

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Agenda Item 30

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Scoping of potential work regarding disability issues		
Date of Meeting:	8th September 2009		
Report of:	Director of Strategy & Governance		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Mary Evans	Tel: 291577
	E-mail:	Mary.evans@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 At Overview & Scrutiny Commission on 14th July 2009 it was agreed that a scoping report be written to enable consideration of any potential work regarding disability issues
- 1.2 The Equalities & Inclusion Policy & Action Plan 2008-11 contain the Council's commitment to tackle inequality for disabled staff and service users and specifically aims to involve disabled people in policy development. This includes the commitment to work to the Equalities Framework which provides indicators of best practice in equalities work and focuses on providing evidence of outcomes and will therefore be a key driver for our equalities work.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That members note the issues and current actions as outlined in the report and consider whether any further action by Overview and Scrutiny is needed at this stage

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Employment statistics

Disabled Recruitment equalities trend data 2004 – 2008

	Applications		Interviews		Offers	
	%	No.	%		%	No.
2004/5	3.2%	198	-	Not collated	3.1%	23
2005/6	4%	409	4.5%	138	2.5%	25
2006/7	3.7%	364	4.9%	145	3.3%	31
2007/8	4.3%	353	5.9%	134	3.4%	30
2008/9 (q1-2)	3.5%	238	5.0%	85	4.7%	26

The marked increase in disabled applicants being interviewed may be traced back to the implementation of the 'two ticks' scheme at the City Council.

3.2 Recruitment & retention of disabled staff

The council uses the 'Double Tick' symbol which means we are committed to employing people with disabilities and wish to encourage more applications from people with disabilities. We were re-assessed by Job Centre Plus in June 2009 who confirmed that we are meeting with our commitments under the scheme.

Guidance for managers on short listing and interviewing disabled applicants - sits alongside the Guaranteed Interview Scheme Policy/Procedure and is a practical support document for recruiters. All HR staff in the Coaching & Advice team recently attended a workshop on disability and absence, covering social model approach to disability, reasonable adjustments, Access to Work. Representatives from the Coaching & Advice Team also attended the 'Dyslexia at Work Conference' run by the British Dyslexia Association in March 2009. HR also provides considerable guidance to managers on making reasonable adjustments for staff who become disabled during their employment.

The Council has a Disabled Workers Forum (DWF) which all staff with disabilities or long term health conditions are encouraged to attend. The DWF is actively involved in Equality Impact Assessments of HR policy and service development e.g. sickness absence policy and provides representation to the HR Equalities Group and Equalities Steering Group. Speakers are invited to the DWF to address areas of concern for Disabled staff e.g. access to transport, and additional work is undertaken where necessary. One example of this is the newly established Reasonable Adjustments working group made up of reps from the DWF, Unions, HR, ICT, Health & Wellbeing, Supported Employment and appropriate managers. The group will explore what else needs to be put in place to ensure that everyone's needs are addressed promptly and effectively

There are already many examples of good practice across the council including the use of specialist software and other equipment, adjustments to work roles and adjustment to physical working conditions.

3.2.1 Local Employment Programme (LEP)

The Local Employment Programme works both internally and externally to provide access to job roles for disadvantaged groups including long term unemployed, Lone Parents and those claiming Incapacity Benefit. This includes working alongside council recruiting managers supporting them and candidates/appointed staff following appointment. The majority of jobs are 6 months – 1 year fixed term.

Once a candidate is successful, the project then provides qualified training opportunities via Train to Gain, NVQ etc and also supports the new employee through a buddy process. Originally the LEP project was given a target of 80 people into employment in the council within 2 years. After 6 months the LEP project had successfully hit the first year target of 40 and is now on 45.

The LEP is in the process of recruiting a Disability Officer, which would be funded by BHCC Supported Employment Team (see below). Their main role would be to help the LEP staff to isolate specific roles, and then support disabled candidates with the application, manage expectations, support the recruiting manager and then provide support once the candidate was successful to maintain sustainability. They would be trained on reasonable adjustments and this will be able to supplement other support.

The LEP work in partnership with the council's Supported Employment Team who provide support for disabled people facing complex or additional barriers when seeking employment. The team provides various functions including helping complete application forms, organising mock interviews, providing information on reasonable adjustments, job adjustments and job coaching, and on-going support whilst in employment.

3.2.2 Dignity & Respect Working Group

This working group has been in operation since January 2009 to examine the issues of bullying/harassment in the council and develop new Dignity & Respect at Work policy and mechanisms. The group is attended by Cllr. Ayas Fallon-Khan and it includes senior management representation from across the council as well as Dr Karen McIvor a specialist consultant. The group will be consulting extensively throughout the process of their work. Following a scoping meeting in April, the Dignity at Work scrutiny panel has been put on hold until Autumn 2009 when a written draft strategy will be at a stage suitable for consideration and comment.

4. INVOLVEMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

The Council is very committed to the involvement of local disabled people in our policy and service development as around 20% of adults in the city are disabled or in a household with someone who is disabled. We are working closely with the Federation of Disabled People and the Primary Care Trust on the new “Get Involved” Project. This project is designed to:

- Keep a database of organisations for disabled people in the city
- Recruit disabled people to be involved in consultation and involvement activities including targeting people who encounter multiple barriers to inclusion
- Provide training for volunteers to enable them to engage effectively with statutory bodies
- Put mechanisms in place for the council to consult disabled people

Considerable progress has been made with this work. A wide range of impairment groups are involved including participants with learning difficulties. People are moving away from expressing only their personal experience of disability and moving towards a position where they are thinking about the barriers encountered by other disabled people, with different needs. The disabled people decide on the theme for meetings and ask questions from invited individuals from the public bodies.

The issues that the Get Involved Project have examined so far include the issuing of bus passes, signage in the city and disability equality training. They have an outstanding area of concern about how disabled people are provided with the right support by the council to live independently, particularly levels of Occupational Therapy provision. They are however aware that there are funding issues for the council and appreciate the work that has been undertaken with Accesspoint and AskSara. In their report “Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People” 2005, the government gave a commitment to Centres for Independent Living (in every council locality) by 2010. These centres would be user-led and would provide the additional support that disabled people need. Work is actively underway between officers in Adult Social Care and the Federation of Disabled People to support the development of such a centre locally.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

5.1 None directly in relation to this report as all costs to be met by existing budgets

Legal Implications:

5.2 Our statutory responsibilities in relation to equalities are directly addressed by the Equalities & Inclusion Policy and the Equality Scheme Action Plan.

Equalities Implications:

5.3 The equalities implications are directly addressed by the Equalities & Inclusion Policy and the Equalities Scheme Action Plan.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 None directly in relation to this report

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Partnership Community Safety Team are key contributors to equalities & inclusion work in the city and this is reflected in the Equalities & Inclusion Policy and the Equalities Scheme Action Plan

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 The implications for risk are directly addressed by the Equalities & Inclusion Policy and the Equalities Scheme Action Plan.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.7 The Equality Scheme Action Plan has been developed with input from all council Directorates.

