

Consultation and Involvement Process in developing the Scheme

West Berkshire Council worked with a wide range of local stakeholders to develop its Disability Equality Scheme. This included Council Officers attending local disability groups to listen to people's concerns and their proposals to help improve equality of opportunity for disabled people. This involved working with people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, and people with a range of physical and sensory impairments, as well as parent and carer associations.

Below is one example of feedback received from Its My Life, a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities.



In addition to meetings with disability groups the Council also sought to engage wider members of the public who have an interest in disability equality. This was done through an online

consultation, which ran for three months. A copy of the survey is attached at the end of this Appendix.

A similar online consultation was targeted at West Berkshire Council employees, which had the full backing of the Human Resources service unit. It was publicised through the Council's staff newsletter, as shown below.



August 2008

For all West Berkshire Council staff

reporter extra

How can the Council enable people with a disability?

Consultation underway until 7 October



The Council is committed to promoting positive attitudes towards disability; encouraging disabled people to participate in public life; and eliminating any unlawful discrimination or harassment towards people with disabilities. This is your chance to help!

By December, an action plan to improve equality of opportunity for disabled people will be drawn up in compliance with the new Disability Equality Duty. A Disability Equality Scheme will be published detailing how the Council will meet the new duty, both as a service provider and as an employer of choice.

Two consultation exercises have been launched, one with disabled people across West Berkshire, and another with Council employees, both aiming to better understand the issues people face in relation to disability inequality and the barriers that need to be broken down.

Robert O'Reilly, Head of Human Resources, said, "The Council want to improve the choice and opportunities in West Berkshire for people with impairments. This includes current and future employees. To support this, we would ask all employees for their views on our current employment practices and working conditions, so that we can identify and eradicate any issues which may be adversely affecting people with impairments, improving our practices and conditions for all."

He added, "Our current statistics indicate that less than 2% of employees have a disability and yet we know the real figure may be far higher. Some employees who have an impairment may not regard themselves as 'disabled', or even be aware they now have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. For example, people with severe back pain or those who may have mild depression. We want to create an open and safe environment, in which people feel confident enough to disclose information, without fear of prejudice, and in the knowledge the Council will do all it can to meet specific needs, as required by the law. If you are in this position and would like to speak to someone in confidence, please contact Joanna Richardson."

To have your say, log on to www.westberks.gov.uk/consultation and go to the Consultation Finder

Or visit the [Equality and Diversity web page](#) for a direct link.

The consultation is open till 7th October.

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In addition to the various meetings and online consultation, the Council held two drop-in sessions in October with its partner, Berkshire West Primary Care Trust. These seminars were advertised throughout the district as shown below.

Disability Equality

Working together to break down barriers

Do you have a disability or impairment and face barriers in trying to access local services?

Would you like to talk informally to the Council or Health Service about steps to help promote equality and stop discrimination against disabled people?

Do you want to know how the Council and Health Service are planning to meet the new Disability Equality Duty?

If so, come along to one of our joint 'drop in sessions' on
Monday 9th October, Room 2, West Berkshire Community Hospital, Thatcham or
Tuesday 10th October, Gateway Room, Theale Green Community School, Theale.

Both sessions will run between 12.30pm - 2.30pm. Refreshments will be available

For further information call Jo Richardson on 01635 519441



The Council is grateful to everyone who got involved in helping it to identify priority actions and to develop its first Disability Equality Scheme. Many of these people, joined senior managers from West Berkshire Council at an informal gathering on 4th December 2006 to mark the launch of the Scheme (see photo below).



The Council looks forward to continuing to work with local disabled people throughout the life time of this Scheme to ensure it remains relevant and effective in addressing local need. By continuing to involve disabled people in the development and monitoring of the Scheme the Council aims not only to comply with the statutory requirements, but to also bring about real benefits for people with disabilities.

Example of online consultation survey

What Disables Disabled People? How Can We Try and Stop It?

In order for us to meet the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty it is important for us to find out what are people's priorities and perceived barriers. We want our Disability Equality Scheme to be relevant and reflect, as far as possible, the key priorities of local disabled people.

Barriers to Council Services

What are the barriers disabled people experience when contacting or using West Berkshire Council services?

Barriers might include buildings not being accessible because of steps, staff not being able to use or understand sign language; the attitude of staff; transport problems; lack of positive policies; or the failure to adjust Council services to make them fully accessible.

Please give details of your three major barriers:

Barrier 1

Barrier 2

Barrier 3

Barriers to work opportunities within the Council

Do you know of any barriers to Council employment opportunities which disabled people experience?

For example, barriers might include: access to job adverts or work placements; selection tests which place disabled candidates at a disadvantage; transport problems; stigma or financial impact.

Barrier 1

Barrier 2

Barrier 3

The issues you would most like the Council to address

What changes do you think the Council should make, as a priority, to help improve equality of opportunity for disabled people and what other actions do you think the Council should take to stop harassment and promote more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities?

Note: Please be as specific as possible. For example, *"to change the policy on parking spaces in a specific location"*, rather than a general comment such as *"more money for services"*.

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

ABOUT YOU

We would now like you to provide some information about yourself. This information will only be used to develop the Council's Disability Equality Scheme and details will not be passed on to any third parties.

Are you a member of any group(s) that represents people with disabilities?

If so, please give details:

Do you regard yourself to have disability? If so, how does your impairment affect you?

Walking Seeing Hearing

Understanding Feeling mentally unwell

Other or further details:

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information.

Your views are very important to us and the results of this survey will help to inform an action plan which will be part of our Disability Equality Scheme.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY EMAIL TO:

jrichardson@westberks.gov.uk

Or by post to: Joanna Richardson
Policy & Communication
West Berkshire Council
Council Offices Market Street
Newbury RG15 5LD

If you would like to be kept informed of our progress, or would like to participate in future consultation exercises regarding our Disability Equality Scheme 2007 – 2009 please can you provide us with your:

Name and Address

Email Address (if applicable)