

## **AGENDA ITEM 7: Overview & Scrutiny Committee – MONITORING OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM JOINT SOCIAL SERVICES & SPECIAL PROJECTS SCRUTINY REVIEW ON THE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT**

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### **1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 In November 2003 the Social Services & Special Projects Scrutiny Panel agreed to set up a Joint scrutiny review focussed around the following remit:

“To review the activities of both the Council and other parts of the public/private sector in relation to compliance with the DDA both in terms of public buildings and service delivery.”

1.2 A Joint Working Group was established to undertake the review, which met over an 8 month period to conduct their review. The review process included a large public meeting, which over 130 stakeholder groups and individuals were invited to attend. The main purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the progress being made by the Council and various other public & private sector organisations in complying with the requirements of the DDA.

1.3 The Joint Working Group completed their review in July 2004 and produced a final report detailing their main findings in relation to the progress being made by the following organisations in addressing the requirements of the DDA:

- Enfield Council
- Local retail businesses (via Enfield Business Retail Association)
- Metropolitan Police
- Enfield Primary Care Trust (PCT)

In addition the report included a number of recommended actions arising from the review.

1.4 The final report from the Joint Review was presented to the Social Services & Special Projects Scrutiny Panels in September 2004. Both Panels endorsed the findings from the review and agreed the final recommendations.

### **2. REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The key recommendations approved as an outcome from the Joint Review were as follows:

- (1) That disabled people be consulted by the Council and other service providers as a matter of routine in relation to the design or amendment of services and/or facilities.
- (2) Disability groups be encouraged to work with the Enfield Business Retail Association to address the problems being experienced by small shopkeepers in particular in meeting the requirements of the DDA.

- (3) All service providers should provide more disability awareness and equality training for staff; such training should include the use of specialist equipment and be updated. In addition, the availability of specialist equipment should be publicised.
- (4) The Enfield Primary Care Trust be asked to ensure that all public access areas within their facilities have text phones for public use, and that telephones be placed at a height suitable for wheelchair users and in well lit areas. The PCT should look at specialist telephone equipment for in-patients and devise procedures and strategies for in-patient care i.e. easier contact with relations/friends.
- (5) Advertisements issued by the Council, in relation to meetings open to the public, should always state what facilities are available and what facilities can be provided upon request e.g. Sign Language Interpreters, transport, carer assistants etc.

A variety of media should be used to publicise meetings e.g. Braille, large print and targeting disability organisations and press e.g. talking newspapers.

- (6) The Council be asked to look urgently (through the scrutiny function) at the provision of transport for disabled people across all service providers for the borough.
- (7) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to agree to the appropriate Scrutiny Panel monitoring the progress of the Council in implementing the decisions of the Cabinet in September 2003. These recommendations arose from a separate audit of Council services in relation to the requirements of the DDA and were as follows:
  - a. Human Resources should develop training programmes that not only provide disability awareness and equality training, but also meet particular aspects of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) that might have specific implications for the particular service group.
  - b. Human Resources and service groups should ensure that all job descriptions and person specifications should be designed to be as inclusive as possible, and ensure that irrelevant attributes were not included, for example, the ability to drive.
  - c. Human Resources, Facilities Management and Occupational Health Service responsibilities – all service groups should have an awareness of available accessible technologies both for service user and employee.
  - d. Facilities Management and Departments should work out a shared approach to responsibility for future access planning. An Access

Officer post or function should be established to make detailed assessments of access need on a consistent basis.

- e. Procurement and the contracting-out of services needed to have an understanding of disability built into the process.
  - f. Communications Team responsibility – there should be a written commitment to make Council materials and documentation available in accessible formats.
  - g. The Council needed to involve disabled people more effectively in the design, planning and operation of services. There should be greater emphasis in service planning on consultation with service users and user groups such as Enfield Disability Action.
- (8) The Council and other organisations should use a simple typeface such as Arial or Helvetica and use font size “12”. Large print documents should be font size “18”. All letterheads should include the fax and textphone/minicom numbers.

NB: Guidelines for documentation are laid out in the Council document “Translation & Interpreting Services” available from Translation Services.

- (9) The Council acknowledges that disabled people have different needs; one solution would not suit all.
- (10) The Council investigates the possibility of providing a videophone or webcam to facilitate access to Sign Language Interpreters
- (11) That the term ‘Sign Language Interpreters’ be used in preference to other terms such as signers.

### **3. MONITORING ACTIVITY**

- 3.1 Overview & Scrutiny Committee (23 November 2004) noted the outcome of the review and also agreed to undertake future monitoring of the progress being made with their implementation.
- 3.2 Since the review was completed, the Council has taken the following actions –
- a. All service managers are now required by the DDA 2005 to fully engage with disabled people in the provision, development and planning of services. It is also a requirement of the Equality Standard for Local Government. All changes to services and policies now require an impact assessment to be undertaken to identify any adverse impact, and this should form part of any decision-making process.
  - b. The Council is currently undertaking a review of equalities training to expand the range of courses already offered. General equalities

training is now a constituent part of induction training for all new Council staff.

- c. In May 2004 the AT Home Centre (a specialist equipment store for disabled people) was formally opened. This coincided with the integration of services between London Borough of Enfield and Primary Care Trust/Acute trust in Enfield and includes Occupational Therapy, District Nursing, Physiotherapy, Speech & Language and Sensory impairment services.
- d. The AT Home Centre service is marketed through a handbook which provides a directory of services, distributed to partner organisations (Enfield Disability Action and others) and some GP surgeries. It has also been represented at Enfield Town Show and a number of similar events, and has given presentations to older people or disabled people groups - in the past these have happened in a sporadic way although plans are in place to engage in more regular and co-ordinated series of workshops and presentations.
- e. All Council staff are encouraged to advertise facilities for disabled people when arranging events and meetings. An Engagement Checklist has been produced to assist managers.
- f. The Council's new customer service centres have been specifically designed to improve access for all disadvantaged groups including disabled people.
- g. All Council publications are offered in a range of formats for disabled customers – this includes large print, audiotape, Braille. Sign language interpreters can also be offered.
- h. The DDA 2005 requires the Council to actively engage with disabled people especially in relation to the production of the Council's Disability Equality Scheme (DES). A major event took place on 16th October 2006 to inform the DES, which will be published in December 2006. This was done in partnership with Enfield Disability Action.
- i. Guidelines for staff regarding typefaces and fonts that are easier for disabled people to read have now been produced, along with other advice on colour contrast etc. All documents are now produced using the council standard Ariel 12.
- j. The Translation and Interpretation Service use the term "sign language interpreters" rather than terms like signers.
- k. The Occupational Health Service provides advice to managers on staff on a range of work related health matters. This includes reasonable adjustments found necessary as a result of pre-employment screening or referrals to the service. The Occupational Health Adviser carries out specialist workstation assessments for staff with known medical

conditions (whether or not they formally come under the DDA). Supply of specialist equipment such as ergonomic aids or speech-activated software can be facilitated through specialist suppliers. Council Safety Advisers and the OH Service can also assist with return to work risk assessments.

- i. The Council Health and Safety Unit provide advice on fire safety issues such as Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans for staff, evacuation of anyone from buildings under Council control (i.e. for staff, service users and others to whom the Council owes a duty of care). Advice is also given on the design of new premises and building improvements in order to meet the requirements of fire safety legislation and this includes consideration of disability issues (advice on compliance with Building Regulations is provided by Building Control). Typical recommendations would be inclusion of a fire evacuation lift, automatic release door holders, beacons etc. in the design.
- m. Fire Evacuation lifts are now available at the Civic Centre, Charles Babbage House & John Wilkes House. The works in the Civic Centre, referred to in recommendation 5 f) are complete.
- n. Job descriptions and person specifications are written in a corporate format that identify and describe key tasks and responsibilities. The two documents work together to clarify the job to be filled and the skills, knowledge, abilities and experience needed. No one is involved in any stage of the recruitment process (including the writing of Job descriptions and person specifications) unless they have attended the Council's Recruitment and Selection Training Course. The objective of this training is to ensure that all activity relating to the recruitment process conforms to equal opportunities and best practice requirements.

- 3.3 In addition to the above action a Joint Scrutiny Commission was established on Transporting People as a direct response to recommendation (6) above. The aim of the Commission was to look at the potential for providing a more joined up approach to transport services for vulnerable members of the community.

The review was completed in April 2006 and led to specific action being taken to promote and attract further volunteers.

- 3.4 Overview & Scrutiny Committee is now being asked to consider how it wishes to undertake any further monitoring activity in relation to the outcomes from this review. As part of this process, and in order to avoid any duplication, the Committee is asked to note that Adult Social Services Scrutiny Panel have included a review of progress being made with implementation of the DDA as part of its work programme for 2006/07

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- (1)** that Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider the progress update in section 3.2 above and what, if any further monitoring activity it's felt is required;
- (2)** that should the Committee be minded to progress this issue it be included as part of the Committee's work programme for the 2006/07 Municipal Year.