



# *WILTSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE*

Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority

## Disability Equality Scheme



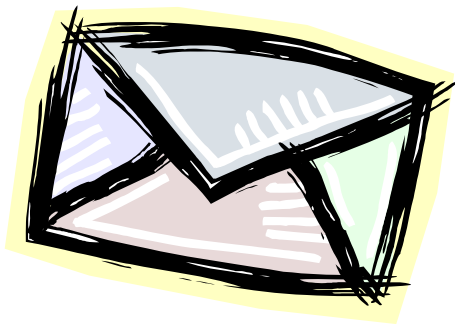
2006

# Draft



## Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service Disability Equality Scheme 2006

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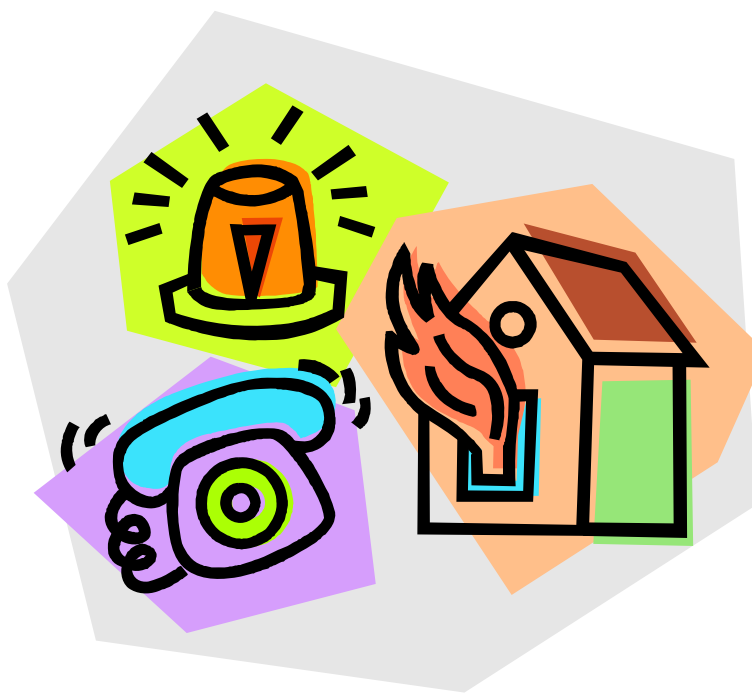
Corporate Services  
WFRS Headquarters  
Manor House, Potterne  
Devizes, Wiltshire  
SN10 5PP



Telephone:  
01380 731100



[Corporateservices@wiltsfire.gov.uk](mailto:Corporateservices@wiltsfire.gov.uk)



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999

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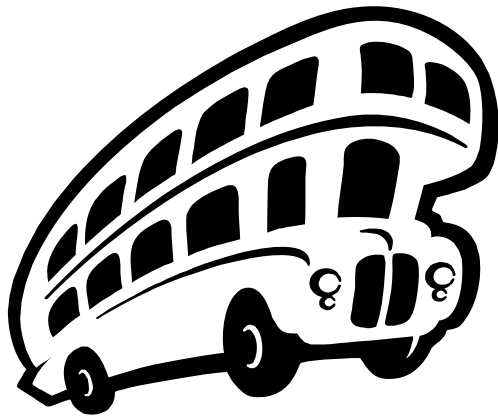
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'The Disability Equality Duty is a new way for public authorities to tackle disability discrimination in a practical way by introducing policies that actively promote opportunities and so prevent discrimination taking place. By taking an organisation-wide approach you can achieve tangible outcomes and improvements for disabled people. It will need the personal commitment from the top of your organisation and will make a real, positive change to your employees and service users.'

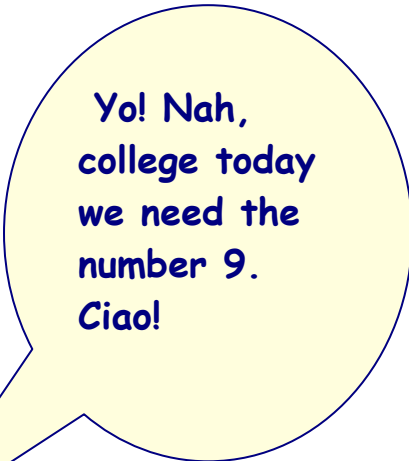
Bert Massie - DRC Chairman

"Treat us like we are not stupid; it takes us a while to tell you what we want, sometimes you think we can not communicate; we can not be rushed; I like to say what I want to say in my own way". Tina Reddick

Quoted during community consultation  
(reproduced with permission, thank you  
Tina)



Yo! Bro!  
Here's ours. Is  
this one yours?



Yo! Nah,  
college today  
we need the  
number 9.  
Ciao!

**The Employers' Forum on Disability Survey found that 27% of respondents believed that Guide Dogs read bus numbers. What are your beliefs about people with disabilities?**

## **Acknowledgements**

Grateful thanks are extended to the following people who participated in the development of this scheme.

### **Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS) Internal Consultation Groups**

#### **Volunteers**

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FF Dot Avenall  
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Sarah-Jane French (H&S Manager)  
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CM Paul Lawler (FBU Representative)  
WM Martin Lloyd  
SM Perry Payne (Community Fire Safety)  
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Kay Malko (Disability Consultant and Trainer)

Steve Milner, SCODP (Swindon Coalition of Disabled People)

Combined Services Equality Group  
Community Volunteers who participated in the consultation exercises

## **Research Sources**

ACAS Website  
Avon FRS Training Event  
CFOA/DRC Guidance Document for FRS  
CIPD Website  
DRC Helpline  
DRC Training Events  
DRC Website  
Leicester Council Website  
Wiltshire County Council Helpline  
SCODP Helpline  
SCODP Website  
SWFRS CFOA Equality Group

**Jane Rose**  
**CFCIPD**  
**WFRS Equality and Diversity Manager**  
**September 2006**

# **Introduction**

## **The Disability Discrimination Act 2005**

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005 outlines what is described as 'general' and 'specific' duties to promote disability equality. The aim of Disability Equality is to make things fairer for disabled people.

One of the requirements of the DDA 2005 is to produce a Disability Equality Scheme.

## **Disability Equality Scheme Aims**

A Disability Equality Scheme highlights our plans for making equality happen for disabled people who are both staff and our community residents. The means our roles and duties as both an employer and service provider need to be given consideration. The Scheme also includes the items we must consider under the specific duty. For example the Action Plan must include measurements of progress for disabled people in employment and access to our services

## **Disability Equality Scheme Objectives**

- Show how we have involved disabled people in the design and development and production of the scheme. Identify what barriers are faced by disabled people and take steps to remove them.
- Identify what disabled people need and which needs are the most important to them.
- Meet the legal duties.
- Communicate exactly what our responsibilities are. This means communicating with elected members, managers, employees, representative bodies, our partners in the public sector and of course our communities.
- Show how the Scheme links to the provision of our services and WFRS equalities objectives and priorities
- Provide information about our monitoring systems. This includes recruiting, assessing, training and promotion arrangements, as well as figures on disciplinary and grievance procedures.

- Work in partnership with other organisations to both reduce and eradicate ignorance and prejudice in the wider community and develop our service provision.
- Have a three-year disability equality Action Plan
- Produce an annual review of the scheme as a paper for the CFA

This Scheme, our employment practices, and the services we provide to our community are always striving for improvement. One of the key concepts of Disability Equality is to consult with people who identify themselves as a disabled person. If you are a disabled person and want to comment on this scheme we would welcome your input. Details of how to contact us are on page one.

## **Definitions**

### **What counts as a disability according to the law?**

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) protects disabled people. The Act sets out the circumstances in which a person is "disabled". It says you are disabled if you have:

- a mental or physical impairment; and
- this has an adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities; and
- the adverse effect is substantial -the adverse effect is long-term (meaning it has lasted for 12 months, or is likely to last for more than 12 months or for the rest of your life).

### **There are some special provisions, for example:**

- if your disability has badly affected your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, but doesn't any more, it will still be counted as having that effect if it is likely to do so again;
- if you have a progressive condition such as HIV or multiple sclerosis or arthritis, and it will badly affect your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities in the future, it will be treated as having a bad effect on you now
- past impairments are covered.

### **What are "normal day-to-day activities"?**

At least one of these areas must be badly affected:

- mobility
- manual dexterity
- physical co-ordination

- continence
- ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- understanding of the risk of physical danger

It is really important is to think about the effect of an impairment without treatment. The Act says that any treatment or correction should not be taken into account, including medical treatment or the use of a prosthesis or other aid (for example, a hearing aid). The only aids that are taken into account, are glasses or contact lenses. The important thing is to work out exactly how a disability affects someone. Remember to concentrate on what they can't do, or find difficult, rather than what they can do.

### **Examples**

- If someone has a hearing impairment being unable to hold a conversation with someone talking normally in a moderately noisy place would be a bad effect. Being unable to hold a conversation in a very noisy place such as a factory floor would not.
- If a person has a mobility impairment being unable to travel a short journey as a passenger in a vehicle would be a bad effect. So would only being able to walk slowly or with unsteady or jerky movements. But having difficulty walking without help for about 1.5 kilometres or a mile without having to stop would not.

Aids and HIV related conditions are included in the DDA and therefore by this Disability Equality Scheme

For further formation please see the national Aids Trust Web site.

## **What does not count as a disability?**

**Certain conditions are not considered impairments under the DDA:**

- lifestyle choices such as tattoos and non-medical piercings;
- tendency to steal, set fires, and physical or sexual abuse of others;
- exhibitionism and voyeurism;
- hay-fever if it doesn't aggravate the effects of an existing condition;
- addiction to or a dependency on alcohol, nicotine or any other

substance, other than the substance being medically prescribed.

For complete, comprehensive guidance, on questions relating to the definition of disability see the full DDA guidance document – there is a link to the DRC in the appendix.

## **The Social Model of Disability**

This Disability Equality Scheme endorses the Social Model of disability.

The Social Model of disability means that the notion of discrimination is key. This means disabled people do not face disadvantage because of their impairments, they experience discrimination in the way society is organised. This includes failing to make education, work, leisure and public services accessible, failing to remove physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers to inclusion, as well as barriers of assumption, stereotype and prejudice and failing to outlaw unfair treatment in our daily lives.

"Disability... the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities".  
(UPIAS 1976)

### **WFRS Disability Scheme also endorses the following principles:**

- We are anti-discrimination - so that disabled people do not face discrimination arising from bad practice, or prejudice.
- Equality of opportunity or making things fairer - for disabled people in every aspect of their contact with the WFRS
- Increasing the independence and choices that disabled people have.
- Individual needs - recognising that a disabled person is an individual who, like all others, has his or her own needs, abilities, human rights and responsibilities.
- Inclusion – such that services are made accessible to disabled people and offer choice.
- Involvement in decision-making - so that disabled people, and/or their advocates, are consulted before decisions which affect them are made.

## National and Local Context

### The National Context

#### General

In March 2006 the DRC Disability Briefing was produced. The Disability Briefing is a compendium of official statistics on disability, produced by the DRC twice yearly. The document is divided into three sections:

**Section One** includes core data on disabled people's participation in the labour market using spring 2005 Labour Force Survey (LFS) data. This section also includes time series analysis using LFS quarterly spring data back to 1998, in order to highlight changes and trends over the past seven years.

**Section Two** presents the latest estimates on the disabled population in Britain from the Family Resources Survey (FRS), published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

**Section Three** presents a short progress report on research projects undertaken at the DRC over the past year.

**For the complete briefing please see appendix for the link to the DRC.**

Disability is a complex phenomenon to measure for a number of reasons. People's understanding of definitions of disability and the concept of disability itself vary - it is possible for one person to define themselves as disabled when another person with an identical condition would not. One reason for this can be a perception that 'disabled' is a stigmatising label. Some surveys are less accessible for people with certain types of disability – for example a self-completion questionnaire in a written format, may be less accessible to someone with a visual impairment. As a result some surveys may underestimate the populations of certain impairment groups. Certain types of disability are fluctuating, with levels of severity that vary over time.

Respondents might classify themselves as non-disabled at the time of the interview if they are not experiencing a severe phase of their disability.

The final estimate can be affected by differences in the way questions are worded (even for the same definition of disability), who commissioned the survey and how the result of the survey (in per cent) is turned into an estimate of the actual number of disabled people.

The term 'disabled person' covers people with a wide range of

impairments and health conditions - from a visual impairment to arthritis, cancer, multiple sclerosis, heart disease, depression, Downs Syndrome and diabetes.

Disability increases with age: only 10% of adults aged 16-24 are disabled, while one third of people between the age of 50 and retirement age are disabled.

By 2020 58% of people over the age of 50 will have a long-term health condition.

The World Health Organisation predicts that depression will be the leading cause of disability by 2020.

The annual spending power of disabled adults is around £80 billion.

(Family Resources Survey. (2003-2004))

There are an estimated 11 million disabled adults in the United Kingdom (1 in 5 of the total adult population) and 770,000 disabled children. Many of these disabled people often have less obvious or non-visible impairments.

Disabled people do less well than non-disabled people in many areas of life. For example, they are more likely to do less well in terms of employment, income and education. Disabled people are also more likely to face discrimination and negative attitudes

(‘Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People,’ Government Strategy Unit 2005)

## **The National Context Work**

Here are a few points to consider:

- There are 6.8 million disabled people of working age in Britain - 1 in 5 of the total working population.
- Only 50% of disabled people of working age are in employment compared to 81% of non-disabled people.
- 1 million disabled people without a job want to work.
- The average gross hourly pay of disabled employees is 10 % less than that of non-disabled employees (£9.36 per hour compared to £10.39 per hour).

In a MORI poll commissioned by the DRC in 2005, more than a quarter - 28% - of British workers believed their boss would be unlikely to help them keep their job if they become disabled.

In the same MORI poll it was found that people working in the small business sector were more pessimistic about their job prospects than those working for larger companies. The poll found that 38% per cent of workers in companies of less than 25 staff felt it unlikely they would keep their job if they became disabled compared to 26% of those employed in companies with 250 or more employees.

Disabled people with mental health issues have the lowest employment rates of all impairment categories, at only 20%.

Only 17% of people with learning difficulties are in paid work.

Three out of five employers readily admit that they would not employ someone with a history of mental illness.

600,000 people working in small businesses are disabled people.

## **The Local Context**

An extrapolation for the 2001 census suggests that approximately 19,000 people in Swindon are covered by the DDA.

## **WFRS Context**

The response rate to our Summer 2006 internal survey was 13% or 90 employees. Of those, 8% indicated that they believed that their condition(s) were covered by the DDA and DRC definitions.

An extrapolation of these figures would indicate that approximately 55 employees could have conditions which may be covered by the DDA/DRC definitions.

## **The Legal Perspective**

### **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005**

The new general duty means that we must, in carrying out our functions, (the things that we do) have due regard to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination which is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities even where this involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people.

The general duty builds upon the duties of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, which included the duty to make reasonable adjustments to make sure people with disabilities can access employment, goods, facilities, services, functions and premises.

## The Equality Standard for Local Government

The Equality Standard is not a legal requirement. It has been produced to provide a framework through which local authorities can meet their legal obligations under anti-discrimination legislation.

In order to deliver our overall commitments on equality and diversity, WFRS works towards increasing our level in the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Equality Standard has five levels of achievement:

- Level 1** Commitment to a comprehensive Equality Policy
- Level 2** Assessment and consultation
- Level 3** Setting equality objectives and targets
- Level 4** Using information systems and monitoring against equality targets
- Level 5** Achieving and reviewing outcomes

The Standard is about making equalities part of our day to day activities. WFRS is working towards achieving the higher levels of the Standard. We measure our progress under the Standard on an annual basis and publish the results of this as Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 2a - The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the Authority conforms

We also recognise that people with disabilities may also be affected by other equality issues, such as, for example, those relating to race and gender (this is sometimes known as multiple discrimination). Information about this and relevant legislation can be found in WFRS Equality and Diversity Plan, and in the WFRS Race Equality Scheme.

## Harassment, Bullying and Victimisation

Harassment includes any behaviour that is offensive, frightening or distressing. It can be unintentional, subtle, and insidious. It may involve nicknames, teasing, name calling, with or without malicious intent, though which is upsetting.

It may be about the individual's condition, or the condition of those with whom an individual associates. It could consist of a general culture which tolerates the telling of disability jokes.

An employee will need to demonstrate either that their dignity has been violated, or that they have been subjected to an hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

**The Hi De HO mnemonic is a useful way of remembering this.**

Bullying to create an unpleasant, insensitive or isolating environment is not acceptable.

### Victimisation

Victimisation is illegal and occurs when an individual is treated detrimentally because they made a complaint or because they intend making a complaint, or because they have supported someone making a complaint. They may become labelled a troublemaker, denied promotion or training or sent to Coventry.

Discrimination also covers occasions following the end of the working relationship, for example, giving references.

#### Examples

- Using unacceptable nicknames either about employees, people in the community or friends and relatives of the same
- Displaying intolerance towards someone with an impairment. For example calling someone who has dyslexia, 'slow', or 'thick'
- Avoiding or isolating someone who has a disability, for example someone who is diagnosed with HIV
- Assuming you know what an individual needs or can do. **Ask them!**
- Assuming that someone with a disability is likely to take more sick leave

## Who is Responsible for the Disability Equality Scheme?

- The Combined Fire Authority members (CFA) have overall responsibility for the Disability Equality Scheme.
- The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Principal managers (Management Board) are responsible for ensuring that the Scheme is put into action across WFRS
- Managers and employees of WFRS and our colleagues in partner agencies all have a role to play in helping us to meet our duty to promote equality for disabled people.

The arrangements described below ensure that we co-ordinate the work involved in putting the Scheme in to practice. These comprise of:

- Two CFA Members who are responsible for equal opportunities.
- An Equality and Diversity Manager
- The Fairness at Work Group
- There are Partnership and Relationship Officers who develop and continue our community relations
- The CFS teams who provide both Fire Protection Advice and fit and Smoke Alarms and specially designed systems for people with hearing impairments.

## Meeting the General Duty

### WFRS as an Employer

WFRS Equal Opportunities Policy already demonstrates our commitment to achieving equality of opportunity for disabled people in employment. We will also follow the guidance given in the CFOA DRC Guidance document. (see appendix for a link to this document)

In particular we will manage our responsibilities as follows:

- Recruitment - by encouraging applications from disabled people and ensuring that the application, short-listing and interview processes gives them equal opportunity.
- The working environment - by taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the working environment does not prevent suitably qualified disabled people from taking up or staying in employment with us.
- Career development - by ensuring that disabled people have the same opportunity as other employees to develop their full potential within the Service.
- Retention of newly disabled employees – by making every effort to ensure that any employee who becomes disabled stays in employment and is fully supported in maintaining a role appropriate to his or her experience and abilities.
- Work experience - by ensuring that work placement opportunities within the Service, are made available for disabled people.
- Employees training - by making employees throughout WFRS more aware of the circumstances of disabled service users and colleagues and changing behaviour, where necessary, to fulfil potential in service delivery and employment.
- Monitoring our performance against agreed targets and seeking continuous improvement, reporting annually in a public report to elected members.
- A commitment to work force and community profiling.
- Representation – by continuing to facilitate the Fairness at Work Group to provide a consultative and contributory forum for disabled employees to improve services and employment provision.

## **Training**

This relates to training our staff so they are more aware of and have skills to take positive action in removing barriers placed in the way of disabled people by society.

An Equalities and Diversity Training Plan was approved in the Summer of 2006. The purpose of the plan is to provide managers and employees with the skills and knowledge they need to ensure that equalities and inclusion become part of our day to day activities. The plan will also help to create a culture which is positive in relation to diversity.

The training is supported with visible and strong leadership from the top by Principal Managers attending the training and every manager having individual responsibility and objectives toward managing a culture which is fair, transparent and positive, as with anything else they deliver.

The approach includes:

- a) Deciding the content of the equality/diversity elements to be included in training initiatives, that is race, disability, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, etc from service delivery and employment perspectives.
- b) Finding out what the different training needs for employees and Members are.

We will evaluate the overall equality and diversity training programme on a yearly basis. If there is evidence to show that the training needs to be changed, we will take action to ensure that this happens.

## **Employment Monitoring**

WFRS monitors its services and employment on equality issues. We will provide the results of monitoring information and the results of equality impact assessments where appropriate within the annual report of the Scheme to the CFA and in the WFRS Annual Report and in the HR Equality Section of the website and Intranet site.

We monitor the number of disabled people that we employ.

We will monitor on a yearly basis to ascertain whether our workforce is representative of the wider community and take positive action to promote representation at all levels within the authority. We will publish the results of our monitoring on our web site in the HR Equality section.

We will ensure disability and impairment is included in our equality monitoring, including:

- Applicants for training
- Applicants for promotion
- Staff receiving training
- Staff benefiting or suffering detriment as a result of the performance review procedures
- Staff involved in grievance procedures
- Staff who are the subject of disciplinary procedures

However, we may have a significant number of employees who have not declared their disability. This means that we may need to do more so that disabled people feel confident that they can declare their disability and not face discrimination during the recruitment process, during employment including training, and promotion.

### **Developing the culture**

The culture needs to be developed where people feel safe to identify as a disabled person so that they then can be offered any reasonable adjustments that are necessary. We will raise the awareness of our managers and staff about the issues regarding working with disabled colleagues in a mutually supportive environment.

## **Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)**

WFRS wants to understand whether our services and employment practices are meeting everyone's requirements and that people who need our services have access to them. To help us to do this we carry out an Equality Impact Assessment.

### **What are Equality Impact Assessments?**

An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of deciding whether an existing or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service does (or may) affect people differently, and if so, whether it affects them in an adverse way.

WFRS has been carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on a number of policies and services during 2006. Assessments will be carried out on new policies and services, as they are developed and over time on all other existing policies and services. Disability issues will be considered alongside other equality issues such as race and gender and will involve disabled people.

We have produced guidance and we have provided training to people who are responsible for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments. Further training will be delivered as and when necessary.

A summary of the results of the Equality Impact Assessments, action plans, and consultation exercises will be reported as part of the annual review of the Disability Equality Scheme and the Equality Strategy.

## **Future Developments**

We will be working towards achieving the Disability Symbol. This means that we will need to be able to make made five commitments as an employer:

- a guaranteed job interview for those who meet the essential requirements for a job;
- to consult disabled employees regularly;
- to keep employees if they become disabled;
- to improve the knowledge of key employees about disability; and
- to check progress each year, plan ahead and let employees know about progress and future plans.

## **Disability Awareness**

We will work towards making sure that all our managers and employees are disability aware and that they have the necessary training and advice available to them so they can work with their disabled colleagues and service users and meet their needs (see also section on training).

## **Retaining our Disabled Employees**

If an employee becomes disabled or their impairment worsens so that they cannot do their current job then we will review how they can be kept in employment, even if it is not in the same job.

**We will follow the guidance produced in the CFOA and DRC document.**

(See the appendix for a link to this document.)

## **Access to Premises and Service Delivery**

### **Access to Services and Premises**

WFRS is a service provider and is also responsible for exercising public functions. This means under the Disability Discrimination Act we have a legal duty to ensure that, wherever possible, disabled people can use or receive the same services, and to the same standards as non-disabled people; and that disabled people do not experience unlawful discrimination.

In 2005 the WFRS approved a system of Disability Access Audits for all of our buildings. We have capital funding and an ongoing ambitious premises improvement and development programme.

### **Disability Access Audits**

The purpose of a disability access audit is to find out what barriers disabled people face to accessing services. These barriers could be for many reasons such as:

- Not having a policy on monitoring accessible parking
- Lack of auxiliary aids such as an induction loop for hearing aid users
- Lack of adequate access into a building such as the provision of a ramp for wheelchair users.

When any barriers have been identified we then have to look at ways of removing these barriers. This is known as making adjustments.

WFRS has a programme of ongoing disability access audits. We recognise that there are areas that will be common to both Access Audits and Equality Impact Assessments. We will ensure that a joint approach is adopted.

## **Communications**

### **Accessible information**

We are developing an Interpretation and Translation policy to help with communication. We are also developing our Internet and Intranet sites and our communication procedures within our Control room.

We will also develop guidance for employees on how to provide written information in accessible formats. The guidance will be produced together with a number of local and national organisations. We will consider utilising the new Change Picture Bank.

WFRS is committed to involving disabled people and giving disabled people every opportunity to comment on how our services and employment practices are provided and developed. We also recognise that it is important that disabled people are represented in all the ways in which we consult.

We will involve disabled people on employment matters and the services we provide including:

- Finding out what barriers disabled people face and taking steps to remove them
- Asking if disabled people are happy with the services we provide, for example through satisfaction surveys, focus groups
- Setting priorities and helping us to plan things
- Looking at the impact of existing and proposed policies
- Monitoring and checking how well things are done
- Reviewing and revising the scheme and providing feedback on how disabled people's views have influenced our decisions.

### **Consultation Standards**

WFRS consultation standards guide our overall approach to consulting and involving the public and people who use our services. One of the Standards is that "that consultation is accessible to all people who take part". This includes:

- Using accessible venues and equipment to help ensure our meetings are accessible to everyone. Arranging events at reasonable times and dates to make it easier for people to attend.
- Providing/arranging advocacy support for people who request it.

- Ensuring that the needs of people are met through, for example, language interpreters, induction loops, large print or guide communicators.

## **Publishing Results of Assessment, Involvement & Monitoring**

Once we have collected the information we will publish the results. The way we publish the results of involvement will vary.

The main consultation and involvement carried out will be summarised in our yearly report on the Disability Equality Scheme, as well as in the WFRS Annual Plan and on the HR section of our Internet and Intranet sites and in our annual paper to the CFA reporting on our Disability Scheme including progress on our action plan.

The yearly report for this Scheme will include an update on the Action Plan. We will involve disabled people further both internally and externally and provide information on our disability equality plans and activities. We will also show what has changed as a result of involving disabled people.

We will inform the public and employees about this information through:

- Our Annual Report
- The DES annual review and CFA report
- Relevant voluntary organisations, community groups and representatives.
- The Equalities and Diversity section within the WFRS website and intranet. We will also provide information there about our work to promote equality and inclusion.

## **Comments and Complaints**

Members of the public who feel that they have experienced disability discrimination in the way the WFRS has treated them may make a complaint through our Complaints procedure.

We have grievance and disciplinary procedures in place and a policy on dealing with complaints of harassment relating to employees.

We also have a 'whistleblowing' procedure, which extends the protection for employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result, and we also provide a confidential 24/7 external helpline for employees.

We will take all complaints seriously and will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour.

The Members' Code of Conduct deals with complaints about the conduct of elected members. Monitoring complaints is also another way of gathering information to see whether we are meeting our equality duties.

## **Consultation to Develop this Scheme**

One of the major requirements in developing our Disability Equality Scheme was that of consultation. Consultation is required, with employees (internal consultation) and communities (external consultation)

### **Consultation was carried out as follows:**

#### **Phase One**

##### **Internal Consultation**

- Internal Consultation Groups with Volunteers
- Internal Questionnaire

##### **External Consultation**

- In partnership with the Wiltshire Police, attending external consultation events with community volunteers.

#### **Phase Two**

Following the production of the first draft of the scheme

- Further Internal Consultation following the production of the first draft of the scheme.
- External Consultation as above

#### **Internal Consultation**

##### **Volunteer Groups**

A request was sent to all employees asking for volunteers to be part of the internal consultation process. Although there was a need to consult with disabled employees; for reasons of confidentiality and because it is an individual's choice in choosing whether or not they identify themselves as a disabled person the request for volunteers was sent out to all staff via the Weekly Bulletin. (see also comments in National Context section regarding the difficulties involved in the classification of disabilities)

14 people responded and were invited to take part in consultation seminars. These included training on issues of disability with an external

training consultant Kay Malko. The training included exercises on barriers to work, an overview of the legal concepts and a video.

## Internal Questionnaire

A questionnaire, designed in consultation with the training consultant was sent out to all 690 staff.

90 responses were received which amounts to 13% of the organisation.

Of the 90 responses 8 felt they were covered by the DDA/DRC definition of disability.

The following are some of the comments, from the “comments” section of the questionnaire, in regard to designing the disability equality scheme.

All responses were used to develop the scheme.

All of the listed areas I think are important particularly provision for the partially or sight impaired with our publication of documents.

Better information for staff on dyslexia and the awareness of it as I believe that it is present amongst a lot of staff who are not aware and would benefit from better provisions.

Information provision ideas including how the individual can adapt into the service and the service can improvise.

The Brigade should focus on operational and non operational posts available. All candidates should be assessed on individual merit and not tokenism

Any possible candidate can cope within this working environment.

Recruitment: training ops

If a person can do a job, and do it well, they should be allowed to be employed.  
Adhere to laid down procedure

Dealing with more and more information when, with age, one has less and less capability to absorb it particularly with ICT issues

Disability Equality Scheme that is easily understood, communicated effectively and provided confidential consultation

Ask the people who it affects most, it's their concerns that matter most

Dyslexia

Access and toilets

Keeping FF in the job (as long as they are still able to competently carry out the job) once they have suffered injury or succumbed to long term medical condition

Awareness of disabilities for all employees by providing training that shows them how to deal with disabled people on a 1; 1 basis

Physical environment, lack of information for these groups on WFRS careers, career progression more understanding for managers

Disabled toilet downstairs, widen front door.

Are you able to wear glasses when you are already in the service? I don't think people should not be allowed in who already wear glasses.

Depends on disabilities for each role!

Depends on type of disability as to which role a disabled person could do in fire service!

Make the buildings accessible

Software packages for people with sight problems

Even without a disability staff at present do not receive adequate amounts of information on the physical environment, training, information provision.

There are still physical barriers for wheelchair access on fire stations, the best people to advise you on obstacles they have overcome perceived or real will be the disabled.

I agree that disabled people should be treated fairly in the workplace, but I do not agree that disabled people should be employed for the operational side of the job, in such a potentially high risk situation you need to know that all of your colleagues are mentally and physically prepared and capable you can not put your life and lives of colleagues at risk for the sake of complying with the DDA Regs!

## External Consultation

In partnership with Wiltshire Police three consultation events were held around the county and members of the community, people with disabilities were invited to attend. A palantypist was available for the events so that the hearing impaired and the deaf community could take part, and a British Sign Language interpreter was also present. Meetings rooms were accessible with accessible facilities nearby. Refreshments were provided.

One main feedback was how could the service be more accessible for the deaf?

There were reports of a fear of fire especially from those with a physical disability:

*"I live in a bungalow, I would find myself trapped in my bedroom at night and would have problems getting out."*

There were also fears of vulnerability from those living in more rural areas and in flats.

The account below summarises that main points raised by the members of the public and the Police's response.

(they are paraphrased for ease of reporting)

Q What are you doing about accessibility to police stations?

A We've got things like: Remote communication front entrances to occupied areas. Notice to inform the public and we've done an access audit.

**The community wanted to reiterate that the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) is not just about access to buildings, it is about providing access to services (service delivery)**

Q What are you doing about format of information?

A We have things like BSL interpreters, computer system, website. Looking to improve with consultation.

Q Do you come out to talk to us in our own home?

A The assumption is there that we will come when called. We are

more than happy to go where it is easiest to meet your needs

Q Ease of communication. To ring the police to speak to someone it's 17 digits. Can you do a 3 figure number for those that have difficulty with using the phone?

A Hampshire are piloting a 333 number that if suitable Wilshire Police will be adopting

Q Can Police officers learn a basic form of BSL?

A Some police officers do have the skill, but we don't know the proportions. That is something we are willing to investigate and roll out when necessary

Q What distinction are you drawing on emergency blue light situations. Most of the comments are about normal situations. When things are calm and controlled, but what are you doing or considering about emergency blue light considerations

A We have never thought about that before and recognised that blue light conditions are part of the service they provide. We are going to look into the subject and think about it.

The comments were aimed towards external service delivery. There were two other comments which were prevalent from the members of the community:

- There needs to be an access officer.
- The need to advertise the facilities and services, so that disabled people know what is available.

The following piece of research/report was carried out after our attendance at one of these community consultation events, following concerns raised by one member of the deaf community.

## **Community Consultation and subsequent report**

### **Introduction**

This report forms part of the Disability Equality Scheme (DES) consultation process. This report sets out to provide the reader with an understanding of the current situation of our operational service delivery

under blue light conditions, (BLC)<sup>1</sup> within Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The reason for this consultation report arose from attendance at a Wiltshire Constabulary DES public meeting. During that meeting a gentleman who communicates through British Sign Language spoke about his distress and anxiety about communicate difficulties after a small crash in his car. This concept was expanded to consider whether, if at a more severe or protracted incident, the service we provide in those circumstances would be able to meet his needs and needs of people with differing impairments.

It raised the question that whether Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service have a duty of care in these instances and to what extent and should the service we provide under BLC are to be included and discussed for inclusion in the Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service DES.

Therefore the following questions are addressed in this report.

1. Do we have a duty of care to provide a service to people with impairments during BLC?
2. Should the service we provide under BLC be considered in Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service DES?

## **Discussion**

During the consultation process five personnel were interviewed with a set of twelve questions (see below). The personnel included:

- Whole time Crew Manager
- Part time Fire fighter
- Control Watch Manager
- Station Manager
- Group Manager

This report is not the result of a scientifically controlled survey. During the meeting discussions were allowed to develop naturally and informally. However the scope of the discussions remained within the boundaries of the 12 questions. All information is given to their best of their understanding and does not necessary reflect the views of all staff

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<sup>1</sup> Blue Light Conditions (BLC) involves incidents from initial call to the appliances arriving back at the station after the incident has been closed.

within those roles. If there is contradiction, there is scope for further investigation.

The main findings of discussion are:

- There are no standard operating procedures with respect to staff interaction with people with impairments under BLC.
- There are no operating procedures at Control with respect to staff interaction, incident support or the engagement of outside parties during an incident involving people with impairments.
- The success of an incident is dependent on the OiC or Control WM personnel skills. There is no quality assurance to monitor the standard of service in this instance. Most experiences show that at the time staff were outside their 'comfort zone' when dealing with people with impairments. However it has not been common for the people interviewed to deal with people with impairments during incidents.
- There is the overwhelming tendency that operational staff will rely on outside parties (particularly the ambulance service and public) for support when they are faced with aspects of disability they do not recognise, or know how to support.
- There is scope to involve the Red Cross via Control to assist with incident support
- Apart from Control utilising text phone and their training to deal with speech impairments there is no training for personnel with respect to operational disability awareness or protocol. There has not been an exercise to test our response<sup>2</sup>.
- There is no understanding of what access needs are required with certain specific impairments and any interaction will be based on the dynamic risk assessment process.
- When discussing disabilities there is the tendency to concentrate on physical impairments for example people who use wheelchairs.
- There is a distinction between life and time critical aspects of BLC and times when the pressure has ceased.

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<sup>2</sup> Exercise Diversity was not concerned with Diversity. It was a New Dimension Exercise. The name is sheer coincidence.

- Training is generally welcomed with respect to improving their understanding and interaction with people with impairments. Suggested methods include, basic key skills training, clue cards kept on pumps and training on support systems. This is recognised as difficult to achieve with part time fire fighters.
- It is unrealistic and unreasonable to provide training for every type of impairment.
- It is perceived that the main challenge facing the improvement of service in BLC is a corporate barrier. It is believed that this issue is low on the list of priorities and traditionally these schemes have only received “lip service” It is believed that the culture of the service will not support such approaches.

## Conclusions

There was the general belief that more could be done to improve the standard of service. One person said of operational procedures:

**“There are more policies to do with animals then disabled persons”.**

There is a strong desire and recognition of duty to provide the best service irrespective of disability or ability.

## Findings and Recommendations

Using the findings of the interviews the following comments are made in response to the raised questions:

- Do we have a duty of care to provide a service to people with impairments during BLC?

All persons interviewed agreed that we do have a duty of care to people with impairments under BLC, our area of uncertainty was the scope with respect to life and time critical activities.

- Should the service we provide under BLC be considered in Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service DES?

From the results and accounts of the interviewed personal the conclusion indicates that there is strong case for inclusion in the DES.

It was recognised that we do provide a service under BLC and as such it should be analysed in conjunction with non-operational aspects. The scope for such analysis is to be determined

**The following questions were discussed during interviews (no particular order)**

1. How do WFRS consider disabled persons under blue light conditions? Do WFRS have a specific duty of care?
2. What disabilities are considered?
3. What are the main considerations related to those conditions?
4. Where do you see the main obstacles?
5. Where do you see the main areas of opportunity?
6. Describe the culture with respects to disability awareness operationally. What priority is placed on the subject?
7. Are there any additional unique risks to WFRS personnel when dealing with people with disabilities?
8. What Internal and external support is available to OIC's?
9. How do OICs access that support?
10. Has that support been assessed for its effectiveness in either real time situations or exercise?
11. What training do the OICs receive?
12. What training do operational personnel receive?

## Appendices

### Resources

DRC

[www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

CFOA/DRC Document

[http://www.cfoa.org.uk/cfoa\\_public/basicsearchresults.asp](http://www.cfoa.org.uk/cfoa_public/basicsearchresults.asp)

Kay Malko, Disability Equality Training and Consultancy

[kaymalko@boltblue.com](mailto:kaymalko@boltblue.com)

SCODP

<http://www.scodp.co.uk/>

ACAS

<http://www.acas.org.uk/>

Employers Forum on Disability

<http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/index.htm>

Change Picture Bank

<http://www.changepeople.co.uk/>

Adult Dyslexia Access

<http://www.dyslexia-help.org/>

Dyslexia

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

National Aids Trust

<http://www.nat.org.uk/>

Access to work

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessstoWork/>

**Abbreviations:**

AFRS Avon Fire and Rescue Service  
ACAS Arbitration Conciliation and Advisory Service  
BSL British Sign Language  
CM Crew Manager  
CFOA Chief Fire Officers Association  
CIPD Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development  
CFA Combined Fire Authority  
CFO Chief Fire Authority  
DRC Disability Rights Commission  
DDA Disability Discrimination Act  
DWP Department for Work and Pensions  
DES Disability Equality Scheme  
EIA Equality Impact Assessment  
FF Fire Fighter  
FBU Fire Brigades Union  
H&S Health and Safety  
HR Human Resources  
HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus  
IPDS Integrated Personal Development System  
OH Occupational Health  
OIC Officer in Charge  
SM Station Manager  
SCODP Swindon Coalition of Disabled People  
SWFRS South Western Fire and Rescue Services  
UPIAS Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation  
WM Watch Manager

## Action Plans

**These action plans follow the SMART (E) formula**

They will be

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time measured
- Enjoyable

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility/Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Integrate general duty responsibilities into all functions	Principal and Senior Managers	Continually from 06/12
Research and apply for the Two-ticks scheme	Equality Manager	Commence 01/07 Complete 06/07
Formulate Policy on Positive Action Recruitment Initiatives	Personnel Manager	Commence 11/06 Complete 03/07
Formulate Policy on Dyslexia	Training Manager Equality Manager	Commence 11/06 Complete 05/07
Formulate Policy for HIV & AIDS in Workplace	OUH Manager	Commence 03/07 Complete 09/07

Actions	Responsibility/Lead	Timescale
Provide report on standards of Access to our premises with Action plan for upgrading	Premises Manager	Commence 02/07
Review Scheme annually In conjunction with CFA Requirements. Review and report on progress made on the Disability Equality Scheme with involvement of disabled people	Equality Manager/Director, People	Annually ongoing
Monitor training needs of all Staff with regard to disability Awareness	Departmental Managers	Ongoing
Respond to any cases of bullying and harassment related to disability in a timely and empathetic manner	Departmental Manager Equality Manager Director, People Management Team CFO	Ongoing
Publish analysis of information on effect of policies and practice on disabled people in particular Recruitment/Retention and Development promotion & training Number of disabled applicants Number of disabled employees in post Number of disabled people who leave Number of disabled people who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of their appraisal Number of disabled people involved in grievance procedures Number of disabled people who are subject to disciplinary procedures	Personnel Manager/Equality Manager	Annually ongoing
BVPI 11c Top 5% earners who are disabled	Director, People	Annually ongoing
BVPI 15 Ill Health Retirements /Employees	OHU Manager	Annually ongoing