



Draft Disability Equality Scheme 2006

**‘making equality a reality for
disabled people’**

If you require information contained in this publication in an alternative format e.g. Easy to Read, large print, Braille, audio tape or if you would like the Scheme to be explained to you in your language contact:

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Our Commitment to Involvement:

We will involve disabled people in developing all aspects of this Scheme

In September 2005 we held an event with our disabled workers and the Disability Rights Commission to develop the Disability Equality Scheme. We will continue to involve disabled people in producing this Scheme.

A list of the initial organisations who will be involved with this draft scheme can be found in **Appendix 1**.

In writing this Scheme we have also used the recommendations made by the Disability Rights Commission's in their Code of Practice on 'The Duty to Promote Disability Equality'.

Foreword

Welcome to Leicestershire County Council's Draft Disability Equality Scheme. Most public authorities including the County Council have to produce a Disability Equality Scheme. This is a very good opportunity to show everyone how we will address the inequality, disadvantage and discrimination that disabled people face during their lives.

We also want to show how we will enable disabled people to become full and active members of the communities in which they live. The talent and potential of many disabled people is not always valued or recognised. We will ensure that when we deliver services we think about how we can meet the diverse needs of disabled people. We will continue to acknowledge the skills and abilities of disabled people who apply for jobs and are employed by the County Council.

However, we cannot produce a Scheme without involving disabled people. We want disabled people to tell us what we need to do better or differently. If you have a disability, we want to know what you think of this draft Scheme. The full Scheme will be published once we have involved disabled people in its development.

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Leader
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Council

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The Purpose of our Disability Equality Scheme

The new Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 gives the County Council what are known as 'general' and 'specific' duties to promote disability equality. Disability equality is about making things fairer for disabled people.

Producing a Disability Equality Scheme is one of the 'specific duties' of the new DDA 2005.

What is a Disability Equality Scheme?

A Disability Equality Scheme sets out our plans for making equality happen for disabled people living in Leicestershire. The Scheme also includes a number of things we must consider under the specific duty. For example, our Action Plan must include measurements of progress for disabled people in the areas of employment, access to services and education.

Further information about the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, including what the new duties mean can be found in the section called 'What the Law Says'

The purpose of our Disability Equality Scheme is to:

- Show how we have involved disabled people in decisions we have made.
- Find out what barriers are faced by disabled people and take steps to remove them.
- Find out what disabled people need and which of these needs are the most important to them.
- Make sure we meet our legal duties.
- Tell people what our responsibilities are. This includes telling: elected members (or councillors), managers, employees, unions, our partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors, as well as residents.
- Explain how we make things fairer for disabled people in planning our services and what we do.
- Show how the Scheme links to other equalities objectives and priorities.
- Provide information about our involvement, assessments and training arrangements.

- Work in partnership with other disability organisations to prevent ignorance and prejudice in the wider community.
- Show what has changed as a result of involvement and set out our three-year disability equality action plan on how we will put the Scheme into practice.
- Monitor and check what we are doing and report each year.

The County Council's Priorities and Targets

We recently published our Medium Term Corporate Strategy. The Strategy is about improving life in Leicestershire.

It tells people about our priorities and targets until May 2009. These priorities are set out within our 3 overall aims, which are:

- Improving quality of life for people
- Improving quality of life in communities
- Improving services so they are high quality and value for money.

To deliver our vision we will:

'Work to promote equality and reduce disadvantages'

There are a number of things we aim to do and we list a few examples below:

- Increase the percentage of disabled employees who work for the County Council to 3.8%.
- Increase the number of disabled people (through the Breaking the Barriers Team) gaining paid work each year by 50 with an additional 100 voluntary work placements per year.
- Increase 30% per year, people with mental ill health and learning disabilities receiving Direct Payments.
- Completing the modernisation of day services for people with learning disabilities.
- Setting and meeting equality targets and objectives for all relevant service areas.

The National and Local Context

The National Context

There are an estimated 11 million disabled adults in the United Kingdom (1 in 5 of the total adult population) and 770,000 disabled children. Many of these disabled people often have less obvious or non-visible impairments.

Disabled people do less well than non-disabled people in many areas of life. For example, they are more likely to do less well in terms of employment, income and education. Disabled people are also more likely to face discrimination and negative attitudes ('Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People,' Government Strategy Unit 2005)

The Local Context

Some facts about Leicestershire and its residents

- There are 623,900 people living in Leicestershire. Two thirds live in market towns or urban areas close to Leicester; a third in rural communities.
- 7.25 % of the population are from black and minority ethnic groups. (2001 Census)
- 15.5% of the population of Leicestershire have a long term limiting illness. (2001 Census)
- The number of people with long term limiting illness living in the county varies from 14% in Harborough to 18% in North West Leicestershire. (2001 Census)
- Of the whole population who are economically active in Leicestershire 11.5% are disabled people. (Audit Commission Area Indicator Profile website).

What is important to disabled people living in Leicestershire?

One aim of this scheme is to find out what disabled people need and find out which of these needs are the most important to them.

For example, as Leicestershire is a large county with a dispersed population in some areas, we recognise the importance of good local transport in enabling disabled people to access services and facilities.

Two recent local consultation exercises with disabled people support this view (County Council Survey with local Disability Access Groups 2001 and a Citizen's Jury for Disabled People 2004).

What is happening to assist disabled people with transport in Leicestershire?

The County Council and our partners provide many services for disabled people across Leicestershire. The following provides a few examples as we cannot list all of the services in this Scheme.

- 11,000 disabled people receive concessionary travel in Leicestershire.
- 45% of the bus fleet in Leicester and Leicestershire have low floors for level access and this will increase over the coming years.
- Community transport services carry approximately 90,000 disabled passengers per year.
- The Citizen's Jury for Disabled People has identified a number of transport initiatives to improve transport for disabled people locally.

What the Law Says

The County Council will carry out its duties under disability legislation. This includes:

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Children Act 2004 (which includes provisions for disabled children)
- Buildings Regulations 2000 and Part M requirements – building regulation amendments 2003

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005

The new general duty means that we must, in carrying out our functions, (what we do) have due regard to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- eliminate discrimination which is unlawful under the Act;
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life;
- take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where this involves treating disabled 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 disabled people can access employment; goods, facilities, services, functions and premises.

The Equality Standard for Local Government

In order to deliver our overall commitments on equality and diversity, the County Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Equality Standard is not a legal requirement but has been produced to provide a framework through which local authorities can meet their legal obligations under anti-discrimination legislation. It has five levels of achievement:

- Level 1** Commitment to a comprehensive Equality Policy
- Level 2** Assessment and consultation
- Level 3** Setting equality objectives and targets
- Level 4** Using information systems and monitoring against equality targets
- Level 5** Achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Standard is also about making equalities part of our day to day activities. The Council is working towards achieving the higher levels of the standard.

We recognise that disabled people may also be affected by other equalities matters such as race and gender (this is sometimes known as multiple discrimination). Important information about this and relevant legislation can be found in the County Council's Corporate Equality Plan at:

www.leics.gov.uk/equality_and_diversity

Or contact:

Policy Officer (Diversity)
Tel: 0116 265 7446
Minicom: 0116 265 6048
Email: equality@leics.gov.uk,

Introduction to the County Council's Disability Equality Policy

The Disability Equality Policy sets out our overall objectives, principles and commitments to disabled people.

The policy's guiding principle says that:

'We believe being disabled is a social issue and that an impairment causes an individual to be disabled because of the social, attitudinal and environmental barriers that the individual faces (this is known as the social model of disability). Our efforts will be focussed on removing these barriers'.

The Disability Policy has recently been updated with our disabled employees. The full policy can be found at the end of the Scheme for your comments see **Appendix 2**.

Who is responsible for the Disability Equality Scheme?

- The County Council has overall responsibility for the Disability Equality Scheme.
- The Chief Executive and Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring that the Scheme is put into action across the authority.
- Members (Councilors), employees, managers of the County Council 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.

The arrangements described below ensure that we co-ordinate the work involved in putting the Scheme in to practice.

- There is a **Cabinet Lead Member** who is responsible for equal opportunities.
- An **Equalities Board** of senior managers from all departments is there to ensure effective action is taken to promote equality and reduce disadvantage. The chair is a Chief Officer accountable to the Council's Corporate Management Team
- A **Disability Equalities Task Group** supports the work of the Equalities Board on disability equality issues. It is made up of senior officers from all County Council departments and the Trade Union. A member of the Task group also sits on the Disabled Workers' Group.

- **The County Council's Disabled Workers Group** is made up of disabled employees and people who are responsible for disability issues.

The role of the group is to:

- Look at ways in which the Council can help its disabled employees to do their job and ensure they are not discriminated against.
- Discuss issues that affect disabled people who use council services.
- Meet together at the end of the formal session. This is for disabled people to talk privately and share their experiences.
- Send someone on behalf of the group to sit on the Disability Equality Task Group. More information about the Disabled Workers Group can be found in the Employment Section.

Key reports and plans such as the Disability Equality Scheme are discussed with the Corporate Management Team and put forward to the Council's Cabinet for decision. The views of the relevant Scrutiny body are also invited. Employment issues arising from the Scheme will be referred to the Employment Committee as necessary.

Meeting the General Duty

The following section and our Action Plan (Appendix 3) looks at how we are meeting (or how we will meet) the new general duty. More information about the general duty can be found in the section called 'What the Law Says.'

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)

At the County Council we need to understand whether our services are meeting everyone's needs and that people who need our services have access to them. To help us to do this we carry out an Equality Impact Assessment.

What are Equality Impact Assessments?

An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of deciding whether an existing or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service does (or may) affect people differently, and if so, whether it affects them in an adverse way.

The County Council has been carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on a number of policies and services during 2005. Assessments will be carried out on new policies and services, as they are developed and over time on all other existing policies and services. Disability issues will be considered alongside other equality issues such as race and gender and will involve disabled people.

We have produced guidance and we have provided training to people who are responsible for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments.

A summary of the results of the Equality Impact Assessments, Action Plans, and consultation exercises will be reported as part of the annual review of the Disability Equality Scheme.

Access to Services, Information and Communication (equal consumers, equal passengers)

Leicestershire County Council is a service provider and is also responsible for exercising public functions. This means under the Disability Discrimination Act we have a legal duty to ensure that wherever possible disabled people can use or receive the same services to the same standards as non-disabled people; and that disabled people do not experience unlawful discrimination.

In 2002 the County Council approved a policy to improve quality and choice of access to public information and services. Through our Access Strategy we are working on a wide-ranging programme of improvements in the contact we have with the public.

Implementing the 'Access Strategy' will include undertaking an equality impact assessment (explained earlier). This will help us to ensure that developments will improve the quality and choice of access to public information and services to everyone. It will also link with other relevant developments, including the Council's policy on interpretation and translation, production of information and publicity to disabled people (see Accessible Information below), work with voluntary and community groups and involvement with groups who may face additional barriers to access.

Disability Access Audits

The purpose of a disability access audit is to find out what barriers disabled people face to accessing services. These barriers could be for many reasons such as:

- Not having a policy on monitoring accessible parking
- Lack of auxiliary aids such as an induction loop for hearing aid users
- Lack of adequate access into a building such as the provision of a ramp for wheelchair users.

When any barriers have been identified we then have to look at ways of removing these barriers. This is known as making adjustments.

The County Council has a programme of ongoing disability access audits. We recognise that there are areas that will be common to both Access Audits and Equality Impact Assessments. We will ensure that a joint approach is adopted.

There are also a number of established **Disability Access Groups** and organisations representing disabled people across Leicestershire. These groups advise the County Council on improving access to services for disabled people.

Disability Access Symbols

We have recently developed a number of disability access symbols for use in our publications. This is so when members of the public want information about our services and buildings they will know what access arrangements are in place.

Accessible information

There is an Interpretation and Translation policy to help with communication. We have also published guidance for employees on how to provide written information in accessible formats. The guidance was produced together with a number of local and national disability organisations and links to the new Change Picture Bank – see below.

Change Picture Bank

The Change Picture Bank is a collection of pictures to help make information easier to understand.

A Company called **Change** made the Picture Bank. They are a national organisation run by disabled people. **Change** campaigns for the rights of learning disabled people especially people with learning disabilities who are deaf or blind.

The **Change** Picture Bank is for people with learning disabilities, people who work with people who have learning disabilities, and people who provide services. There are over 500 images in the Picture Bank.

People will be able to photocopy the pictures and stick them to their information or they can copy the pictures onto a document on their computer.

Council staff will have access to this which will greatly improve the way information is communicated to people with learning disabilities.

Involvement

Leicestershire County Council is committed to involving disabled people and giving disabled people every opportunity to comment on how our services and employment practices are provided and developed. The Council also recognises that it is important disabled people are represented in all the ways in which we consult.

We will involve disabled people on employment matters and the services we provide including:

- Finding out what barriers disabled people face and taking steps to remove them
- Asking if disabled people are happy with the services we provide e.g. through satisfaction surveys, focus groups
- Setting priorities and helping us to plan things
- Looking at the impact of existing and proposed policies
- Monitoring and checking how well things are done
- Reviewing and revising the scheme and providing feed back on how disabled people's views have influenced our decisions.

Consultation Standards

The County Council's consultation standards guide our overall approach to consulting and involving the public and people who use our services. One of the Standards commits the Council to ensuring "that consultation is accessible to all people who take part". This includes:

- Using accessible venues and equipment.
- Arranging events at reasonable times and dates to make it easier for people to attend.
- Providing/arranging advocacy support for people who request it.
- Ensuring that the needs of people are met through, for example, language interpreters, induction loops, large print or guide communicators.

Further information can be found on the Consultation Toolkit at:

http://website/index/your_council/haveyoursay/standards.htm

Consultation Toolkit

The County Council has developed a Toolkit to assist employees who are or will be undertaking consultation and involvement exercises with the public and/or other stakeholders. There is a section on the Toolkit about involving disabled people.

The involvement techniques (as explained on the Toolkit) will also provide the Council with important information about how we are meeting our new duties to promote disability equality.

The Toolkit is available to County Council employees through the internal Corporate Information System (CIS) or intranet (http://cis/chief_execs/consultation/toolkit.htm). A wide range of external partner organisations are also registered to use the toolkit.

Accessible Meetings Guidance

This has been produced to make sure our meetings and events are accessible to disabled people. To be fully inclusive it is important that all meetings whether provided to our employees or to people who use our services are fully accessible.

The guidance is available through the internal Corporate Information System (CIS) or intranet at:

http://corp1:8000/chief_execs/personnel/Disability/accessible_meetings_short.htm

http://corp1:8000/chief_execs/personnel/Disability/accessible_meetings_full.htm

If members of the public require information on the 'Accessible Meetings Guidance' the contact details are on the front cover of this Scheme.

Monitoring

The Council monitors its services and employment on disability issues. We will provide the results of monitoring information through service plans, the results of equality impact assessments and where appropriate within the annual report of the Scheme.

Publishing Results of Assessment, Involvement & Monitoring

Once we have collected the information we will publish the results.

The way we publish the results of involvement will vary. Some will be published within reports provided by services to relevant committees.

The main consultation and involvement carried out will be summarised in our yearly report on the Disability Equality Scheme, as well as in the Council's Annual Plan.

The yearly report for this Scheme will include an update on the Action Plan. We will involve disabled people further both internally and externally and provide information on our disability equality plans and activities. We will also show what has changed as a result of involving disabled people.

We will inform the public and employees about this information through:

- 'Leicestershire Matters', the Council's newsletter which is delivered to all homes in the County.
- 'Newslines', the Council's newsletter for employees.
- Relevant voluntary organisations, community groups and representatives.
- The Equalities and Diversity section within the County Council's website and intranet. We will provide information there about our work to promote equality.

We will also publish information about relevant involvement exercises on the County Council's Consultation Toolkit and on the CareOnLine Web Site at: www.leicscareonline.org.uk

Comments and Complaints

Members of the public who feel that they have experienced disability discrimination in the way the County Council has treated them may make a complaint through its Corporate Complaints procedure.

We have grievance and disciplinary procedures in place and a policy on dealing with complaints of harassment relating to employees.

We also have a 'whistleblowing' procedure, which extends the protection for employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result.

We will take all complaints seriously and will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour.

The Members' Code of Conduct and Standards Committee deals with complaints about the conduct of elected members.

Monitoring complaints is also another way of gathering information to see whether we are meeting our equality duties.

Training

Training our staff so they are more aware of and have skills to take positive action in removing barriers placed in the way of disabled people by society.

An Equalities and Diversity Training Plan was approved in October 2004. The purpose of the plan is to provide managers and employees with the skills and knowledge they need to ensure that equalities becomes part of our day to day activities. The plan will also help to create a culture of diversity.

The training is supported with visible and strong leadership from the top and every manager has individual responsibility and objectives, as with anything else they deliver.

The approach includes:

- a) Deciding the content of the equality/diversity elements to be included in training initiatives, i.e. race, disability, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, etc from service delivery and employment perspectives.
- b) Finding out what the different training needs for employees and Members are.
- c) Finding out the current County Council initiatives through which it is possible to mainstream and develop managers' equality and diversity responsibilities.

We will evaluate the overall equality and diversity training programme on a yearly basis. If there is evidence to show that the training needs to be changed, we will take action to ensure that this happens.

Education – (towards equality in educational attainment and contribution to school and college life)

The Local Education Authority will be encouraging schools to develop their own Disability Equality Schemes using the guidance from Department for Education and Skills when it is available.

The Action Plan at the end of this scheme contains proposals on collecting information to meet the requirements of the new Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

Employment Equality (getting in, staying in, getting on)

The authority is a Disability Symbol user, which means we made five commitments as an employer:

- 1 a guaranteed job interview for those who meet the essential requirements for a job
- 2 to consult disabled employees regularly
- 3 to keep employees if they become disabled
- 4 to improve the knowledge of key employees about disability and
- 5 to check progress each year, plan ahead and let employees know about progress and future plans

Employment Monitoring

We monitor the number of disabled people that we employ.

Figures show:

- That 3 % of people employed by the County Council are disabled. This is as a percentage of the whole workforce (excluding schools).

We will monitor on a yearly basis to ensure that our workforce continues to be representative of the wider community and take positive action to promote representation at all levels within the authority. We will publish the results of our monitoring on our web site (leics.gov.uk). See Action plan Appendix 3 for more about employment monitoring.

National Recognition

The County Council won a national award in October 2005 for 'Leading the Way' in employing disabled people. We now want to build on the award by taking further action to promote the authority as an "employer of choice" for disabled people.

However, we have a significant number of employees who have not declared their disability. We know that we need to do more so that disabled people feel confident that they can declare their disability and not face discrimination during the recruitment process, as our employees or in progressing their careers

Creating a culture so Disabled People can declare their Disability

We will work towards encouraging a culture where people feel safe to declare their disability so that we can help make any reasonable adjustments that are necessary. We also want to celebrate the achievements of our disabled employees so that we can demonstrate to other employers in the county the benefits of employing disabled people. We want to raise the awareness of our managers and staff of the benefits of working with disabled colleagues in a mutually supportive environment.

Local Government Opportunities

We want to show disabled people who are still in education the range of jobs that are available in local government and provide disabled people with opportunities for work experience. We will work with other disability organisations to make this happen.

Disability Awareness

We will work towards making sure that all our managers and employees are disability aware and that they have the necessary training and advice available to them so they can work with their disabled colleagues and service users and meet their needs (see also section on Training).

Disabled Workers Group

We have a Disabled Workers Group for our employees which is held every two months. The Group helps make sure that people who work for us treat people equally. The types of issues we discuss cover access to buildings, training, disabled parking, accessible information, support workers and the impact of new equipment, e.g. telephone system. It also provides a support network. (More information can also be found in the section called 'Who is responsible for the Disability Equality Scheme'.)

Retaining our Disabled Employees

If an employee becomes disabled or their disability gets worse so that they cannot do their current job then we look at how we can keep them in employment, even if it is not in the same job.

Breaking the Barriers Team

We have set up a special team called 'Breaking the Barriers' which is a Leicestershire employment service for disabled people. To date they have supported 62 people with learning disabilities into employment. 171 people have found volunteering opportunities with support from the Breaking the Barriers team. For many people this is the first step into work. It helps them build the skills, experience and confidence they will need when they are looking for a job. The team works with employers to show them why it is such a good idea to employ people with learning disabilities.

The Breaking the Barriers team is part of the work on the Catalyst fund. This is a particular piece of work to support disabled people to start their own businesses. It is a partnership between the European Social Fund, the Learning and Skills Council and the Leicestershire Strategic Partnership. The Catalyst fund gives people grants of up to £5,000 to start their own businesses.

Breaking the Barriers has changed the way that sheltered work schemes in Social Services work. They have set up Social Enterprises. These are small businesses where the workers with learning disabilities decide how their business is run. They do things like gardening and recycling.

Start Coaching

We run a Start Coaching project supported by the European Social Fund and Jobcentre Plus aimed at disabled people who would like to find employment in their local communities as sports coaches.

Appendix 1

Who will be involved in developing the Disability Equality Scheme?

This list is not exhaustive and only includes the initial groups involved in developing the scheme. The full list will be published in the final version.

- Any disabled person who wants to be involved in developing the Scheme
- The County Council's Disabled Workers Group and Black Workers Group
- The County Council's Disability Equality Task Group
- The County Council's Cabinet
- The County Council's Equalities Board
- Trade Unions
- Valuing People Team, Breaking the Barriers Team

Local Disability Access Groups this includes:

- Blaby District Disability & Access Group
- Charnwood Disability Forum
- HANDSTAND (North West Leicestershire Disability Access Group)
- Harborough District Access Group
- Hinckley & Bosworth Disability Action Group
- Melton Borough Access Group
- Oadby and Wigston Access Action Group.

Local Umbrella Disability Organisations includes:

- Age Concern Leicestershire and Rutland
- AKWAABA (formerly Mental Health Shop)
- British Red Cross Disabled Living Centre (DLC) & Information Service
- Carers of Leicestershire Action & Support Project (CLASP)
- Centre for Deaf People
- FAIRDEAL (Disability Empowerment & Advocacy in Leicestershire)
- Headway Leicester
- LAMP (Leicestershire Action for Mental Health Project)
- Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL)
- Leicestershire Ethnic Minority Forum

- Committee for Leicestershire and Rutland Leicestershire Ethnic Elderly Advocacy Project (LEEAP)
- Leicestershire and Rutland Visually Impaired Council
- MENCAP
- mosaic: shaping disability services,
- VISTA (Royal Leicestershire, Rutland & Wycliffe Society for the Blind)

- Other Statutory Organisations

National Disability Organisations

- Employers' Forum on Disability
- Disability Rights Commission

Also requests from

- West Middlesex University Hospital - NHS Trust.
- Opportunities for People with Disabilities, Coalville, Leicestershire

We also want to involve:

- Other Local Authorities
- NHS Trusts
- Key partnerships e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships
- Private employers – the wider business community
- Black and minority ethnic organisations

Appendix 2

The County Council's Disability Equality Policy

The Disability Equality Policy sets out our overall objectives, principles and commitments to disabled people.

Our Commitment to Disabled People

We will work to reduce disadvantages, discrimination, and inequalities of opportunity, and promote diversity in terms of the people we serve, our workforce, the partners we work with and the services we deliver.

The policy sets out our commitment to disabled people and builds upon work which has already taken place.

Our Objectives

We want disabled people living, working and visiting in Leicestershire to be enabled to realise their full potential. We will progress this by:

- Removing barriers and changing attitudes that prevent disabled people from getting access to jobs and services provided by the County Council and its partners.
- Promoting disability equality at all levels within the County Council.
- Working together with disabled people, disability organisations and disability access groups to achieve equality of opportunity.
- Involving disabled people (including our disabled employees) on employment matters and the services we provide.
- Training our own employees, so they are more aware of and have the skills to take positive action in removing the barriers placed in the way of disabled people by society.
- 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 to help us to look at such things as reasonable adjustments, priority areas and to set targets.
- Acting as an example of good practice to other organisations.

Meeting our Legal and Equalities Objectives

- Working towards achieving level five (the highest level) of the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- Working within the County Council's broader equalities framework as outlined in our Corporate Equality Plan.
- Fulfilling our legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the new Disability Discrimination Act 2005). Fulfilling other requirements found in the legislative section of this scheme.
- Developing a Disability Equality Scheme (as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005) and setting targets within all departments and service areas.

Guiding Principles – The Social Model of Disability

- We believe that being disabled is a social issue and that an impairment causes an individual to be disabled because of the social, attitudinal and environmental barriers that the individual faces (this is known as the social model of disability). Our efforts will be focussed on removing these barriers.

We are guided by the following principles:

- Anti-discrimination - so that disabled people do not face discrimination arising from bad practice.
- Equality of opportunity or making things fairer - for disabled people in every aspect of their contact with the County Council.
- Increasing the independence and choices that disabled people have.
- Individual needs - recognising that a disabled person is an individual who, like all others, has his or her own needs, abilities, human rights and responsibilities.
- Integration – such that services are made accessible to disabled people and offer choice.
- Involvement in decision-making - so that disabled people, and/or their advocates, are consulted before decisions which affect them are made.

Providing Access to County Council Services

We aim to remove barriers to obtaining the Council's services and will seek to ensure that the services provided are those that are required.

We are committed to do this by:

- Providing services fairly to all disabled people.
- Involving disabled people appropriately about their needs, whether they are happy with the services they use, and seeking their views on how new facilities are provided or designed.
- Identifying the needs of disabled people and acting to meet those needs.
- Providing information about our services clearly and in a variety of formats accessible to disabled people.
- Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments to assess how services are provided to disabled people, (including audits of our own services with the help of disabled people to remove barriers to access). The results of these will highlight areas for improvement, which will be dealt with through service plans.
- Put into action the corporate DDA capital programme provision (consider departmental bids for access fund works and recommending how the money is spent).
- Embracing inclusive design and inclusive services in terms of designing, managing and monitoring the built environment.
- Working with our agents providing services on our behalf to take similar initiatives.
- Monitoring our performance against agreed targets and seeking continuous improvement, reporting annually in a public report to Cabinet/elected members.
- Monitoring and checking complaints.
- Encouraging other organisations across Leicestershire by setting a good example and publicising it.

The County Council as an Employer

The Council's Equal Opportunities Policy already demonstrates our commitment to achieving equality of opportunity for disabled people in employment. We will build on this in:

- Recruitment - by encouraging applications from disabled people and ensuring that the application, short-listing and interview processes gives them equal opportunity.
- The working environment - by taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment does not prevent suitably qualified disabled people from taking up or staying in employment with us.
- Career development - by ensuring that disabled people have the same opportunity as other employees to develop their full potential within the Council.
- Retention of newly disabled employees – by making every effort to ensure that any employee who becomes disabled stays in employment and is fully supported in maintaining a role appropriate to his or her experience and abilities.
- Work experience - by ensuring that work placement opportunities within the Council, are made available for disabled people.
- Employees training - by making employees throughout the Council more aware of the circumstances of disabled service users and colleagues and changing behaviour, where necessary, to fulfil potential in service delivery and employment.
- Monitoring our performance against agreed targets and seeking continuous improvement, reporting annually in a public report to Cabinet/elected members.
- A commitment to work force and community profiling.
- Representation – by continuing to facilitate a Disabled Workers Group to provide a consultative and contributory forum for disabled employees to improve services and employment provision.

Appendix 3

Our first Draft Action Plan contains:

- **what disabled people have asked for (so far) through involvement**
- **the objectives, priorities and targets of Leicestershire County Council**
- **the requirements of the Code of Practice: “Duty to Promote Disability Equality” published by the Disability Rights Commission. For example, we must include measurements of progress for disabled people in the areas of employment, access to services and education as well as a number of other requirements such as our approach to Equality Impact Assessments.**

Draft Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan 2006/7			
Implementing the Scheme			
Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
1. Prepare a Draft Disability Equality Scheme and promote involvement to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005	Effective involvement and feedback from disabled people on Draft Disability Equality Scheme	Head of Partnerships and Diversity	March – June 2006
2. Publish and promote full Disability Equality Scheme	Scheme reflects the priorities of disabled people and is widely publicised	Head of Partnerships and Diversity	By December 2006
3. Ensure that the disability elements of the Equality Standard for local government are achieved	Disability is contained within the day to day activities of all Council departments and service areas	Equalities Board Chief Officers	March 2007 to achieve level 3
4. Produce a timetabled programme of Equality Impact Assessments	Equality Impact Assessments take place systematically and are used to inform how we plan our services	Equalities Board	March 2006 and reviewed annually

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
5. Prioritise, as part of the annual review of the Scheme, the most relevant service areas and functions for disabled people	Disabled people are involved in the prioritisation of services and functions most relevant to them	Heads of Service	December 2006 (for scheme) and ongoing annual review
6. Set priorities for the DDA Disability Access Capital Programme for County Council buildings. The programme consists of a number of corporately identified access improvement works	Disability Access groups consulted and a prioritised Capital Programme is agreed and implemented	Disability Equality Task Group and Resources Dept (Property Services)	July 2006
7. Meet targets for Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 156). This is a measurement set by national government which helps us see how we are doing with making our buildings accessible	Major improvements to the access of buildings and facilities	Resources Dept (Property Services)	Aim to achieve at least 78% BVPI by the end of March 2006.
8. Service areas to develop plans to introduce equality monitoring in relation to disability and other equalities areas	Information systematically collected to measure gaps in service delivery, investigate any such gaps and take action to remove any disparities or disadvantage	Heads of Service	June 2006

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
9. Ensure procurement activity addresses disability equality issues	Ensure that external providers of Council services meet their Statutory equalities requirements and the Council's equalities policies and practices	Head of Procurement	May 2006 and ongoing
10. Review harassment policy to include service issues	Disabled service users and disabled employees who deal with the public are covered by a new anti - harassment policy and that disability related harassment is monitored	Equalities Board	April 2007
11. Improve communication with people who use British Sign Language (BSL)	Improved County Council Website; more employees are trained in BSL communication skills	Disability Equality Task Group	December 2007

Employment Greater (employment equality getting in, staying in, getting on)				
Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	
12. Change recruitment and selection procedures identified by JobCentre Plus and DDA audit, e.g. colour contrast on application form, improved monitoring of applicants, additional disability awareness training for managers	Revised application form and guidance available for use from April 2006. Improved colour contrast, explanations as to why information required, etc.	Head of Human Resources	Implement new form and guidance from April 2006	
13. Support for disabled employees including monitoring of types of support requested, provisions made and improvements needed, e.g. provision of support worker, screen reading equipment, etc.	Monitoring system to be established	Head of Human Resources	By summer 2006	
14. Produce guidance on Support Workers for disabled employees	A consistent approach to the recruitment and management of support workers	Head of Human Resources	By summer 2006	
15. Ensure that training on disability legislation and issues is delivered to all staff	Staff are aware of their legal and employee obligations, and transfer their learning into practice	Head of Human Resources	Audit of training, gaps identified and draft Action Plan proposed – by Autumn 2006.	

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>16. Publish analysis of information on effect of policies and practices on disabled people in particular on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recruitment/retention and development (promotion & training) of disabled employees ➤ number of disabled applicants ➤ number of disabled employees in post ➤ number of disabled people who leave <p>(Information about disability status requested from employees every two years as part of Data Verification exercise)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BVPI 11c Top 5% earners who are disabled ➤ BVPI 15 Ill Health Retirements/Employees (including schools) ➤ disabled people who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of their appraisal ➤ disabled people involved in grievance procedures ➤ disabled people who are subject to disciplinary procedures 	<p>Information gathered and analysed. Results published on internet under equalities and diversity.</p> <p>Information reviewed every 6 months. Targets developed in conjunction with Workforce Development Plan and Services Plans</p>	<p>Head of Human Resources</p>	<p>Annually</p>

Education Towards (equality in educational attainment and contribution to school and college life)

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>17. Monitor the Early Years Service (most Early Years Provision in Leicestershire is made through the private sector). Monitoring will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ determining how funding is used to support the inclusion of disabled children in out of school clubs and play schemes ➤ The impact for individual disabled children ➤ A measure of the impact that inclusion has on all children attending the play scheme or out of school club ➤ A method of determining how activities were designed to include disabled children and what adjustments are made to allow this to happen ➤ The impact of inclusion for the families of disabled children 	<p>Disabled Children are able to access the full range of early year's provision, play schemes and out of school clubs</p>	<p>Children's Services</p>	<p>To start April 2006 – March 2007</p>

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
18. Replace current database which measures educational attainment, attendance and exclusion and to include a 'flag' for disability within the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act	Produce reports on how disabled pupils compare with the rest of the school population	Children's Services	To start April 2007 – March 2008
19. Monitor the take up of Leicestershire Arts provision by disabled pupils (drama, orchestras, bands, dance etc)	Identify strategies over time to increase the participation of children and young people in Arts Activities	Children's Services	To start April 2006 – March 2007
20. Increase the participation of young disabled people in Youth Activities (including Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes, Statutory and Voluntary youth activities). This is part of the Local Area Agreement	Increase participation of young disabled people by 5% each year for the next three years	Children's Services Department	To Start March 2006 – March 2007

Involvement (telling us what you think)			
Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
21. Hold 2 nd Development Day with our Disabled Workers and the Disability Equality Task Group	Improve communication and raise disability awareness within the County Council	Disabled Workers Group and Disability Equality Task Group	By December 2006
22. Support the implementation of the County Council actions arising from the Citizen's Jury for Disabled People held in 2004 ¹	Work in partnership to address issues raised and monitor outcomes	Disability Equality Task Group	December 2006
23. Undertake initiative to support International Day of Disabled People 2006	Celebrate the achievements of Leicestershire County Council's work towards disability equality	Disability Equality Task Group and Disabled Workers Group	December 2006

¹ A copy of the report on the Citizen's Jury for Disabled People is available from the Senior Policy Officer (Community Planning) Chief Executive's Department, Leicestershire County Council, Tel: 0116 265 8137, Fax: 0116 265 7271, email: dmackay@leics.gov.uk

Monitor and Review 2007

Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale
24. Review and report on progress made on the Disability Equality Scheme with involvement of disabled people	Demonstrate that good progress has been made in respect of meeting the Council's legal duties and the targets set in the Scheme's action plan	Equalities Board	First report required by December 2007

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County Hall, Glenfield, Leicestershire, LE3 8RA

Further details available on the web:

www.leics.gov.uk/equality_and_diversity