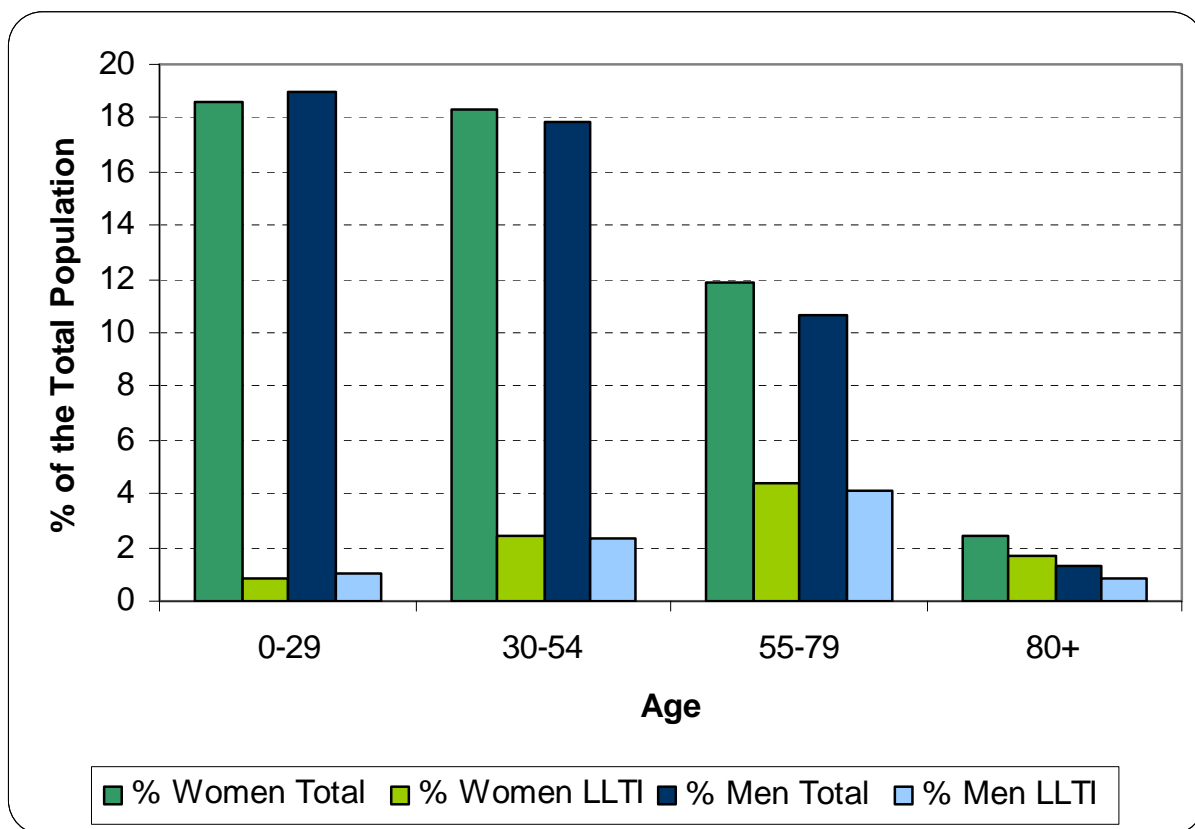
Services we currently provide include:

- Loughborough Shop Mobility located at Loughborough Town Hall.
- Accessible toilets throughout the Borough including the distribution of Radar keys.
- Sheltered Housing provision for the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Provision of information in alternative formats including Braille, large print and audio tape.
- Home visits as requested.
- An Occupational Health Advisor for our housing tenants.
- Provision of adaptations for our housing tenants.
- Wild Card (our leisure pass) discounts for people with disabilities
- Adaptations to service, for example the waste collection assisted list for these people who are unable to move their wheeled bin.
- Provision of Housing and Council Tax Benefits for people with disabilities.
- Funding of community projects that support people with disabilities through our Community Grants Scheme.
- Use of the two ticks employment standard that guarantees a job interview for any disabled applicant who meets the essential criteria of the job.
- Provision of the concessionary travel scheme for the elderly and disabled.

More information about all of these services can be found on our website using the following link or by picking up a factsheet leaflet at the Councils Southfields reception <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/community/equalityanddiversity.html>.

I.6 About Disability in the UK

In the 2001 Census, one in six people in the UK (10.3 million,) living in a private household reported having a limiting long-term illness (LLTI) and around one in five people of working age are considered to be "disabled". A recent Labour Force Survey (2005) indicates that this number has risen to 11 million adults and 770,000 children). Only 17 % of people with a disability were born with a particular condition. Graph 1.1 shows that the proportion of people with disability increases with age (5.1% of 0-29 year olds as compared to 37.8% of 55-79 year olds).



Graph 1.1
Limiting Long-Term Illness in England and Wales by Gender and Age
Plotted Against the Total Population (Census 2001)

While Britain is getting wealthier and medicine is developing, an increasing proportion of the population have some form of health condition or disability, partly because many of us are living longer and treatments are improving. People are able to live for a long time even after for example cancer, a heart attack or an accident.

In the 2002/03 Family Resource Survey, the most common limitation reported by both men and women in Britain was mobility, followed by the ability to lift, carry or move objects, and then by manual dexterity. The most common condition was musculoskeletal disorders, followed by heart and circulatory problems and then respiratory diseases.

Other statistics include:

- 71.1% of over 70-year-olds will have some kind of hearing loss
- There are 12,000 children aged 0 to 15 years old who were born deaf
- There are 23,000 deafblind people in the UK
- There are an estimated 50,000 British Sign Language users
- The ratio of interpreters (including trainees) to sign language users is 1 to 156
- The ratio of fully-qualified interpreters to sign language users is 1 to 275

- 2 million people use hearing aids - 1.4 million people who use them regularly
- It is estimated 4 million people could benefit from a hearing aid
- There are 921 hearing dogs that have been trained by Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- 4.7 million adults have experienced tinnitus for longer than five minutes

Source RNID

- 2 million people in the UK self define as having a sight problem
- The majority (85%) of people with sight problems are aged over 65
- There are approximately 25,000 children with sight problems in the UK, while nearly half of these (12,000) of these children also have other disabilities
- There are 378,000 people in the UK who are registered as blind or partially sighted
- Every day another 100 people start to lose their sight

Source RNIB

- 1.5 million people in the UK have a learning disability
- 200 babies are born with a learning disability every week
- 9 out of 10 people with a learning disability get bullied
- There are more than 29,000 people with a severe or profound learning disability who live at home with carers aged over 70

Source Mencap

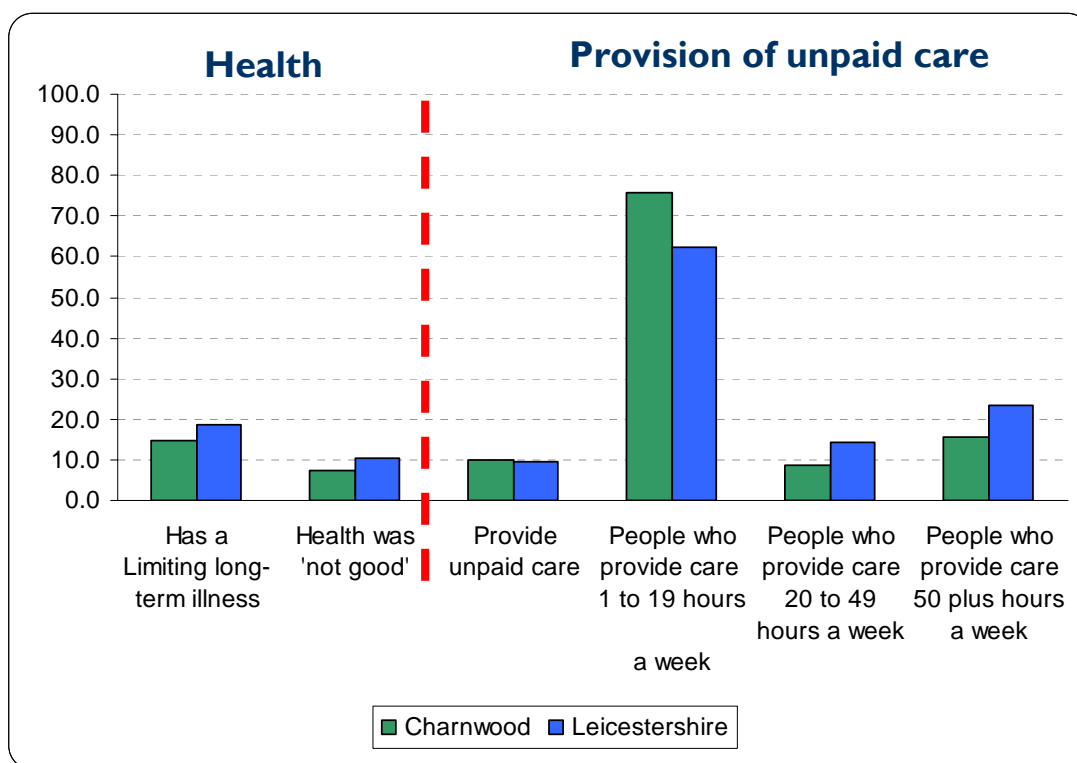
- Around 300 people out of 1,000 will experience mental health problems every year in Britain
- 230 of which will visit a GP
- 102 of which will be diagnosed as having a mental health problem
- 24 of which will be referred to a specialist psychiatric service
- 6 will become inpatients in psychiatric hospitals

(Source: based on figures from Goldberg, D. & Huxley, P, 1992, Common mental disorders a bio-social model, Routledge.)

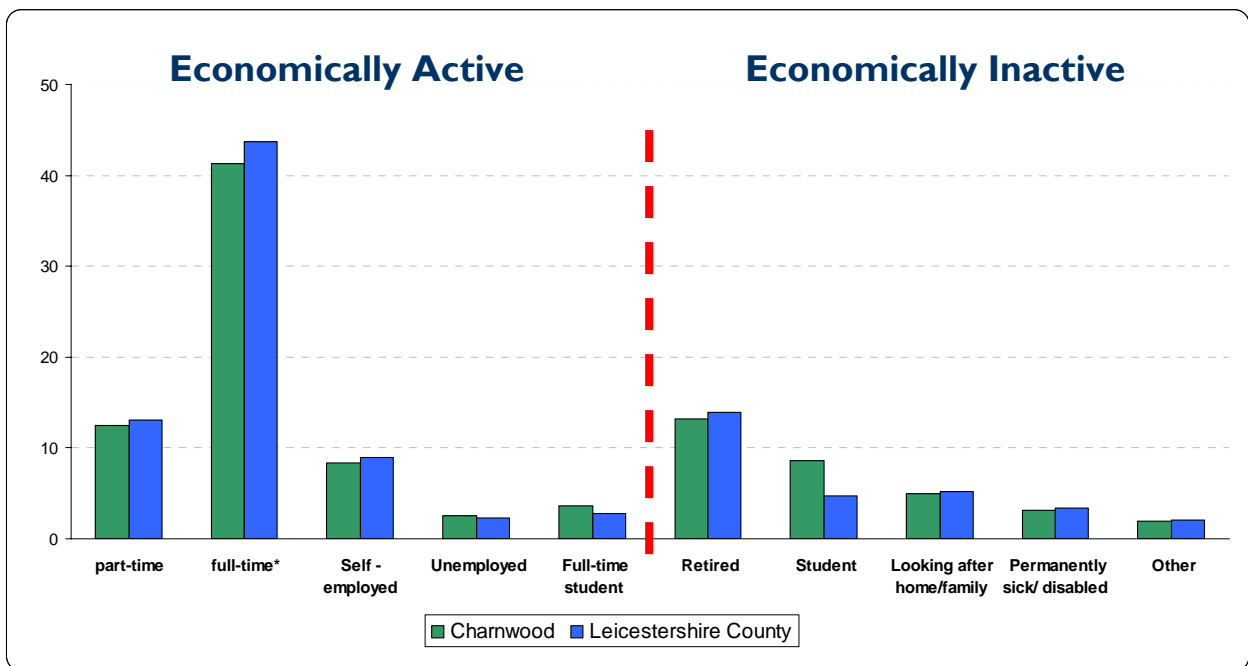
Statistics show that disabled people have lower levels of educational attainment, lower employment incomes and higher unemployment rates than the general population. Of the total of unemployed people living in Britain, 40% are disabled. Only 51% of disabled people are in work, with 21% of people with a mental health illness and 17% with a learning disability in paid work. At all levels of qualification, a disabled person in Britain is more likely than a non-disabled person to be low-paid and have fewer opportunities to improve their economic standing. This creates a less visible social profile for disabled people and leads to increased marginalisation (Source Disability Rights Commission).

I.7 About Disability in Charnwood

In the 2001 Census, 15% of the population of Charnwood stated they had a limiting long-term illness with 7.3% of the population having 'not good health'. This makes up a significant amount of the population and therefore considering the needs of people with disabilities when we design our services and carry out recruitment it is important that we can meet the needs of everyone within Charnwood. Graph 1.2 below shows the proportion of people with poor health along side those who provide unpaid care. 10% of people provide some kind of unpaid care. Of those 10%, 75% provide 1 to 19 hours per week, 8.8% of 20 to 49% and 15.5% provide 50+ hours. In many cases people with disabilities provide unpaid care.



Graph 1.2
Health and Provision of Unpaid Social Care in Charnwood compared with Leicestershire (2001 Census)



**Graph 1.3
Economic Activity of people aged 17-74 in Charnwood compared with Leicestershire (2001 Census)**

Graph 1.3 above shows the profile of economic activity of people aged 17-74 in Charnwood compared with the whole of Leicestershire. Permanently sick or disabled people make up 3.1% of the population aged 17-74 who are not in employment or education.

These figures demonstrate the scale of disability in Charnwood and why disability equality needs to be a priority for the Council's services. The services the Council provides are often of most need to particularly vulnerable people within the community. This can include people with a wide variety of disabilities. Therefore it is even more important that we get our services right for people with disabilities, particularly the more debilitating disabilities.

Section 2

2.1 The Disability Equality Scheme

This is Charnwood Borough Councils first Disability Equality Scheme. To date disability actions and issues have been captured in the Equality and Diversity Plan. We welcome the strengthening of the Disability Discrimination Act which gives a much stronger grounding for disability equality. The Scheme has been developed over several months and has involved many different groups and organisations, much of which is outlined below. But that involvement doesn't stop at the writing of the Scheme, we want disabled people to be involved in the monitoring and development of the actions within the Action Plan towards the end of this document.

2.2 Involving disabled people in developing the scheme

One of the specific duties within the Act requires public authorities to involve disabled people who appear to the authority to have an interest in the way it carries out its functions in the development of the Disability Equality Scheme.

The Code of Practice state that in order to be fully effective, the involvement should:

- Be focused – the process should be clear about where the authority has scope to make changes, and what resources are available
- Use accessible mechanisms – use accessible mechanisms in order that disabled people can participate effectively
- Be proportionate – the approach taken should be commensurate with the size of the public authority
- Be influential – people outside the organisation should be able to see how the involvement has affected the public authority's plans; and
- Be transparent – to maintain ongoing commitment of involvement by disabled people they need to know that it has been influential, not merely tokenistic.

We wanted to find out from disabled people what they felt were the most important issues for people with disabilities in Charnwood. Several activities have been undertaken to involve disabled people in the development of the Scheme.

These include:

- Learning disabilities focus groups
- A Disability Equality Scheme Workshop
- A disability access to service questionnaire
- Charnwood Action Group (Learning Disabilities) Mystery Shop

Learning Disability Focus Groups

Focus group sessions were held with 3 groups of people with learning and other disabilities. Some of these groups had participated in a Mystery Shop exercise conducted by the Charnwood Action Group on behalf of the Borough Council.

The following topics were discussed:

- Rubbish and Recycling
- Council Housing
- Town Hall and Shop Mobility
- Leisure Centres
- Parks
- Town Centre Toilets
- Community Safety
- How people like to contact us and to be contacted

Disability Equality Scheme Workshop

A workshop event was held specifically for Charnwood Disability Forum with invitations being sent to other groups. The event started with a brief outline of the new Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the new duties under it. The meeting then broke into smaller discussion groups facilitated by Senior Officers and Members of Charnwood Borough Council on the topics outlined above.

Disability Access to Service Questionnaire

A questionnaire exercise designed around people's experience of accessing council services was carried out. The questionnaire was sent out to over 120 individuals and groups and has also been posted on the website. The questionnaire will remain on the website after the development of this Scheme to continue to find out what disabled people's experiences are.

Charnwood Action Group Mystery Shop

The Charnwood Action Group is linked to Leicestershire Learning Disability Partnership Board and the Valuing People Team. 9 different groups within the

Charnwood Action Group took part in Mystery Shopping some of the Council's services. The places 'mystery shopped' included:

- Loughborough Leisure Centre
- Soar Valley Leisure Centre
- Loughborough Town Hall
- Shop Mobility
- Southfields Council Offices
- Loughborough Town Centre and Market Place.

The findings have been presented to Senior Council Officers by some of the groups that took part with a commitment to meet with the group again in 6 months to identify what actions have been taken. These actions have been included within the Action Plan.

2.3 Consultation Findings

These engagement exercises drew out a number of issues. These can be summarised as:

- **Consultation and engagement in project and service development**

Many people expressed a desire to be involved in helping to develop and design services to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities had been considered thoroughly before the projects or services have been launched.

- **Access to buildings and services**

This means going beyond the DDA 1995 requirements particularly how services are designed e.g. access to leisure facilities, housing and other services that are provided at our Southfields Offices site. This also included how people get to our services and safety on the journey.

- **Accessible information**

People with a range of disabilities found it difficult to access some of our information either because a specific disability prevented them from being able to read the information or because the information was difficult to understand.

- **Signage**

This relates to the town centre signage we provide and signage to the Council's main buildings on Southfields Road Loughborough. It also picked up on signage we provide to some of our facilities and in particular Loughborough Leisure Centres.

- **Customer Care**

The quality of our customer care was asked at each consultation exercise. There were a lot of positive comments about staff going out of their way to be helpful but unfortunately there were some instances when this wasn't the case. Customer care and disability equality training have been recommended as actions to improve this.

- **Employment**

A number of people raised the point that if we had more staff with a range of disabilities the organisation would be more aware of the needs of people with disabilities.

This engagement work has been invaluable in understanding the needs of disabled people and the barriers they have come across when using our services. Through this work a number of improvement actions have been suggested and these have been picked up in the Action Plan section of the Scheme.

2.4 Information gathering

Evidence gathering is part of the process of achieving greater equality for disabled people and treating employees, service users and members of the community more fairly and with respect. Information gathering is not an end in itself but a mechanism to enable us to make better decisions about what actions would best improve disability equality.

At a national level there is no one satisfactory data source of information on people with disabilities and the Disability Rights Commission relies on a range of householder surveys to build a picture of disability across the UK. However, the disability questions within these types of surveys are often ambiguous and don't provide detailed information on the extent of people's disabilities or its impact on the day to day experience.

Therefore, we must gather information to identify any potential barriers to our employment practices and our services, or when people are experiencing different levels in quality or satisfaction with service.

The Disability Equality Scheme must include within it arrangements for gathering information on:

- The impact of the public authority's policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of its disabled employees.
- The extent to which the services it provides, and the other functions it performs, taking account of the needs of disabled people.

2.4.1 Employment

The Council gathers information through the TRENTHAM integrated Human Resources and Payroll computer system. The system records personnel records and personal information.

Once the disability status of a member of staff or job applicant is recorded, we are able to monitor the effectiveness of our recruitment, development and retention of disabled employees. It is not only about monitoring the information but evaluating and responding to what it is telling us about our practices and processes.

We also gather data on disability through our annual staff survey. This survey provides results on whether a member of staff has a disability and whether they have been harassed or discriminated against on the grounds of their disability. This includes both the internal working environment and as they work with our customers.

There is currently an under reporting of disability status by our staff. We need to raise awareness of the definition of disability and encourage staff to report their disability in order for us to provide suitable adjustments to enable them to carry out their work more easily and effectively. The DRC recognises that 53% of disabled people do not either identify themselves as being disabled or do not recognise that they have rights under this legislation. The stereotypical prejudices associated with being disabled means that many who can hide their impairment will often choose to do so. The emphasis within the Social Model of Disability is to consider what steps we can take to make it a positive step to identify as a disabled person. This means the approach must be around creating positive images, role models and development programmes that sees disabled people being recruited, supported, promoted and offered training and opportunities on an equal basis. It is only by taking away negative stereotypical images that we will create a climate for change and disabled people will feel more included and more open to identification.

2.4.2 Service Delivery

Many of our services have been engaged in equality monitoring for a number of years. Our current monitoring forms include ethnicity, disability and age. This monitoring information is not only recorded for service take up but also for customer satisfaction. We are able to identify any disparities in satisfaction between disabled and non-disabled users.

We collect data on disability through our Triennial Customer Satisfaction Survey. This provides us with an insight into the number of disabled residents we have in the borough and the extent to which our service users, and those who live in their households, have disabilities that limit their day to day activities.

We are currently developing a new Customer Relations Management System (CRM). The CRM system will develop person profiles and enable us to gather more information on individual needs e.g. this person needs information in Braille, this person needs a home visit as they have a mobility impairment etc. The purpose of gathering this information on a central system is to ensure that when people are approached by or use different Council services they aren't asked for the same information several times and that services have an awareness of people individual requirements in order to make our service provision more personalised. The development of the new CRM system has also provided an opportunity to revise and update our current monitoring arrangements.

This links to the commitments in our Equal Opportunities Policy on employment and service delivery standards as well as our recently revised Customer Access Strategy and Customer Service Standards. All of these documents can be found on our website www.charnwood.gov.uk or by telephoning 01505 634505.

2.5 Conducting Equality Impact Assessments

We have taken a generic approach to equality impact assessments since April 2006. This involves assessing whether a policy, strategy or function is relevant to equality or diversity. If it is relevant to equality a full assessment is carried out.

We will continue to assess our policies and functions to ascertain whether they have, or are likely to have, an adverse impact on equality for disabled people.

Our EIA process follows the best practice from the Commission for Race Equality by having a separate screening and full impact assessment process.

The aim of the equality impact assessment process is to:

- Identify and highlight the potential effects that proposed policies will have on different groups,
- Take action to reduce or eliminate any identified adverse impact that cannot be justified before the policy is implemented, and
- Identify issues in the context of other relevant policies.

This process will be managed through the Equality Project Team and progress will be reported quarterly to the Project Board. The impact assessment process will be reviewed annually and the full list of policies and functions reviewed after two years in 2008.

Results of the Equality Impact Assessments will be published on our website www.charnwood.gov.uk/community/equalityanddiversity.

2.6 Links to the Equality Standard for Local Government

The Equality Standard for Local Government provides a framework to help deliver equality throughout the Council's activity. It does this by ensuring that race, disability and gender equality are considered together without losing focus on the specific issues.

The Equality Standard has five levels

- Level 1 - Commitment to a comprehensive equality policy
- Level 2 - Self-assessment and consultation
- Level 3 - Setting equality objectives and targets
- Level 4 - Establishing Information systems and monitoring equality targets
- Level 5 - Achieving and reviewing outcomes

For each level the Council must consider four key areas:

- Leadership and commitment
- Consultation, community development and scrutiny
- Service delivery and customer care
- Employment and training

Many of the actions to fulfil elements of the disability equality duties are already captured in the Council's Equality and Diversity Plan which can be found at <http://www.charnwood.gov.uk/community/plansandpolicies.html>, however, distinct disability equality actions will be highlighted in the Action Plan accompanying this Scheme.

The achievement of level 3 of the Equality Standard is one of the Council's key projects. This project ensures we are addressing all the relevant equality commitments and continuing to improve our performance. Development of this Scheme has been managed through this project to ensure it lines up with the Standard.

For further information on the Equality Standard for Local Government look up the IDeA Local government improvement web pages at <http://www.idea.gov.uk>.

2.7 Review of the Disability Equality Scheme

We will conduct annual reviews of progress in implementing this scheme, and will publish annual reports. At the end of the two year period we will produce a revised version to cover the following three years. This review will involve input from residents and employees with disabilities.

Section 3

3.1 Disability Action Plan 2007-10

The following action plan sets out how we will deliver disability equality in Charnwood.

Each relevant Directorate Service Plan includes actions that they will take to implement this plan. There will be other action plans such as the Race Equality Scheme and the Equality and Diversity Plan which will provide a comprehensive list of the actions we intend to take over the next 3 years.

Actions are grouped under the following headings, which follow the best practice requirements within the Equality Standard for Local Government

- Section 1 Leadership and Commitment
- Section 2 Consultation and Community Development and Scrutiny
- Section 3 Service Delivery and Customer Care
- Section 4 Employment and Training

This Action Plan will be delivered from April 2007 to March 2010 and will undergo an annual review taking on board the results from a self-assessment process, equality impact assessments and emerging equality legalisation. In addition during the lifetime of this plan the Council will conduct a Best Value Review of its equality and diversity activity. The findings of this review will form the basis for improvement actions.

Task	Responsibility	Start	Finish	Resources	Performance Measure	Complete
Consultation and Engagement						
Consultation on the draft Disability Equality Scheme	Performance Support Officer	Dec 06	Jan 06	Consultation budget	Range of consultation methods have been used Final version produced in a number of formats	
Raise awareness of the Hard to Reach Toolkit	Communication and Consultation Team	Apr 07	Ongoing	Officer Time	Number of consultations carrying out targeted work	
Invite stakeholders and customers to conduct mystery shopper exercises	Performance Support Officer	Aug 07	Apr 08	Officer and customer time	1 per year	
Establishment of Disability Advisory Panel	Performance Improvement Officer	Apr 07	Ongoing	Officer Time	Initial meeting Purpose and aims of the Panel agreed	
Access to buildings and services						
Roll out year 2 equality impact assessments	Directors Performance Support Officer	Apr 07	Mar 08	Officer Time	100% or year 2 programme completed	
Improved provision of recreation and leisure opportunities	Head of Recreational	As per project		As part of Capital	Development of targeted sessions	

Task		Responsibility	Start	Finish	Resources	Performance Measure	Complete
		Services Head of Arts, Culture and Heritage			Projects	Leisure Centre improvements Improvements at Queen's Park Increasing use of the Outwoods by non-users Raise awareness of wildcard, museums and parks with disabled groups	
	Increase accessibility of the Town Hall	Town Hall Manager	Dec 07	Dec 08	Community Grants Concessions Budget	Development of concessions scheme Investigate feasibility of signed shows and audio descriptions	
	Improve access to the refuse collection system for people with visual and mobility impairments	Head of Environmental Services	Feb 07 Apr 07	Mar 07 Ongoing		Carry out Equality Impact Assessment on Cleansing Services and implement improvements Increase awareness raising and information in different formats	
	Improve the accessibility of Loughborough Town Centre	Director of Regeneration	Mar 06	2010	Town Centre Master Plan	Accessible shop campaign Lighting, signage and surface strategies within the Town Centre Master Plan.	

Task		Responsibility	Start	Finish	Resources	Performance Measure	Complete
	'Making it Easy' SDP embedded with Staff	Director of Development	Apr 07				
	Review access audits to Council's own public buildings	Head of Property Services	Oct 06	Oct 07		Improve BVPI 156	
	Complete access audit for customers travelling to the Southfields Road Council buildings	Head of Property Services	Apr 08	Oct 08	Officer Time	Access audit complete and issues arising included into service plans	
	Raise awareness of the sheltered housing schemes	Housing Services Manager	Aug 06	Aug 07	Warden Services	Number of targeted awareness raising events	
	Raise awareness of the Council's services specific to disability	Performance Improvement Officer	Mar 07	Ongoing	Officer Time	Development and distribution of publicity material e.g. use of Shopmobility Increase information on Council's website	
Accessible information							
	Use of Plain English in all written and verbal communication	Head of Communication, Consultation and Partnership	Apr 07	Mar 08	As part of all campaigns	Documentation and verbal communication clearer and jargon free Use of visual information	

Task		Responsibility	Start	Finish	Resources	Performance Measure	Complete
	Improved information provision	Head of Communication, Consultation and Partnership	Apr 07	May 07		Announcements on a recorded telephone message Raise awareness of Charnwood news on tape Increase use of large print, audio and Braille etc.	
	Pilot Easy Read application forms	Housing Policy Officer	Jun 07	Aug 07		Pilot in Housing Services to establish any improvement in access to service information	
Signage							
	Improve Southfields Offices External Signage	Director of PACS	Nov 06	Mar 07	Property Service budget	Signs developed and installed	
	Establishment of Town Centre Signage Strategy	Director of Regeneration	Nov 06			Integrated into Town Centre Master Plan	
	Improvement of Signage at Loughborough Leisure Centre	Leisure Centre Manager	Nov 06	Dec 08			
Customer Care							
	Deliver all staff customer service training in line with Customer	Corporate Service	Nov 06	Ongoing	Corporate Training	Number of staff attending training	

Task		Responsibility	Start	Finish	Resources	Performance Measure	Complete
	Service Strategy	Development Officer			Budget		
	Improve ease of contacting the Council through more queries being resolved at first point of contact	Director of PACS	Apr 07	Apr 10		Establish recording system Increased number of enquiries being dealt with at first point of contact	
Employment							
	Campaign to increase staff reporting of disability	Human Resources	Jan 07	Aug 07	Officer Time	Increased reporting of disabled staff	
	Development of work placements/experience at the Council for people with disabilities	Human Resources	Jan 08	Aug 08		Number of placements per year	
	Develop and deliver Disability Equality Training for staff	Learning and Development Officer	Mar 07	Mar 08	Corporate Training Budget	Number of officers attending training	
	Raise awareness of the Council's flexible working policies to encourage take-up	Human Resources	Oct 07	Jan 08		Uptake of flexible working arrangements	
	Increase understanding of the needs of members of staff with disabilities	Human Resources	Mar 07	Mar 08		Feedback mechanism for staff with disabilities to raise specific issues.	