



Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board -
DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

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DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

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ABOUT THE ASSESSOR & ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

The Assessor/ERO is responsible for three functions and services to the constituent authorities. These are the compilation and maintenance of the Electoral Register, the maintenance and annual publication of the Council Tax Valuation List and the maintenance of the non-domestic Valuation Roll. There are around 212,000 registered electors in the area, residing mainly in the 135,000 or so domestic subjects shown in the Council Tax Valuation List. The Valuation Roll has some 10,800 entries with a total rateable value in the region of £250m. The Assessor's service operates from one central location employing approximately sixty personnel.

Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board serves an area with a population of 279,480, 20.43% of which has a limiting long-term illness (Source 2001 Census)

Although the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places new obligations the service has always been conscious of avoiding discrimination.

A copy of the Joint Board's Equal Opportunities Policy Statement is attached. (Appendix 1)

General Duty

Through the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, the Government has placed a general duty on all public bodies, including local authorities, to adopt a proactive approach to promote equality for disabled people into all activities and decisions - taking action to prevent acts of disability discrimination before they occur. In practice this translates into a requirement to:

- Involve disabled people in the preparation of a Disability Equality Scheme
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination of people with a disability
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Take steps to take account of disabled people's' disabilities, even when that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people
- Promote positive attitudes to people with a disability
- Encourage participation in public life by disabled people

The duty makes the promotion of disability equality central to the way that the Assessor/Electoral Registration Officer's service operates, improving our services to everyone and helping to mainstream disability equality.

The Assessor/Electoral Registration Officer will strive to eliminate discrimination by auditing all policies and procedures, whether old or new, to ensure that they do not discriminate and by making any necessary amendments.

The Valuation Joint Board will promote equality of opportunity by ensuring that all employees are trained in the promotion of disability equality and our responsibilities under the Disability Equality Scheme.

Promotion of positive attitudes of people with a disability and an encouragement to participate in public life will be achieved by the implementation of good communication strategies, which will ensure active involvement as well as positive initiatives to involve the wider community as consumers of our services.

Specific Duties

We are required to formally prepare and publish a Disability Equality Scheme which sets out our functions and services relevant to the General Duty. This is due by the 4th December 2006 and should involve people with disabilities both staff and stakeholders.

In addition, the Valuation Joint Board has to :-

- Revise the Scheme regularly at least every 3 years
- Monitor the impact of its policies on the promotion of disability equality
- Formulate an Action Plan to ensure the General Duty is fulfilled
- Publish the results of assessments, consultations and monitoring
- Ensure public access to information and to services
- Train staff in issues relevant to the duty

In order to meet both the General Duty and the Specific Duties of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board has published this Disability Equality Scheme. The Scheme is a timetabled and realistic plan, setting out our arrangements for meeting the general and specific duties in terms of disability equality. Its aim is to help us eliminate unlawful disability discrimination and promote disability equality.

Disability equality will be more relevant to some of our services and functions than others, but, in this context, relevance is about how our actions affect people rather than the number of people they affect. Disabled people make up 20.43% of the population within the Board's area; our functions and policies affect those members of the community directly and indirectly, and are therefore relevant to disability equality. The Valuation Joint Board's Disability Equality Scheme will help to ensure that citizens and employees will not suffer from direct or indirect discrimination on disability grounds.

How we will meet the general duty -

We will make measured progress in achieving disability equality by

- Making sure policies are properly targeted
- Improving our systems to deliver suitable and accessible services to meet the needs of the community
- Increasing confidence in our service, encouraging us to be more aware of possible problems
- Assess each service for relevance to the General Duty
- Comply with Specific Duties
- Develop anti harassment policies

How we will meet the specific duties -

The Valuation Joint Board will, in conjunction with disabled people, assess its policies & public services for their impact on disability equality and will develop its action plan for the next three years.

Timetables for action can be found within the Action Plans at Appendix 2 of this document.

Monitoring the impact of services on disabled people -

Services provided by the Valuation Joint Board will be monitored on an ongoing basis to check their effects on disabled people and whether there is any adverse impact on those people. If changes are required these will be carried out over the three years of the Disability Equality Scheme and timescales will be outlined in the Action Plans.

Involvement -

Involvement is a priority within the Disability Equality Scheme. As the Assessor/ERO service is too small to attempt to undertake this aspect on its own we have used Clackmannanshire Council – our Joint Board service provider to assist in completing our Scheme. This assistance has been provided by Francine Orr of Clackmannanshire Council. In developing our future action plans we have sought the involvement of the organisations listed in Appendix 2.

Employee Training -

Existing staff will be required to attend a training session on the Disability Equality scheme and the achievement of equality targets as set out in the Action Plan.

Diversity training will form part of all induction packages to ensure that all new staff are aware of the Valuation Joint Board's commitment to equality of opportunity and the Disability Equality Scheme.

Training will be reviewed and updated on an on going basis

The training will be co-ordinated and delivered primarily by Clackmannanshire Council.

Meeting the Specific duties under the act in terms of employment -

The Valuation Joint Board is required to monitor employees in the following categories;

- the numbers of staff in post and applicants for employment who have a disability
- those who receive training
- the number of staff with a disability who are promoted within the organisation
- the number of employees who are involved in disciplinary proceedings
- those who leave employment.

Existing monitoring of applicants and the workforce will be extended to cover the new duties. We will use the information to help assess the effect of our functions and policies on the recruitment training and retention of employees with a disability

Our new employee application packs identify, by means of a separate form, if the applicant considers that they have a disability. This form is not available to anyone involved in the selection process.

Recruitment applications will be monitored and statistics kept.

Analysis of the results will provide information to inform for any future amendments.

Communication -

Employees of the Valuation Joint Board will be informed about our progress on Disability Equality through in-house communication and through Service Plans and Best Value reviews. The public will be kept informed through focus groups, consultative forums, involvement in local voluntary sector organisations and through the press and our website.

Appendix 1

Equal Opportunities Statement

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

The Valuation Joint Board believes that equality of opportunity should be a guiding principle in all of its activities. The Board is actively working towards the elimination of Policies and Practices which discriminate. It is opposed to any form of discriminatory practices on grounds including:-

- gender
- marital status
- religious belief
- disability
- race
- ethnic origin
- colour
- nationality
- political belief
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic status
- age

We are actively working towards the elimination of all discriminatory practices.

Legal Framework:

The Joint Board is committed to adhering to the principles of domestic legislation as presented in the following Acts:

Equal Pay Act 1970
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Race Relations Act 1976
Disability Discrimination Act 1995
The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003
Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) Regulations 2003
Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
Disability Discrimination Act 2005
The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
Equality Act 2006
The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

In addition the Joint Board will adhere to European Directives, information on which will be made available on a regular basis.

Updated by Central Scotland
Valuation Joint Board
22nd June, 2007

Applicable to all staff.

Appendix 2

Three Year Action Plan

Three Year Action Plan -

ACTION	YEAR
Contact and involve disabled groups in regard to new and reviewed policies	2006/07
Involve disabled people in consideration of improvements to office facilities and access	2006/07
Produce forms in Braille and retain stocks	2007 onwards
Investigation of alterations to computer systems so that appropriate communication methods are recorded	2007 onwards
Co-ordinate through Scottish Assessors' Association and Portal for national forms and consultation	2007 onwards

Appendix 3

Organisations Contacted

Organisations Contacted :-

Forth Valley Macular Disease Support Group, Larbert
Epilepsy Connections, Falkirk
Headway Forth Valley, Falkirk
Muscular Dystrophy, Falkirk
Enable Scotland Falkirk Branch
Falkirk & District Assoc. for Mental Health, Falkirk
Capability Scotland, Grangemouth
Scottish Disability Equality Forum, Stirling
Dyslexia Scotland, Stirling
Enable Scotland Stirling Branch
Forth Valley Asperger Support Group, Stirling
Multiple Sclerosis Society, Stirling
Parkinson's Disease Society Stirling Branch
Arthritis Care Doune/Dunblane Branch
Council on Disability Stirling Area
CVS Stirling
Dyslexia Forth Valley, Stirling
Alzheimer Scotland Action on Dementia, Bridge of Allan
Deafblind Scotland, Lenzie

Appendix 4

Definition of Disability

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Disability is defined as:

“A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”

Impairment

The definition covers physical and mental impairments. These include:

Physical impairments affecting the senses, such as sight and hearing
Mental impairments including learning disabilities and mental illness

Substantial

The following are examples that are likely to be considered substantial:

Inability to see moving traffic clearly enough to cross a road safely
Inability to turn taps or knobs
Inability to remember and relay a message correctly

Long-term

These are effects that:

Have lasted at least 12 months or
Are likely to last at least 12 months or
Are likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected

Long-term effects include those which are likely to recur. For example, an effect will be considered to be long-term if it is likely both to recur, and to do so at least once beyond the 12 month period following the first occurrence.

Day-to-day activities

Day-to-day activities are activities carried out by most people on a regular basis and must involve one of the following categories:

- Mobility – moving from place to place
- Manual dexterity – use of the hands
- Physical co-ordination
- Continence
- The ability to lift, carry or move ordinary objects
- Speech, hearing or eyesight
- Being able to recognise physical danger

The Government has issued guidance under the Act about whether an impairment has a substantial or long-term effect. This guidance does not in itself impose legal obligations on an employer or service provider, but a tribunal or court must, when considering a complaint about discrimination take into account any of the guidance which appears to be relevant.

Particular Cases or Conditions Covered by the Legislation

Severe Disfigurements -

The Act's definition treats severe disfigurements as disabilities although they have no effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

If, however, the disfigurement consists of a tattoo which has not been removed, non-medical body piercing (or an object attached through such a piercing) the regulations have the effect of ensuring that this would not be treated as a disability.

Impairments Helped by Treatment or Artificial Aids –

Medication or equipment (such as an artificial limb) which helps an impairment, is not taken into account when considering whether an impairment has a substantial effect.

For example, a person who wears a hearing aid is considered to have the hearing loss that would exist without the use of the aid. An exception is when people wear glasses or contact lenses it is the effect on the person's vision, while wearing their glasses or contact lenses, that is considered.

If, however, the treatment is likely to cure the impairment, this should be taken into account in assessing whether the impairment is long-term.

Progressive Conditions -

The Act covers progressive conditions where impairments are likely to become substantial. Examples of progressive conditions include:

- Cancer

- HIV infection

- Multiple sclerosis

- Muscular dystrophy

The Act covers people with these conditions from the moment that there is a noticeable effect on normal day-to-day activities however slight.

For example, a person with multiple sclerosis would be covered from the time they first developed symptoms that affect their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. They would not be covered just because the illness had been diagnosed.

Genetic Predispositions -

The Act does not cover people with a gene that causes a disability unless they develop the disability. For example people with the gene that causes Huntington's Chorea are not covered if they do not have the condition. People are covered as soon as the first effects on normal day-to-day activities appear.

Past Disabilities -

The definition covers people who have had a disability in the past. If a person once had a disability which is covered by the Act, they are still protected if they have recovered. This applies even if they recovered before the Act came into force.

Babies and Young Children Under the Age of Six -

It may be difficult to see the effects of an impairment on a baby or young child and thus determine if he or she is disabled. However, a young child with an impairment will be treated as disabled under the Act if someone over the age of six with such an impairment would normally be covered by the Act.

Impairments which are Excluded -

The following conditions are not to be treated as impairments for the purposes of the Act

- Addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine or other substance (unless the addiction resulted from the substance being medically prescribed)

- Seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever) except where it aggravates the effect of another condition

- A tendency to set fires

- A tendency to steal

- A tendency to the physical or sexual abuse of others

- Exhibitionism

- Voyeurism