



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

**Disability Equality Scheme
Annual Progress Report 2009**

Disability Equality Scheme

Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, has provided an opportunity for Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (VJB) to reaffirm its commitment to disability equality.

The promotion of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination in relation to disabled persons is a process to which I am personally committed. This has required changes to our operations in the recent years and will require further actions in the years to come. This third report details the progress made to date and highlights the way forward

David C. Thomson
Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board

December 2009

The year to November 2009

1. Making sure the Disability Scheme works

- Equalities Champion continues to promote all equalities issues to all stakeholders
- All new staff are trained in equalities issues as part of the staff induction processes
- Issues highlighted regularly at Management Team meetings
- Scheme and annual reports published on the DAB-VJB website at <http://www.dab-vjb.gov.uk/equalities/>
- Monitoring statistics are produced and published on the website
- Equalities champion has participated in the consultation for the new Equalities Bill

2. Identifying relevant functions and policies

- All VJB Policies are examined to ensure that they do not contain any barriers to the promotion of disability equality

3. Assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies to remove any adverse impact

- Monitoring forms are issued to and the returns collated for a random sample of all stakeholders under the VJB Customer Consultation Policy. All relevant comments examined by a member of the management team
- Equalities champion is a member of the Community Planning Equalities Group
- Any complaints received being monitored for equalities issues
- The Board has been developing procedures to allow Equality Impact Assessments to be carried out on new policies and processes.

4. Communicating the results of assessment and monitoring

- Results communicated to management team and staff
- Results published on website at <http://www.dab-vjb.gov.uk/equalities/>

5. Ensuring Access to buildings, functions and services

- DDA building works completed during 2007/08. Works include signage, an induction loop, ramps and disabled toilet provision. Alterations should ensure that the buildings are more accessible for all stakeholders
- Provision in Braille or tape offered on many policies, documents and forms on request
- Discussions completed with lead authority (West Dunbartonshire Council) regarding accessibility of the DAB-VJB website. The website has been updated to improve accessibility for the visually impaired, the dyslexic, and those with

cognitive difficulties. New accessibility guidelines have been added to the Board website at <http://www.dab-vjb.gov.uk/accessibility-guidelines/>

- “Text phones” have been installed in both offices to enable severely hearing impaired people to communicate using a telephone with a small keyboard and screen. The text phone numbers are now detailed on the Board website and on all outgoing letters.
- The facility to text “no change” notification for the Electoral Register during the annual canvass has been developed in addition to the existing options of Web, telephone and paper return
- Link added to website to access the Electoral Commission “easy Guide to Voting in Scotland” pamphlet
- Contact made with Access to Democracy Project with commitment made to facilitate a registration day during 2010.

6. Employment

- Monitoring forms are issued to and the returns collated for:
 - all existing staff
 - all applicants for new posts
 - all temporary staff
 - salaries
 - all retirements, resignations, and redundancies as required
 - all staff training
 - all applications for promotion
- No grievance or disciplinary procedures have arisen for disabled members of staff
- All applicants who have identified themselves as having a disability have been interviewed

7. Training Staff

- All new staff are trained in all aspects of the Joint Board’s Equality Policies

Actions for year to December 2010

- Through the management team the VJB will ensure that equalities issues remain to the fore and that all staff remain committed to ensure that equality neutral delivery of services is maintained
- Equalities champion to continue to attend Community Planning Equalities Group meetings

- Equality Targets can be found on the website and will be updated at the end of each calendar year, reconsidered on an ongoing basis, and amended as necessary
- DAB-VJB buildings to be monitored to ensure DDA accessibility
- The VJB will continue to provide support to disabled staff and will encourage staff to “self declare” disabilities to assist in removing the stigma of disability and also to ensure that the VJB is properly meeting the needs of disabled people
- Training of staff will continue with accent on the early awareness of the Disability Equality Scheme in the induction procedures
- All job applicants who identify themselves as having a disability will be interviewed
- Continue to monitor personnel as in the current year
- Issue full equality monitoring forms as part of the Customer Satisfaction Procedures
- Continue to develop and implement our Equality Impacts Assessments
- Continue consultations with the Disability Consultancy regarding the format of forms issued by the Board
- Continue consultations with the Access to Democracy Project at Scottish Council on Deafness who are keen to examine the possibility of increasing the number of deaf persons registered to vote.

Conclusion

Dunbartonshire and Argyll and Bute Valuation Joint Board continues to encourage equality for all stakeholders and staff and ensures that all its equalities policies are adhered to and its services are accessible to all.

Note

When the new streamlined equalities legislation becomes law, it is the intention for the Board to have a single Equality Scheme and a single Annual Report for all the strands.