

**DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME ANNUAL REPORT 2009**

Disability equality is about offering full opportunity and choices for disabled people to improve their quality of life and be respected and included as equal members of society.

The Council can make a significant contribution towards removing the barriers (both environmental and attitudinal) to equal opportunities for disabled people. The Council can do this by addressing the way in which we run our services and employ people, and also by exerting our influence in the community at large.

The Council recognises its responsibilities as a community leader, service provider and employer to encourage the fair treatment of all individuals and to tackle social exclusion. The Council recognises the diversity in the community and that all groups do not have the same resources, situations and needs. Therefore the Council must ensure that these issues are reflected in the planning, designing and improving of our services. It also recognises the benefits this brings to the community, the Council and its employees.

It is proposed that in light of the new Single Equality Bill which should come into effect in autumn 2010 that we create a Single Equality Scheme in consultation with the Moray Equalities Forum. At the moment the Moray Council is subject to the three separate equality duties covering race, disability and gender. The new Equality Duty will replace these existing duties with a single, consistent framework. It will also extend coverage to include age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion or belief and pregnancy/maternity.

The Disability duty places a general duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:-

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons more favourably than other persons

The Disability Equality Scheme has 9 actions within the action plan. All actions had been completed and reported in 2008. The one remaining action, to 'Publish a list of information and services available from the Council and format', has been produced however it has been proposed that we further involve the Moray Equalities Forum in order to ensure that we have included the information that would be of most use to and beneficial to the equality groups.

The Moray Equalities Forum has also proposed that we hold a Diversity Day for partnership agencies. This has been arranged for December 2009, when representatives from the forum will deliver short presentations to the partnership highlighting issues relevant to the different groups in Moray. There will be six different disability organisations represented on the day.

The council continues to carry out equality impact assessments on policies and activities to ensure that discrimination is eliminated and that actions to promote equalities can be identified. To date we have carried out 245 assessments. 66 new policies and activities have been identified for assessment by March 2010. In addition 46 assessments are outstanding since March 2009. The aim is to complete these by March 2010.

Recommendations arising from completed assessments include:-

- Better consultation for projects that impact on disabled people by involving the Moray Access Panel.
- Consideration given to disabilities in addition to physical access issues with regard to public meetings.
- Reinvigorate Older Person's Forum and Disability Forum

The Happy to Translate Logo continues to be displayed on our documents and at access points. This initiative has encouraged the use of our interpretation and translation services by members of the public. Between April 2008 and March 2009 there were:-

- 9 British Sign Language requests
- no requests for Braille or audiotape.

The Council will ensure that the views of the equalities forum are taken into consideration during the planning, development and implementation of our policies. The forum will provide valuable input into the creation of our Single Equalities Scheme and action plan. We will continue to equality impact assess our policies and activities where the recommendations from the assessments along with the actions from the Single Equality Scheme will assist in shaping Council services to meet the needs of the community.