

Castle Point Borough Council



Disability Equality Scheme

If you require information contained in this publication in an alternative format such as LARGE PRINT, Braille, audio tape or if you would like the Scheme to be made available in your language please contact the council on 01268 882200.

December 2006 – December 2009

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Our Statement of Intent

The aim of our Disability Equality Scheme is to ensure we are taking the needs of people with disabilities into account in everything we do – this can include providing services, employing people, developing strategies and policies and consultation. As a major service provider in Castle Point we recognise that we need to continue to promote equality of opportunity and tackle all forms of discrimination. We will promote our vision of Castle Point as being a fair, just and vibrant borough in which members of our community will choose to work, live and participate in the life of our community.

For this to be real and meaningful we will need to ensure that our Disability Equality Scheme is seen as a working and living scheme in order to effectively mainstream disability equality throughout our organisation. As a key element of our commitment, our Disability Equality Scheme and associated Actions Plans aim to ensure that we are meeting the diverse needs of all our community.

David Marchant
Chief Executive

Cllr Pam Challis
Leader of the Council

Cllr Tony Belford
Member Champion for Diversity

The Corporate Link

Welcome to Castle Point Borough Council's Disability Equality Scheme. This scheme sets out our plans for making equality happen for disabled people living in Castle Point. We aim to ensure that we make a difference to all those who live and work in Castle Point, so they may have equal access to our services, information, employment opportunities and buildings.

Our Disability Equality Scheme is one of a series of documents which form part of Castle Point Council's Corporate Diversity Strategy. The Diversity Strategy is a key policy document that aims to deliver key actions as laid down in our Corporate Plan and our Community Strategy. It will be reviewed at the end of the first year and subsequently at the end of the three years.

The Equality Standard for Local Government

In order to deliver our overall commitments on equality and diversity, Castle Point Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. The standard is about making equalities part of our day to day working practices and we are working towards achieving the higher levels of the standard.

What is the Disability Equality Duty?

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (amended 2005) places a duty on all public authorities to have due regard to the following:
(Due regard means that authorities should give due weight to the need to promote disability equality in proportion to its relevance.)

- promote equality of opportunity for people with disabilities.
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act.

- eliminate harassment of people with disabilities that is related to their impairment.
- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.
- encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life.
- take steps to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Our Disability Equality Scheme provides the focus on positively addressing disability needs which address the distinct and specific needs of members of the community, and links with the Council's overall diversity objectives.

Specific Duty

The specific duty requires Castle Point Borough Council to produce and publish a three-year Disability Equality Scheme by involving people with disabilities in the on-going development of the scheme, to identify methodology for information gathering and to develop service plans for monitoring annually. This will also include conducting disability impact assessments of services, functions and policies.

What do we mean by Disability?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Purpose & Responsibilities

The purpose of our Disability Equality Scheme is to:

- Find out what barriers are faced by disabled people and take steps to remove them.

- Find out what disabled people need and what are priorities to disabled people.
- Involve disabled people in decisions we make to improve service provision.
- Meet our legal duties.
- Work in partnership with other disability organisations to promote awareness of disabled issues.
- To work to prevent discrimination and harassment against disabled people.
- Outline key actions that we will take to improve services and our approach to disability.
- To advise you how we are going to monitor our actions.
- Show what has changed as a result of the scheme.
- Outline a 3 year action plan showing how we will put the scheme into practice.

Who is responsible for the Disability Equality Scheme?

Members (Councillors), the Executive Management Team, employees and our colleagues in partner agencies all have a role to play in helping us to meet our duty to promote equality for disabled people in Castle Point.

Members have a collective responsibility for reviewing and evaluating equality as appropriate in the Committee process.

Councillor Tony Belford as Diversity Champion has overall lead for Diversity.

The Chief Executive will take lead responsibility for the management of implementing diversity across the Council.

The Strategic Diversity Group led by a Corporate Director and made up of senior managers from all departments ensures that action is taken against our diversity actions plans. The Corporate Director is a member of the Council's Executive Management Team.

Diversity Champions Group made up of staff members who are responsible for promoting diversity in their service areas, raising awareness of diversity issues, leading on Diversity Impact Assessments and diversity action planning.

What have we done so far?

- Developed a toolkit to undertake Diversity Impact Assessments of all services.
- Developed a Strategic Diversity Group and a Operational Diversity Group (Diversity Champions).
- Appointed Diversity Champions in each service area.
- Provided Corporate access to Translation and Interpretation Services.
- Delivered Corporate Equality Standard Training.
- Delivered Corporate Diversity Awareness Training.
- Appointed a Member with responsibilities for Diversity.
- Conducted a Disability Audit and implemented the Disability Access Action Plan.
- Conducted Diversity Screening & Diversity Impact Assessments of all our service areas.

- Developed service based diversity action plans and consulting with internal and external stakeholders.
- Reached level 2 of the Equality Standard.
- We can provide accessible information on request in preferred formats, e.g. community languages, audio, large print, Braille, electronic, BSL for the hard of hearing community etc.

Our Objectives

We will annually monitor, evaluate and take action on all that we do to ensure that we are meeting the needs of people with disabilities. To date, we have developed the following objectives:

- We promote respect for people with disabilities in Castle Point.
- We challenge prejudice, create a culture that is positive towards disability and promote positive understanding of disability issues within Castle Point.
- We ensure that council services can be accessed through a variety of methods and/or locations.
- We ensure staff are trained to understand basic disability issues.
- We conduct Diversity Impact Assessments of our services, identify gaps and develop actions to tackle any form of disadvantage.
- We are working towards making sure that all the buildings and services are accessible and that we make 'reasonable adjustments' where necessary to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.
- We aim to provide services that are tailored to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

- We continue to work with partners to ensure a consistent accessible and co-ordinated approach to all services.
- Creating a culture where harassment and discrimination against disabled people is unacceptable and will be stopped.
- Creating a culture where both employees and service users feel able to declare their disability so that accurate information is available

Employment Equality

Job applicants and staff treated fairly

We have put in place employment policies and procedures that demonstrate to everyone our aim to provide equal access to employment and that they will be able to participate in employment without being subjected to harassment and discrimination because of their impairment.

We ensure that trained staff who are involved in all aspects of the recruitment and selection process receive training that covers a broad range of diversity issues.

We support managers who recruit and manage people with disabilities to ensure that as far as possible all support and access requirements are in place prior to the employment start date or as identified thereafter.

We are working towards a workforce that is representative at all levels and reflects the community we serve.

We support disabled employees who acquire support while employed and make 'reasonable adjustments' as required.

Our Arrangements for Involvement

Through the implementation process of the Equality Standard (BV2a), guidelines and training has already been provided to Managers and diversity champions on the process of undertaking diversity impact assessments to ensure against any adverse impact in the provision of services and the implementation of policies.

This process has already identified disability equality as a key requirement in the assessment and review of key service and policy areas. All new Council policies will be accordingly diversity screened and impact assessed in relation to the adverse impact to ensure fair and accessible services to people with disabilities.

Service areas and Heads of Service are supported by their respective diversity champions to conduct diversity impact assessments and develop from them Service Diversity Action Plans (SDAPs) which will be presented to the Strategic Diversity Group.

The Service Diversity Action Plans will be consulted with 'hard to reach' and disability themed groups in Castle Point with the aim of addressing their specific needs.

We will also consult our key corporate strategies with all 'hard to reach' groups which include people with disabilities.

Identifying key issues with and for People with Disabilities

We have developed a Diversity Impact Assessment Toolkit which aims to identify any adverse impact of our services, policies and functions may have in relation to an individual's or communities' disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, age or sexuality.

We have conducted, and will continue to conduct on a yearly basis, diversity impact assessments our services, policies and functions and develop Service Diversity Action Plans in all service areas.

Our Service Diversity Action Plans will include clear disability themes and will be linked to our yearly Service Plans.

Our Service Diversity Action Plans will be consulted at all levels internally within Castle Point Borough Council and consulted externally with stakeholders and people with disabilities or their organisational representatives.

Our Strategic Diversity Group and Policy unit will provide external scrutiny of our Service Diversity Action Plans.

Comments and Complaints

Castle Point Borough Council welcome any comments on this scheme or our working practices and suggested improvements to service delivery.

Castle Point Borough Council is committed to providing best value and the best possible level of service to its customers. We will take all complaints seriously and will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour. We will monitor all complaints against race, gender, age, disability and will use that information to provide us with more detailed data about discrepancies in service provision and identify and eliminate any discriminatory practices.

Monitoring

The Council monitors the actions in the Disability Equality Scheme through the Strategic Diversity Group.

How will we demonstrate our achievements?

We will publish our achievements in a number of ways:-

- Relevant committees will receive reports around diversity issues.
- We will use the Borough News (The Council's magazine) to share developments with our community.
- We will establish a diversity section on the Council's internet and intranet and will provide information there to promote equality issues.
- We will continue to involve disabled people in the development of the Disability Equality Scheme and any associated actions. The Council will publish the results of any consultation that we undertake on our website.
- The Council's main achievements in Diversity will be published annually in The Council's Corporate Plan.

- There will be a yearly report on the actions of the scheme.

More specific service actions around disability are contained within the service Diversity Action Plans

Delivering our Intentions – Our Action Plan

Disability Objective	Outcome	Lead	Resources	Deadline
To take action on any form of harassment of members of the community.	Decrease in the number of complaints of harassment on the grounds of disability.	Community Services	Officer Time	Year 1
Ensure that all organisations who provide goods and services on behalf of the council adopt the council standards around diversity.	All goods and services are available to all members of the community	Procurement	Officer Time	Year 2
Ensure our Local Strategic Partnership supports our commitment to disability equality.	We promote our vision of a inclusive Castle Point and support our partners to mainstream diversity	Partnerships	Officer Time	Year 1

Disability Objective	Outcome	Lead	Resources	Deadline
To screen and conduct diversity impact assessments of our services, policies and function.	Gaps are identified and action is agreed.	All service areas	Officer Time	Years 1, 2 and 3
To consult Service Diversity Action Plans with 'hard to reach groups' internal and external stakeholders and linked to Service Plans.	There is internal and external ownership and agreement that the SDAPs can tackle identified disadvantage. SDAPS are implemented and changes are made to the way we deliver our services and recruit employees.	All service areas	Officer Time	Year 1, 2 and 3
Disability Equality Scheme is reviewed and evaluated.	Our Disability Equality Scheme continues to shape services to meet the needs of people with disabilities.	Strategic Diversity Group	Officer Time	Year 1 and 3

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Disability Objective	Outcome	Lead	Resources	Deadline
Ensure our strategies and policies are consulted with people with disabilities and/or disability groups	Our strategies and policies continually strive towards delivering a service that meets the needs and views of all our customers	Policy Unit	Officer Time	Year 2
Ensure that people are able to take up services and benefits available to them through a range of appropriate formats.	Our Council website achieves 'AA' Compliancy. Documents are available in a range of appropriate formats.	ICT Customer Services	Officer Time Officer Time	Years 1, 2 and 3 Year 1
Ensure that council buildings are open to the public have equipment to meet the needs of customers with disabilities.	Council buildings are accessible. (BVPI 156)	Facilities Management	Officer Time	Year 3

Disability Objective	Outcome	Lead	Resources	Deadline
Ensure all current and forthcoming corporate strategies and policies are compliant with our legal duties under the DDA 2005.	Corporate strategies and policies reflect our commitment to providing accessible services to people with disabilities.	Policy Unit	Officer Time	Year 2
Enhance the corporate complaints procedure to ensure that it monitors by a range of diversity categories including disability.	Monitoring of complaints will enable the council to identify issues/barriers to access by people with disabilities.	Policy Unit	Officer Time	Year 1
Ensure that all staff know how and where to access communication in a range of formats.	Staff will be able to respond to customer requests for information in various methods.	OMG	Officer Time	Year 1
Continue to raise awareness of disability issues through training and development of a	Staff have an increased awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.	Personnel	Officer Time	Year 1

Diversity Handbook.				
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Disability Objective	Outcome	Lead	Resources	Deadline
Develop and maintain monitoring mechanisms which will include applications, recruitment/selection grievance, harassment/bullying, pay, and retention.	We can evaluate the how our policies and practices support our aim to remove any possible barriers and develop an inclusive and reflective workforce.	Personnel	Officer Time	Year 1
Provide support through the application and recruitment process for people with disabilities.	The application pack will advise candidates of the support that is available to enable people with disabilities to gain employment with the council.	Personnel	Officer Time	Year 2
Achieve the 'two tick' Positive about Disability status.	Our employment practices promote our vision of a disability diverse and inclusive workforce.			

Disability Objective	Outcome	Lead	Resources	Deadline
Continue with training staff on disability issues for all staff involved in the recruitment process.	All staff involved in recruitment will be aware of disability issues and able to support candidates/new disabled people.	Personnel	Officer Time	Year 1, 2 and 3