

National Library of Scotland

Disability Equality Duty: Annual Report for the period ending November 2007

Introduction

The National Library of Scotland (NLS) published its Disability Equality Duty in November 2006. The document can be found on the NLS website (www.nls.uk). NLS understood that it would be permissible to report on developments in this area as part of the annual review of progress carried out against our corporate plan, where the aims and objectives of the Duty are mainstreamed. We have however been advised (by letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, 13 December 2007) that a separate annual report on progress against the Duty is required, and this document has been prepared to meet that requirement.

1. Progress against action plan

The appendix provides specific updates on our Disability Equality Duty Action Plan. In a number of areas, delays have been encountered and we have not met the planned completion dates. This has been a result of construction issues and a failure to allow sufficient time for the resolution of training issues and the development of robust procedures. In the majority of cases completion is expected early in 2008 now that these issues have been resolved. We can however report that no customer has been refused access to the Library's collections and services as appropriate adjustments are always made. The changes to the building and the evacuation procedures will however ensure full equality of access once completed.

There have been a number of positive developments in the reporting period:

- The creation of an entirely new 'front of house' team to take charge of reception duties, event support, exhibition visitor support, reading room security, reader registration and switchboards. This team has a focus on the accessibility and user-friendliness of all our services and was selected and trained with that in mind. Initial customer feedback for these new arrangements has been encouraging.
- The introduction of a customer charter and service standards which embed equality of access and opportunity. The charter is measured by an extensive programme of mystery visits (fourteen a year) backed up by an annual customer satisfaction survey and customer feedback forms. The mystery visits include users with disabilities. In the first year an average score of 94% on the mystery visits indicates that the Library is meeting the requirement of the customer charter to 'ensure our services are available to everyone'.
- The first stage of the development of visitor centre services was launched in June 2007 with the final stage (including shop, café and

online access) due for completion in April 2008. Stage one provided new permanent exhibition areas with a high level of technology designed to be fully accessible and the removal of security barriers from the front hall area, promoting greater accessibility within an enlarged public space.

2. Information-gathering

The number of customers declaring a disability on registration has remained consistent at around 3% during this period. Once all the improvements to access to the building are complete in mid-2008 it is the intention to promote the accessibility of service more proactively and set targets for an increase in users with disabilities as we suspect that many are currently discouraged by a perception of the building's inaccessibility.

The most recent annual customer satisfaction survey has 90% of those surveyed (including users with a disability) saying that they were very or quite satisfied with the service.

As noted above, we also use an intensive (and ongoing) mystery visit programme to provide qualitative measurement of our services (including their accessibility). A detailed report form produces both comments from the visitor and a percentage score against the checklist. We are currently averaging over 90% and a number of specific issues have been identified and dealt with.

We also measure public awareness of NLS and its services on an annual basis, using an omnibus survey approach that includes a cross-section of the Scottish public. The 2007 survey revealed awareness of NLS at 50% of those surveyed, up from 31% in 2006, showing a significant success rate for our communication activities. This survey is mentioned here as the level of awareness among potential customers is central to encouraging a larger and more diverse customer base.

Our monitoring data is looked at on a quarterly basis by the NLS Equalities Group, chaired by the Director of Customer Services. This group also undertakes the annual review of our equalities policies, which now include not only the Disability Equality Duty but also the Gender and Race Equality Policies.

3. Future development

Essentially, our information gathering reinforces the importance of carrying through with our action plan, and we need to complete this work before moving to the next level of service development. We would anticipate identifying further developments by mid-2008 that can be incorporated into an updated action plan and we will be reporting on this next year.

We are aware that the information gathered thus far is relatively high-level and lacks detail in terms of the specific requirements of the Duty. While we can be sure that we have a solid base on which to build, the next phase of

development will engage at a more specific level with our customers. This will be carried out through the creation of user groups which will look at all areas of equality in service provision as we develop our new customer environment in George IV Bridge, through the new Visitor Centre and associated services. In particular we will use existing connections with customers who have a disability to further address the specific problems of our building, which was not built with accessibility in mind.

The Library has also resolved to create efficiency gains that will allow us to put more resource into our remote services through website and digital service development. Again, we will continue to engage with specific users and advisory bodies such as RNIB to ensure the accessibility of these services. We are also working with our IT system providers to encourage and where possible require them to provide us with accessible solutions.

The Disability Equality Duty and action plan will be reviewed and updated in the first quarter of 2008.

NLS is committed to providing a national service to the people of Scotland and beyond and to doing this without any discrimination, as evidenced by our work on service delivery, physical and electronic developments. We will continue to mainstream this commitment within our planning process and develop our relationship with existing and potential customers to inform future development.

Gordon Hunt
Director of Customer Services

Appendix

**NLS Disability Equality Duty Action Plan:
Review of Progress November 2006 – November 2007**

What will we do?	Who?	When?	Progress made
Review all policies and practices, in order to assess their impact on disabled people. (This will form part of the Library's routine work planning for the 2007/08 year).	All directors and service managers	March 2007	Incorporated into annual divisional planning and into development and maintenance of Customer Charter and Service Standards.
Introduce new lift from street level to public areas on the ground floor of George IV Bridge (level 11).	Director of Customer Services	May 2007	Difficulties in sourcing equipment. Now planned for completion by March 2008. Existing lift remains in operation.
Review signage in George IV Bridge, and across the Library.	Director of Customer Services	May 2007	Replacement programme under way. Entrance signage incorporated into Visitor Centre Project, due for completion April 2008.
Equip public area in George IV Bridge as fully-accessible visitor centre, including PCs with assistive technology and staff supportive to assisting disabled visitors.	Director of Customer Services	End 2007	Project timescale extended to April 2008.
Introduce new evacuation procedures, permitting members of the public with mobility impairments to access the General and Special Reading Rooms at George IV Bridge.	Director of Customer Services	May 2007	Delayed by construction elements of project and the need for a robust staff training programme. Completion by February 2008.

Introduce new evacuation procedures, permitting staff to use all levels of Causewayside Building.	Director of Customer Services	To be confirmed	To be addressed on completion of GB evacuation plans.
Conversion of legacy web features, catalogues and other online services into more accessible formats.	Director of Strategy and Communications	Ongoing	Legacy conversion still in progress. Web features are, in the main, accessible. Working with RNIB and plan to submit to full RNIB assessment by March 2008.
Review our staff development needs (including awareness training) to improve understanding of how to identify and respond to disabled people's needs.	Director of Corporate Services	To be confirmed	Awareness training now incorporated into programmes for customer-facing staff under Customer Charter. Longer term needs being considered as part of ongoing development of staff training.
Improve monitoring of HR information	Director of Corporate Services	March 2007	Staff survey carried out. Monitoring now embedded in HR processes.