

Disability Involvement Meeting

27 March 2009
Review



If you would like help to understand this document, or would prefer it in another format or language, please contact the Diversity Team on 01432 260216 or diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk.

Background

As a result of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, all public organisations need to produce a Disability Equality Scheme detailing how they plan to take the needs of disabled people into account. The document needs to be relevant to the local area, and it is our duty to consult with and involve disabled people.

From November 2009, the Herefordshire Council, NHS Herefordshire and the Hereford

Hospitals Trust (together called “Herefordshire Public Services”) will have a joint Disability Equality Scheme.

The Disability Involvement Meeting held on 27 March 2009 at Withington Village Hall was the first stage in the process to write this joint Disability Equality Scheme for 2009-2012.

Who was involved?

70 Herefordshire groups were invited to attend the meeting, and 19 people from the following groups attended:

- Breathe Easy Group
- Canal Road Day Centre
- Disabled Data International
- ECHO
- Herefordshire Disability Forum
- Herefordshire Mencap
- Hereford Access for All
- Herefordshire Centre for Independent Living
- Herefordshire Mind
- Herefordshire Carers Support
- Herefordshire LINK
- Herefordshire Mental Health Regeneration Forum
- Leominster Shopmobility

Written responses were received from:

- Independent HUG
- Herefordshire Mind

The following public service areas were represented:

- Hospital Human Resources
- Asset Management & Property Services
- Involving People Team
- Corporate Diversity Team
- Legal Services
- Information & Communications Technology
- Deputy Chief Executive’s Office

We would like to acknowledge the support of the deputy leader of the Council, Councillor June French, who has been an active champion for diversity for a number of years.

Introduction to the meeting

Tony Featherstone chaired the meeting. Tony is the Council’s Strategic Asset Manager, and Chair of the Disability Working Group.

Annie Faulder is the Interim Deputy Chief Executive for the Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire. She introduced herself and explained how important disability equality is to Herefordshire Public Services.

Objective of the meeting

To involve local disability groups in preparing the new Disability Equality Scheme by identifying priorities and actions.

Harriet Yellin is the Herefordshire Council's Diversity Officer who leads on work around disability. She looked back at some of the successes from the 2006-2009 action plan.

Carol Trachonitis is Herefordshire Council's Equality & Diversity Manager. She explained the process that we are following to produce the new Disability Equality Scheme. She also described the kinds of services which are

covered by Herefordshire Public Services, which range from hospital treatment to dentists to waste management.

The workshops were facilitated by Carol Trachonitis, Neville Meredith (Race Equality Development Officer), Kevin O'Keefe (Legal Practice Manager) and Lucy Ruck (ICT Client Account Manager, and Chair of the Disability Staff Group).

Workshop 1

Some of the issues arising from workshop discussions were:

- Lack of provision of accessible toilets, particularly "Changing Places" facilities
- Car parking at Hereford Hospital
- Consulting disabled people as early as possible
- Access to work
- Awareness and training around invisible impairments
- Transport
- The needs of individuals (especially people with learning disabilities) when they're in hospital
- Negative staff attitudes and tokenism

What are the main issues and barriers for you and the people you represent?

- Problems with pavement surfaces and inaccessible diversions
- The need for disabled people to get involved in providing training
- Accessible voting
- Training generally, but specifically for GPs and children
- Access to playschemes
- Access to the Odeon cinema, Courtyard theatre and Hereford United
- Availability of pulmonary rehabilitation classes and hydrotherapy
- Provision of wheelchairs

Feedback

We narrowed down the comments to the following five priorities:

- 1. Transport**
- 2. Toilets**
- 3. Training**
- 4. Attitudes**
- 5. Inclusive Communities & Services**

Some issues arose which were discussed after lunch, as there is some work already being done. These included:

- The Council already holds (and uses) a list of disability organisations who are willing to advise on accessibility.
- Temporary Blue Badges are being reviewed as part of the national review of the Blue Badge scheme.
- The Council has gone some way towards providing an on-line accessible venues guide, and it is hoped this will be publicly available soon.

Workshop 2

Examples of the ideas for actions include:

- Review the eligibility criteria for bus passes, where people currently have to declare a permanent impairment.
- Increase availability of evening buses.
- Ensure that taxi drivers know how to transport disabled passengers safely.
- Ensure that the hospital informs patients and visitors about the opportunity to claim back parking fees.
- Investigate possible sanctions against people who park illegally in allocated disabled bays.
- Investigate allowing use of bus pass on community transport.
- Investigate feasibility of providing an accessible minibus for groups to hire.
- Improve signage for public toilets.
- Aim to ensure that the Edgar Street Grid incorporates at least one Changing Places toilet.
- Allow flexibility of appointment duration for seeing consultants and GPs.
- Work towards getting a Changing Places toilet in each market town.
- Review day opportunities for young people.
- Hold regular informal meetings with disabled people to update on progress and share ideas.
- Improve publicity eg. discounted RADAR keys, work of Diversity Team, diversity web pages, Changing Places facilities already available.
- Increase funding for Occupational Therapy and wheelchairs.

What specific and realistic actions can the three organisations take to tackle the priorities which have been identified?

What happens now?

- The priorities identified will be incorporated where possible into the draft Disability Equality Scheme (however further consultation may result in them being amended).
- A survey of employee opinions will go live throughout April 2009.
- A survey of public opinion will be live throughout May 2009.
- More work will be done with schools and specialist organisations to ensure that as wide a range of people as possible are encouraged to participate.
- A public Disability Forum will be held on 11 May 2009 (at Hedley Lodge Hotel, Belmont Abbey, Hereford) to consult more widely. Please feel free to pass this information on to anyone you think may be interested – more information to follow shortly.
- The joint 2009-2012 Disability Equality Scheme (and Action Plans) will be published in November 2009.
- The Disability Equality Scheme will be reviewed each year, and a report published.

Herefordshire Council Corporate Diversity Team
01432 260216 • diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk
PO Box 4, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0XH
www.herefordshire.gov.uk/diversity