

Disability Equality Scheme

2006 - 2009

Cynllun Cydraddoldeb Anabledd



Dyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council



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Please contact Alan Burkitt Equalities Officer

by phone on 01495 355108 .

E mail alan.burkitt@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

or write to him at;-

**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
The Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 6XB**

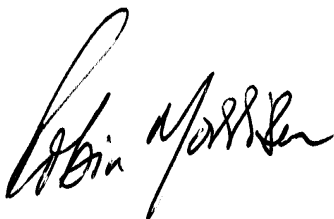
FOREWORD

I am delighted to introduce you to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's first Disability Equality Scheme that was agreed by the Council on the 20th December 2007.

The Council has always been at the forefront of service provision to disabled people, and this scheme is seen as a formalising and refining of the good works carried out over the years by its officers and members.

The Council is committed to providing an even better standard of service to disabled people, their families and carers, and are looking at a variety of constructive ways that they can be involved with us in shaping our service delivery with disability issues being a major consideration in everything that we do.

This Scheme also meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended in 2005.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Morrison', written in a cursive style.

Robin Morrison
Chief Executive
Prif Weithredwr

INTRODUCTION

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 means that from December 2006 all public bodies will have a duty to promote disability equality (similar to the duty to promote Race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000). It aims to change the way our laws work in this area, from relying on individual disabled people making a complaint, to expecting the public sector to be positive in removing barriers.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) says that:

“A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

(A detailed explanation of how the Disability Discrimination Act defines disability can be found in Appendix 2.)

Some disabled people feel this focuses too much on a ‘**medical model**’ of disability. The code of practice for the DDA 2005 moves this issue on by explaining that,

“The poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers.”

This is known as ‘the **social model of disability**’, and gives the Council a way of putting its legal duties into practice. The social model of disability explains that it is social ‘barriers’ that cause

disability, not impairments. The Council is working to reduce the barriers that exclude (disabled) people who have impairments.

These barriers can be:

- Prejudice and stereotypes.
- The way things are organised and run,
- Little or no access to information, buildings and transport.
- Poor signage, inaccessible buildings and information.

There are six steps in the successful implementation of a Disability Equality Scheme:

- Meeting the General and Specific duties
- Involvement of disabled people
- Gathering and analysing evidence to inform the 3 year Action Plan
- Impact Assessing existing and future policies
- Delivery of the Scheme
- Publication of the Scheme

This scheme has been developed to reflect these steps.

BLAENAU GWENT'S POLICY STATEMENT ON DISABILITY

“Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is committed to promoting Disability Access and providing equality of opportunity for disabled people in the services that it provides.

The Council aims to ensure that disabled people and carers have access to services in the same way as non-disabled people. Issues regarding equipment, physical access and using services will have to be addressed”

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 replaces the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and: -

“Makes it unlawful for a public Council to discriminate against a disabled person in carrying out its functions”.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will fulfil its responsibilities by: -

- Taking full account of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 when arranging and providing services.
- Requiring that Health and Safety legislation needs to be adhered to.
- Operating a cross Departmental and public involvement group (known as the Access For All Forum) reporting to a Strategic Equalities Network (SEN) which leads on the Equalities Agenda. Members of the Network will act as the focal point for disability issues within their own departments.
- Prioritising the required adaptations to the Authority's properties.

- Recruiting the best person for the job by ensuring adherence to Equal Opportunities Policies.
- Providing the same standard of service to everybody.
- Ensuring that the needs of disabled people, pupils and students are met.
- Facilitating relevant training and development opportunities.

ABOUT BLAENAU GWENT

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has been a Unitary Council since the 1st April 1996, is located in the valleys of South Wales, and covers around 10,900 hectares, stretching over 109 square kilometres between Tredegar and Brynmawr in the North to Llanhilleth and Swffryd in the South.

The Council is the largest organisation and employer in the area with approximately 3,900 staff and has 42 members serving a population of 69,300

SERVICE DELIVERY

The Council's Executive and Chief Executive have overall responsibility for delivering the scheme across all of the Authority's services.

The following departments carry out the Authority's many and varied services.

Governance Directorate

- Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Election Services
- Land Charges
- Legal Services
- Estates
- Policy & Performance
- Democratic Services
- Corporate Communications
- C2BG Outreach

- Human Resources Division
- Recruitment and Selection
- Equalities and Diversity
- Employment Policy development and implementation

Resources Directorate

- Council Tax & Non Domestic Rates
- Housing and Council Tax Benefits
- Payment Service at the Civic Centre Cash desk
- Council House Rents Service

Environment Directorate

Housing Services Division

- Council Housing
- Estates Management
- Homelessness

Technical Services Division

- Property Maintenance
- Architectural Services
- Engineering services
- Transportation
- Passenger transport

Public Protection Division

- Environmental Health
- Trading Standards
- Planning
- Building Control
- Private Sector Housing
- Licensing

Regeneration Division

- Regeneration
- Job Match
- Workstep
- Community First
- Business Services

Environmental Management and Highways Services Division

- Highways Maintenance (including Winter Maintenance)
- Cemeteries
- Public Conveniences
- Waste Management (including Re-cycling)
- Refuse Collection
- Street Lighting
- Animal Impounding
- Fleet Management
- Street Cleaning

Community Services Directorate

Education

- Education
- School Catering
- School Transport
- Children and Young People
- Education Welfare

Social Services

- Adult Services (including Learning Disabilities, Mental Health Care, Occupational Therapy, Visual & Hearing Impaired)
- Home Care Services
- Residential Services
- Children's Services (including Home Finding, Community Support, Children with Disabilities, Youth Offending, Children Looked After)
- Day Services
- Supporting People
- Welfare Rights

Leisure Division

- Arts
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Tourism
- Grounds Maintenance
- Sports & Recreation
- Youth Services
- Adult Education

DISABILITY AND BLAENAU GWENT

The Census of 2001 revealed that Blaenau Gwent:

- Had the second highest number of people of working age reporting a limiting life long illness in Wales.
- Had the third highest number of people of all ages reporting a limiting life long illness in Wales.
- Had 9,557 people over 60 saying they had a limiting long - term illness and 5,217 of these reported their health as not good.
- Had 19,000 or 28.3% of people with a disability.
- Had 13.8% permanently sick / disabled.

THE COMMUNITY PLAN 2005 - 2009

“ Enhancing the quality of life for the people of Blaenau Gwent by securing, in partnership a more caring, prosperous, vibrant, safe and healthy community”.

The Community Plan is a four year plan to ensure a better Blaenau Gwent, where people can be proud of their past, can look forward to a bright future. The plan aims to develop new ways of working by building partnerships within Local Communities, voluntary and business sectors, the Local Council and other agencies in order to change the area and meet community needs and ambitions.

The Community Plan has seven key action areas. These are Regeneration, Health, Social Care and Well - Being, Lifelong Learning, Environment, Housing, Transport, Culture and Sport. All these actions are linked and overlap in some way and five issues have been identified as cross cutting principles that are embedded within all the key action areas. These are Equality of Opportunity, Social Inclusion, Sustainability, Safer Communities, Welsh Identity and the Welsh Language. The plan promotes the issue of Equality by stating that:

“Every aim and objective of this plan will embrace diversity and equality, with the principle being not to treat everyone the same but to recognise and respect difference by tackling the physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers that allow discrimination”

THE EDUCATION ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2004-2007

This strategy describes how the LEA has and intends to:

- improve access to the physical environment of schools
- improve access to the curriculum; and
- improve access to written information provided by schools.

Improving Access to the Physical Environment of Schools and other LEA Learning Centres

Over a period of time, accessibility to the physical environment of all schools and learning centres will be improved to ensure that accessibility is not a barrier to learning opportunities for children, young people and adults.

The planning duty under this heading includes improvements to the physical environment of the school and the provision of physical aids to education. Improvements to physical access may range from the fitting of handrails, provision of ramps, or widening doorways to create accessible toilet and changing facilities and the provision of passenger lifts.

One of the key aims of the Authority has been and will be, the replacement of older primary school buildings that are considered unsuitable to meet future needs, including those related to disabled access. These proposals are included in the Authority's School Organisation Plan 2004-2009 and will be included in the Schools Asset Management Plan.

(This is only a small extract from the Strategy which is available in its entirety on the Authority's Internet and Intranet sites and is also available in alternative formats upon request.)

EQUALITIES MANAGEMENT

The Council regards equality as a priority in everything it does. Responsibility for this Scheme will rest with the **Chief Executive**, supported by the Council's Corporate Management Team. On a day to day basis, implementation of the Scheme will be overseen by the **Head of Human Resources**, and Politically the Scheme will be lead by the Council's **Leader and Executive Member for Governance**.

In 2002 the Council formally adopted the **Welsh Assembly Government's Generic Equality Standard (GES) for Local Government in Wales**. The Standard was developed to provide a framework for mainstreaming all the equality strands into the every day functions of a local Council and involves 5 levels of achievement.

The principles of the GES form the basis on how the Authority is working towards mainstreaming Equalities into its goods, services and employment

In April of 1996 – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council formally set up the **Disability Access Group**. This group consisted of appropriate officers from each department, and went under the chairmanship of the Social Services Department. During the life of this action plan this group's remit and structure will be regularly reviewed.

The Council has recently set up the Access For All Forum consisting of Officers and Members of the Authority, also disabled staff and members of the public. The Forum aims to INVOLVE and utilise the skills and personal experiences of the disabled members in shaping service delivery for the disabled people of Blaenau Gwent.

The Council has a Strategic Equalities Network (SEN) that involves senior officers from each directorate and service area, chaired by the Head of Human Resources.

The remit of the SEN is to look at the specific equality strands, to research issues, problem solve, report on good practice, and to ensure that equality is embedded throughout the council. **In addition it also** facilitates the cascading of information to each department in order to raise awareness of the Equalities Agenda, thereby improving levels of communication. The SEN acts as a channel of communication through to Corporate Management Team and Executive/Scrutiny Committees.

The Council has appointed Jennifer Morgan (J.P.) Councillor as the Council's Equality Champion.

As a further measure of the Council's commitment to equalities, it has been included in the **Executive /Scrutiny Work Programme**, which engages the elected members in the equalities agenda and they have also contributed to the direction of the scheme.

These key strategic groups will further enhance the Council's ability to promote equality. This scheme provides an insight into the work that has already been carried out to promote disability equality both within the Council and within Blaenau Gwent. It is further supported by an action plan that identifies a number of improvement actions that have been developed through the Involvement of disabled people and service managers.

MEETING THE GENERAL DUTY TO PROMOTE DISABILITY EQUALITY

The DDA sets out the General Duty as follows.

Public Authorities must, in carrying out their functions, have due regard to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled persons, groups and others.
- Eliminating discrimination that is unlawful under the Act.
- Eliminating harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities.
- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled persons.
- Encouraging participation by disabled persons in public life.
- Taking steps to meet disabled persons needs, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

Essentially public authorities must take account of disability equality in every aspect of their work:

Policy - making, service delivery, employment practices and other functions etc.

The Equalities Officer works closely with all service areas to ensure that they comply with the General Duty.

SERVICE DELIVERY

This scheme and accompanying action plan sets out how the Council intends to comply with the General Duty and in providing equality of access to the services it provides to both the disabled and non-disabled public of Blaenau Gwent.

COMPLAINTS

The Council takes the monitoring and resolving of complaints very seriously and will investigate complaints that relate to poor service delivery or discrimination on the grounds of disability.

The Equalities Officer and Access Officer will work closely with service areas in any such investigations.

PROCUREMENT

The Council provides a wide range of service and has also entered into contracts with other agencies that have been contracted or commissioned to provide services on its behalf.

The Council has developed a Corporate Procurement Strategy that is routinely distributed to all applicants. The strategy makes detailed reference to all of the equality strands and requires contractors to evidence their commitment to equality, and in the light of disability, have due regard to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is an area in which an organisation can unwittingly exclude individuals with specific visual, hearing or speech impairments and create barriers.

One of the aims of the Council's Corporate Communication Strategy is to work towards standardising the way it communicates with its customers in order to remove these barriers from all forms of communication.

EMPLOYMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

Blaenau Gwent Council is the largest employer in the area and, therefore, under the DDA has to meet specific duties on employment.

The Council has been awarded the Disability Symbol accreditation by the Job Centre Plus to acknowledge Blaenau Gwent's commitment to employing disabled staff. The symbol will make everyone aware of the pledge that the Council has made in terms of employing people with disabilities

Monwel Signs and Services

The Council has a supported factory in Ebbw Vale – Monwel Signs and Services, this being one of the biggest producers and suppliers of road signs in Wales.

Workstep

This scheme provides support, advice and guidance to both employers and employees, if they are looking to appoint a disabled person or an employee who has become disabled. It is a Government funded scheme which is designed to give disabled people an opportunity to gain or retain employment (please ring 01495 353908)

The Council also works in partnership with Job Match, Job Centre Plus, Welfare to work, Work Preparation Project, Remploy and the Shaw Trust.

DISABILITY EQUALITY TRAINING

Although not being mentioned as a specific duty, the Council considers awareness training for staff as being essential and is committed to raising the levels of understanding with regards to disability issues. It will enable staff to begin to understand the needs and requirements of disabled individuals – both public and staff and to offer a service according to peoples different needs and requirements. (Appendix 5 lists the training that has taken place in the Authority over the last couple of years)

MEETING THE SPECIFIC DUTIES OF THE DDA 2005

The Act also sets out specific duties that must be discharged in order to meet the General Duty:

- Ensuring that disabled people are involved in the development of the scheme.
- Identifying how evidence will be collected and analysed to inform the 3-year action plan.
- Identifying how existing and proposed activities will be assessed for impact on disabled people.
- The delivery and publishing of a Disability Equality Scheme
- Reporting on the progress of the scheme
- Reviewing the scheme every three years.

INVOLVEMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE SCHEME

The Council is committed to providing high quality services to all and to consult with the people of Blaenau Gwent to seek their views, needs and opinions.

The involvement of disabled people and staff is highlighted as a critical element of the Disability Equality Duty and a vital element to the success of this Disability Equality Scheme. All of the following disabled groups and disabled individuals are currently involved with the council.

- The Highways Department are consulting some local disabled people on disabled parking bay applications and road closures, sending the plans and asking for observations as to appropriateness of the location etc.
- Leisure Services have recently set up a Disability Sport Forum in Blaenau Gwent, led by Greg Morgan (Leisure Services Sports Inclusion Officer). The Forum was established to provide a place for people involved in disability sport (coaches, volunteers, participants and parents) to meet, share ideas, discuss training needs, funding issues or any other issues that may be affecting them.
- Lifelong Learning Department have held a consultation event with disabled children and their parents asking what their specific needs are to enable them to go about their daily school routine. (The document is the - Schools and Learning Centres Accessibility Strategy)

- The Learning Disability Planning Group have agreed to spend money on supporting service users to join the Strategic Planning Groups. The funding will not just cover transport expenses and refreshments but will give them training to help them feel empowered and less overwhelmed when faced with a formal meeting situation. **In addition they** will be provided with named administrative support to help them read through documents and provide feedback as and when required.

- The Council, in conjunction with Monmouthshire and Torfaen Council's held a Disability Consultation Seminar at the Parkway Hotel in Cwmbrân. It involved around 30 officers of the local authorities, 30 attendees from other public bodies (Local Health Boards/ Trusts, GAVO, Age Concern etc) and 70 disabled people from the 3 key Council areas. The Seminar was arranged by the Disability Advice Project from New Inn, Pontypool and asked the disabled attendees to indicate their concerns and any observations they had as to problems experienced at accessing the many and varied services provided by local authorities. (Appendix 4)

- In February 2007 the Authority held the Access for all Seminar attended by approximately 80 people, a high proportion of whom were disabled. The Seminar was organised as a partnership event with Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board and was very well received. A report of the event was sent to those that attended and actions will arise from the feedback received. Attendees will be contacted to see whether they would like to become more formally

involved with the Authority. In line with the requirements of the DDA, we would like disabled people to have a say in the development of services in Blaenau Gwent, and to raise awareness of the issues that face disabled people on a day to day basis.(Appendix 6)

- The Council is currently developing a Corporate Consultation Strategy to assist service providers follow best practice in undertaking appropriate and inclusive public engagement with all groups in the community. Results of future consultation will be reported as part of progress reports on the scheme.

- Due to the requirement to involve disabled people, this scheme will continually be updated, effectively making it a LIVING document. Any feedback from the Forum, events and seminars will need to be actioned upon and subsequently reported back to our disabled people and carers. This will act as evidence of the transparency and effectiveness of the involvement process in Blaenau Gwent.

The progress of the scheme will be monitored through the Authority's Performance Management Framework. An annual report including recommendations will be presented to the Council's Executive Committee and will be published on the Council's web site.

GATHERING AND ANALYSING OF EVIDENCE TO INFORM THE THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN

This scheme's action plan (attached Appendix 1) was informed by people with a disability and organisations working with and for disabled people:

This approach is consistent with the Council's existing commitment to the Equality Standard for Local Government through which all equality strands will be monitored.

The Generic Monitoring Process will allow areas to monitor service provisions and gather information about the way disabled people use the Council's services. It will also allow an analysis of any inequalities that may exist in the way services are provided, actions of which will be included in service areas performance toolkits

IMPACT ASSESSING EXISTING AND FUTURE POLICIES

During the summer of 2006 the Council collated a comprehensive list of its policies, procedures and functions. Departments then allocated these to responsible officers who then assessed their relevance to the General Duty.

The Council has adopted a Generic Equality Impact Assessment toolkit, which will incorporate all of the equality strands. This was decided in order to ensure consistency of approach and the best use of limited resources (both human and financial)

To further ensure consistency, the Council commissioned Equality Impact Assessment training for all staff involved in policy development and management who are then responsible for assessing their allocated policies.

A pilot training session commenced in November 2006. Full Impact assessments will look in detail at policies, procedures and functions where the assessment for relevance reveals a possible significant risk to the Council's ability to discharge its duties under the DDA 2005. The assessments will look at old, new and proposed policies, procedures and functions alike.

The results of the impact assessments will reveal areas that need addressing e.g. service delivery or communication problems etc. Corrective measures in the form of actions will be included in service area performance toolkits and monitored through the performance management framework.

The results will also be published on the Council's web site.

DELIVERY AND PUBLICATION OF THE DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

The Disability Equality Scheme covers the full range of services provided by the Council.

This Scheme and its associated Action Plan will be published and circulated widely within and outside of Blaenau Gwent. It will also be published on the Authority's Internet and Intranet, and circulated to Authority buildings and **our Involvement representatives. Finally, the Scheme will be sent to individuals and organisations, and will be made available in a range of alternative formats upon request.**

Reporting on the progress of the scheme annually

Every December the Authority will produce a report that will demonstrate the progress that the Disability Equality Scheme has made over the previous year.

Reviewing the scheme every 3 years

The Council will review the scheme's progress annually to ensure it remains up to date and will target priority areas. The review will be reported to the Corporate Management Team and to the Executive Committee.

In line with the specific duty, a new revised Disability Equality Scheme will be produced every three years

FURTHER INFORMATION AND FEEDBACK

If you have any queries or suggestions please feel free to contact Alan Burkitt, Equalities Officer on 01495 355108

alan.burkitt@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

**This document is available in other accessible formats:
Braille, tape, large print etc Please contact Alan Burkitt
(details above)**

APPENDIX 1

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN

The action plan provides an overview of the key actions being taken across the Council. These will be developed further and form part of service area business plans which will in turn become an integral part of the Council's existing performance management framework. They will feature as part of the Wales Programme for Improvement and provide guidance in relation to the Joint Risk Assessment.

This Action Plan has been separated into the following 4 distinct sections that are the central themes of the Generic Equality Standard for Local Government:

- Leadership and Corporate Commitment
- Service Delivery and Customer Care
- Consultation, Community Development, and Scrutiny
- Employment and Training

Leadership and Corporate Commitment

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Measure of Achievement	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Mainstream equalities (including disability issues) as a core function of Council business	Identify and appoint a senior manager as "Equality Lead" to lead on the promotion of disability equality	Equalities recognised as a key element throughout the Council	Appointment of Equality Lead Officer	May 2006	CMT
To enable service areas to access the likely impact of proposed policies on the promotion of disability equality	Agree Generic toolkit for mainstreaming the equality impact assessment of Council policies and functions (new & existing)	The Authority will possess a Toolkit for conducting equality impact assessment of Council policies and functions	Toolkit formally adopted	Dec 2006	Equalities Officer/ Head of HR
To meet people's many communication needs	Feed into Corporate communications strategy for Authority to ensure that the disabled public can access Council information in accessible formats	Clear and practical guidelines will be available to the Authority	Publication of guidelines	October 2008	Marketing Officer/ Equalities Officer
To enable monitoring data and new information and research to influence the progress report	Gather information to inform the review of the action plan	Inclusion of monitoring data and new research findings into the progress report	Publication of monitoring data and research	May 2007	DMT'S

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Measurement of Achievement	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Raise awareness of the Authority's commitment to the Disability Duty amongst Disabled people	Strap line on all documents/correspondence to the public informing them of the available alternative formats	Increase in requests from disabled people for information in alternative formats	Requests and increase in take-up of accessible information	March 2008	SEN / Departmental DMT'S
To reveal bad practice and barriers to communication with disabled people	Audit of current public information produced by the Authority	Totally accessible information produced	Requests and increase in take-up of accessible information	September 2008	SEN Communications Departmental DMT
To enable Members and the public to consider progress of the scheme over the previous 3 year period and to identify future priorities for disability equality	Carry out a review of and publish a new disability equality scheme every 3 years	A new Disability Equality Scheme will be produced	Publication of Scheme	December 2009	Equalities Officer
To enable Members and the public to consider progress over the next 12 months and identify future priorities	Produce an annual report indicating the progress that has been made in the Council's disability action plan	An annual progress report will be produced indicating what the Council had achieved in the previous year	Publication of progress report	December annually	Equalities Officer/ Head of HR

To ensure that equality is mainstreamed into service improvement plan	Include measures from this action plan into each service area business plan.	To improve service area planning process across the Council	Equality actions present in departmental/divisional delivery	Ongoing	Service areas
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Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer
To ensure that there are no areas of discrimination	Each service area to review existing policies & functions for relevance to the specific duties of the DDA	All functions and policies are reviewed across all service areas	31 st July 2008	Head of Service / SEN
Development of a disability forum to support/advise on disability issues and to feed into departmental/divisional service delivery plans	Establish "Disability Forum" for disabled service users	A Disability Forum will be established ensuring disability considerations in future policies and practices	July 2007	Disability Forum/ Equalities Officer
To fulfil the Council's duty to involve disabled people in the policy making process	Increased number of disabled representatives on the Disability Forum	Disabled people to contribute to a 'living' document	September 2007	Disability Forum/ Equalities Officer
To ensure that disability equality is mainstreamed into all policies, functions and procedures of the Council	Each service area to establish disability equality monitoring of service use	Generic equality monitoring reports will be produced	July 2008	DMT'S

To ensure that disabled members of the public, carers and staff are INVOLVED with the Authority in deciding priorities in the Authority's Disability Access Budget	To explore ways in which the Authority can engage and INVOLVE Disabled members of the public, carers and staff in a targeted structured building works improvement programme of Council buildings	To INVOLVE disabled members of the public, carers and staff as per the Disability Discrimination Act 2005	April 2008	Equalities/ Access Officers/ Disability Forum
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Service Delivery and Customer Care

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer
To ensure that contractors meet their Statutory equalities requirements and the Council's equalities policies and practices	Build equality guidelines into the Council's Procurement Strategy	Contractors will be required to demonstrate good practice in their own disability equality employment practices	October 2007	Equalities / Procurement Officers
To comply with all appropriate legislative requirements for building accessibility for all Council property	Identify and put in place a targeted structured building works improvement programme of Council buildings	Timetable of improvement recommendations to be produced	April 2008	Equalities/ Access Officers/ Disability Forum

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer
Allow disabled people to access the website	To ensure that the Authority's Website is DDA compliant	The Council's website is DDA accredited	Ongoing Dec 2009	Head of Communications / Website Group/ Equalities Officer
To raise awareness both internally and externally of the disability services the Authority can provide	Gather Disability resource information	Disability Resource booklet published	Ongoing	SEN / Equalities Officer
Monitor illegal parking (pavements, disabled parking bays) and report to police, or deal with in disciplinary (as required)	Develop an illegal parking policy for Council property.	Alleviate possible challenge from member of the public through DDA	December 2008	Equalities Officer

Employment and Training

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer
To enable service areas to assess the likely impact of proposed policies on the promotion of disability equality	Appropriate staff to undertake a structured programme of staff equality impact assessment training	All appropriate staff will receive equality impact assessment training	November 2007	DMT'S/ Training Manager/ Equalities Officer
To enable the collection of information about the number and level of disabled people working for the Council	Develop the existing Council employee ethnic monitoring scheme into a generic employee equality monitoring scheme	The scheme will include categories for disability in line with the Disability Rights Commission guidance	May 2008	Equalities Officer / Head of HR
To benchmark the level and number of disabled Council employees	Identify the number of disabled staff	Data will be published	April 2008	Human Resources
Allow Members to fairly represent and access their electorate	All Elected Members to undergo equality awareness training	Awareness of equalities agenda	September 2008	Executive
To provide employment opportunities for disabled people	Meet annually with Job Centre Plus to access any disability employment practices	To retain our Disability accreditation status	Annually July	Equalities + HR Officer

Objective	Action	Outcome/PI	Timescale	Responsible Officer
To increase employees disability awareness and to improve service delivery	The Authority to commit to a targeted structured programme of staff disability awareness training.	All staff will receive Equality awareness training	Ongoing December 2009	CMT/ Training Manager/ Equalities Officer
Adhere to the Disability Accreditation Symbol	Interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria and consider them on their abilities	To increase the number of disabled employed in the Authority	Ongoing	SEN / Equalities Officer

APPENDIX 2

LEGAL DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY FROM DRAFT CODE

(Based on the medical model)

When is a person disabled?

A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

What about people who have recovered from a disability?

People who have had a disability within the definition are protected from discrimination even if they have since recovered.

What does 'impairment' cover?

It covers physical or mental impairments; this includes sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing.

Are all mental impairments covered?

The term 'mental impairment' is intended to cover a wide range of impairments relating to mental functioning, including what are often known as learning disabilities.

What is a 'substantial' adverse effect?

A substantial adverse effect is something, which is more than a minor or trivial effect. The requirement that an effect must be substantial reflects the general understanding of disability as a limitation going beyond the normal differences in ability, which might exist among people.

What is a 'long-term' effect?

A long-term effect of an impairment is one which has lasted at least 12 months, or where the total period for which it lasts is likely to be at least 12 months, or which is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected. Effects, which are not long-term, would therefore include loss of mobility due to a broken limb, which is likely to heal within 12 months and the effects of temporary infections, from which a person would be likely to recover within 12 months.

What if the effects come and go over a period of time?

If an impairment has had a substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities but that effect ceases, the substantial effect is treated as continuing if it is likely to recur; that is if it is more probable than not that the effect will recur.

What are 'normal day-to-day activities'?

They are activities, which are carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis. The term is not intended to include activities which are normal only for a particular person or group of people, such as playing a musical instrument, or a sport, to a professional standard or performing a skilled or specialised task at work. However, someone who is affected in such a specialised way but is also affected in normal day-to-day activities would be covered by this part of the definition. The test of whether an impairment affects normal day-to-day activities is whether it affects one of the broad categories of capacity listed in Schedule 1 to the Act. They are mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, hearing or eyesight, memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand, or perception of the risk of physical danger.

What about treatment?

Someone with an impairment may be receiving medical or other treatment, which alleviates or removes the effects (though not the impairment). In such cases, the treatment is ignored and the impairment is taken to have the effect it would have had without such treatment. This does not apply if substantial adverse effects are not likely to recur even if the treatment stops (i.e. the impairment has been cured).

Does this include people who wear spectacles?

No. The sole exception to the rule about ignoring the effects of treatment is the wearing of spectacles or contact lenses. In this case, the effect while the person is wearing spectacles or contact lenses should be considered.

Are people who have disfigurements covered?

People with severe disfigurements are covered by the Act. They do not need to demonstrate that the impairment has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Are there any other people who are treated as disabled under the Act?

Anyone who has a diagnosis of HIV, Cancer or Multiple Sclerosis is automatically treated as disabled under the Act. In addition, people who are registered as blind or partially sighted, or who are certified as being blind or partially sighted by a consultant ophthalmologist are automatically treated under the Act as being disabled. People who are

not registered or certified as blind or partially sighted will be covered by the Act if they can establish that they meet the Act's definition of disability.

What about people who know their condition is going to worsen over time?

Progressive conditions are conditions which are likely to change and develop over time. Where a person has a progressive condition he/she will be covered by the Act from the moment the condition leads to an impairment which has some effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, even though not a substantial effect, if that impairment is likely eventually to have a substantial adverse effect on such ability.

Are people with genetic conditions covered?

If a genetic condition has no effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, the person is not covered. Diagnosis does not in itself bring someone within the definition. If the condition is progressive, then the rule about progressive conditions applies.

Are any conditions specifically excluded from the coverage of the Act?

Yes. Certain conditions are to be regarded as not amounting to impairments for the purposes of the Act. These are: addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine, or any other substance (other than as a result of the substance being medically prescribed), seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever), except where it aggravates the effect of another condition, tendency to set fires, tendency to steal, and tendency to physical or sexual abuse of other persons, exhibition of voyeurism. Also,

disfigurements which consist of a tattoo (which has not been removed), non-medical body piercing, or something attached through such piercing, are to be treated as not having a substantial adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

APPENDIX 3

DEVELOPMENTS IN SERVICE PROVISION

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

Currently there are 11 qualified Signers (British Sign Language) working for the Council (10 – Level 1, 1 – Level 2)

Professional Signers and Interpreters can be accessed through contacting: Wales Council for the Deaf, Glenview House, Courthouse Road, Pontypridd, CF37 1JY, 01443 485687.

LOOP SYSTEMS

Loop Systems are in place in the following buildings: -

Abertillery Social Services,
Bridge Centre,
Foundry Bridge,
Abertillery
Tel: 01495 322770

Blaenau Gwent CBC
Council Chamber
Ebbw Vale
Tel: 01495 350555

Brynmawr Market Theatre Cinema
Market Square,
Brynmawr
Tel: 01595 310576

Beaufort Theatre
Beaufort Hill
Beaufort, Ebbw Vale
Tel: 01495 308996

Abertillery Community Theatre
Abertillery Comprehensive School
Tel: 01495 350360

Metropole Theatre
Mitre Street
Abertillery

Cwrt Mytton Residential Home
Abertillery
Tel: 01495212736

Plas y Coed Residential Home
Ebbw Vale
Tel: 01495 350460

Glyn Coed Junior & Infants School
Ebbw Vale
Tel: 01495 302402

Social Services
Bridge Street, Ebbw Vale
Tel: 01495 355794

Brynmawr Trading Standards Office
Beaufort Street
Brynmawr
Tel: 01495 356138

Tredegarr Leisure Centre
Stable Lane
Tredegarr
Tel: 01495 723554

Brynmawr Library
Market Square
Brynmawr
Tel: 01495 310045

The Electoral Registration Service has purchased 8 portable loop systems for Elections, which are then available for departments to use upon request

TALKING BOOKS

These are available through the: -

Abertillery Sensory Team,

Social Services,

Bridge Centre,

Foundry Bridge,

Abertillery

Tel: 01495 322770

Application Forms are processed via Gwent Association for the Blind,

Tel: 01495 763650

AUDIO TAPES

These are available through the: -

Resources Department,
Benefits Section
Civic Centre,
Ebbw Vale,
Tel: - 01495 350555

The following tapes are available:

- Help from Social Fund
- Going into Hospital
- A Helping Hand with Benefits
- Help with your Council Tax
- Help if you live in Residential Care or Nursing Home
- Help with your Rent
- Sick or Disabled
- Separated or Divorced.

BRAILLE OR MOON TACTILE COMMUNICATION

Social Services

Rehabilitation Officer,

Bridge Centre,

Abertillery

Tel: 01495 322 770

(The Rehabilitation Officer is able to teach service users either Braille or Moon).

Correspondence through the medium of Braille can be arranged by the Gwent Association for the Blind – 01495 763650 or PIA– 0870 321 6450

The Resources Department, Civic Centre will provide Braille documents or information if requested or required, please contact the relevant Section you are dealing with.

LARGE PRINT

Social Services Department

Bridge Centre

Abertillery

Tel: 01495 322780

The department will provide large print leaflets for Visually Impaired People. The Sensory Disability Team Newsletter is produced in large print on Yellow paper with Black ink.

All departments will provide documents in large print if requested or required.

INTERVIEW ROOMS

The Council has designated interview rooms within some office buildings in order to allow disabled people to visit and speak to staff face-to-face.

The rooms are in the following departments and locations:

Civic Centre,
(Available to all depts)
Ebbw Vale,
Tel: 01495 350555

Regeneration Division
Business Resource Centre
Tafarnaubach,
Tredegar 01495 355501

Central Depot
Monusk
Brynmawr
(suite of 3 rooms)
Tel: 01495 311556

Brynmawr Trading Standards Office
Beaufort Street
Brynmawr
Tel: 01495 356138

Social Services
Bridge Street
Ebbw Vale
Tel: 01495 355794

VISITING SERVICES

Revenues Division

Civic Centre

Ebbw Vale

Tel: 01495 355055

If housebound or disabled members of the public make a request, an officer will visit a service users house to deal with Housing Benefit, Council Tax or Rents queries. The Council would consider all such requests across all of its service areas.

More detailed information can be found on the Authority's web site.

Look for - Disability Resource Booklet

Appendix 4
Disability Equality Seminar
Parkway Hotel, Cwmbrân, Monday 11th September 2006

THE DISABILITY EQUALITY DUTY

- The general duty applies to all bodies carrying out a public function.
- There is a statutory requirement to:
 - Report on the Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan annually
 - Write a new scheme every 3 years
 - Impact assess proposed and existing policies.
- The action plan is the key part of the scheme.

SUGGESTIONS

- Involve disabled staff
- Local and national groups
- Try and ensure diversity of impairment
- Involvement with the disabled public is vital as is keeping evidence
- Ensure the prominence and accessibility of schemes.
- Cover expenses of those involved in consultation
- The Council can be challenged and taken to court by the public or Commissioner for Equality and Rights for failure to comply with the D.D.A.

PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Participation by disabled groups and accountability of local Authorities and other public bodies.

- The Duty highlights the legislative need for involvement with disabled people
- It is hoped that there will be an email consultation Network organised for the future
- Disabled people will need reimbursing to cover any expenses
- Disabled people need to be realistic – it will not happen overnight
- Always be objective.

DISABLED PEOPLE CAN HELP BY:-

- Coming up with problems and solutions
- Work closely with other groups
- Identify barriers
- Setting priorities for action plans
- Identifying shortfalls and gaps
- Identifying future actions

We must try and involve disabled people/groups that don't normally get involved.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

- What we have done so far
- How we have involved disabled people
- Say about action plans – departmental/ divisional

- Annual reporting process
- About employment – disabled people
- Training
- Communications – Arial font size 12 minimum, space and a half, justified
- Access to buildings
- Procurement
- Internal Disability Network
- External Forum
- Blaenau Gwent Involvement Conference in the Parkway Cwmbran

**Synopsis of responses from Disability Seminar Parkway Hotel 11th
September 2006**

1. Responses regarding specific places

LIBRARIES

- Inappropriate inaccessible buildings x 3 – Ebbw Vale (split level building)
- Awareness training for staff x3
- Lack of hearing loops
- Limited availability of resources in alternative formats

LEISURE CENTRES

- Keys for locked lifts back at reception x4
- Not accessible x2
- Verbally instructed activities or visually instructed activities not adjusted for disabled people
- Lack of hoists x2
- Poor location of accessible toilets
- Abuse of disabled bays or lack of disabled bays x2

ROADS & CAR PARKS

- Abuse of disabled bays x 5
- Poor location of bays x 3
- Disabled bays too narrow x3
- Lack or dropped kerbs x2

- People parking in front of dropped kerbs x2
- People parking on pavements x 2

SERVICES FROM COUNTRY HALLS/CIVIC CENTRES

- Poor fire evacuation planning
- Lack of public transport to Civic Centre
- Awareness training for reception staff x1

2. ANYTHING ELSE FROM PUBLIC BODIES

- Alternative format information available
- Moving of services – are they disabled friendly (need to impact assess)
- Disability seen as a special need not as a mainstreamed issue.
- Designers, planners, architects need training and awareness on needs of disabled people, can build an appropriate measure at design stage,
- Problems adapting old buildings – some new buildings non-compliant.
- Doors and frames not colour contrasted
- Lack of Taxi drivers with adapted vehicles
- Schools & Colleges of F.E/H.E not accessible
- More jobs for people with learning disabilities
- Disabled toilets locked – key available from somewhere else
- Key system for
- accessing toilets

(Appendix 5) (Gwerfyl wedi symud o dudalen 21)

EQUALITIES TRAINING

- Since July 2004 a Disability Awareness element has been introduced in to the Induction and Customer Care Programmes for staff.
- Awareness training on Part M of Building Regulation/Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Visual Impairment Training has been carried out for staff involved in building design.
- Technical Services Division have organised Visual Impairment Awareness training through the Royal National Institute for the Blind (R.N.I.B).
- Disability Awareness training (visual impairment) was held in December 2005 for selected staff in conjunction with Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board.
- Training on Disability Awareness is being arranged in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Organisation (W.L.G.A) for appropriate staff.
- The Social Services Sensory Disabilities Team have carried out awareness training for Crossroads and Ophthalmology.
- Also they carried out a Sensory Impairment Awareness Day at the Civic Centre for both Council staff and members of the public in conjunction with the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (R.N.I.D).
- The RNIB carried out a Visual Impairment awareness session in March 2006 where in excess of 30 staff attended. This covered basic awareness and the legislative background to the DDA.
- Equalities Awareness Training



**Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol
Local Health Board**
Blaenau Gwent



**Disability
Advice
Project**



Appendix 6

ACCESS FOR ALL CONFERENCE

ABERTILLERY LEISURE CENTRE

21 FEBRUARY 2007

Overview of Event

The Access for All Seminar was a collaborative event, held in partnership by Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and project managed by the Disability Advice Project. It was held on the 21st February 2007 in Abertillery Sports Centre.

The aim of the involvement event was:-

- To engage with as broad a range of people as possible**
- To work collaboratively**
- To engage individuals in the work of the Local Health Board and the Borough Council with experience of being a disabled person, or of caring for a disabled person.**
- To enable disabled people in Blaenau Gwent to participate in public life. Disabled people have been under-represented in positions which determine the policies and priorities of public authorities.**
- To establish a local disability advice group, with individuals attending who have identified themselves as having a particular interest in healthcare or council issues**
- To assist in shaping policies, procedures and strategies around healthcare and local authority priorities for the future to ensure that service provision is inclusive of all members of the community**

There were more than 80 people in attendance, including representation from :-

- **Individuals with a disability and their carers**
- **Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board**
- **Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – Social Services, Education and other departments**
- **Voluntary Organisations**

Speakers

- **The seminar was opened by, Robin Morrison, BGCBC and Richard Bevan, BGLHB who set out their organisational commitment to ensuring that services provided meet the needs of the community, specifically people with disabilities and their carers.**
- **Ian Matthews from the Disability Advice Project gave an overview of the work of the Council and the Local Health Board. After each overview, a series of questions were looked at by those attending, with individuals sharing their good and bad experiences of Council and LHB services.**
- **The morning was closed by Tony Crowhurst, Senior Access Auditor, Disability Advice Project, who described ways in which people might get involved with shaping council and health services for the future.**
- **At the end of the seminar, people had an opportunity to network and to look at a number of display stands offering information on a variety of different organisations, including signage, sound support systems, the LHB, Jobmatch, Social Services, Yellow Card Centre and voluntary organisations**

Feedback

People who came to the event were asked for their views on how services have been delivered to them. To help people to give their

views, some service areas were suggested. These service areas were :-

County Borough Council	Local Health Board
Registrars Polling Stations Libraries Parks Roads and Pavements Schools and Colleges	GPs Dentists Out-of-hours service Hospitals Passing from hospital care to social services care

Under these services, people were asked to think about

- The buildings which they have to visit to obtain the service
- How the service is delivered by the people from the Council and Health Board
- The type and style of information that is given out by the service
- The overall service

Both the County Borough Council and the Local Health Board want to improve their services and will be looking at ways in which they will be able to work with the people who attended the conference and others in the wider community to make this happen.

This report looks in detail at what was fed back during the discussions, but it should be recognised that these views are individual’s stories and experiences which are therefore difficult to

respond to specifically. However, these general messages and viewpoints will be built into further local discussions.

Buildings and the Routes to Them

Parking

The main comments about parking related to

- **the lack of spaces for disabled people**
- **the lack of dropping off points for disabled people**

Getting About Outside

Many of the comments made by people at the conference related to the use of pavements around towns. Items causing obstructions on pavements that were specifically mentioned included bins, bollards, advertising boards, uneven pavements, crazy paving.

Further comments were received that related to roads. Important issues mentioned included :

- **the problems caused by speed reduction ramps to scooter users,**
- **potholes,**
- **the lack of dropped kerbs and**
- **the absence of ramps.**

Of particular note was a comment on the lack of colour contrast to new road layout. This was an issue recently highlighted by Guide Dogs for the Blind. They have pointed out that the needs of wheelchair users to have level surfaces can conflict with the need

for people with a sight impairment to be able to identify kerb edges etc.

Getting Around Inside Buildings

Issues raised under this heading mainly concerned wheelchair users and those with a sight impairment. Some buildings were inaccessible to wheelchair users. Horizontal circulation was made difficult by narrow doors and corridors. Vertical circulation was made difficult by the absence of lifts and by destinations on upper floors only reachable using stairs.

Signage was also seen as a problem by some people.

There were no comments about the quality and/or availability of accessible toilets.

Furniture and Equipment

The main theme coming out of this section related to the heights of shelves and desks. The locations highlighted included reception counters and polling booths. When considering counters and the like, the important points to ensure are

- that there is a drop level area available that can be easily accessed by a wheelchair user and by people who prefer to sit or who have problems standing.**
- that a hearing-enhancement facility is in place**

In connection with this last point, it is understood that North Glamorgan NHS Trust had currently let a contract to improve the hearing-enhancement facilities at its receptions and clinics.

Libraries and similar places should also ensure that the minimum of display areas are at a high or low level for easy access by those with mobility impairments. One acceptable alternative is to ensure that staff are continuously aware of the needs of those with mobility impairments and are trained to offer help in appropriate circumstances.

Getting Out of Buildings

This is an issue often forgotten by people using public buildings. They often do not complain about provisions for escape as they have never experienced the need to vacate a building in a hurry. However, at least one person at the conference had thought about this point. He was concerned about how deaf people would be aware of an alarm sounding.

People Related Issues

In some locations, staff were felt to be helpful towards disabled people (eg Registrars; Dentists) but in others, disabled people were treated poorly (eg school; GPs). The quality of communication was patchy showing that some staff had received good training (eg

some libraries) whereas others may not have received any training (eg some schools; some GPs).

The greatest criticisms were reserved for GPs. The major comments were that

- they did not use clear speech**
- they have a poor use of language (ie too complex)**
- they address the carer rather than the patient**
- they presume that any complaint relates to a patients impairment and nothing else**
- they focus on the medical model**
- they fail to realise the extent that they have on people's lives**
- they are not aware of all the services available**
- they are reluctant to come out of hours**
- they do not have alternative ways of addressing patients (eg by use of hearing enhancement devices)**

Many of these comments were repeated when considering hospitals.

There were several comments relating to peoples experiences in schools. One mother reported a poor response from a school when complaining of bullying of her child. Another complained about inadequate provision for disabled people at parents' evenings. However good comments were made regarding the roles of classroom assistants and nursery nurses.

There was some indication that maintenance and other key management procedures were not being adhered to. Instances were quoted of lifts not working and disabled parking bays being used by non-disabled people.

Information

The issues highlighted relating to the provision of information centred on two main areas. These were

- The lack of information on the services available**
- Poor delivery of information**

Several people commented that they had had problems finding out about out of hours services, registrars services, mobile libraries, dentists and opening times.

Several people asked that information should be made available in plain English and in alternative formats. This was highlighted in the cases of hospitals, GPs, Dentists and out of hours services. This is a particular issue for people who have been deaf from birth and whose understanding of the written word may not be great enough to cope with complex structures and long sentences.

The delivery of information was also commented upon. Particular mention was made of the calling system in GP surgeries and the lack of hearing-enhancement systems in rooms used for meetings by the Council.

Overall Service Delivery

Introduction

Several issues were raised that touched on more than just buildings, people or information individually. Such issues are brought together in this part of the report.

Council Services

In considering Council provided services, the comments were not always consistent. For instance it was reported that “support for people with visual impairments in Ebbw Vale schools and colleges is good” but another person reported a “lack of facilities for partially sighted people”. Another person stated that “the visual impairments team are supportive and informative”.

Particular causes for concern in schools and colleges included

- Poor training on disability awareness**
- Lack of provision (in colleges) for independent living**
- Unequal treatment of disabled children in after schools clubs**
- Unequal treatment of disabled children in the provision of transport to school**
- Causing disabled children to attend schools further away from home than non-disabled children**
- The appropriateness of the curriculum for disabled children**

Many issues were raised regarding polling stations, registrars and libraries. Many points were positive, many negative but with some constructive suggestions were also included.

There were many issues over the completion of polling forms and the recognition of the candidates.

Issues concerning the Registrars service mainly concerned the location and the possibility of an “out reach” service.

The “house bound” service of the libraries was rated good as was the ability to phone for a book to be reserved. However some people would value the availability of some refreshments in libraries. This is a particularly relevant comment now that libraries are extensively used for internet and other computer uses. Such uses can cause a user to be in a building for many hours.

Transition Services

One of the areas raised for discussion at the conference involved the transition from Health Service care to Social Service care. The responses showed both good points and areas for concern.

Individuals felt that they had received a good service in the following areas

- Blaenau Gwent Homecare**
- Registering as blind or partially sighted**
- Occupational Health service**

Concern was expressed about

- **Communication between hospitals/services/people**
- **Complaints not taken seriously**
- **Issues relating to the sharing of records / information**
- **Lack of information about what equipment and funding may be available**

Health Services

The Out of Hours Service received criticism. Such services were seen to be of great importance to disabled people. Some criticisms were aimed at the service as a whole eg one individual thought that it might be easier and quicker to go to the A&E department, difficulties had been experienced in getting home visits especially out of hours and concerns were raised about the length of response time and lack of information about the service.

Other criticisms looked at particular parts of the service, eg length of response time, lack of information about the service.

When considering the services provided by Hospitals, there was again a mixed message. Some people reported good experiences regarding treatment, support and discharge. However a number of negative experiences were also highlighted. These included :

- **Length of waiting for appointments**
- **Ambulance response times**

- **Problems with sharing records between specialists**
- **Hospital staff not trained to care for severely disabled people**

Conclusion

Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and the Disability Advice Project would like to extend their thanks to all the individuals and organisations whose participation in the Access for All conference ensured its success.

The issues which have been highlighted within the body of this report will be considered and taken forward through service planning mechanisms and partnership groups, and individuals who have indicated their willingness to be involved in working with the County Borough Council and Health Board will be contacted in due course.

