

Disability Policy

The Libraries & Museums Service is committed to equality of opportunity for people with disabilities. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and the Human Rights Act 1998 have given a new focus to our work and led to the drafting of this policy statement.

This policy also reflects the promotion of race equality and the prevention of unlawful discrimination (Race Relations Act 2000 - General Duty).

We will celebrate diversity and respect for all and adhere to the principles of the Council's Diversity Policy Statement:

'The Council is fully committed to the broad principles of social justice and is opposed to any form of discrimination or oppression.

It therefore willingly accepts not only its legal responsibilities but also wishes to embrace best practice in all areas of its work in order to secure equality of both treatment and outcome for all.

The Council is therefore committed to ensuring that no-one is treated in any way less favourably on the grounds of personal differences such as race; colour; national, ethnic or social origin; gender (including reassigned gender); sexual orientation; religious belief; age; disability; marital status; caring responsibilities or al or other personal beliefs.

The Council will implement all necessary action and training to ensure its commitments with regard to equality of treatment and outcome are fulfilled and will regularly monitor and review progress in this respect.'

We believe that disability is a social issue and that an impairment becomes a disability because of the social and physical barriers that the individual faces. Our efforts will be focussed on removing these barrier, so that people with disabilities are presented with equality of opportunity in every aspect of their dealings with the Libraries & Museums Service.

Guiding principles

- Independence not dependence -

enhancing the independence of disabled people and increasing the choices available to them

- Individual needs -

recognising that the disabled person is an individual who, like all others, has his or her own needs, abilities, rights and responsibilities

- Integration -

services for disabled people will be provided as part of an integrated whole, not separately

- Involvement in decision-making -

disabled people, or their advocates, will be consulted before decisions which affect them are made.

Specific action plans to develop the service with these principles in mind are contained in the Annual Libraries & Museums Business Plan, the Library Service Position Statement and the Museums Service Forward Plan.

Access

We will help local people with disabilities to realise their full potential by:

1. **providing access to books, artifacts, knowledge, information and support to everyone in the community**

The Library Service stock policy clearly states that we will provide materials for the whole of the community, including paperback books for those who find hardbacks heavy to hold and talking books and large print titles for those who have visual impairments. We will establish a collection of audio-described and closed captioned videos for loan.

We will also work with the WRVS to provide a Home Library Service to people who are either housebound or have very restricted mobility.

We will provide information about our services clearly, and in a variety of formats accessible to disabled people. All our information leaflets will be written in Plain English and will be set out in a large sans serif font. All notices will be laminated in a matt finish.

All libraries will have access to an Interpreting and translation service.

2. removing physical barriers which may prevent disabled people from gaining access to our services

Following advice from the Council's Access Officer, a programme of building improvements will be built into the Annual Business Plan, so that all our buildings achieve compliance with Building Regulations Part M as soon as possible.

An annual report outlining the works completed will be sent to the Council's Access Officer.

We will provide an Access Directory outlining facilities at each of our libraries and Museums. This directory will be made available to all local groups for people with disabilities and will be updated annually.

3. ensuring no one is prevented from using libraries and museums services because of staff attitudes towards people with disabilities

We will provide mandatory customer care courses for staff at all levels to include specific training on disability awareness.

Consultation

We will design our services with people with disabilities in mind. To establish their needs we will establish formal consultation methods (in line with the corporate consultation guidelines).

Staff training

Staff training will ensure that all staff at all levels are aware of the difficulties faced by people with disabilities.

1. All staff undergoing induction will be sent on the corporate training course - 'Welcoming Customers with Disabilities and Special Needs'
2. Refresher training will be provided for all staff on dealing with specific disabilities - hearing and visual impairments, and mobility problems.
3. All librarians and Museums professionals will be trained in providing sites which are physically accessible to people with disabilities
4. All staff involved in recruitment and selection will be made aware of the Council's Equalities Policy, to ensure that work experience opportunities are made equally available to everyone regardless of any disability

Monitoring and evaluation

The success of this policy will be monitored by use of annual satisfaction surveys; analysis of customers comments and analysis of issue figures.

By also monitoring our performance against the targets outlined in the Annual Business Plan we will seek to make continual improvements to our services to people with disabilities.

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