

**Disability Equality Scheme
Cynllun Cydraddoldeb
Anabledd
2006 - 2009**

**Annual Report
Adroddiad Blynyddol**

JANUARY / IONAWR 2009

Contents / Cynnwys

	PAGE
1. Introduction	3
2. Commitment to Disability Equality and Background of the Scheme	3
3. Summary of Main Progress in 2007/2008	4
Leadership and Corporate Commitment	4
Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny	6
Service Delivery and Customer Care:	8
Children's Services	8
Improved Sensory Services for the Deaf	8
Improved Services for Visually Impaired	10
Improvements under the DDA to Buildings	11
Connect 2 Blaenau Gwent (C2BG)	13
Employment and Training	13
Employment Route: Access For All	14
Events/Awareness Sessions	14
Projects:	
Switched on Communities Project – Wales Remote Assessment Project	16
4. Key Areas for Action:	17
Leadership and Corporate Commitment	
Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny	
Service Delivery and Customer Care	
Employment and Training	
Appendix 1	
Strategy for Older People (SfOP) Implementation within Blaenau Gwent	25

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the second Annual Report to update the Council, its partners and the public of Blaenau Gwent on progress with the development and implementation of the Council's Disability Equality Scheme. The scheme, with accompanying action plan was in place and being actioned as a living document from December 2006.

2. COMMITMENT TO DISABILITY EQUALITY AND BACKGROUND OF THE SCHEME

The overarching goal of the Disability Equality Duty is to promote equality of opportunity. To achieve this, specific duties that apply to public authorities in England and Wales ensure that due regard is given to the needs of disabled people when planning, delivering or monitoring the functions and the services they provide. The general duty requires public authorities to adopt a proactive approach, mainstreaming disability equality into all decisions and service delivery.

The Scheme and its associated Action Plan demonstrates Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's commitment, through its roles and responsibilities in delivering services for local people, and to actively look for methods of ensuring that disabled people in Blaenau Gwent have equality of opportunity. This commitment is fundamental to the way in which the Council will plan, commission and deliver services locally. The Council will continue to respond positively by working with and involving local people and our staff to ensure that our approach is appropriate and effective both as a service deliverer and as the largest employer in Blaenau Gwent.

This report, therefore, focuses upon the action plan in order to demonstrate the ways in which the Council has responded to its Scheme and the General Duty. This Duty specifies the promotion of equality of opportunity, elimination of illegal discrimination, elimination of harassment, promotion of positive attitudes, encouraging participation in public life and taking account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people. These are:

- Leadership and Corporate commitment;

- Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny;
- Service Delivery and Customer Care; and
- Employment and Training

3. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROGRESS IN 2007/2008

Leadership and Corporate Commitment

- The Council regards equality as a priority in everything it does. Responsibility for the Disability Equality Scheme rests 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 Equalities Officer, and Politically the Scheme will be lead by the Council's Leader and Executive Member for Governance.
- The Council is in the process of restructuring the Council's Equalities framework. The Chief Executive, Mr Robin Morrison has been named as the Council's Equalities Champion and will chair the Corporate Equalities Board. It is proposed that there will be Networks covering all equality strands chaired and attended by Senior Officers. These Networks will all report to the Corporate Equalities Board whose remit will be to give the Council the strategic direction in terms of mainstreaming equalities throughout the Council.
- Councillor Don Wilcox has been nominated as the Member Equalities Champion.
- Councillor Jennifer Morgan along with Councillor Hayden Trollope are both working members of the Access For All Forum.
- The Council have set aside funding that is ring fenced to support the Access For All Forum and the principle of involvement.
- The Council has been accredited with the Two Tick Disability Symbol User status that recognised the Council's commitment to good practice in employing disabled people

following an assessment in July 2008 the Council remains in compliance with the seven commitments of the scheme.

- The Council has identified all its functions, policies and procedures and developed a generic toolkit in preparation for the Equality Impact Assessment process (EQIA). 130 Senior staff have been trained in Equalities Awareness and Equality Impact Assessment. The Housing Department have recently carried out the Council's first Equality Impact Assessment on its Anti Social Behaviour Policy which links in with the Housing Strategy. Issues were identified across all seven of the equality strands.
- The Council's Corporate Procurement Strategy ensures that all new contracts, service level agreements and commissioning documentation requires a demonstration of commitment to the Act and also compliance with the duties of the Act.
- An apprentice interpreter from the BSL (British Sign Language) Futures Project, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and European Social Fund, began a placement with the Council and LHB in early November 2007. The apprentice, in conjunction with the Social Worker with Deaf People, were instrumental in further strengthening the links already made with the Deaf Community in Blaenau Gwent and raised staff awareness of issues facing those in the Deaf community. However as a result of the influence of the apprentice interpreter we are now having substantial engagement with the Deaf community throughout the Council assisted by the engagement of BSL interpreters. The placement ended in June 2008.
- The Council in partnership with the Local Health Board and Ebbw Vale Partnership Trust are actively looking to support Ebbw Vale Deaf Club to relocate from their current venue due to problems they are experiencing in the use of the facility.
- The Council has recently heard that it has been successful in its bid to run a pilot project in conjunction with the WLGA.

The pilot is concerned with looking at the possibility of developing a Self Assessment Toolkit for the Equality Improvement Framework for Local Government in Wales (EIF). The EIF is designed to mainstream the seven strands of Equality throughout Council's through the use of the Performance Management process.

Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny

- The Access For All Foun was formed in July 2007 and is attended by disabled and non-disabled officers of the Council, members of the public, carers, representatives from local groups and Elected Members. It is the management group for disability equality in the County Borough with officers responsible for cascading information and actions arising from the Forum through to their service areas. The Council have set aside funding that is ring fenced to support the Access For All Forum and the principle of involvement.
- The Forum has a varied membership that encourages the development of partnership working. The members of the group to date are as follows:
 1. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
 2. Disabled staff and members of the public
 3. Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board
 4. GAVO
 5. Crossroads
 6. Blaenau Gwent Leg Club
 7. Blaenau Gwent Council for the Disabled
 8. Blaenau Gwent Deaf Club
 9. Disability Wales
- The Forum meets every 6 weeks and undertakes the role of monitoring, reviewing and revising the Scheme and its Action Plan where appropriate, and this will be regularly reported to the Council's Corporate Management Team.
- The Council works closely in partnership with Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board in running the Forum which exists to give a voice to people with a Disability in Blaenau Gwent.

- An events sub-group meets bi-monthly to discuss topics and arrangements for four themed events to be held across the County Borough aimed at engaging and involving disabled members of the public and staff.
- Through the Access For All Forum a Deaf Forum has been developed which will meet quarterly and is designed to give a voice to the Deaf Community of Blaenau Gwent in helping to shape service delivery and access to services. The first Forum met on the 19th September 2008 and was a great success having being attended by approximately 70 people of whom 50 were deaf.
- The Ebbw Vale Civic Centre reception re-modelling which commenced on 24th November 2008. This project was presented to the Council's Access For All Forum who suggested a number of very important access changes which were added to the plan – a very good example of involvement.
- The Council runs a Disability Sports Forum for people who are involved in Disability Sport (coaches, volunteers, people who run clubs, participants and parents). The Forum enables members to meet and share ideas, discuss training needs, funding or any other issues they may face. This initiative has been instigated by the Leisure Services Sports Inclusion Officer.
- Social Services service users, Carers, professionals and voluntary agencies held an 'Have Your Say' event in 2008 about the services provided to individuals with Learning Disabilities, their family and informal carers, by the Local Authority and Local Health Board along with general services and facilities provided within Blaenau Gwent. The event attracted over 80 participants from across Blaenau Gwent, provided an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge of current service provision in an open and honest manner within a safe and encouraging environment. This is to become an annual event.

- The information gathered from 'Have Your Say' will assist Blaenau Gwent's Social Services and Local Health Board to develop a joint commissioning strategy to plan for future services for people with a Learning Disability and their families and carers. (Full details of events can be obtained from Social Services).
- Attached at Appendix 1 is a summary of the Implementation in Blaenau Gwent of the Strategy for Older People (SfOP).

Service Delivery and Customer Care

Children's Services have:

- Developed an assisted leisure scheme and are about to open a retained carer scheme (with Barnados). An Excellence Wales Award was given for this work.
- Supported the re-launch of a parents support group.
- Prepared a Business case supporting an early years project.
- Established protocols and panel for transition into adult services.
- In conjunction with Housing, adapted properties and had new build for approximately 20 children with disabilities. This supported families to continue to care for their children.
- User and Carer Strategy in place in Social Services and a User and Carer Survey carried out in March 2008.
- Integrated playscheme in place with Barnardos and Leisure.
- Mentro Allan Scheme in place.

Improved Sensory Services for the Deaf

- The Social Services Sensory Team wrote a BSL/English Interpreter procedure in 2008 that is available for the Council's staff to follow when hiring a BSL Interpreter.
- The Social Services Sensory Team are the first Local Authority in Wales to have purchased a Videophone to enable contact with the Deaf community.
- The Access For All Forum are to fund the purchase of a Videophone for the new Customer Services Reception in the Civic Centre in Ebbw Vale.

- The Education Service has been proactive in involving disabled pupils, parents, carers, occupational therapists, and specialists in Visual impairment in various adaptations to schools in the County Borough.
- The Social Services Sensory Team have worked in partnership with Sense Cymru in relation to developing and maintaining a robust register for Deaf/Blind service users within Blaenau Gwent.
- Support services for Deaf/Blind service users are now provided following an effective contract and commissioning process with specialist partner agencies.
- Visual Impairment Benchmarking participation which has proved to be a useful tool in developing services. It has mapped understanding of where services are being developed and best practice guidelines available. Where it has been fully used, it has helped service improve. It has been recognised as excellent work by WAG, ADSS, SSIA, SSIW and across voluntary sectors.
- Visual Impairment representation at the Public Information Group – informed an appropriate formats for information provision i.e large print, Braille, audio and IT links.
- Services for People with a Visual Impairment booklet updated and distributed.
- Services for Children with a Visual Impairment booklet currently being translated and will soon be ready for print and distribution.
- The Council provides learning support for Deaf students. A protocol has been put in place that ensures that BSL Interpreter Support assistants will be located, put in place, and that funding will then be applied for rather than vice versa in order to ensure that the service user is not disadvantaged by a delay in the placement at the Learning venue.
- The Access For All Forum are looking into providing mainstream information through the medium of British Sign Language (BSL). Officers from the Council and the Local Health Board have visited Bristol City Council's Sensory Team who have been named for their good practice in this area.
- A local film editor has been approached by the Forum to carry out the filming of a DVD on the Council's complaints

service and a comprehensive “Social Care services for Adults” DVD in BSL.

- The Council through the Access For All Forum recently had the accolade of being voted as the Best In Wales and fifth best in the UK for being Deaf Friendly. This accolade came about as a result of a poll taken by the RNID Tynetalk Service.
- The Council has produced a Linguistic Skills Strategy which will record how many staff we have who possess British Sign Language Skills and if they are prepared to use them for the benefit of the Council and Deaf Service users.
- The Council, in conjunction with a number of other local partners, has been successful in obtaining funding through the Making the Connections Improvement Fund for an Interpretation and Translation Services (WITS). It is envisaged that major benefits of such a service would include provision of accurate data regarding the language needs within Wales (in terms of this report the use of BSL) and avoiding the duplication of work by each individual body in Wales. The bid is at the stage where information is being collected Pan Wales regarding the services that will be required to be provided by the new organisation.

Improved Services for Visually Impaired

- Partnership working with Blaenau Gwent Libraries and Social Services Visual Impairment team, who offer Home visiting scheme, Talking Books either via local resources, RNIB, Calibre Library. British Wireless for the Blind Agents. Currently in the process of organising Reading groups.
- The Community Education Service offer IT courses to people aged 16 years and over. All courses are mixed ability so both experienced computer users and complete beginners are welcome to join. Taster sessions organised in July of this year, where Visually impaired people accessed individual assessments with a view to joining organised courses. This proved to be very successful. The computers in each of the centres can be adapted to suit every individuals needs. The colour and size of objects on the screen can be adapted. They also offer different types of keyboards.

- The National Museum and Galleries for Wales “Getting ‘Hands on’ at the National Museum”. Visually impaired people from Blaenau Gwent have taken part in tactile workshops. There are a number of events organised for next year commencing April.
- The Social Worker for the Visually Impaired has provided information in October 2008 to support the refurbishment of the Gallery from a Sensory perspective.
- The Corporate Communications Team provide large print and also Word versions of the Connect Council Newspaper, BG Issue to enable blind staff to access the documents with the PC based Jaws speech application software.
- The Union (Unison) has done likewise for its blind/visually impaired members with the Shadow Newsletter.

Improvements under the DDA to Buildings

- **Leisure Services.** The Metropole Theatre in Abertillery won the RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) Welsh Award (Category: Community Benefit).
- The Metropole Theatre also received Consortium of Local Authorities in Wales (CLAW) Building of the Year Award ‘Commendation’.
- **Leisure Division development/improvement to access within Sports Centre in Blaenau Gwent:**
- Major refurbishment of wetside changing rooms in Tredegar Sports Centre.
- Easy access steps to enter to swimming pools in all Sports Centres.
- People with Disabilities swimming lessons in Abertillery Sports Centre.
- Disability Sports Development session in Nantyglo Sports Centre.
- People with disabilities football session in Abertillery Sports Centre.
- Increased usage of Abertillery Sports Centre by Social Services Clients
- Integrated summer playscheme programme in all 4 Sports Centres.

- Extension of the “Life Card” for young people within the Learning Action Centre Arena.
- Also below are a few DDA related projects that were carried out in 2008 by the **Technical Services** team and are well worth a mention:
 - Ebbw Vale Parkway – access to the Railway Station
 - Polling Stations – Access Ramps
 - Monwel Hankinson – Rear Access ramp
 - Disabled WC in Ebbw Vale Comprehensive
 - Disabled WC in Brynmawr Library
 - New Ramp/Disabled WC in Abertillery Youth Centre
- **Abertillery Comp.** Slip resistant flooring in certain areas of the school (special needs).
- New automatic sliding doors to main entrance/reception.
- Automatic fire door closures (allows travel throughout the school by wheelchair).
- Total refurbishment of disabled/special needs toilet.
- **Georgetown School.** Adaptations to disabled toilet.
- Adaptations to door frame to allow wheelchair access to early years classroom.
- **Queen Street.** Provision of stairhead protectors for easier access.
- **Ysgol Gymraeg Brynmawr.** Provision of ramp to allow access to main entrance/reception.
- **Thomas Richards Centre.** Provision of anti-slip flooring.

The Council is committed to provide, where appropriate and reasonable, aids to assist disabled people in making their complaints, including the use of appropriate advocacy services and the use of alternative formats.

Connect 2 Blaenau Gwent (C2BG)

- C2BG held workshop sessions not only for the Authorities Peer Review in Customer Service Principles into Practice (CSP2P) but also the open days for customers in order to have a greater understanding of the services provided and the access channels available. C2BG aims to promote equal access to Council services, therefore work being undertaken over the next year will look at further access channels available (Digi TV, SMS, Video phones etc) in order for all clients and customers to continue to have ease of access to Council services. This will include re-development of the Website in order to further provide transactional processes.
- C2BG have installed a Mini-com and have a website where online services can be operated from. They also arrange face-to-face meetings for deaf service users with BSL interpreters upon request.

Employment and Training

- The Council continues to ensure that all staff that deal with complaints are aware of the differing needs of people with disabilities so that reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure that individuals' needs are met. All Social Services staff have been trained with regard to the complaints process.
- The Two Tick Disability Symbol is displayed on all job advertisements, application forms and corporate stationery to demonstrate the Council's commitment to employing disabled people.
- Workstep, which operates in Monwel Signs in Ebbw Vale which employs 35 staff and provides support, advice and guidance to both employers and employees, on disability. It is a Government funded scheme that is designed to give disabled people an opportunity to gain or retain employment.
- The Council works in partnership with Job Match, Job Centre Plus, Welfare to Work, Work Preparation Project, Remploy

and the Shaw Trust. Work is ongoing to bring all these agencies together and to develop an informal protocol for referral of disabled people that will maximise funding and training opportunities.

- Generic Equality Training continues to include Disability as part of the Council's induction process for new staff.
- The Council is developing Level 1 and Level 2 BSL classes for members of the Council and LHB and taster courses for those that would like to learn to sign.

Employment Route: Access For All

- The Employment Routes Development Office for Jobmatch was asked by the Access For All Forum to design a project that would specifically help people who are registered Disabled enter into employment. Through the Forum the officer was introduced to three ladies who were Deaf, unemployed and wanted careers within the Education/Care Sector. The idea to design a pilot Employment Routes programme was initiated here and scoped further.
- The Head Teacher of Pen-y-Cwm Special Needs School was extremely keen to get involved and host the project. The trainees will be working towards CACHE Level 2 Certificate for Teaching Assistants whilst on work placement which will place them in a good position to apply for any vacant posts that may arise. The Schools vision of providing 'equal access and opportunities for all at Pen-y-Cwm, where staff are afforded regular opportunities for continued professional development is of great importance and the Head Teacher believes the programme will benefit both the pupils and the staff at the school. The programme started in January 2009.

Events/Awareness Sessions

- The Social Worker for the Hearing Impaired ran a lunchtime seminar about Deaf issues.

- Social Services ran a BSL course through the Social Services Training Unit recently.
- The Access For All Forum ran a Storytelling Event in September 2008 in the Beaufort Ballroom. This event was attended by over 100 people and involved disabled people telling their stories of their lives with the problems and ignorance that they have encountered. This event has been so successful that other organisations have asked to use the format to run their own events. It has been decided to run this event again in the new year for all the senior officers and Elected Members of the Council.
- A Deaf Information Exhibition event – Sign of the Times – was organised by Social Services Sensory Team with funding from the Access For All Forum and held in the Metropole Cultural and Conference Centre in Abertillery on the 16th April 2008. It was attended by over 200 people, involved exhibitions, presentations, workshops, and was regarded as a massive success.
- The Environment Division hold two large events at the Monusk Depot in Brynmawr (June and October) every year, where many organisations are invited to attend, the following of which attended this year:
 - Osteoporosis
 - Help the Aged
 - Expert Patient Programme
 - Care and Repair
 - Children’s Entitlement
 - Masseur
 - Stroke awareness.
- Awareness days are held on a monthly basis. These have in the past included Diabetes, Healthy Heart, Breast Cancer, Prostrate Cancer, Stress Awareness.
- The Disability Sports Officer has organised various training events for staff and coaches on disability awareness and adapting activities for people with disabilities.

- The Disability Sports Officer has organised the following over the last year:
 - An Athletics Club for children aged 8-18 with a disability;
 - Swimming lessons for people with disabilities
 - An open access event at Ebbw Vale to showcase Paralympic Sports

Projects

Switched on Communities Project – Wales Remote Assessment Project

- Two accessible technology projects are being delivered across Wales by the IT and disability charity AbilityNet. AbilityNet was established in 1998 from the merger of the Computability Centre and the Foundation for Communication for the Disabled and is widely regarded as the foremost authority in the UK on disabled people using Information and Communication Technology.
- **Social Services** set up a project with RNID in October 2008 (Blaenau Gwent is the only Local Authority in South Wales that has been selected to run this project) this is a partnership project with RNID, LHB & BGCBC – establishing a volunteering project with local Deaf people.
- **Switched On Communities (SOC)** is a community investment programme funded by the DSG International Foundation (best known for its high street brands PC World and Currys Digital) and delivered by AbilityNet in conjunction with RISE. (RISE is a 5 counties Learning Network based in the former Greater Gwent area). It was funded by the Welsh Assembly Government as part of the regeneration measures for the area following the closure of the Steelworks in Ebbw Vale). RISE is based in a number of Learning Action Centres and satellite centres across Blaenau Gwent. To participating voluntary sector centres it provides an accessibility kit (keyboard and mouse alternatives, software

to provide literacy support and supporting CD's and skillsheets), training in how to adapt computers to meet the needs of disabled users and support to identify learners' access needs. AbilityNet works with a social model of disability and embraces a broad spectrum of difficulties and disabilities including failing sight, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) needs, dyslexia, arthritis, as well as registered disabilities. NCH Winchestown was one of the first voluntary sector centres in Gwent to be recruited to this project.

- **The Wales Remote Assessment Project (WRAP)** funded by The Big Lottery, is cross-sectoral and is in the process of identifying 90 community based Public Access Centres (community education, libraries, mobile units, etc) in each local authority in Wales which cater for disabled people. Through innovative use of IT and Internet services, the project is providing self and supported assessment for disabled people and their IT needs, reducing, through technology, the average waiting time for disabled people to be assessed. All participating centres receive an accessibility kit of hardware and software and training in its usage. Three centres in Blaenau Gwent are participating in this project: Abertillery Open Learning Centre and Library, James Street Learning Action Centre in Ebbw Vale, and Catapult in Tredegar.

4. KEY AREAS FOR ACTION IN 2009

- The Council has undertaken a considerable amount of work in the last year in the Disability field as evidenced in this report. The encouraging element is that it is over all service areas, covers a remarkable variety of work and initiatives. It is however recognised that we cannot be complacent and that there remains areas of the Disability Scheme action plan that require attention and that a continued focus is required on disability equality issues. The areas that require further attention within the action plan for 2009 are as follows:-

Leadership and Corporate Commitment

- Feed into Corporate Communications Strategy for Authority to ensure that the disabled public can access Council information in accessible formats. More Divisions are aware of the need for providing information in alternative formats and do provide them upon request. This strategy will be written next year and will give clear detail of information accessibility needs.
- More information is required to inform the development of the action plan.
- “Include measures from the Disability Equality Schemes Action Plan into each service area business plan”. The Council is shortly going to adopt the Equality Improvement Framework for Local Government in Wales which will mainstream Equalities through the Performance Management process and will therefore replace this action.

Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny

- Each service area to review existing policies and functions for relevance to the specific duties of the DDA”. We have trained over 130 senior staff to carry out this function. Training will continue to take place. Equality Impact Assessments are beginning to take place on the major strategies of the Council (Children’s Single Plan, Housing Strategy, Local Development Plan, Education Accessibility Strategy). We have carried out an assessment of a policy linked to the Housing Strategy (Anti-Social Behaviour Policy) and found actions in relation to the seven equality strands. Work will continue to take place across the Authority on carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.
- To increase the numbers of Disabled public, staff, carers and organisations attending the Access For All Forum to further enhance participation with those disabled in the Community. As it stands the Forum is very well regarded and there is a very healthy membership with over 50 people attending the meeting in December. The membership though is still heavily biased towards staff and Elected Members and the Forum will need to consider how we can get more disabled

members of the public to join and to get involved in developing the Council's services.

Service Delivery and Customer Care

- “Further work to be undertaken on the Council's website to continue to improve accessibility to disabled people”. Discussions are ongoing and the necessary amendments have been identified. We are just awaiting the amendments to be carried out (size of text, adjustable, colour of various parts of the standard layout, colour contrast for visual impairment).

Employment and Training

- “The Authority to commit to a targeted structured programme of staff disability awareness training”. At present there is ad-hoc training across pockets of the Council, and this needs to focus on developing a structured programme that is appropriate to staff needs e.g awareness training for front line staff etc.

Appendix 1 - Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Strategy for Older People (SfOP) Implementation within Blaenau Gwent

Brief Progress Update – October 2008

1 Valuing Older People: Maintaining and Developing Engagement

- Public Participation / Involvement Officer retained in post (funded via SfOP development monies)
- Development of 'Older People Services' Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council website. (BGCBC)
- Involvement Events:
 - Healthier, Wealthier and Wiser 50+ Information Event, The Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale. Advice/Information to Blaenau Gwent CBC employees (Pensions, Healthcare, Voluntary Work, Leisure Activities, Carer Support, Welfare Rights advice, Education, Occupational Health, Keeping Fit and Active, Learning Welsh) (April 08)
 - Home Care Services, Blaina (April 08)
 - Have Your Say – meeting with Older People's Champion and Local Elected Members, Abertillery (Sept 08)
 - Gwanwyn Event, Metropole Theatre, Abertillery (April 08)
 - Celebration of United Nations International Day for Older People, Beaufort, Ebbw Vale (1st Oct 08)
 - User/Carer Surveys (Social Services) using joint review format and production of annual report/revised action plan – identifying areas of improvement to assist service planning.
- Multi agency older people information/awareness days organised at four locations across the Borough, co-ordinated by Gwent Police (June 08)
- Access for all 'Storytelling Event' Beaufort Ebbw Vale (June 08)
- Programme of Intergenerational Activities provided by RSVP, these included:
 - Development of Heritage sessions/Reminiscence sessions within local schools. All schools forwarded project literature with advice on booking sessions.

Development work, in liaison with schools, has resulted in recruitment of volunteers to take part in World War 2 Day at Roseheyworth Millennium School. (This included recruitment of two volunteers who attended the school for a series of 'old time' dance workshops with the children.

- Intergenerational Project has developed a 'cooking in schools' pilot programme. Volunteer Facilitator has undertaken food hygiene training funded by RSVP. Development Worker in touch with Communities First re possible extension of project / wider participation within the community.
- RSVP / Public Participation and Involvement Officer – organisation of Blaenau Gwent Older People's Dance Event (involving two different schools choirs)
- Development Work. RSVP actively seeking volunteers to promote knitting in schools project.
- Never mind the Gap Valleys Dance. Intergenerational Dance Project. Project bringing people in six valley boroughs (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, RCT and Torfaen) Professional choreographer working with participants leading to two performances in the valleys and Wales Millennium Centre.
- Blaenau Gwent CBC Leisure Division, Community Services
 - Lunchtime and afternoon concerts at the Metropole Theatre, Abertillery
 - Daytime activities supported at both the Beaufort Ballroom and the Metropole Theatre.
 - Weekly Salsa sessions at Beaufort Ballroom, weekly Tea Dances at the Metropole, weekly Yoga and Belly Dancing at the Metropole.
 - Partnership work with Communities First to engage older people in Community Consultation on public art, new activity developments, Aberfest etc.
 - Links with local community groups and societies that perform, exhibit or visit the venues (all include older people 50+) support these where necessary in accessing grants, advice and support for new or sustained initiative.
 - Various cultural events programmes at the venues above (from opera to blue's music to ballet to cinema)

- Encouragement to family visits to holiday projects, workshops and shows.
- Gwent Association for the Blind event. 'How to make the most of your remaining sight, what benefits are you entitled to, the most common eye problems for the over 60's' – Ebbw Vale Coleg Gwent.
- 'Have Your Say in Blaenau Gwent; Have Your Say on Council Spending' (16.09.08 – 10.10.08) Blaenau Gwent Council teams up with the Post Office to listen to the public through the medium of touch screens and enable the public to express their views about life in the County Borough. Additionally, 13 Council or Community Venues such as leisure centres, libraries. The survey will allow the Council to make the best decisions about setting priorities for the next 10 – 15 years – how services can be improved as part of the new Community Strategy.

2 Changing Society – The Economic Status of Older People

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Leisure Division, Community Service initiatives that include Older People 50+ volunteering at the Metropole Theatre – front of house activities; supporting the retention of older people in employment – allowing people to work beyond retirement age in its venues; supporting art exhibitions by older people 50+.
- Retention of Adult Learner Co-ordinator position (currently funded via SfOP development monies but bid for funding via alternative funding stream submitted to assist 'mainstreaming' processes).
- In promoting the wider benefits of learning for all the Adult Learner Co-ordinators report includes the following activities;
 - Adult Learners Week. A £489 grant from NIACE was used for IT taster sessions in Sheltered Accommodation venues in Abertillery, Blaina, Cwm and Brynmawr. The sessions were attended by 40 people and resulted in 16 of the participants enrolling on longer IT courses.

- Ebbw Fach Creative Club supported in finding funding to hold a four day exhibition to coincide with Gwanwyn (celebrating creativity in later life) Building on the success of the Gwanwyn event the creative club are already planning a future exhibition.
- Winchestown ICT Club – a group of former learners supported to become an independent constituted group and complete a funding application to awards for All Wales.
- New Horizons Project – a group of older learners successful in securing a £4,000 grant from Comic Relief to hold educational sessions every other week plus trips to heritage locations, using fully accessible transport.
- Launch of Prime Cymru Volunteer Mentor Scheme at the Metropole Theatre, Abertillery and the subsequent recruitment of volunteer mentors to advise and assist older people access work / education / training / volunteering activities / skills programmes etc.

3 Health Wellbeing and Independence

- Blaenau Gwent Alzheimers Society – Blaenau Gwent Memory Walk, Tredegar – to support people living with dementia and those who care for them.
- In consultation with older people and locality partners development of a 'Falls Strategy' (led by LHB/NHPS). Conference and consultation events to gather the views and experiences of individuals who care for older people. Strategy developed represents community wide / multi agency response for the prevention and treatment of falls.
- Feeling Good Project – Tredegar and Ebbw Vale areas. Age Concern initiatives to both older people and carers – to improve and maintain their health (Activities include Extend, Tai Chi, Reminiscence, First Aid, Aids to Daily Living, Specialist Nurse advice, Specialist advice on cardiac, skeletal and prevention of falls, health, fire, police and pension service issues.
- Extra care Sheltered Housing Group in place and project plan formulated to implement new Extra Care sheltered Housing Developments.

- Communities First Partnership have developed a number of initiatives to improve access and availability of healthier foods.
- Blaenau Gwent CBC Leisure Services (Community Services) weekly events as advised above (Salsa/Tea Dances/Yoga/Belly dancing).

4 **Making It Happen**

- Revised Needs Assessment, Blaenau Gwent co-ordinated by Social Services. Information from Social Services, Leisure, Health Services etc into a comprehensive document including recommendations for service development.
- Equality Impact Assessment Training (Including Age Equality Stand) provided to all local authority managers and senior officers.
- Community Services Directorate Workshop (Social Services, Leisure/Lifelong Learning) Workshop to consider challenges and benefits of socially excluded groups having access to community facilities. Improving access to facilities and ensuring experiences are enjoyable when community facilities are accessed.
- Maximising Income Group co-ordinating Work involving Disability Benefits Centre, KWTW campaign, Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit increased take up initiative.
- Finalised Strategy for promoting Mental Health and Well Being in Blaenau Gwent, NPHS.
- Completion of 'Falls Strategy' co-ordinated by Local Health Board.
- Blaenau Gwent's Health, Social Care and Well Being Strategy (2008 – 2011) – Blaenau Gwent Healthier Future Partnership.
- Leisure and Cultural Services (Community Services) – development of a Sport and Active Living Strategy which includes specific services for older people. Funding secured to develop a Lets walk Scheme to provide 'doorstep guided walks' led by qualified walk leaders for older people.
- Making Homes Warmer and Healthier to Live in. Helping Older People Stay warm and well this Winter. One day

Energy Efficiency awareness raising event for professionals arranged via Health Promotion accessing NEA Cymru support held at VITCC Tredegar.

- Revision of Blaenau Gwent's Strategy for older people 50+ (based upon Welsh Assembly Government Living Longer / Living Better Document) awaiting final input of Strategy Development Group members and development of 2009/10 Action Plan.

Clive Phillips

Strategy Co-ordinator – Older People Services

Community Services

Bridge Centre

Foundry Bridge

Abertillery

Blaenau Gwent

NP13 1BQ