

DRAFT



ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

2007 – 2010

December 2006

1. What is a Disability Equality Scheme?

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, places a statutory General Duty on all public authorities to promote disability equality. The 2005 Act provides an increasingly robust legislative framework that requires Councils to actively promote disability equality. This means that public authorities must, in carrying out all functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons

The Act requires public authorities to publish a Disability Equality Scheme setting out what they intend to do to plan, deliver and evaluate action to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.

This is the first Disability Equality Scheme to be produced by Rochford District Council. The Scheme is part of an overarching equality strategy which sets out the vision which the council has to promote equal opportunities for all people and eliminate unlawful discrimination. This Scheme will help us:-

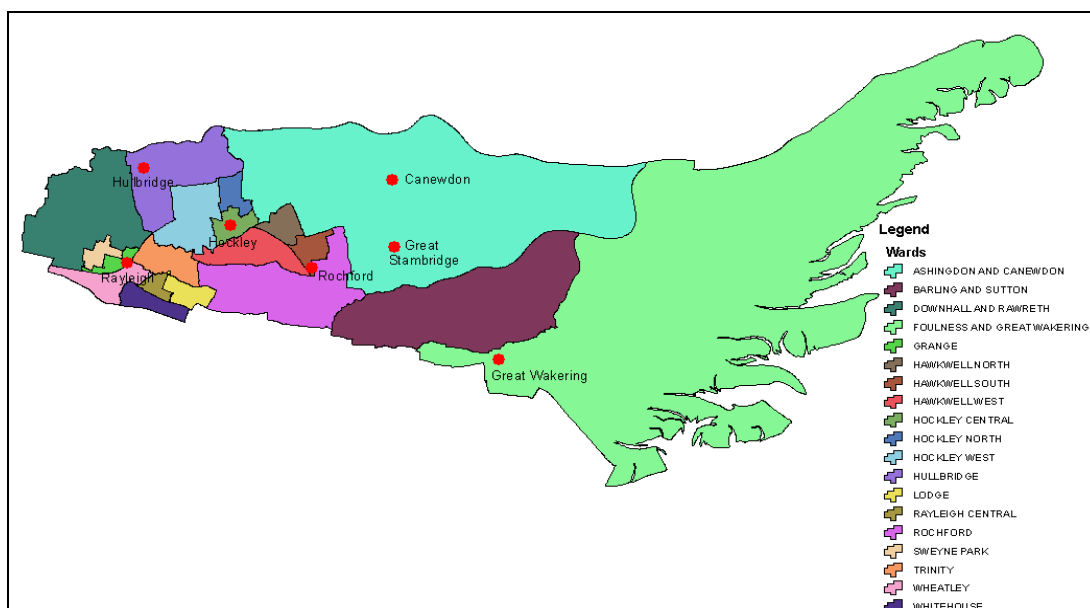
- Meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and set out our plans to improve disability access to employment and services
- Make sure that we are taking the needs and views of disabled people into account when we design or deliver services, make access improvements or develop policies
- Continuously monitor and improve the ways in which we deliver services to disabled people.

As a result of the work we will undertake to implement this Scheme, it is likely that it will need to be revisited in the light of the information we gather.

2. About the district of Rochford

The Place

Rochford is a small district located in south east Essex. It is bounded by the River Crouch to the north and the urban areas of Southend and Castle Point to the south. The district has three main towns, Rayleigh, Rochford and Hockley. Much of the remaining area is green belt with a large area around Foulness, largely under Ministry of Defence control. London Southend Airport straddles the district's southern boundary with Southend.



The People

The district has a population of 79,700 people, living in 33,534 households. This is predicted to rise to 80,300 by 2011, with a forecasted large increase of those over the age of 85 years.

The area is relatively affluent, ranking 316 out of 354 most deprived authorities nationally. The most deprived ward, Foulness and Great Wakering East, ranks 2,680 of 8,414. Owner occupied homes constitute 75.1 per cent of households. This is amongst the highest in the country. Private renting accounts for 15.4 per cent. The Council's housing stock is currently 1,700 dwellings, of which 665 are allocated to elderly people. House prices are higher than the average for England and Wales. Unemployment levels are below regional and national averages at 1 per cent.

Whilst there is no exact data on the number of disabled people within the area, we have to rely on the 2001 census, which indicated that 15.8% of the population have a limiting long term illness. This equates to almost 12,500 people.

3. About The district of Rochford District Council

Rochford District has been under a Conservative administration since May 2002, which holds 34 of the 39 seats. New political management arrangements based on alternative committee structures were introduced in May 2002. These have since been refined but currently comprise 5 policy committees, an overview and scrutiny committee, audit & regulatory committees and a standards committee.

The Senior Management Team (SMT) is made up of the Chief Executive and two corporate directors supported by six heads of service. The Council employs approx 260 staff. Many of the frontline services are externalised.

Our Plans and Policies

The Council is aiming to make Rochford District *'the place of choice in the county to live, work and visit'*. This is to be delivered through collaborative working with partners and communities and is underpinned by six principal aims, to:

- provide quality, cost effective services;
- work towards a safer and more caring community;
- provide a green and sustainable environment;
- encourage a thriving local economy;
- improve the quality of life for people in the district; and
- maintain and enhance the local heritage.

The Council's aims are closely aligned to the six aims of the community strategy: 'Feeling safe', 'Looking after our environment', 'A good education, good skills and good jobs', 'Healthy living', 'Getting around', and 'An inclusive community'.

The Council has also signed up to the County's Local Area Agreement "Health and Opportunity for the People of Essex" which includes a number of proposals that are aimed at positive impacts on disadvantaged groups.

4. Rochford District Council's Disability Equality Scheme

Context of the Scheme

The Council's approach is based on the 'Social Model' of disability which recognises that it is the barriers in everyday life that serve to 'disable' people and through implementing the action plan, it will seek to identify them and remove them. Current research suggests that the barriers encountered are:

- employment – attitudes and knowledge of line managers, perceptions
- physical barriers
- financial barriers
- inaccessible information
- inaccessible transport, housing
- inflexible personal care, availability of personal assistants
- lack of role models
- stereotypical perceptions

The Council will need to challenge what it currently does to find out if this disadvantages disabled people. To do this we will undertake impact assessments, develop effective consultation mechanisms with affected people and take action to make any reasonable adjustments.

Impact Assessments

Discrimination is not usually intended. It happens because a policy or service has not considered a wide range of different needs. Impact assessments for race and disability are now a legal requirement for all public bodies. They are a systematic way of finding out whether a policy or service will have an adverse impact on any group or sector of the community.

Action has already begun on the impact assessment process at Rochford. The Council has joined with neighbouring authorities and secured funding to enable its senior managers to be trained and supported as they undertake this task in 2007. It is likely that the assessment process will highlight the need for further information on our services and the barriers people face when using them.

Involving Disabled people

The Council already works with the Rochford Access Committee for the Disabled. We will also seek to establish links with other representative groups operating within the area. However, the Council recognises that it needs to more effectively engage with all disadvantaged groups in the community. As part of its work with partner authorities, work will be undertaken to provide appropriate mechanisms for engaging and consulting with dispersed, low numbers of hard to reach and minority communities across the large rural areas of South East Essex.

5. Administration of the Scheme

Responsibility and Accountability

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for our Disability Equality Scheme and he will work closely with the Senior Management Team to oversee it. Political accountability rests with the Policy, Finance & Strategic Performance Committee.

Co-ordination of the day to day running of the scheme is the responsibility of the Corporate Policy Manager.

Review of the Scheme

The action plan will be monitored by the Service Development & Improvement Sub-Group and reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purposes. As a minimum, the scheme will undergo a full review in 2010 and every three years thereafter.

Publishing the Scheme

The scheme needs to be read in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Equalities Strategy and Race Equality Scheme. It will be published on the website and will be available in a range of other formats. Copies will be sent to known community groups

Contact Details

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6. Action Plan

Action 1 – Arrangements for Assessing the Impact of Policies				
Action	Who	Completed by	Resources	Milestones
Agree an approach to impact assessments for new and existing policies and functions	CPM/HRM	October 2006	Within existing	Agreed process in place COMPLETED – as part of Building Capacity East Project
Identify responsible officers to undertake the impact assessments	SMT	October 2006	Within existing	List of officers responsible for undertaking impact assessments COMPLETED – heads of service identified
Provide training on impact assessment for those identified	CPM/HRM	January 2007	Training course/trainer costs	People trained to undertake assessments
Undertake impact assessments in accordance with agreed priority order	Nominated officers	February onwards	Officer time	Completed impact assessments
Provide advice for services undertaking assessments ensure a consistent approach	CPM	February onwards	Officer time	Co-ordinated approach to consultation
Agree procedure for considering result of impact assessments and linkages with service planning process	Service Development & Improvement Sub-Group	March 2007	Within existing	Co-ordinated approach to impact assessments
Action 2 – Arrangements for Monitoring Policies for Adverse Impact				
Action	Who	Completed by	Resources	Milestones
Agree services which will be required to produce monitoring information	SMT	March 2007	Officer time	Understanding of those services where monitoring information is relevant
Establish monitoring process for identifying service users for all these appropriate services	SMT	March 2007	Within existing	Agreed processes to enable monitoring information to be collected
Develop local performance indicators for equalities in relevant service areas	Individual Heads of Service	March 2007	Within existing	Agreed equalities indicators in relevant areas

Ensure that monitoring information is used as part of the annual business planning process	Service Development & Improvement Sub-Group	March 2007	Within existing	Divisional planning amended to take account of new requirements, if necessary
Action 3 – Arrangements for Publishing, Assessment, Consultation and Monitoring				
Action	Who	Completed by	Resources	Milestones
Publish this disabilityequality scheme on the website and in 'Rochford District Matters'	CPM	January 2007	Within existing	Published scheme in place
Publish results of impact assessments, including responses to consultation, in the annual Performance Plan	HFAPM	June 2007	Within existing	Results of impact assessments undertaken publicised
Publish employee monitoring information on the website on an annual basis	HRM	June 2007	Within existing	Information widely available
Provide appropriate mechanisms for engaging and consulting with dispersed, hard to reach and minority communities	CPM	March 2008	Funded by Building Capacity East Project	Engagement with minority and hard to reach groups to ensure actions are relevant and comparisons with majority groups can be made
Action 4 – Arrangements for Making Sure the Public have Access to Information and Services				
Action	Who	Completed by	Resources	Milestones
Consider the outcome of the Best Value review on Access to Services and review for equalities implications	HAMS/CPM	March 2007	To be identified	Agreed improvement plan in place
Action 5 – Arrangements for Training Staff				
Action	Who	Completed by	Resources	Milestones
Continue to offer training to elected members and particularly those with responsibility for this Scheme	HAMS	May/June 2007	Within existing	Equalities training included in member induction
Agree any specific training necessary for implementation of this Scheme	HRM	January 2007	Within existing	Training in place to enable implementation of scheme

Provide training on impact assessments to designated persons	HRM	January 2007	Within existing	Impact assessment training in place
Action 7 – Employment Monitoring				
Action	Who	Completed by	Resources	Milestones
Provide employment monitoring data to meet the specific employment duties as follows:				
- staff in post	HRM	COMPLETED	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- applicants for employment	HRM	COMPLETED	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- applicants for training	HRM	May 2007	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- applicants for promotion	HRM	COMPLETED	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- those who receive training	HRM	May 2007	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- those who benefit or suffer as a result of performance appraisals	HRM	May 2007	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- those involved in grievance procedures	HRM	COMPLETED	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- those subject to disciplinary procedure	HRM	COMPLETED	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
- those who end their service	HRM	COMPLETED	Within existing	Data analysed and produced in annual workforce profile report
Publish results of monitoring exercises	HRM	June 2007	Within existing	Annual workforce profile report published on the internet and intranet
Compare data to local population and develop an action plan to address any under representation	HRM	September 2007	Within existing	Action plan in place