

## **WORK PLAN THEME PROJECT BRIEF**

### **Review Title**

Promoting Disability Equality in Cheltenham

### **Project Sponsor**

Cllr. Barbara Driver

### **The Project Team (suggested)**

Peter Woolley AD Community Services

Richard Gibson Corporate Policy Manager

Richard Levett AD Business Support – chair of council's internal disability group

Geoff Sloman – Community Development Manager

Iain Houston – Access Officer

Hilary James (Chair of Cheltenham Disability Forum)

Representative from Human Resources

Representative from Frontline Services

Elected member(s) from Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **Timetable for the Review**

Terms of reference agreed on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2005

Commence review in October 2005.

Interim report to be brought to the April 2006 meeting

### **Background**

The new Disability Discrimination Act was enacted on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2005 and will place a Disability Equality Duty on the public sector to increase equality and fairness for disabled people. This is a positive duty which builds in disability equality at the beginning of the process, rather than make adjustments at the end. It will bring about a shift from a legal framework which relies on individual disabled people complaining about discrimination to one in which the public sector becomes a proactive agent of change.

It is expected that the duty will come into force from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006.

The new legislation places an expectation on public bodies to:

- Involve disabled people in producing a disability equality scheme and developing a supporting three year action plan.
- Identify how they will gather and analyse evidence to inform their actions and track progress.
- Set out how they will assess the impact of their existing and proposed activities on disabled people.
- Report on their progress every year and review and make appropriate revisions to this scheme at least every three years.

### **Outline Terms of Reference**

Aim

To review how effectively the council will comply with the provisions of the new Disability Discrimination Act.

Objectives

It is proposed that the O+S review will take this forward through:

- gathering and analysing evidence, the effect on the recruitment, development and retention of our disabled employees and the extent to which our services and functions take into account the needs of disabled persons

- assessing the impact of policies and proposed policies on equality for disabled persons
- consulting with disabled people, using different means to gather knowledge of what we provide and what users want
- preparation of an action plan to identify key deficiencies in the ways in which we work, what the barriers to equality are, and where we should be doing more positively to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and set in train work to rectify those deficiencies
- assessing the resource implications of implementing the new act and who should be responsible for ensuring compliance
- to keep the delivery of the action plan under review and integrate wherever possible into the council's business planning processes.

### **Scope of the Review**

The review will have the following components:

An update on how well the council is complying with existing disability legislation (DDA '95) particularly in terms of how we are improving access to our services.

A consideration of new legislation and the code of practice to be produced by the Disability Rights Commission.

An assessment of demographic data will be carried out to determine the prevalence of disability in Cheltenham which will then provide the benchmark for assessing our staff structure and service provision.

An assessment of our staffing structure with regards to the numbers of disabled employees and their recruitment, development and retention. This section will conclude with a number of recommendations on how best we can improve recruitment and retention.

An impact assessment on 10 functions and service areas to assess the extent to which the needs of disabled persons are taken into account.

A review of how well we involve disabled people in planning and reviewing services including an assessment of how best to support Cheltenham Disability Forum to allow it to support the council in delivering its obligations under the new legislation.

### **Expected Outcomes / Issues**

- ensure that we consider disabled people in the formulation of policy and the impact upon them at the outset – that we “build in” for disability
- encourage better co-ordination across departments and functions e.g. spatial planning and transport infrastructure to ensure equal access for disabled people
- contribute to more informed decision-making
- ensure that policies are properly targeted
- improve the authority's ability to deliver suitable and accessible services that meet varied needs
- encourage greater transparency in policy making
- increase involvement of disabled people in policy making
- increase confidence in public services, particularly amongst disabled people
- help to avoid claims of unlawful disability discrimination
- compliance with the provisions of the new act