

West Dunbartonshire Council

Disability Equality Scheme

2006 – 2009

**(Including the West Dunbartonshire Council Education
Authority Disability Equality Scheme)**

The Scheme is available in standard print (12 point), in large print, in Braille, on CD and on audio tape. It can also be made available in community languages.

**This document is also available in other languages,
large print and audio format on request.**

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.

Hindi

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

Urdu

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Chinese (Cantonese)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Polish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formie audio.

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Disability Equality Duty Action Plan

Appendices:	A	Disability Discrimination Legislation
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1 Introduction

- 1.1** The Disability Equality Scheme presents the Council's approach to the delivery of its services in a way which meets disabled people's needs and priorities, and their right to equality of opportunity. The scheme has been developed from the Disability Equality Strategy 2005 which has been extended to respond to the requirements of new legislation. It is part of a framework of policies that address equality issues.
- 1.2** The scheme follows the statutory code of practice produced by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) for Scottish public authorities and may be amended to respond to further guidance to be published by the DRC.
- 1.3** The scheme reflects the Council's longstanding links with the disabled community and the involvement of disabled people in the formulation of the scheme itself. It sets out the Council's decision-making process in regard to equalities and the values that it seeks to put into practice.
- 1.4** The DDA 2005 requires education authorities to publish disability equality schemes which are recognisably distinct from council schemes. The West Dunbartonshire Education Authority scheme forms section 19 of the Council's scheme.
- 1.5** The main body of the scheme shows the Council's approach to key disability issues such as access, communication and isolation from public life, and goes on to set out the process by which mainstream policies and procedures will be assessed for their impact on disabled people.
- 1.6** The scheme identifies actions to be taken in the next three years and gathers these into the accompanying action plan. The Council will report progress annually, and review the scheme in 2009.

2 Background

Legislation

- 2.1** The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requires the Council to ensure that it does not discriminate against disabled people in its role as employer or service provider. It is required to make adjustments to its services and procedures to avoid disadvantage to disabled people, and to ensure that its premises do not make access to services unreasonably difficult.

2.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 does not, in general, add to the rights established in the 1995 Act but gives public authorities the duty to take positive steps to promote equal opportunities for disabled people, to eliminate discrimination in the way they carry out their functions and to challenge the harassment that disabled people experience. Authorities must promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. These responsibilities should be underpinned by the willingness to treat disabled people more favourably than others if this is required to achieve equality of outcomes for them.

2.3 The 2005 Act gives councils the specific duties of involving disabled people in the development of a disability equality scheme, assessing the impact of new and existing policies and functions on disabled people, gathering and using information on its employment and delivery of services to disabled people, and producing an action plan which sets out how they will meet these duties. Appendix A provides a more detailed account of disability equality legislation.

Previous Disability Strategy

2.4 The scheme is a successor to the Council's equal opportunities strategy published in 1999, to the Best Value Access Review in 2003 and to the Disability Equality Strategy published in 2005.

The Equality and Diversity Strategy

2.5 The Council's Equality and Diversity Strategy provides the overarching framework for its approaches to disability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief, which will each have its own strategy or guidance. Some aspects of these strategies, including training, communication and impact assessment will address disability within integrated approaches which include other equality strands.

Council Strategies

2.6 The scheme cannot be seen in isolation from a wide range of corporate strategies which have to take account of the needs and rights of disabled people. These include the Customer Care Strategy, Consultation Strategy, Procurement Strategy and Asset Management Plan. A number of sections of the scheme refer to these links.

Corporate & Community Planning

2.7 The strategy lies within the framework of priorities, objectives and actions set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, and contributes to the Council's strategic objective of providing high quality best value services.

- 2.8** A number of the Council's objectives in the pursuit of disability equality are addressed in the context of the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership. These include the community safety of disabled people, accessible transport, and employment.

3 Disability in West Dunbartonshire

- 3.1** Disability is associated with a wide range of impairments or conditions:

- Physical impairment
- Mental illness or disorder
- Learning disability
- Dyslexia
- Sensory impairment
- Conditions such as cancer, diabetes and multiple sclerosis
- Facial disfigurement

- 3.2** Disability can also be seen in terms of the barriers that people face in functions such as:

- Mobility
- Manual dexterity
- Physical co-ordination
- Continence
- Speech, hearing or sight
- Memory
- The ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- Confidence and assertiveness

- 3.3** On most counts West Dunbartonshire is more affected by disability than almost any other local authority in Scotland. Appendix B provides a range of data, including the following:

- In the 2001 census over 21000 people (22% of the total population) reported having a long term illness or disability. Around 11000 were of working age.
- By their mid-fifties, people in West Dunbartonshire have a 50/50 chance of having a long-term illness or disability.
- Eleven thousand people are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance.
- In 2003, 8.7% of the adult population received GP prescriptions for mental health problems.
- At 36%, the employment rate among disabled people is the fifth lowest in Scotland.

- 3.4** Disability is therefore part of the fabric of the community of West Dunbartonshire and has to be integral to the Council's approach to all of its policies and services. The Disability Equality Scheme sets out the Council's approach to achieving this.

Information on the disabled community

- 3.5** The Council recognises the importance of developing its knowledge of the patterns and extent of disability in the West Dunbartonshire area, and has amassed a significant amount of data. This will be drawn together into a 'disability profile' and published as a means to broaden the understanding of disability and to assist local agencies, the voluntary sector and community groups to plan activity and attract additional resources.

Action 1: The Council will produce a 'disability profile' of West Dunbartonshire.

4 Leadership

- 4.1** The Council's approach to disability equality is led by an elected member with the role of spokesperson for equality and diversity. The councillor chairs the Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG), made up of elected members and senior managers, which oversees the scheme and reports to the Council's Social Justice Committee. The Positive Employment Forum (see 15.2) will report to the EDWG on employment issues. Appendix C provides a diagram of the decision-making structure.
- 4.2** All elected members are kept up to date with disability issues in the quarterly *Equalities Briefing* which highlights the measures being taken by the Council to address disability equality, and the national disability issues that have a local impact.
- 4.3** The Corporate Management Team is involved in operational decisions on elements of the scheme.
- 4.4** In June 2004, the Council appointed a Policy Officer in its corporate policy unit to have specific responsibility for disability equality policy. The officer's remit is to support the decision-making structure, co-ordinate the Council's approach to disability equality and provide guidance and assistance to Council services.

5 Key Principles

Equal Opportunities

- 5.1** Disabled people do not have the same opportunities or choices as non-disabled people and the Council accepts that it has a major influence in determining whether disabled people in West Dunbartonshire are able to progress toward equality of opportunity. It is the largest employer in the area, has responsibility for key services and regulatory functions, plays a lead role in the Community Planning Partnership and has opportunities to influence public awareness and attitudes.

The social model of disability

- 5.2** The strategy is based on the principle that people are not disabled by any specific condition or impairment but by:
- the physical barriers they encounter,
 - the problems created by the way services are organised, and
 - the attitudes and awareness of those who provide these services.
- 5.3** The implication of this ‘social model’ of disability, when applied to the work of the Council, is that responsibility lies firmly with the Council and its employees, rather than people with impairments, to meet the challenge of disability equality.

Equality of outcome

- 5.4** Treating disabled and non-disabled people alike will not overcome the accumulated disadvantages that disabled people experience, and the Council recognises that it may need to treat disabled people more favourably in order for them to achieve an equality of outcome with non-disabled people.

Shared advantage

- 5.5** The scheme does not involve a ‘trade-off’ between the interests of disabled and non-disabled people. Improvement in access and delivery of service for disabled people, and their wider access to equal opportunities, is to the advantage of the community as a whole. All of the Council’s customers will benefit from the improvements which the scheme will achieve.

Mainstreaming disability equality

- 5.6** Disability equality will be integrated into the day to day working of the Council and its services rather than be developed as a supplementary process.

6 Involvement

- 6.1** Disabled people themselves are the most 'expert' on the barriers and discrimination they face. This is reflected in the links that the Council has made over many years with the disabled community, and these have provided the foundation for the involvement of disabled people in the formation of the scheme. These links include:
- The Disability Working Group
 - Community Care Joint Strategy Groups
 - The Community Participation Committee
 - The Transport Forum
 - The Community Planning Partnership Board
- 6.2** The Council's involvement of disabled people reflects its consultation strategy. The Council's approach to consultation is aligned with the National Standards for Community Engagement, and the commitment to effective engagement with disabled people which this entails.
- 6.3** The Council's Consultation Strategy includes a Citizen's Panel of which 31% of members are disabled people, and for which results can be analysed to take account of this.
- 6.4** In April 2006, a conference organised jointly by the Council and the West Dunbartonshire Access Panel was attended by over 130 people, including representatives of over 20 local groups, to look at key issues that impact on disabled people and to contribute to the scheme. A report is available on the Council website, or from the Policy Unit.
- 6.5** The conference was followed up by meetings with individual groups to identify the services and issues which affect them and to plan their ongoing involvement with the Council through its Disability Working Group. The scheme therefore reflects the ideas and priorities of disabled people in West Dunbartonshire. Particular areas that reflect community input include the expansion of the Disability Working Group (see 6.6), the publication of a newsletter (see 6.10), the approach to access improvement (see 10.1), walking audits (see 10.4), the value of a one-stop-shop for information (see 13.3), and the password scheme for homecare (see 16.4).

The Disability Working Group and Joint Strategy Groups

- 6.6** The Council's Disability Working Group (DWG) was set up in 2002 to provide a forum for community representatives and Council officers to scrutinise the impact of mainstream policies and services on disabled people. In the period leading up to the publication of the scheme, its meetings were attended by managers from Waste Services, Library Services and Roads, and the group has been involved in the development of the disability equality training strategy, the Council's consultation strategy and the access improvement programme.

- 6.7** In 2006, the DWG identified the need for it to include a wider range of perspectives, in particular people with mental health problems, learning disabilities, and disabled people who use personal assistants. The expansion of the group will be an important contribution to the scheme.

Action 2: The Disability Working Group will be expanded to represent a wider range of disability.

- 6.8** The Joint Strategy groups are part of the joint planning process for community care, health and housing services in West Dunbartonshire. There are groups for areas such as learning disability, sensory impairment, physical disability and mental health. Each involves officers from the Council and health services, representatives from voluntary services, and representation from the disabled community. One of the primary roles of the groups is to give disabled people a voice in the planning of community care services.

- 6.9** The functions of the Disability Working Group and the Joint Strategy Groups, and the expertise that they represent, have already enabled them to contribute to the assessment of the impact of new and existing policies and services. They will therefore have a key role in the development of impact assessment. (See section 18).

Action 3: The Disability Working Group and Joint Strategy Groups will contribute to impact assessment.

Disability Equality Newsletter

- 6.10** The majority of groups involving disabled people exist to meet social and recreational needs rather than as the means to represent the views of their members. Nevertheless, the Council will try to ensure that they are kept informed of its approach to disability equality and have the opportunity to be involved through the disability working group. Contact with groups has led to the proposal that a periodic newsletter on the progress of the scheme would provide this opportunity. This will be sent to all local groups in the Council's mailing list and not just to groups primarily associated with disability.

Action 4: The Council will publish a newsletter on its approach to disability equality.

Involvement in service delivery

- 6.11** Involvement is not restricted to planning and scrutiny of services but includes the opportunity for partnership in the delivery of service. Disabled people are involved in the delivery of staff training (see 14.2), in 'walking audits' (see 10.4), as advisors in regard to particular access issues, and in initiatives such as the Access and Involvement Conference. (See 6.4)

7 Participation in Public Life

- 7.1** There is a tendency for disabled people to be isolated from public life in general and, in particular, from decision-making processes which should reflect a disability perspective. The Council addresses this through professional support, through funding, and through the work of its Community Participation Committee (CPC).
- 7.2** The Council's Community Development Team specifically focuses on support for organisations that represent the disabled community. Of the 26 groups receiving ongoing support at the time of writing of the scheme, 17 could be described as coming from the disabled community. The Council contracts-in support for another three disability groups and funds an advocacy service which supports individual disabled people to voice their needs.
- 7.3** The Community Learning and Development Team provides short term support to enable groups to organise for the purpose of mutual support and activity, and to give voice to community concerns. Although the service does not specifically target groups representing disabled people, team members are prompted to identify situations where disability is a barrier to community involvement and to find the means to overcome this.
- 7.4** Professional support to groups is complemented by the funding that the Council provides for local organisations. Of the 68 local grants made by the Council for 2006/7, 19 (28%) have been made to groups representing disabled people.
- 7.5** The Community Participation Committee is made up of elected members and representatives of local organisations, including disabled groups. Its role is to give community representatives the opportunity to scrutinise Council policy and to encourage community participation in the Council's operations. In the period before publication of the scheme, the CPC examined the role of the West Dunbartonshire Citizens' Panel, the Council's Consultation Strategy and the involvement of disabled people in the Disability Equality Scheme itself.

8 Promotion of Positive Attitudes

- 8.1** Images of disabled people can focus, almost exclusively, on the challenges they face or on their role as recipients of services, and the 2005 Act requires authorities to redress this imbalance by giving due emphasis to the diversity of their roles and accomplishments. This is addressed in a number of the elements of the scheme.

- 8.2** The Council's equality training strategy (see section 14) will include material which assists participants to see disabled people in a range of roles rather than solely as recipients of services.
- 8.3** The Council's spokesperson on equalities (see 4.1) will use their role in decision-making forums to present disabled people in terms of their achievements.
- 8.4** The disability equality newsletter (see 6.10) will be sent to all the local groups on the Council mailing list and will report the achievements of disabled people as well as the challenges they face.
- 8.5** The Council's newspaper and in-house magazine will carry stories which draw attention to disabled people in the community and within the Council's employment.
- 8.6** Events such as Community Day will continue to give disabled people the opportunity to demonstrate their contribution to community life.
- 8.7** Local media have been shown to have a major influence on people's attitudes and awareness of issues, and the Council's Public Relations Team will use the opportunities provided by the local press to represent disabled people in diverse and positive roles.

Action 5: The Council will use the opportunities provided in training, in decision-making forums, in events, in its own publications and in the local press to promote positive attitudes to disabled people.

9 The Elimination of Discrimination

- 9.1** The scheme addresses the elimination of disability discrimination in two ways. First, the following eight sections of the scheme address disability equality in key areas of corporate performance. These include statutory duties but also reflect the priorities identified by the disabled community. The key areas are:
- Access to Buildings and the wider environment
 - Transport
 - Communication
 - Information
 - Training
 - Employment
 - Elimination of harassment
 - Procurement of goods and services
- 9.2** Second, the scheme sets out the Council's approach to the assessment of the impact of new and existing policies and practices on disabled people.

10 Access to Council Buildings and the Wider Environment

10.1 People with physical and cognitive impairments are frequently disabled by the way in which buildings are designed, maintained and managed. Problems include physical access, signage, lighting, inappropriate toilets and lack of arrangements for people with hearing impairments. The Council has done a comprehensive access audit to provide the basis for its access improvement programme, which is part of the Council's Asset Management Plan. The programme focuses on the most frequently used Council buildings, and buildings which support local communities; specifically halls, community centres and libraries. Schools are included in a separate programme.

10.2 In 2005/6, improvement work was spread across 30 buildings and included a comprehensive programme of induction loops in libraries and community centres. In 2006/7, following consultation with the Access Panel, the programme has been narrowed to a smaller number of buildings to allow a more comprehensive range of improvements, better links to patterns of service provision, and more opportunity for user consultation.

10.3 The Council's response to the introduction of a Statutory Performance Indicator of access was to base it on a robust set of access criteria which resulted in only 20% of council buildings being deemed reasonably accessible at March 2005. By March 2006 this rose to 28% and the increase will continue as the programme progresses.

Action 6: The Council will make an annual capital allocation for a programme of improved access to its buildings.

Action 7: The Council will not take on the lease of property that will prevent disabled people from accessing services.

10.4 Disabled people also face barriers in the wider environment. The difficulties they face using roads, pathways and other open areas can be as disabling as those experienced within buildings. The Council has introduced a system of 'walking audits' which involve disabled people accompanying Council staff in the inspection of key pedestrian routes. Funding has been allocated to carry out the improvements recommended by the walking audits.

Action 8: The Council will work with disabled people on the ongoing assessment and improvement to key pedestrian routes.

11 Transport

11.1 The disabled community consistently identifies access to suitable transport as a major determinant of their independence, employment opportunities and lifestyle. The Council's approach to transport works through the Community Planning Transport Forum which brings together the agencies responsible for the development and delivery of transport services, and includes members of disability groups in its community representation. The approach to transport issues will be set out in the Local Transport Strategy which is due to be published early in 2007. Disabled people were involved in the workshops used to formulate the strategy, and their involvement will be reflected in how it addresses disability issues.

Action 9: The Council will address disability equality in transport through the Local Transport Strategy.

12 Communication

12.1 The Council can only deliver high quality services if it communicates effectively with its service users. This is true for all customers of Council services but particularly for those with diminished hearing and/or sight, those with learning disabilities and for customers from minority ethnic groups.

12.2 In 2000, the Council published '*Communicating Effectively*', a guide to communicating with people from ethnic minorities and with disabled people. In 2005 this was reviewed and updated, and has been adopted by the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership. The guide will continue to be used as the means to promote best practice in communication for Council staff and services, with particular attention to issues raised by the disabled community. These include:

- The need to make communication a focal point of staff training.
- Making all documents and publications as readable as possible, and in line with recognised best practice.
- The need to publicise the availability of alternative formats and people's rights to them.
- Appropriate use of communication aids such as textphones.
- Making e-communication as accessible as possible.

Action 10: The Council will use '*Communicating Effectively*' to address barriers to communication with disabled people.

12.3 Guidance on communication requires to be supported by clear procedures for the use of assistive technology and alternative formats. This includes:

- loop systems
- textphones
- provision of material on audio tape and Compact Disc
- information in large print
- use of Braille
- use of sign language interpreters.

12.4 The Council's Sensory Impairment Strategy Group, including people with sensory impairments from the community, will be involved in drawing up these procedures.

Action 11: Procedures will be drawn up for the use of assistive technology and alternative formats.

13 Information

13.1 Consultation with disabled people consistently shows a demand for better information on the specialist services they require and on Council services in general. Experience has shown that Council employees also lack information on disability issues and are unclear on where to access it, reducing their capacity to respond positively to the needs of disabled people. Disabled people and council employees should therefore both be regarded as targets for the provision of information on services.

13.2 Previous experience in Council services has shown the difficulty of maintaining the quality and accuracy of information over a period of time and any approach would have to address this requirement. One option would be a web-based approach to the provision of information, but there is concern in the disabled community at a possible over-reliance on the internet, and a balanced approach needs to be identified.

13.3 In some instances the shortage of information results from a confusing range of sources, and there is a lot of support in the disabled community for a one-stop-shop approach in which disabled people can access a comprehensive range of information from one source.

Action 12: The Council will identify an approach to the provision of information for disabled people.

14 Training

- 14.1** The Council recognises that its employees should be provided with knowledge about disability, encouragement to develop positive attitudes to disability and the opportunity to change the way in which their work impacts on disabled people. This reflects the emphasis that disabled people place on the attitudes, awareness and skill of Council employees as determinants of whether they receive a good service.
- 14.2** Disability equality training, with input from disabled people, is already part of induction training for new employees, and training has been provided in a number of individual services. The Council will build on this to provide basic disability equality training across all services as part of a wider programme of equality and diversity training. The approach will include the capacity for monitoring and evaluation of impact. The Positive Employment Forum (see 15.2) will provide the focus for this action.

Action 13: The Council will produce an equalities training strategy including disability equalities training.

15 Employment

- 15.1** Disabled people are disproportionately likely to be unemployed, and those who are in employment face barriers to training and advancement. This diminishes their economic potential and their achievement of the personal and social rewards associated with employment, and denies employers the benefit of their skills. The Council will take steps to address these issues both as an employer and as part of the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership.

The Council as an Employer

- 15.2** The Council has a working group consisting of personnel staff and representation by disabled employees. The group will broaden its remit and representation to enable it to address a wider range of equality issues in employment, including race and gender. It will be known as the Positive Employment Forum and be led by a senior manager. The forum will act as a sounding board on equality employment issues and lead the reviews of the Council's employment policies. This will include the Council's dignity at work policy and the issue of harassment. (see 16.2)

Action 14: The Positive Employment Forum will lead reviews of the impact on disabled people of the Council's employment policies.

15.3 The Council has joined the Employment Service's Positive About Employment ('Double Tick') Scheme and will maintain the commitments that this involves in the areas of recruitment, selection, retention, consultation and review of actions.

Action 15: The Council will continue to develop its commitments under the Employment Service's 'Double Tick' Scheme.

15.4 The Council includes disability as part of its recruitment monitoring but in order to take the impact of disability on employment fully into account it should be linked with a full range of employee information. This will require information on disability to be included in a management information system. Information will be used to measure the Council's success in recruiting and retaining disabled employees and as the means to ensure that they receive appropriate support. Council services have already taken steps to identify disabled employees, but results suggest that many are reluctant to identify themselves, and this issue will be addressed.

Action 16: The Council will integrate disability equality into a management information system.

Employment in West Dunbartonshire

15.5 The Council recognises that access to employment is a major contributor to disability equality and that West Dunbartonshire has a comparatively low rate of employment for disabled people. The Council will work with the other agencies and community representatives on the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership to develop employment opportunities for disabled people across the West Dunbartonshire area.

15.6 West Dunbartonshire is a priority area for the Scottish Executive's 'Workforce Plus' and 'More Choices, More Chances' initiatives and the West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership will draw up action plans for 2007–10 to take these forward. The Council will ensure that disability issues are a major component of these plans.

Action 17: The Council will work through the Community Planning Partnership to increase employment opportunities for disabled people in West Dunbartonshire.

16 Elimination of Harassment

- 16.1** Many disabled people experience harassment in their day-to-day lives, often as a result of negative attitudes or their perceived vulnerability. The Council approaches this from the perspective of an employer, as a service provider and in its role within the community safety partnership.

Employment

- 16.2** The Council's policy on dignity at work addresses issues of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying. The policy will be reviewed along with other employment policies (see 15.2) to ensure that due regard is paid to harassment related to disability.

Action 18: The Council will review its policy on dignity at work.

Community Safety

- 16.3** In 2005, West Dunbartonshire Community Safety Partnership carried out a survey of community groups to provide an initial assessment of the extent and pattern of disabled people's experience of crime and harassment. The results reflected national findings that disabled people are frequently the victims of 'low level' crime and suggested that people with mental health problems may be particularly subject to this experience, and affected by the fear of crime.

Action 19: The Council will use its survey results to assess the action to be taken to address community safety concerns among disabled people.

- 16.4** In 2005, the Council joined with a group representing visually impaired people to pilot a password scheme to enable visually impaired people to identify Council home support staff. The scheme reflected concerns about bogus callers, particularly where staff were providing temporary cover. Over thirty service users were identified by local groups and through advertising in local talking newspapers. The scheme appears to be a success and will be evaluated by the Council and the group, with a view to its extension across other Council services.

Action 20: The home support password project will be evaluated with a view to it being extended across a wider range of services.

17 Procurement of Goods and Services

- 17.1** Responsibility for disability equality extends to the situations in which the Council contracts out services and its approach to procurement will reflect this. The current procurement strategy is due for a revision which will provide the opportunity to review the way in which it addresses equality issues. This will take the form of an impact assessment focusing on how the strategy can be used to promote disability equality.

Action 21: The Council will carry out a disability impact assessment on its procurement strategy.

18 Impact Assessment and Evidence Gathering

- 18.1** The goal of integrating disability equality into the day to day work of the Council requires a systematic approach to the assessment of the impact of new and existing policies and practices on disabled people. The Council's approach is set out below and presented in diagrammatic form in Appendix D.

New policies, practices, and procedures

- 18.2** The Council will incorporate its assessment of the impact of new policy and practice on disability equality in an integrated approach which will include race and gender equality, and their impact on the determinants of health.
- 18.3** The approach involves a screening stage in which service managers, along with staff responsible for equalities policy, will apply a series of key questions designed to elicit the potential effect of the new policy on equality groups. The questions relating to disability equality have been drawn up in consultation with disabled people. Where screening identifies the need for further information or for consultation, the policy or practice will be referred to the Disability Working Group (see 6.6) which has a broad representation of the disabled community. Further information gathering or consultation will take place as required.
- 18.4** The process is in development and the screening phase has been piloted across a number of policies. When it is fully implemented, managers will be provided with training in the process, and new policies will only be considered by Council committees when they are accompanied by an impact assessment report.

Action 22: The Council will undertake a disability impact assessment of new policies, using integrated impact assessment.

Existing policies, practices and procedures

18.5 In the three year period, December 2006 to December 2009, the Council will assess its existing policies practices and procedures. This will involve an initial prioritisation into:

High priority: those which are highly relevant to the disabled community as a whole, or to sections of the disabled community.

Medium priority: those which are only of moderate relevance to all or part of the disabled community.

Low priority: those which are unlikely to have significant relevance to the disabled community.

18.6 The Council's Disability Working Group (see 6.6) made up of Council officers and members of the disabled community will be asked to carry out this prioritisation.

Action 23: The Council will prioritise existing services for an assessment of their impact.

18.7 Following prioritisation, a programme of assessments will be set up, containing a workable balance of High, Medium and Low priority policies, procedures and practices. The programme will be part of the wider process of the assessment of the impact of policies on disability, race and gender.

18.8 The assessment process will use the questions described in 9.2 above in screening meetings between service managers and policy officers responsible for equality issues. From there, some policies and services will be referred to the Disability Working Group or to a relevant Joint Strategy Group (see 6.8). It is anticipated that all high priority policies and practices, and a proportion of medium priority policies and practices will be referred.

18.9 A record will be kept of all assessments and the actions that are recommended to avoid discrimination and promote equal opportunities, and the results reported annually to the Social Justice Committee.

Action 24: The Council will set out and implement a programme of assessment of the impact of existing policies and practices.

Evidence Gathering and Reporting

- 18.10** The assessment of new and existing policies and practices will make use of the measures that are currently available. In many instances this will be limited, and it will be part of the assessment process to identify information gaps and the quantitative and qualitative evidence that should be gathered from then on, along with targets for improvement. The Council recognises that effective evidence of impact is dependent on the sustainability of the systems by which it will be gathered.
- 18.11** Evidence of the impact of services will be reported annually to the Equality and Diversity Working Group (see 4.1) as part of the annual reporting on the Disability Equality Scheme.

Action 25: The Council will identify evidence and measures of the impact of its services on disabled people and report these through the Equality and Diversity Working Group.

- 18.12** The Council is developing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which will provide a central record of customer information and contact history as the means to improve the efficiency and quality of customer service. The system will include information which will allow services to identify disability issues and to analyse take-up of services by disabled people.

Action 26: The Council's CRM system will include information on disability.

19 Disability Equality in Education

- 19.1 The DDA 2005 requires education authorities to publish disability equality schemes which are recognisably distinct from council schemes. The West Dunbartonshire Education Authority scheme is therefore published as an individual section of the Council's scheme.

Disability in Education

- 19.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 states that, '...a person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' However within education, 'learning disabilities' is interpreted more widely in terms of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. That is, where a 'child or young person is unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education provided.' Children with a formal diagnosis of a disability will be included within this definition. **Children and young people with additional support needs are identified first by PRESCAT and then through a Staged Intervention process. (Appendix E)**
- 19.3 In common with other West Dunbartonshire services, education strategies are based on the principle that children and young people are not disabled by any specific condition or impairment but by:
- The physical barriers they encounter,
 - The problems created by the way services are organised, and
 - The attitudes and awareness of those who work with them.
- 19.4 The implication of this model is that responsibility lies firmly with the education authority and its employees, rather than people with impairments, to meet the challenge of disability equality in education.

Action 27: A task group to implement the disability equality in education action plan will be established.

- 19.5 In addition to legislation referred to in section 2, the education authority must comply with education legislation; most recently the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. The Act aims to ensure that all children and young people receive the additional support required to meet their individual needs and to help them benefit from school education.

19.6 The Additional Support for Learning Act states that:
...all children and young people benefit from school education when they can access a curriculum which supports their learning and personal development; where teaching and support from others meet their needs; where they can learn with, and from, their peers and when their learning is supported by the parents in the home and by their wider community.

19.7 As previously stated, “treating disabled and non-disabled people alike will not overcome the disadvantage that disabled people experience”. Within the context of providing all children and young people with the best possible education, West Dunbartonshire has long recognised the need to treat children and young people with a disability more favourably in order to ensure equity of opportunity.

Action 28: Mechanisms to identify all children and young people with a disability in educational establishments will be reviewed.

19.8 Section 15 of the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Act 2000 requires that the education of all children should be provided in mainstream schools unless certain specified exceptions apply. The educational objectives for the majority of children and young people with disabilities are achieved by appropriate assessment and support of their needs in schools and Early Education and Childcare Centres in West Dunbartonshire through the Staged Intervention process (Appendix E). For children identified at Stage 3b and above, educational objectives will be set within an Individualised Education Programme and, for a small number of pupils, within a co-ordinated support plan.

Action 29: Track the progress of pupils with disabilities through educational objectives and national assessments.

19.9 A wide programme of continuous professional development is offered to staff on specialised topics related to disability. This covers not only general awareness-raising, but also detailed ongoing training in relation to improving access to the curriculum and provision of learning opportunities for children with a disability.

19.10 If required, appropriate transport is arranged, specialist equipment is provided and adaptations to buildings are made. For those children or young people whose disability or illness causes a temporary absence from school, tuition supported by ICT is provided through the Interrupted Learners programme.

19.11 Psychological Services and the Network Team of specialist teachers offer pupils, staff and parents a range of services such as assessment and intervention and in-service training. An action research approach

helps shape policies and development strategies which most effectively support children with a disability.

- 19.12** In addition, some children and young people with a disability are educated in specialist provision. Kilpatrick School provides for those with a range of severe and complex learning needs; a primary language and communication unit and secondary base provide for those on the autism spectrum; and sensory impairment resources provide for children with a visual or hearing impairment. A small number attend specialist placements outwith West Dunbartonshire.

Action 30: Procedures will be revised to ensure that all children not educated in mainstream education establishments, whether within or outwith West Dunbartonshire, are appropriately placed.

- 19.13** For some children access to education requires their physical environment to be adapted to ensure that they are able to have a full educational experience. Through the accessibility strategy, a three year programme of adjustments and adaptations has been underway to make the learning environment in educational establishments accessible to all users. Buildings adaptations have varied from alterations to accommodate a disabled toilet and changing bed to handrails at stairs. Equipment ranging from ICT to bath steps and adjustable chairs has been provided according to individual needs.

- 19.14** Pupils whose additional support needs prevent them from travelling independently to school may require specialist transport.

Alternative Assessment Arrangements

- 19.15** In accordance with the Scottish Qualification Authority's guidelines, West Dunbartonshire has produced a policy on assessment arrangements for candidates with additional support needs and/or disabilities. This allows for reasonable adjustments to be made to the Scottish Qualifications Authority's published assessment arrangements for candidates when they are placed at a substantial disadvantage.

Action 31: Provide training on reviewed policy and procedures on assessment arrangements for candidates with disabilities and/or support needs.

The Accessibility Strategy

- 19.16** The Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Education Records) Scotland Act 2002 introduced the need for education authorities to prepare and implement accessibility strategies to improve, over time, access to education for pupils with disabilities. West Dunbartonshire's Accessibility Strategy set targets for the period 2003-2006 to ensure that potentially discriminatory procedures or practices were identified.

Action 32: Evaluate the Accessibility Strategy and set new three year targets.

Involvement

- 19.17** Parents, children and young people, including those with a disability, have been widely involved in the consultation process for implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act, and the issues identified have informed the Disability Equality Scheme. Events were held at various locations between November 2005 and June 2006 to provide information for parents and children and young people and to allow them to have an opportunity to contribute to discussion and decisions. Decision makers from several agencies were available on a 'surgery' basis to talk to parents about their own individual concerns and suggestions for improvements. Parents were involved in training along with professionals from education, social work and health, and their contributions helped shape ongoing training and practice. Children and young people had the opportunity to air their views through small group meetings, a 'big brother' type diary room and graffiti board.
- 19.18** A Parents' Forum was established as a point of contact between parents and senior staff from education and social work. Other services such as health are invited when appropriate. The parents who attend represent a wide variety of interests including physical disability and health, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism.
- 19.19** As part of the communication target of the West Dunbartonshire Council Accessibility Strategy, young people attending the Pupil Council Congress were informed about disability legislation through a series of presentations and workshops. A video produced by Enquire entitled 'Have Your Say' was evaluated by the Pupil council congress and distributed to all primary schools to be shown to primary seven pupils before transition to secondary school. An audit of use with primary seven pupils is being conducted, and pupils will soon be involved in an evaluation of the impact of the video.
- 19.20** As a result of this ongoing communication a number of areas for improvement have been identified. For example:
- Parents have identified a need for an advocacy service for parents of children who require additional support, including children with a disability.
 - Young people have indicated that they would like to play a more active role in planning for and participating in meetings to discuss their support needs.

Action 33: In partnership with social work and health services, establish an advocacy service for parents of disabled children and young people.

Action 34: Ensure that existing consultation arrangements encourage and enable children and young people with a disability and their parents to participate.

Participation in Public Life

- 19.21** Educational establishments offer many opportunities for children and young people to be involved in the life of the school. Each primary and secondary school, for example, has a pupil council. Children may take part in local and national competitions, represent their school, participate in after-school events or go on educational visits. Children with disabilities should have equal access to participation in the opportunities offered. Additional funding has been made available to schools to support pupils with additional support needs.
- 19.22** Pupil Councils have been involved in deciding how to ensure that disability equality becomes a reality in schools. An action plan (Appendix F) drawn up by pupils at one of the Council's secondary schools will be available to pupil councils across the authority.

Action 35: Produce an audit tool to be used to ensure children and young people with disabilities have equal access to participation in public life.

Promotion of positive attitudes

- 19.23** Awareness raising with young people has been approached on a wide scale by reaching them through libraries, schools and the interactive performance of creative writing in the 'It Takes All Sorts' project. Three authors took part in this project in several primary schools on the theme of diversity and disability. Seventy children produced creative and imaginative work and were presented with certificates.
- 19.24** Staff have been trained on the Disability Discrimination Act and this will be revisited in the light of the Duty to Promote Disability Equality.

Action 36: Deliver awareness raising training to school staff about the Duty to Promote Disability Equality.

Action 37: Publish an awareness raising leaflet.

Action 38: Identify further training and support needs of staff.

The Elimination of harassment related to disability

- 19.25** Research by Capability Scotland and the Disability Rights Commission reveals that many disabled people are silently enduring harassment

motivated by prejudice. Education establishments in West Dunbartonshire tackle harassment through citizenship programmes and a range of anti-bullying initiatives.

Action 39: Establish a monitoring system to identify incidents of harassment on the grounds of disability.

Employment

19.26 In order to ensure the promotion of Disability Equality for all staff within the education department, professional development training is provided as an integral component of the equal opportunities and diversity programme.

19.27 Awareness raising courses in disability equality will be provided for all staff working for Education and Cultural Services. Training is at present included in the recruitment and selection programme, the programme for teachers on the induction scheme and in the leadership courses which contain elements of disability, equal opportunity and diversity.

Action 40: Deliver awareness raising training to all education staff.

19.28 Procedures for supporting staff with a disability are provided through the staff support service. This confidential service can ensure that appropriate intervention and support strategies are put in place.

19.29 Education staff are covered by the Council's policies which deal with the protection and support of disabled employees, and the education perspective will be included in the reviews referred to in section 15.2. The education service will be covered by the Council-wide arrangements for monitoring the recruitment and retention of disabled staff. (See 15.4)

Impact Assessment

19.30 An equal opportunities group has begun the work of assessing education policies in relation to race equality. This group will be reformed and extended to include individuals who have experience of working with children and young people with disabilities. The initial prioritisation will be done in line with the authority wide approach (See 18.6).

Action 41: Reform equal opportunities group to include staff with experience of disability issues. Group to assess impact of education policies in relation to Duty to Promote Disability Equality.

19.31 Each educational establishment will consider all potentially significant policies and practices in relation to the Duty to Promote Disability Equality.

Action 42: Each educational establishment will audit relevant existing policies and practices to ensure they comply with the Duty to Promote Disability Equality Disability Equality.

20 Reporting and Review of the Scheme

- 20.1** Progress on the actions contained in the scheme will be reported annually on the anniversary of publication of the scheme. Reports will be submitted to the Equality and Diversity Working Group and Social Justice Committee, reflecting their lead role in the Council's approach to disability equality, and will be reported to the wider community through the disability equality newsletter (see 6.10), the Council's quarterly newspaper, and through the local press.
- 20.2** The scheme will be reviewed and revised every three years as part of the continuing development of the Council's approach to disability equality.

Action 43: The Disability Equality Scheme, including the Education Authority scheme, will be reported annually, and reviewed and revised in 2009.