

# Can you see the disability?



## Merton Council as an Employer of Disabled People

February 2006

A scrutiny review into how we employ and treat disabled staff.



LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON SCRUTINY REVIEW

MERTON COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER OF DISABLED PEOPLE

February 2006

***Making Change Happen: Improving the work experiences of disabled people in Merton***

Task Group Members

Councillor Joe Abrams OBE

Councillor Corinna Edge

Councillor John Cole

Councillor Sheila Knight as an adviser

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## **Foreword**

**I was aghast when I came to the Civic Centre for a Council meeting and there was no wheelchair for me to use to get to the Council Chamber. I had to be wheeled there by the security staff in one of their office chairs...**

**Up to 2 years ago there were few facilities for people with disabilities including a minicom, loop systems, a talking lift and some reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of individuals. I feel that the findings of this review are very important in the life of the Authority as they will ensure positive outcomes for disabled people in Merton in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.**

**Employment promotes the well-being of individuals, families and communities. We want to bring about equality of opportunity for every member in society. At this point in time, a good number of disabled people feel left out – we want to make a real change to improve the day to day life and work experience of disabled people in Merton.**

**Consistent clear messages came from many individual staff, staff groups, local partners and national experts about what needs to be done and how we need to do it. At the heart of this is kickstarting a culture change across Merton to embrace the skills and abilities of disabled people and ensure our environment is disability friendly. This can only be done by learning from and sharing good practice with staff, partners and other authorities.**

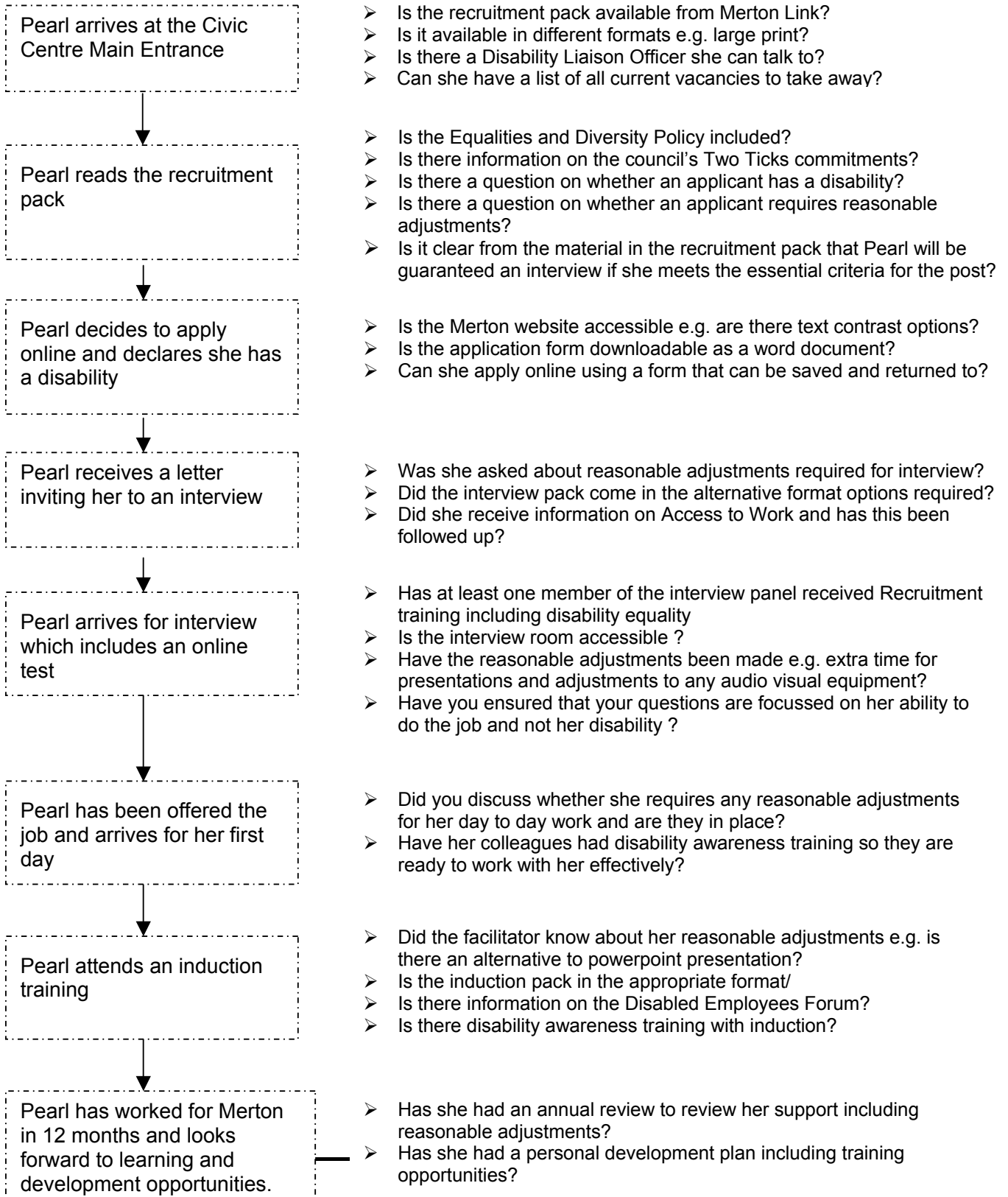
**The Review Task Group is impressed by the meeting with the Leader of the Authority, Councillor Andrew Judge, the Chief Executive, Ged Curran and the Cabinet Member for Diversity, Community Engagement and Partnerships, Councillor Stephen Alambritis. I would like to thank Diane Bailey and Lynette Ametewee for the work they have done in this review. I thank also Councillor Corinna Edge for acting for me while I was in hospital. My thanks also go to my colleagues, Councillor Sheila Knight for being an Adviser to the Panel and Councillor John Cole, Carolyn Ives for taking confidential minutes. However, this review would not have been possible without the contributions from Merton's staff, Disabled Employees Forum, local partners, national experts and other authorities. The Disability Rights Commission provided a useful sounding board to our recommendations.**

**I recommend every Member of the Authority, officer and the general public reads this report. We hope that all our recommendations will be agreed by Cabinet.**

**Let's make change happen and improve the life and work experiences of disabled people!**

**Councillor Joe Abrams OBE  
Review Task Group Chair**

Pearl has lived in Colliers Wood for 20 years. She is 35 and is a graduate with visual impairment. She is a senior housing officer seeking a housing management position. She saw an advertisement on The Guardian website and came to the Civic Centre to get more information.



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**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON SCRUTINY REVIEW  
MERTON COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER OF DISABLED PEOPLE**

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. Communicate and embed disability commitment**

- 1.1 Update the definition of the social model of disability by using Tower Hamlets definition:

***“The social model of disability takes the view that society disadvantages people by not being aware of the barriers which exist or how to remove them to improve access to the physical environment, information, employment and services generally due to the imposition of negative and patronising attitudes” (Tower Hamlets, para 4.21)***

- 1.2 Market the Access To Work (ATW) scheme throughout the Council and set up an equipment bank/Access To Work fund to compensate for time lag in receipt of ATW funds (paras 4.1- 4.4, 4.48)
- 1.3 Ensure managers and staff have clear understanding of reasonable adjustment” within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act (para 4.1-4.4)
- 1.4 Provide ongoing disability equality training as a priority for all levels of the organisation, and include clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of both line managers and human resources staff (paras 4.1-4.4, 4.33,7)
- 1.5 Provide disability equality training for Members (para 4.1-4.4 )
- 1.6 Ensure informal and formal learning and development to raise awareness of disability equality through for example Question Time panel discussions, local disability groups, drama, videos, e-learning, joint working with other authorities and partners (paras 4.1-4.4, 4.23,4.33 5.1, 7)
- 1.7 Monitor attendance at and practice following disability equality training and take action as necessary and regularly evaluate the content and quality of training (paras 4.1-4.4, 4.33)
- 1.8 Ensure compliance with disability equality duty in corporate procurement strategy to ensure contractors are in line with Council policy (para 4.1-4.4)

- 1.9 Scrutiny Review Action Plan to be part of the proposed Disability Equality Scheme (to be published by December 2006) (para 4.17)
- 1.10 All disability related actions in the Corporate Equality Programme (see Appendix 1) which are not fully met or making a difference should be completed or reassessed. (para. 4.17)
- 1.11. As Community Leaders, facilitate closer working between the Council and Local Strategic Partners to improve recruitment and support of disabled staff within council workforce (paras 5.1, 7.4)
- 1.12. The Council should consider whether a Charter for Employment of People with Disabilities would add value in reducing employment discrimination (part 6)
- 1.13 The Council should put into use the good practice available from the national organisations, contact them for advice on individual occasions, and consider them as training providers (part 6)
- 1.14. Produce information and advice on disability including where to go for help, for managers and staff, to be included in the managers and staff handbook and available on-line (paras 4.1-4.4,4.43,6.10)
- 1.15. The Council's web and intranet to be reviewed with disabled people with a range of impairments, especially on-line recruitment, employment and training materials, to become more disability friendly – at least by offering text, colour and sound options and aim to get the new British Standards Institution standard on web accessibility (paras 5.1, 8.6)
- 1.16. Implement an ongoing internal and external communications strategy to promote progress and achievements.  
(para 7)

## **2. Improve satisfaction of existing disabled staff**

- 2.1 To facilitate staff feedback and actions taken to address the gaps, the brief for staff attitude surveys should include an analysis by disabled respondents (and ethnicity, age, gender, religion and sexuality) and the Council should find out why staff feel their access to learning, development and promotion is less equal for them and take action in response (para 3.2)
- 2.2 Carry out a new staff audit which should be anonymous and ask a simple question about whether or not an individual regards themselves as having disabilities – include information on what is a disability (paras 4.1-4.4, 4.5)
- 2.3 Develop a system to record centrally staff who become disabled during employment with the Council (para 4.1- 4.4)

- 2.4 Corporate human resources policies be reviewed to make sure that they are disability friendly as has happened with the new absence management policy and, before implementation, be checked out with staff, the Disabled Employees Forum and possibly with disability experts, local or national (paras 4.26, 4.28)
- 2.5 Ensure that all staff who have declared disabilities receive a formal review at least once a year (para 4.1-4.4)
- 2.6 Use workforce data to develop retention strategies (paras 4.1-4.4,4.5)
- 2.7 The Council should seek agreement from Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB), Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (RNID), British Dyslexia Association (BDA) to be listed as helplines for managers in proposed new guidance on disability (para 6)
- 2.8 Produce a checklist for layout of meeting/interview rooms to make certain there is a disability friendly environment (paras 6.10,7.4)
- 2.9 Maintain pressure on the contractor to complete the new rear entrance to the Civic Centre by the end of March 2006, or as soon as possible thereafter (para 8.4)
- 2.10 Agree a process with the Disabled Employees Forum and the voluntary sector to ensure that they are consulted on all access programmes and asked to audit completed works and report back on whether they achieved the improvement expected for disabled people (paras 5.1,8.3)
- 2.11 Install powered openings onto each Civic Centre floor and improve the disability accessibility of Merton Link, including lowering the counter, as part of the 2006/7 capital programme (para 8.6)
- 2.12 Review the accessibility of disabled staff to disabled car parking bays at Council offices and ensure that the bays comply with Department of Transport guidance (para 8.6)
- 3. Increase number of disabled staff in workforce**
  - 3.1 Information in job advertisements, job specifications, job applications, and appointment should be made more disability friendly drawing upon national expert advice (para 4.28)
  - 3.2 Review recruitment sources to ensure that they reach all individuals, including those with disabilities (para 4.28)
  - 3.3 Use workforce data to develop recruitment strategies (para 4)



- 3.4 The Council as the largest local employer should work with local strategic partners to achieve the proposed Community Plan target for year on year increases in the number/proportion of people with mental health problems who are supported in paid employment, mainstream education and integrated voluntary work. (paras 5.1, 6, )
- 3.5 Design and implement a supported work experience scheme tailored to meet the needs of disabled people seeking entry or re-entry to work with clear objectives and expectations from the start for both the employer and the participant. (para 4.39)
- 3.6 Introduce other supported employment tailored to meet the needs of disabled people, including people with mental health problems (paras 4.39, 7)
- 3.7 Review the relationship between the welfare to work role and the employment advice service in the learning disabilities team in community and housing and the corporate human resources employment function and consider whether they could be brought together to enhance the corporate resource for employment services for disabled people (paras 4.40, 4.41)

#### **4. Make sure change happens**

- 4.1 The Leader and the Chief Executive to lead the step change required, delivering positive messages of support underpinned by disability proof processes, and appoint a chief officer (Director of Corporate Services) to implement the recommendations (paras 7,9)
- 4.2 Appoint a Member Disability Advocate to drive disability equality across the council (para 9)
- 4.3 Appoint departmental disability advocates to support the Corporate Disability Adviser (para 9)
- 4.4 A formal link be made from the Welfare To Work Steering Group and Partnership Board into the Corporate Equalities Group chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive as a means of improving employment opportunities for disabled people (paras 4.43,9)
- 4.5 Mainstream disability equality into the Human Resources work programme and ensure two new posts of Human Resources Equality Adviser and Corporate Disability Adviser are funded to initiate the process and consider extending the fixed term contract for the Disability Adviser from one year to three to be available for the duration of the first statutory Disability Equality Scheme (paras 4.17,9)
- 4.6 Hold an annual meeting with disabled staff to feed into the progress report on implementation of Task Group report to the Way We Work Panel (para 9)

- 4.7 Way We Work Scrutiny Panel to monitor the delivery of the Workstep Improvement Action Plan on an annual basis (paras 4.38,9)
- 4.8 Way We Work Scrutiny Panel to monitor the delivery of the Two Ticks Disability Symbol Action Plan on an annual basis (para 4.24,9)
- 4.9 Way We Work Scrutiny Panel to monitor the Action Plan from this review every 6 months, evaluating both progress and impact (para 9)
- 4.10 Monitor staff declaring disabilities against London trends (para 4.13, 9)
- 4.11 As part of impact assessments of policies/procedures and functions/services, consult with the Disabled Employees Forum and local disability organisations (para 5.1, 9)
- 4.12 Maintain the current annual allocation of capital resources for access works be maintained as a priority within the Council's capital programme focussing on works advantageous to staff as well as the public - since the total value of works required was some £8m in total (para 8.7,9)
- 4.13 Agree the following performance indicators to measure the impact of these recommendations upon the employment opportunities with Merton Council for disabled people (para 9):
- Satisfaction of disabled staff in an annual survey that they are being treated fairly
  - Number of staff who have become disabled year on year and what percentage have remained in Merton employment
  - Number of staff who declare disabilities (suggest double present target to 5.25% by 2008/9)
  - Number of disabled applicants who secure a job with the Council
  - Contribution to the Merton Community Plan target to increase year on year the number of people with mental health problems taking up education, training and employment opportunities
  - Best Value Performance Indicator 2 (BVPI) BVPI 2 relating to duty to promote race equality but translated into impact on disabled employees
- 4.14 The scrutiny task group to meet with Corporate Management Team to discuss the review and its conclusions (para 9)

## **PART ONE – BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION**

### **1. Why We Did It**

- 1.1 This review was agreed as part of the programme of scrutiny reviews for the first half of 2005/6 decided by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in March 2005. It was chosen because there was the draft Disability Bill going through Parliament due to become effective during 2005, and just 114 employees have declared themselves to have a disability, just 12 new staff recruited in the last year have a disability, and the recent staff survey said disabled staff are significantly less likely than employees generally to feel they have equal access to learning and development.
- 1.2 The review aimed to recommend ways to increase the attractiveness of and value accorded to the Council as an employer for people with disabilities, so that people with disabilities choose to apply to the Council for employment and feel supported and valued whilst here.

### **2. Task Group and Member Support**

- 2.1 The “ Way We Work Scrutiny Panel”<sup>1</sup> was responsible for the review. They appointed a task group of Councillors Joe Abrams (Chair until October 2005), Corinna Edge (Vice Chair and Chair from November 2005) , John Cole. The Group asked Councillor Sheila Knight who has a special interest in promoting disabilities to work with them. The Review Group has been supported by Scrutiny Officers: Diane Bailey, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Chief Executive’s Department (to September 2005 and Consultant from Oct 2005) and Lynette Ametewee, Interim Human Resources Diversity Manager, Corporate Services.

### **3. Scope and Timescale.**

- 3.1 The task group held 10 formal meetings and numerous research meetings between July 2005 and February 2006. This review is an agreed review for the first half of 2005/6 Municipal Year. The Review aimed to examine council information and key groups including consult with staff, councillors, partners and best practice authorities as follows:
- To examine the current number of staff with a disability, overall and by department, identify the trend, and compare with others and examine issues arising;
  - To look at the current position and the trend with regard to retention of staff with a disability compared to staff as a whole and examine issues arising;

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<sup>1</sup> One of Six London Borough of Merton Scrutiny Panels consisted of representatives of all parties

- To have a greater understanding from people with a disability, including current staff, of the barriers to employment with the Council, and their solutions;
- To learn of the Council's current strategies and their impact in attracting into and supporting people with a disability in our workforce.
- To evaluate the feasibility of extending current Disability Employment Schemes e.g. Workstep;
- To identify best practice elsewhere which could be useful in Merton;
- The task group decided not to include schools in this review – it was an important area for examination but worthy of a review of its own.

3.2 At the start of the review we agreed the definition of Disability from the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)1995. The Act says you are disabled if you have:

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

3.3 (At the end of 2005 the legal definition of disability widened to protect people with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer from the point of diagnosis and it is no longer necessary for mental illness to be “clinically well recognised”. However, there is no definitive list of conditions or disabilities – the definition is based upon the impact of a condition, but it is likely to include those with age related conditions such as worsening hearing impairment, arthritis, health conditions such as heart conditions and diabetes.)

#### **4. Methodology for this review**

- Focus groups with Disabled Employees Forum, managers, Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations, and local disability organisations
- Meetings with staff (some private), including human resources, occupational health, employment related services in community and housing, each Director, Head of Human Resources, HR Services Manager, Interim Learning and Development Manager,
- Question Time Panel event with staff, councillors and local partners
- Articles in Council staff magazine (Xchange), Merton Voluntary Services Council magazine,
- Posters and visual displays
- Meeting with Jobcentre Plus
- Visits to best practice authorities; London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea

- Visits to national and local organisations: Disability Rights Commission, Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB), Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (RNID), National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) and Merton Race Equality Partnership
- Visit to Weir Road (Employment Assessment Centre for People with Learning Disabilities) and Workstep team
- Literature search

## **PART TWO- NATIONAL CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Literature and Statistics**

A key theme of this review has been the evidence of discrimination against disabled people in employment and within different disability groups:

Within the UK, there are approximately 6.2 million disabled people of working age – 18% of the working population

1 in 6 people of working age have a disability or long term health condition

Deaf and hard of hearing are two and a half times as likely to be unemployed than a hearing person, which rises to four times for people between 20-45 years old

25% people with visual impairments are not working,

90% unemployment rate among people with a learning disability

1 in 4 people have a mental health problem

Research has shown that people with mental health problems are at double the risk of losing their jobs as compared with other disabled people or people with long term health conditions

Sources: DRC, RNIB, RNID, NIMHE

**“People with a disability or health condition have been denied the opportunity to enter or remain in work because of fears and stereotypes about their abilities and because of policies and practices which hold them back” (Disability Rights Commission – Employment Guide 2006)**

### **2.2 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005**

Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 it is unlawful for an employer of any size to discriminate against anyone defined as disabled for the purposes of the Act for a reason that relates to disability. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (see appendix D) placed a duty on public authorities including councils to protect disabled people in employment; access to goods, facilities and services; the management, buying or renting of land or property and education. Some of it became law for employers in December 1996. Other provisions were introduced over time. For service providers (e.g. businesses and organisations including public authorities:

- since **December 1996** it has been **unlawful to treat disabled people less favourably** than other people for a reason related to their disability
- since **October 1999** they have had to make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled people, such as providing extra help or making changes to the way they provide their services;
- since **October 2004** they have had to make reasonable adjustments to the **physical features** of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access.

2.3 Part 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 focussed on eliminating discrimination in employment. The Disability Rights Commission, national body responsible for disability published two guidances on the implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The Code of Practice<sup>2</sup> on Employment and Occupation ( DRC, 2004) explains how disabled people are protected from discrimination if they are in employment, if they are seeking employment, or if they are involved in a range of occupations. The other Code relates to discrimination by trade organisations and qualifications bodies.

#### Reasonable adjustments

2.4 Public authorities need to take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons (DDA 2005 S49A(1)(d)). The concept of reasonable adjustments is a cornerstone of the DDA. Making an adjustment means being flexible so that it is possible for people with disabilities and health conditions to work effectively. In employment, reasonable adjustments are changes made to working policies and practices and to the physical features of premises, where these are substantially disadvantaging disabled people. They could be general, like disability awareness, or very individual, like flexible working. Employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments as soon as they know that someone defined as disabled in the terms of the DDA may be in need of a reasonable adjustment – not asking whether something is needed is no defence for not knowing.

#### **Archibald v Fife Council**

**This landmark ruling by the House of Lords strengthened the employment rights of disabled people by ruling there is a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people if they become unable to carry out the job they are in due to their**

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<sup>2</sup> This Code replaces the 'Code of Practice for the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment against disabled persons or persons who have had a disability', issued by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment in 1996.

**disability, and that this duty includes considering whether it is reasonable to transfer the person to another vacant post even if that post is at a higher grade (See Appendix 3 for full details)**

#### Disability Equality Scheme

- 2.5 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has been amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (which came into force on 5 December 2005) to place a duty on all public sector authorities to promote disability equality. The main tool for this is through the development of a Disability Equality Scheme, similar to the Race Equality Scheme. The new Disability Equality Scheme (to be published by December 2006 and reviewed every three years) follows the framework set for the Race Equality Scheme – it must set out the Council's:
- Way of involving disabled people in its development
  - Methods for assessing the impact of policies and practices on equality for disabled people
  - Actions which it will be taking to meet the duty
  - Arrangements for gathering information about performance in relation to disability equality and how the information gathered will be put to use

The DRC Code of Practice on the Disability Equality Duty (England and Wales) was published in December 2005.

#### **2.6 The Equalities Bill 2005**

The Equality Bill was published on 19 May 2005. It has three main purposes:

- To establish the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and define its purpose and functions.
- To make unlawful (subject to exemptions set out in the Bill) discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal and management of premises, education, and the exercise of public functions.
- To create a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between women and men, and to prohibit sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions.

A key provision of this bill is the bringing together of the existing equalities Commissions, namely the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission into a new Commission for Equalities and Human Rights (CEHR) which will operate across Great Britain. In addition to dealing with race, disability and gender discrimination, the CEHR will cover discrimination on the grounds of age, religion or belief and sexual orientation and promote human rights.



## **2.7 Government Strategies**

- Recent initiatives such as the Local Government White Paper “Strong Local Leadership, Quality Public Services” (2001) have highlighted the need to engage with local communities and have a workforce representative of the local community.
- 2.8 The Key Lines of Enquiry for the regulation of council performance by the Audit Commission through Comprehensive Performance Assessment performance management framework recognises the importance of ensuring that the workforce represents the local communities that it serves. How well authorities meet the disability equality duty will be part of the inspection/audit process\* <sup>3</sup>
- 2.9 Government’s commitment to improving the health and well being of the working age population is set out in the Health, Work and Well-Being-Caring for our Future (2004), a strategy for health and well-being of working age people, published by the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department of Health and the Health and Safety Executive. The strategy highlights the need for people with health conditions and disabilities to optimise work opportunities and the need to remove barriers to employment through promotion of a National Charter for Health, Work and Well-being.
- 2.10 Some policies have highlighted the high levels of unemployment and barriers to continued employment for people with specific disabilities. More specifically, key Department of Health policies including the National Service Framework for Mental Health (1999) address the mental health needs of working age adults up to 65. The Mental Health and Social Exclusion Report (2004) sets out an action plan to bring together the work of government departments and other organisations in a concerted effort to challenge attitudes, enable people to fulfil their aspirations, and significantly improve opportunities and outcomes for this excluded group. The plan seeks actions to promote employment through giving people with mental health problems a real chance of sustained paid work reflecting their skills and experience; The plan will contribute to the delivery Public Service Agreement targets, in particular:
- the Department for Work and Pensions target to increase the employment rate of people with disabilities, work to improve their rights and remove barriers to their participation in society;
  - the Department of Health targets to reduce the mortality rate from suicide, and reduce inequalities in health outcomes; and

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<sup>3</sup> Statutory Code of Practice on the Disability Equality Duty for the public sector (Disability Rights Commission, December 2005)

- the joint Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury target to halve child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. of a number of departmental (Mental Health and Social Exclusion Report, 2004)
- 2.11 The White Paper 'Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier' (2004) gave Investors in People UK (IIPUK) the remit to develop a new 'healthy business assessment' in conjunction with the Department of Health. This is intended to build on the success of IIPUK by developing the business case for investing in health and well-being.
- 2.12 This White Paper sets out the key principles for supporting the public to make healthier and more informed choices in regards to their health. The Government will provide information and practical support to get people motivated and improve emotional wellbeing and access to services so that healthy choices are easier to make.
- 2.13 The White Paper 'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century' was published on 20 March 2001. It is the first white paper on learning disability for thirty years and sets out an ambitious and challenging programme of action for improving services. The proposals are based on four key principles: civil rights, independence, choice and inclusion. Valuing People takes a life-long approach, beginning with an integrated approach to services for disabled children and their families and then providing new opportunities for a full and purposeful adult life. It has cross-Government backing and its proposals are intended to result in improvements in education, social services, health, employment, housing and support for people with learning disabilities and their families and carers. In relation to employment, a guide for public sector employers is now available, called "Valued in Public – Helping People with a Learning Disability to work in public bodies," ( November 2005 DWP).

## **PART THREE - LOCAL CONTEXT**

### **3.1 Strategic objectives and targets**

- One of the Council's strategic objectives (Equalities Merton) is for " full and equal access to learning, employment, services, cultural life and the celebration of diversity"
- Diversity runs as a theme throughout each of the three objectives of the Council's People Strategy with a commitment to provide a working environment that does not discriminate and positively addresses an aim to have a workforce that reflects the community
- The Council aims to apply for Corporate Investors in People in 2006
- A key equality target in the current Business Plan is to implement the Corporate Equality Programme 2004 -2006 and achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by March 2006.
- The corporate equality programme addresses actions from the Disability Discrimination Act scrutiny review which considered employment issues
- The Council has 114 staff with disabilities (2.11%)
- In the year up to December 2004, 12 of the 589 people recruited had disabilities (2.5%)
- 10% Merton's economically active population say they have a disability (2000 census) – the percentage of Merton employees with a disability compared with the percentage of the economically active disable population in Merton is 20.6%, just below the London average
- Merton is a Two Ticks Disability Symbol employer
- The Council has a Workstep Programme with 13 participants
- Other Council employment support initiatives – Weir Road (Employment Assessment Centre for people with learning disabilities) and a work experience scheme
- There is a Disabled Employees Staff Forum

### **3.2 Staff attitude survey outcomes**

An independent staff attitude survey was carried out by the Work Foundation in Autumn 2004, with a very high response rate. It said:

- Disabled staff are significantly less likely than staff generally to feel their access is equal to learning and development.
- More likely to feel that access to promotion is less equal for them
- Significantly less likely to find their appraisal useful

3.3 However, the brief had not included a full analysis by disabled respondents which has limited the learning from it. The Work Foundation has been asked to do an analysis by disabled respondents. This should

highlight why disabled staff felt as they did – did they go to agreed training and found it inaccessible due to the way training was provided or were they not being offered training opportunities?

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1 To facilitate staff feedback and actions taken to address the gaps, the brief for staff attitude surveys should include an analysis by disabled respondents (and respondents by ethnicity, age, gender, religion and sexuality) and the Council should find out why staff feel their access to learning and development and to promotion is less equal for them and take action in response**

## **PART FOUR - KEY MESSAGES AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 What we learned from the Disabled Employees Forum**

The Disabled Employees Forum was set up by staff “to provide support and advice for all disabled staff, ensure that disabled staff are represented in matters affecting their working lives and provide a collective voice to promote and represent disabled workers interests.” (Forum constitution)

Key messages were:

- Disabled staff generally received poor treatment from the Council
- Need to promote the examples of positive experiences, which do exist and are due to character of individual managers
- Need to improve data on disability within the Council – inaccurate and unreliable
- Managers do not know what constitutes ‘disability’ and are not aware of employment policies and disability
- Poor understanding of staff who have become disabled
- Need to spread understanding of full interpretation of reasonable adjustments, e.g. flexible working not just physical requirements
- The Council was not keeping to its Two Ticks Disability Symbol commitments nor meeting its legal obligations
- Need a focal point for information for staff on disability
- Need dedicated and supported disability policy officer or team – continuity in Human Resources is very poor

### **4.2 What we learned from staff**

Key messages were:

- Merton does not as a whole welcome staff with disabilities
- All staff and Councillors have a responsibility to remove barriers which disable staff
- What is the agreed Merton definition of disability?
- No systematic understanding throughout the Council of legal obligations as a public body, as an employer and as a manager, including of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Two Ticks Disability Symbol obligations
- Need for disability awareness raising through the Council using a mixture of methods
- Provide clear accessible information about different disabilities
- Lack of knowledge of Human Resources policies, role of Human Resources, support for managers and where to go for help on disability employment issues, including when staff become disabled

- Publicise role of occupational health
- Provide a safe environment which encourages 1:1 dialogues between managers and staff
- Changes in the Workstep Programme should be sensitive to participants ambitions
- Staff who become disabled and have to be redeployed should have the support of a specific individual throughout the process of adjustment
- Need to understand meaning of 'reasonable adjustments' both for recruitment and retention purposes, benefits from the Access To Work scheme

#### **4.3 What we learned from councillors**

Key messages were:

- Council must be employing more than 3% disabled people (which had been the duty prior to the DDA) and to understand how we are progressing in different areas of the Council there must be effective monitoring
- Disability awareness training is a priority and it needs to be managed strategically
- Need disability champions
- Social model of disabilities not understood or integrated into Council behaviour
- Need more support for disabled staff
- Home working could be valuable for some disabled people

#### **4.4 What we learned from chief officers**

Key issues which emerged were:

- Corporate data on the Payroll and Human Resources Information System (PAHRIS) was accurate but departments need to update it more regularly
- There were poor returns from schools
- There was no breakdown of the 'other category' of disability categories yet more than 90% staff categorised their disability under this heading
- The Access To Work scheme is used very little and there was a general ignorance of it.
- Information about staff who become disabled seems not to be available organisationally - collectively directors reported only about 12 cases over the year prior to August/September 2005
- Workforce data was not being used in planning strategies
- Disability had not been raised as an issue in any inspections over the last twelve months other than the Inspection of the Workstep Programme
- The capital programme of access works to buildings appeared to be progressing, except for some concern about the feasibility of the new rear entrance to the Civic Centre being completed by the end of March 2006.

- Disabled staff are not receiving their annual reviews – one of the 5 standards Merton has committed to as a Two Ticks employer.
- Managers appear to have some disability training but general disability awareness training is ad hoc and insufficient and there has been very little of it in the last year. Departments have organised their own in the past.
- The Council appears not to seek compliance with the DDA in corporate procurement requirements – only race
- Only one Employment Tribunal concerned with disability was reported – and as a consequence the new absence management policy is going to reflect the implications of dyslexia

A number of positive suggestions for improvements were made which have been incorporated in the recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Communicate and embed disability commitment**

- 1 Market the Access To Work (ATW) scheme throughout the Council and set up an equipment bank/Access To Work fund to compensate for time lag in receipt of ATW funds**
- 2 Ensure managers and staff have clear understanding of “reasonable adjustment” within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act**
- 3 Provide ongoing disability equality training as a priority for all levels of the organisation and include clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of both line managers and human resources staff**
- 4 Provide disability equality training for Members**
- 5 Regularly monitor and assess the content and quality of the training**
- 6 Ensure informal and formal learning and development to raise awareness of disability equality through for example Question Time panel discussions, local disability groups, drama, videos, e-learning, joint working with other authorities and partners.**
- 7 Monitor attendance at and practice following disability equality training and take action as necessary**
- 8 Ensure compliance with disability equality duty in corporate procurement strategy to ensure contractors are in line with Council policy**

## **Improve satisfaction of existing staff**

- 9 Carry out a new staff audit which should be anonymous and ask a simple question about whether or not an individual regards themselves as having disabilities – include information on what is a disability**
- 10 Develop a system to record centrally any staff who become disabled during employment**
- 11 Ensure managers and staff have a clear understanding of “reasonable adjustments” within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act**
- 12 Ensure that all staff who have declared disabilities receive a formal review at least once a year**
- 13 Use workforce data to develop retention strategies**

### **4.5 Assessment of Merton Situation**

#### Workforce profile

The workforce profile is a monthly and annual analysis of staff by various categories including disability. We used the Workforce Profile 2005 (January) during this review, which covered December 2003 to December 2004. This showed there were 114 (approx. 2%) staff with disabilities. 20 of those were schools staff, less than 1% of their staff. All other departments had between 2% and 6%. The schools could be missing out on talent and expertise by not employing disabled people, which could help understand and ensure Merton’s education is accessible to all and also provide role models for pupils. The situation in schools should be researched because the proportion of pupils with disabilities is likely to more closely reflect the local population profile. This low number of disabled staff in schools should be addressed.

- 4.6 According to the profile, disabled employees have a range of physical, learning and sensory disabilities, categorised as ‘diabetes’, ‘dyslexia’, ‘hearing disability’, ‘sight disability’, ‘requiring a wheelchair’ and ‘other disabilities’. The largest number of staff have “other disabilities” of which the Council has no detail. The Council needs to understand the specific range of disabilities amongst its staff in order to better support them and to focus disability awareness training generally. Staff will need to know what counts as a disability within the DDA, especially the new categories from 2006.
- 4.7 The numbers do appear to be improving and 3% (11) of the total 879 new employees between December 2003 and December 2004 declared



disabilities, although none of these were from the 541 new starters in schools.

- 4.8 Information on a range of employee planning and monitoring topics is collated from a range of sources including Human Resources Managers, recruitment, schools and departments. Monthly profile reports – departmental and corporate – are published on the intranet for use by managers to inform development of departmental action plans. Departments agree these are now generally accurate. However, neither departments nor corporate human resources appear to make use of these better to understand what is happening in relation to disability. There is now additional administrative staff in human resources to ensure central co-ordination and quality assurance of the information.
- 4.9 It is several years since the staff database was updated in relation to those with disabilities. The vast majority of new employees are recruited through the Recruitment Team and the personal details collected at the applicant stage include whether they are disabled. It is several years since the staff database was updated in relation to those with disabilities (2003/4 for non schools staff, 2004/5 for school based staff). There is a planned update of personal records for the New Year 2006.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Carry out a new staff audit which should be anonymous and ask a simple question about whether or not an individual regards themselves as having disabilities – include information on what is a disability**
  - 2. Use workforce data to develop recruitment strategies**
  - 3. Use workforce data to develop retention strategies**
- 4.10 Best Value Performance Indicator 16A (BVPI 16A) – Percentage of Staff who declare they have disabilities**

Considerable progress has been made in attracting and appointing applicants from under-represented groups such as ethnic minority communities. There has been less success in increasing the proportion of staff who declare they have disabilities.

In 2003/4 2.11% workforce declared themselves to have a disability (112 staff)

In 2004/5 2.32% did (123 staff, i.e. 21 more)

In 2005/6 2.75% is the Council's target (146 staff, i.e. 23 more)

In 2008.9 3% is the Council's target (160 staff, i.e. 14 more)

- 4.11 Assuming the Council's workforce remains at 5326 including schools over this period then the change sought is not ambitious – just 14 more staff declaring over a three year period. 10.24% Merton's economically active population have declared themselves to have a disability.
- 4.12 3% was the Council's duty to recruit from 'registered' disabled people before the DDA .  
3% would increase the percentage of local authority employees declaring they have a disability compared with the percentage of the economically active disabled population in Merton from 20.6 to approx 29%. This would have brought Merton just into the top quartile of London boroughs performance in 2003/4. It is likely that all those boroughs will continue to improve over the next 5 years.  
The best performers in 2003/4 (the last audited set of figures) were:
- |            |            |
|------------|------------|
| Lewisham   | 74%        |
| Bromley    | 51.4%      |
| Richmond   | 47%        |
| H&Fulham   | 45% approx |
| Hackney    | 39.8%      |
| Ealing     | 35.5%      |
| Wandsworth | 33.1%      |
| Haringey   | 31.1%      |
- 4.13 If the Council set its 2008/9 target at double its 2005/6 target – to 5.25% (266 staff), then the BVPI percentage would rise to approximately 50% and Merton may well be in the top quartile.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **1. Monitor staff declaring disabilities against London trends**

#### **4.14 Corporate Equality Programme 2004- 06**

A key equality target within the Business Plan is to implement a Council-wide Equality Programme. The Corporate Equality Programme 2004 – 2006 is structured in line with the Equality Standard for Local Government and has taken the issue of disability into that structure (APPENDIX 1 shows disability actions within the Corporate Equality Programme). It sets out how we will achieve our targets from 2004-2006. It has four parts – an overview, the equality and diversity policy, the race equality scheme and an action plan. The Equalities Policy (2004) reinforces our commitments to ensure our workforce is representative of the local community and that all staff are developed and supported whilst in employment.

- 4.15 The implementation of the Programme will enable the council to achieve Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by March 2006.

- 4.16 Departments have their own action plans which contribute to the achievement of Level 3 of the Standard. The employment actions required have been set back by this year's major re-structuring of the Council's departments, but almost 60% have been completed or are in progress. Human resources are the lead in most activities. Progress has been slowed down by historical problems in human resources, by the restructuring of the Council's departments, and although a priority, disability awareness training has not been allocated a significant corporate budget.
- 4.17 The key issue is whether the Human Resources Division now has the capacity to deliver the Programme and to monitor and evaluate its impact. A new post of Human Resources Diversity Manager was created in early 2005. It has been filled by an Interim Manager since July 2005 and the permanent postholder arrives in March 2006. The demands upon this post are significant and two further posts are sought from the 2006 budget process: one, a permanent equalities adviser, and a second, an interim disability adviser (one year fixed term while developing policy). With the knowledge that the Council has to produce, review and update a three year Disability Race Scheme which will run from the end 2006, and to respond to other equality issues, such as gender, age, sexuality, the disability adviser post should be considered for a three year fixed term.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Ensure Review Action Plan is part of the proposed Disability Equality Scheme (to be published by December 2006)**
- 2. Mainstream disability equality into the Human Resources work programme and ensure two new posts of Human Resources Equalities Adviser and Corporate Disability Adviser are funded to initiate the process, and extend the fixed term contract for the Disability Adviser from one to three years to be available for the duration of the first Disability Equality Scheme**
- 3. All disability related actions in the Corporate Equality Programme 2004 – 2006 (see Appendix 1) which are not fully met or making a difference should be completed and/or reassessed**

### **4.18 Social Model of Disability**

The Council has rejected the medical model of disability and accepted the social model of disability in July 2004 and it is included in the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy 2004 as follows:

***This is a model of thinking about disability that looks at the attitudes and actions of people who are not disabled. The main idea is that the way buildings, transport systems and jobs are designed puts***

***some people at a disadvantage. The answer then is to include the needs of those (disabled) people when designing transport, jobs and so on.***

4.19 It has not yet been significantly promoted across the Council and yet all staff need to know and understand it for disability equality to move forward. However, the Merton's Community Plan Framework Document 2005 - 2015 (2005) is being rewritten following consultation and it is known that each chapter/topic has, as part of that, to include diversity/equality with specific reference to disability based on the social model of disability from the Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

4.20 The task group compared the social model definition in the Equality and Diversity policy against two alternative definitions to see if they explained it better:

Definition 2 from Slim Flegg, Chair of Go Forum, sub-group of Physical and Sensory Disabled Group

***We believe that the position of disabled people in society is a human and civil rights issue and that society must be changed to allow our full inclusion. We believe that our disability arises from society's negative treatment of us; it is not an inevitable consequence of our impairments. So equality is possible and can be achieved through removing the barriers to our social inclusion. This belief is called the Social Model of Disability, which was a belief developed by disabled people in the 1970's. (British Council of Organisations of Disabled People)***

Definition 3 based on Tower Hamlets definition:

***The social model of disability takes the view that society disadvantages people by not being aware of the barriers which exist or how to remove them to improve access to the physical environment, information, employment and services generally due to the imposition of negative and patronising attitudes***

4.21 The task group concluded that the definition used by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets provided the most clear explanation of the social model.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. Update the definition of the social model of disability by using the London Borough of Tower Hamlets definition subject to the outcomes of the DRC debate on definition of disability.**

4.22 **Department for Work and Pensions Two Ticks Disability Symbol Action Plan**

The Council had been a 'two ticks' employer for several years. This promotes positive action for employing disabled people. It is a Government recognition given through Jobcentre Plus to employers who have agreed to take action to meet five commitments to progress disability equality:

1. Interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities
2. Review, at least once a year, with disabled employees what you and they can do to make sure they can develop and use their abilities
3. Make every effort when employees become disabled to make sure they stay in employment
4. Ensure all employees have appropriate level of disability awareness to make the commitments work
5. Review the 5 commitments and what has been achieved annually and plan further developments

4.23 The Council had not been fully meeting all the commitments but was already responding to this when the review started. The Two Ticks Disability Symbol Action Plan (August 2005) outlined the Council's position in relation to the five commitments with actions for improvement. Jobcentre Plus approved the Action Plan. They have been impressed with the amount of work that has been done recently to identify and respond to what is lacking, for example, disability awareness, annual reviews with disabled employees were not taking place systematically. They return to Merton in six months to check on progress and response to areas in the plan marked for improvement.

4.24 Merton will be taking forward the positive duty to promote disability equality in the delivery of this Action Plan. Jobcentre Plus identified the following key areas will make the most difference:

- Heightening awareness amongst everybody of the two ticks commitment and practice required
- Simplifying the web which was difficult for disabled applicants to follow
- Making clear Merton's commitments to two ticks
- Shortening the recruitment process
- Ensuring there is a system which will assure the Council that the recruiters are following the process

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. Way We Work Scrutiny Panel to monitor the delivery of the Two Ticks Disability Symbol Action Plan on an annual basis**

#### **4.25 Human Resources Policies**

The Two Ticks Disability Symbol commitment is dependent on support from the Council's human resources policies. Five new policies have been launched as part of Merton's Journey to Excellence. The task group had been alerted that sickness absence records did not differentiate between disability and non-disability related absence. The new one, which came into operation in November, was examined. It has been agreed with the Disabled Employees Forum. It now treats separately any disability related sickness absence and includes a guide on the definition of a disability within the Act and reasonable adjustments.

- 4.26 All other new human resources policies should similarly reflect disability equality appropriately and monitoring should take place to ensure that this happens in practice.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. Corporate human resources policies be reviewed to make sure that they are disability friendly as has happened with the new absence management policy, and before implementation checked out with staff, the Disabled Employees Forum and possibly with disability experts, local or national.**

#### **4.27 Recruitment**

The task group has spoken with the Head of Human Resources and the HR Services Manager, directors, and looked at key information provided during recruitment (a sample of job descriptions, advertisements, Council website). Current practice to ensure equal access for disabled applicants includes:

- Jobs are advertised on the web, in job centres, Merton Link.
- Job News is e-mailed to Remploy, Disability Alliance Merton, Royal British Legion Industries, Mencap and posted to around 40 other groups or partners.
- Job advertisements include the two ticks logo and a supporting statement, but this does not appear to be consistent
- Applications are offered in large print and Braille with the minicom/texttype number and can be completed on line
- Two ticks Disability Symbol briefing sheet goes with the application form
- Applications from people with disabilities who meet the essential criteria are guaranteed an interview
- Anyone who has declared a disability and is offered an interview is asked if they have any special requirements
- A survey was done of people with disabilities who had been unsuccessful

- Line managers are responsible for workplace assessments and making any agreed reasonable adjustments
- Induction pack was not assessed from disabilities perspective because at the time of the review the majority of content was under review.

4.28 There needs to be more monitoring and evaluation of the application and impact of these practices.

## RECOMMENDATION

1. **Information in job advertisements, job specifications, job applications, and appointment should be made more disability friendly drawing upon national expert advice (see Part 6)**
2. **Review recruitment sources to ensure that they reach all individuals, including those with disabilities**
3. **Corporate human resources policies be reviewed to make sure that they are disability friendly as has happened with the new absence management policy issued in November 2005, and before implementation checked out with staff, the Disabled Employees Forum and possibly with local experts, local or national**

### 4.29 Learning and Development Strategy

In the 12 months to September 2004, there had been no significant learning opportunities around equalities. Merton's approach had been ad hoc and one off - in 2004/5, there had been an estimated £9,000 spent on:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| • Equalities and diversity course                | 39         |
| people   |            |
| • 2 DDA Awareness Workshops(REMPLOY)             | 26 people  |
| • An Equality Awareness Event, Wimbledon Theatre | 197 people |

4.30 The Interim Corporate Learning and Development Manager informed the review that the priorities set in September 2005 were management development, customer care, lone workers and violence, and equalities. It is imperative to make disability training regular, put it on a consistent basis and keep reinforcing the message.

4.31 The Learning and Development Strategy agreed in September 2005 includes:

- Half day equalities training as part of induction and this includes less than one hour on disability – 450 staff will attend
- 2 one day events for Garth Road managers and events for Garth Road staff of 2.5 hours each

- Briefings for some specific areas

4.32 Some departments use their own budgets, such as Community and Housing, and some diversity training is provided. But there was no corporate knowledge of the spend or the content of departmental training programmes.

4.33 The provision for disability training is insufficient. Line managers need to understand it is their responsibility to deliver disability equality and not Human Resources. Training needs to be provided for all staff but with different content and learning tools for different groups of staff. For example:

Human Resources staff	Need to know most so they can give good quality advice to all departments
Staff in public facing services	Need basic disability awareness and where to go for help Need detailed knowledge of disability implications for their service
All line managers	Need to understand they are responsible for ensuring legal obligations are met, including need to know the DDA and reasonable adjustments, health and safety obligations and hr policies and practices
Senior managers	Need to understand legal obligations, and to ensure disability is taken into account in all policies

## RECOMMENDATION

1. **Provide ongoing disability equality training as a priority for all levels of the organisation and include clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of both line managers and human resources staff**
2. **Regularly monitor and assess the content and quality of disability equality training**
3. **Ensure informal and formal learning and development to raise awareness of disability equality through for example Question Time panel discussions, local disability groups, drama, videos, e-learning, joint working with other authorities and partners.**

4.34 **What supported employment schemes do we have and what support do we give?**

### 4.35 Workstep Programme for 13 people

The Council is a provider for Workstep – a supported employment scheme run by Jobcentre Plus to provide employment for people with disabilities. Merton’s Workstep Programme aims



**“to provide Learning and Development Opportunities for Disabled People in the Local Community to work with Merton council with a view to developing skills to enable learners to contribute to the public, private , community and voluntary sectors. Workstep is key to achieving corporate council priorities including Equalities Merton, Education Merton and Caring Merton on the Journey to Excellence.”**

4.36 A recent inspection in May 2005 by the Adult Learning Inspectorate had concluded that the overall effectiveness of the provision was inadequate and classified the provision as Grade 4. The supportive line management for Workstep participants was praised but otherwise there was a need to:

- Improve strategic management of Workstep programme
- Develop communication links with workplace staff and participants
- Develop and implement quality improvement measures
- Provide better promotion of equality and diversity
- Improve opportunities for participants to progress
- Improve development planning, target-setting and reviews

4.37 The Council has responded well to the outcome of the inspection. A robust Improvement Programme has been drawn up with the managers of workstep participants – this has been well received by both the Adult Learning Inspectorate and Jobcentre Plus.

4.38 The review group was satisfied that the Workstep Post Inspection Improvement Action Plan 2005 - 2006 will support the learning and development of participants.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **1 Way We Work Scrutiny Panel to monitor the delivery of the Workstep Action Plan on an annual basis**

#### **4.39 Work Experience Opportunities**

Over the past 2 or 3 years the recruitment team has found a series of placements for diverse groups seeking work experience to enter or re-enter the workplace. These are usually students and have included people with disabilities (as well as young people, people over 50, lone parents and refugees and asylum seekers). At least three people have gained permanent jobs in the Council.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Design and implement a supported work experience scheme tailored to meet the needs of disabled people seeking entry or re-entry to work with clear objectives and expectations from the start for both the employer and the participant.**
- 2. Introduce other supported employment tailored to meet the needs of disabled people including people with mental health problems**

### **4.40 Employment services for people with physical and learning disabilities**

The physical and learning disabilities team is in the department of Community and Housing – around 145 staff providing and arranging a wide range of services in different settings. The employment services for People with Learning Disabilities operates several services for social services clients and others :

- \* A sheltered workshop environment at Weir Road, where users can experience what the world of work can be like with the support of trained staff, before moving out into a job in the community. Staff offer continued support to users once they find a suitable job. Some users choose to remain working within the centre. For many it is their first contact with employment. The work might be volunteering, work experience or paid.
- \* An employment advice team based out of Weir Rd where users can self refer and work on a one to one basis to gain and retain primarily paid work. This service works with partner agencies such as Shaw Trust, Mencap Pathway and Working Links as well as statutory bodies such as Connexions and JobCentre Plus. The employment team considered there could be greater benefit to their clients if there was more flexibility about job content, so that a suitable mix of job tasks could be put together in line with the skills of a person, e.g taking clerical duties out of the job roles of a number of staff and creating one new post. The team would like to have a central shop front base so that people with other disabilities could come for advice.
- \* The sheltered industrial group known as the Sheltered Industrial Group made up of a supervisor and 4 'Workstep' employees.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Review the relationship between this service, the welfare to work role and the corporate human resources function and consider whether they could be brought together to enhance the corporate resource for employment of disabled people**

#### 4.41 Welfare to Work

A part-time welfare to work Officer is based in the Department of Community and Housing to encourage the Council and other employers including voluntary and community sector to employ disabled people by facilitating dialogue and information-sharing. The officer works with a Welfare to Work Steering Group and Partnership Board.

4.42 The welfare to work officer is looking at Merton as a major employer in the borough to set an example to smaller employers for employing people with disabilities. The officer set up the Disability Employees Forum. The officer is a member of a multi-borough task group (Merton, Bromley, Kingston, Sutton, Croydon and 2 others) which is producing a Disabled Toolkit (A toolkit to encourage all employers in those areas to employ disabled people. The group is also trying to encourage employment of disabled people through the Council's business rates letter.

4.43 Key messages from the Welfare to Work officer

- Consider a proposed "The Procedure for Employing Disabled People" which was consulted on with Welfare 2 work Partnership Board, Steering Group and Disabled Employees Forum. Recommendations include specialist resource for recruiting disabled and supporting disabled applicants
- Need for dedicated HR welfare to work role to complement the social services (now community and housing) welfare to work role
- Enlarge the Welfare 2 Work Steering Group that feeds into the work of the four employment advisers (Learning Disabilities Employment Adviser; the Physical and Sensory Impairment Employment Adviser (under advertisement to be recruited in Sept. 2005), the Mental Health Adviser in the Primary Care Trust).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Review the relationship between the welfare to work role in social services and the corporate human resources employment function and consider whether they could be brought together to enhance the corporate resource for employment of disabled people**
2. **A formal link made from the Welfare to Work Steering Group and Partnership Board into the Corporate Equalities Group chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive as a means of improving employment opportunities for disabled people**
3. **Produce information and advice on disability, including where to go for help, for managers and staff to be included in the managers and staff handbook and available on-line**

#### **4.44 Occupational Health**

Merton's Occupational Health service is staffed by one part time doctor and nurse on a part-time basis with full time administrative support. It is located in the Human Resources division and incorporates medical services currently provided by Merton and Sutton Community NHS Trust. The service includes advice related to disability and provides the corporate counselling service in conjunction with qualified and experienced counsellors. It is currently undergoing a review in order to make improvements to the service.

#### **4.45 Key messages were:**

The nurse guesstimated that there were approx. 100 staff becoming disabled during any year although Managers and Directors thought the number was considerably less. The Council was keeping staff with disabilities in employment although there were difficulties in finding alternative work in some cases.

#### **4.46 Managers were making the reasonable adjustments when recommended. There were some staff with long term impairments e.g. dyslexia which might not be known to Managers where staff have made own adjustments. Recommendations for improvement were for:**

- Disability awareness including Access to Work
- Increased resources
- Awareness of respective roles and responsibilities of Occupational Health and Managers

#### **4.47 Jobcentre Plus Access To Work Scheme**

The Access To Work Scheme is a government scheme, run by Jobcentre Plus. Access to Work (ATW) offers practical advice and help that can be tailored to suit the needs of an individual in a particular job. It can offer a grant towards the approved costs that arise because of an individual's disability. For people who are starting a job the grant is up to 100% of the approved costs. For those who already work for the Council, the grant is up to 80% of the approved costs over the first £300.

#### **4.48 The scheme can help in a number of ways - it can help pay for:**

- communicator support at interview
- a support worker
- special aids equipment
- adaptation to premises or to existing equipment;
- help with the additional costs of travel to, or in, work

An early conclusion of this review was that staff throughout the Council are unaware of the Access To Work Scheme and its benefits and have not therefore used the scheme to full advantage. The experiences of other authorities suggest it could be helpful to have an Access To Work fund to enable reasonable adjustments to be put into place pending the arrival of agreed Access To Work grant.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. Market the Access To Work (ATW) scheme throughout the Council and set up an equipment bank/Access To Work fund to compensate for time lag in receipt of ATW funds**

## **PART FIVE - WHAT OUR PARTNERS TOLD US**

### **5.1 Local partners**

Messages from a meeting with Frank Anti from the Merton Race Equality Partnership, and two focus groups, one with the Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations and the other with the community and voluntary groups involved with disability, were:

- The Council is not welcoming to potential job applicants with disabilities
- Our recruitment material could be much more disability friendly
- Merton Link does not present a disability aware image
- The recruitment website is not as accessible as it could be
- Training and disability awareness is a very high priority, and voluntary and community groups can help with this, such as Hard of Hearing Centre, Guardian Centre for the Blind – and even could have joint training
- Could be value from independent support to disabled staff from outside Human Resources – example of Patient Advisory and Liaison Service Managers was given
- Disability is not evident in the Merton Community Plan
- Council could be a community leader in employing disabled people.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. Ensure informal and formal learning and development to raise awareness of disability equality through for example Question Time panel discussions, local disability groups, drama, videos, e-learning, joint working with other authorities and partners.**
- 2. As Community Leaders, facilitate closer working between council and Local Strategic Partners to improve recruitment and support of disabled staff within council workforce**
- 3. The Council's web and intranet to be reviewed with disabled people with a range of impairments, especially on-line recruitment, employment and training materials, to become more disability friendly – at least by offering text, colour and sound options – and aim to get the new British Standards Institution standard on web accessibility**
- 4. Agree a process with the Disabled Employees Forum and the voluntary sector to ensure that they are consulted on all access programmes and asked to audit completed works and report back on whether they achieved the improvement expected for disabled people**

- 5. The Council as the largest local employer should work with local strategic partners to achieve the proposed Community Plan target for year on year increases in the number/proportion of people with mental health problems who are supported in paid employment, mainstream education and integrated voluntary work.**
- 6. As part of impact assessments of policies/procedures and functions/services, consult with the Disabled Employees Forum and local disability organisations**

## **PART SIX – WHAT NATIONAL EXPERTS TOLD US**

### **6.1 Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)**

The Institute is a national organisation for people with sight problems. The RNIB offers a wide range of employment services, including:

- RNIB Employment Line can offer information and advice to blind and partially sighted jobseekers throughout their job search
- A wide range of vacancies that blind and partially sighted jobseekers can apply for
- Trainee Grade Scheme that offers paid work experience to unemployed blind and partially sighted people
- CV submission service that can give you advice on your CV and potentially match you to one of our employer contacts
- Vocational guidance and training

### **6.2 Action for Blind People**

This organisation provides

- Training and support for employers of disabled people, which can be pan disability or about visual impairment.
- Assessment and advice on about access technology.
- Access to Work assessments
- Job search advice and placements
- Funded placements with employers

### **6.3 Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (RNID)**

This organisation offers

- training both pan disability and focussed upon hearing.
- benchmark employers
- contractors for Access To Work
- job search and training for people who are hard of hearing

### **6.4 British Dyslexia Association**

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) role is to:

- Influence government and other institutions to promote a dyslexia friendly society
- To represent the needs of dyslexic people on learning, school, in higher education and work



At the end of 2005 the BDA published an Employers Guide to Dyslexia. The publication has a checklist to identify symptoms of dyslexia which will then need following through by formal diagnosis, profiling to focus on their strengths and any adjustments/support needs. Adjustments may involve technology but may be flexibility in work practices focussing on what people can do rather than what they cannot.

## **6.5 Mental Health in the Workplace**

The task group met with the **South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust** and the **South London and Maudsley NHS Trust** – both recognised nationally as good practice authorities.

### South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

- 6.6 This Trust provides health and social care for local people with mental health problems in Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton and Wandsworth as well as more specialist national mental health services.
- 6.7 The Trust not only had had success with employment initiatives for clients but had introduced specific employment related initiatives for their workforce:
- A “Charter for the Employment of People who have experienced mental health problems” to reduce employment discrimination against such staff and recognise the ‘added value’ of their personal experiences to the work of the Trust
  - Encourage applications from people who have experienced mental health problems by amending person specifications to include ‘personal experience of mental health problems’ and by changing the equal opportunities statement on advertisements to encourage applications from people who have personal experience of mental health problems. Within 4 years, the percentage of new recruits who said they had experienced mental health problems had doubled from 5% to 7%
  - The User Employment Programme. Employment specialists provide a specialist vocational resource to staff and clients within the PCT teams working in conjunction with occupational therapists and individual clinicians. The Programme has been cited as good practice in a number of national government reports including Mental Health National Service Framework – Five Years On (DH 2004)
  - A support programme for each member of staff with mental health problems (new and existing)
  - Annually reviews whether there has been discrimination at any stage of the recruitment process

Key messages were:

- In any one year, about three in every 10 employees will have a mental health problem at work, with depression being one of the most common. It is probably the type of condition anyone is most likely to experience or come across in the workplace
- Many people are more anxious about dealing with mental health conditions than any other types of disabilities and health conditions
- Good management practice is a key to supporting staff with mental health problems, although managers need to know how to recognise symptoms.
- Reasonable adjustments are more likely to involve flexibility of working.

#### 6.8 South London and Maudsley Mental Health Trust

Key messages were:

- Focus on promoting good mental health and well being amongst all staff
- Use of mental health impact assessment for functions and services – they focussed upon enhancing control, reducing anxiety, participation and sense of belonging
- Need training to promote understanding of mental health
- Support workers for employees have made a difference to individual staff
- Human Resources is crucial because they can be the first contact for applicants as well as looking after the staff

#### 6.9 **Disability Rights Commission**

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2000 to stop discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. Their goal is of “a society where all disabled people can participate fully as equal citizens”. The Commission works with disabled people, employers and service providers and their work includes:

- Advice to disabled people, employers and service providers
- Advising disabled people in getting their rights under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Producing policy statements and publications on rights and good practice

6.10 Summary of good practice advice from the national experts:( see also Appendix 2)

The specialist organisations provided information about good practice relevant to their impairment but there were common themes. A disabled applicant will form judgements about an organisation from the first impressions they have, e.g. website, recruitment material. They all emphasised that the good practice they recommend is what any good manager would seek to do. Recruitment is about the best applicant for the job and good managers will aim to provide the support and environment in which people can demonstrate their abilities. Key advice is to:

- Have a disability friendly website
- Ensure job specifications include minimum criteria and ones that are not discriminatory, e.g. requiring a driving licence when this is not essential, and spell out what is meant, e.g. by good communication skills as it may not mean capable of answering the telephone
- All recruitment material to be written in jargon free English ,12 point text size, include Two Ticks logo and a supportive strapline be considered, and use black on white although black on yellow is best for visual impairment
- Offer a discussion to help hearing impaired people to decide whether to apply
- Use specialist websites such as Disability Now, Connexions, RAD, Channel 4, Ready, Willing and Able, Jobs Go Public, to advertise jobs.
- Ensure interview letter asks if applicant has any additional requirements and follow through
- Provide information about Access To Work to applicants
- Contact the appropriate national organisation for advice at any point in the recruitment process
- Have online information for staff on disability, retraining, who to go to, etc to assist awareness and responsiveness
- Put specialist organisations contact advice into any managers' guide – rather than including lengthy papers on good practice for different impairments.
- Have dedicated corporate disability expert and disability champions
- Training is a key to being disability aware and priorities are human resource staff who will have to support and advise the whole authority, managers who recruit staff, all new staff, front line staff
- Consider use of national experts for training
- If powerpoint is involved in training, recruitment, ask the person about their preferred method of communication.
- Always use the microphones if provided – someone relying on a mini loop system will be disadvantaged even if the speaker is very clear
- Provide contrasting pastel decorations when redecorating

- Keep statistics and review regularly (annually) whether there has been discrimination in any part of the recruitment process, in training, and take remedial action if needed

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The Council should seek agreement from RNIB, RNID, British Dyslexia Association (BDA) to be listed as helplines for managers in proposed new guidance on disability**
- 2. As community leaders, closer working between Council and Local Strategic Partners to improve recruitment and support of disabled staff within Council workforce**
- 3. Council should consider whether a Charter for Employment of People with Disabilities would add value in reducing employment discrimination**
- 4. Council as the largest local employer should work with local strategic partners to achieve the proposed Community Plan target for year on year increases in the number/proportion of people with mental health problems who are supported in paid employment, mainstream education and integrated voluntary work.**
- 5. The Council should put into use the good practice available from these national organisations, contact them for advice on individual occasions, and consider them as training providers;**

## PART SEVEN – VISITS TO OTHER AUTHORITIES

### 7.1 London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

Hammersmith and Fulham Council has a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating of \*\*\* stars and an ‘improving well’ direction of travel, and in the top quartile of performers for the percentage of employees who declare they have disabilities compared to the percentage of such people in the local community (4.5% of their 7000 staff have declared).

### 7.2 London Borough of Tower Hamlets

This Council has a \*\*\* stars CPA rating, adopted the social model of disability in 1997, been a Two Ticks employer since 1999 and has reached the highest level of the Equality Standard for Local Government (Level 5).

### 7.3 London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

Kensington and Chelsea has a \*\*\*\* CPA rating, and has been a Two Ticks Disability Symbol employer since the start of the scheme.

### 7.4 SUMMARY OF INFORMATION FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ISSUE	HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM	TOWER HAMLETS	KENSINGTON & CHELSEA
<b>Recruitment</b>	Make sure criteria are correct – ask for ability not qualifications as disabled people may not have written qualifications	All adverts, jds and person specifications are checked by HR to ensure do not exclude disabled applicants.	Managers responsible – HR do spot checks
	Ads focus on tasks	HR check all – See above	
	Look at where advertise and do focus locally		Not many local people employed (14%) but just starting strategy to encourage more local employment which hope will attract more disabled applicants
	Separate selection process for people with learning disabilities - can have 3 months trial in job which counts as their interview	HR provides point of contact for people who want advice	
<b>Other issues</b>	Recruitment pack includes access to key buildings Support community groups  Accessible meetings checklist	Accessible web just launched Support community groups Accessible meetings checklist	Applications logged centrally and managers prompted re disability HR monitor what happens at each stage of recruitment

<b>Retention</b>	Dispel the myths/Publicise positive images of disabled staff	Regular communications with staff on legislation, policies and projects Also items in weekly council paper	
	Disability equipment bank to forward fund Jobcentre Plus Access To Work agreements	Flexible working options In house counselling service	
	Disabled people have 12m not 3m for redeployment consequent to reorganisation		
	Managers Guide	Managers Guide	
	Disabled staff network supported by HR	Disabled staff forum	No disabled staff forum
	Member disability champion	Member lead	No, Cabinet Mbr for Performance
	Top management commitment	CEx chairs Equality Steering Group	
<b>Two Ticks Disability Symbol</b>	Review annually with Jobcentre Plus. Have integrated diversity section into appraisal template so can produce evidence of doing reviews	In since 1999. Review annually and looking to add positive strapline to ads in addition to Two Ticks logo	In since scheme started. Jobcentre Plus do not always visit annually but K& C review plan annually. Use written survey in every other year and half day seminar with disabled staff in the other.
<b>Workstep Programme</b>	Programme but no participants at present	No programme	Kensington Recruitment in SSD. 7 staff of whom 5 are employment workers. Takes referrals from SS and NHS and seeks work placements, which if successful, become permanent jobs. Salary budgets top sliced by £25K to fund.
<b>Work experience</b>	20 to 30 placements pr year	Yes but new scheme  Other schemes	See above and Have business admin trainee scheme for 16-25 year olds – get £1000 per month and day release for NVQ customer care. – has people with disabilities on it. Going to promote home working due to difficulty of recruitment in Central London/parking problems – realise could have positive spin off re employment of disabled people. Corporate budget of £200K
<b>Mental Health</b>	Take positive steps – H&F	No information	No information

	was the first borough against whom a claim was made relating to mental health. Include positive information in our recruitment pack		
<b>Training</b>	Mandatory managers training but has small element on disability	Mandatory and core	Awareness training using Action for Disabled K&C
	E learning package of 1 hour for all staff, monitored centrally – has phone test – 3000 people at £3 per head – key groups like hr/recruiters/h&s staff		E learning package just about to roll out
	1 day course for managers	1 day disability equality course for managers and staff	
	Looking at drama based training for senior managers	Offered to work jointly with Merton Council managers	'The Leap' play by Garnett Foundation most successful diversity training event (£99 per person for one day)
<b>Policies</b>	Training has to be backed up with HR policies and do review those, e.g. sickness absence policy recognises barriers and accepts fluctuating situations when sickness is disability related	Have a Workforce to reflect the community strategy and a Disability Employment Strategy since 1998 Introduced sickness linked to disability as category on leave cards	Individual staff keep a record of their training on the corporate database
<b>Accessible Bldgs</b>	A 3 year plan prioritised by dpts and disabled residents and staff involved in that. e.g spring loading on doors was not a priority for surveyors but it was for disabled people H&F Association for Disability comment on issues, e.g access/employment/signage/web	Audited buildings and prioritised programme with residents £1m capital p.a. budget	No information
<b>Contractors</b>	With Ealing, doing more stringent assessment of contractors performance on diversity, e.g. 20 of 30 failed recently so running seminars with companies		No information
<b>Work with partners</b>		Work on employment targets through Joint Investment Plan Steering Group, which includes human resources.	Council, PCT and mental health trust just set up a group to work together on of employment of disabled people. Pooled budget.
<b>Staff declaring disabilities</b>	4.5%. Doubled within 6 months of introducing positive initiatives	Annual equalities audit Declarations up from 1.5% in 2002/3 to over	Do an annual audit by asking each member of staff to update data on

		4% in 2004/5	themselves
<b>Monitoring and action planning</b>		<p>CEX chairs the Equalities Steering Group.</p> <p>6 monthly performance reports to Cabinet</p> <p>Divisional equality lead officers on equalities group</p> <p>DMTS always have Equalities Steering Group on their agendas.</p> <p>HR dedicated support to work experience participants, potential staff with disabilities and disabled staff.</p>	<p>Director of Personnel makes annual report to Management Team with recommendations.</p> <p>Director then goes to each DMT to tell them how they compare to Council overall</p>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The Leader and the Chief Executive to lead the step change required, delivering positive messages of support underpinned by disability proof processes, and appoint a chief officer (Director of Corporate Services) to implement the recommendations**
2. **Implement an ongoing internal and external communications strategy to promote progress and achievements**
3. **Provide ongoing disability equality training as a priority for all levels of the organisation, which includes clarity on the respective roles and responsibilities of both line managers and human resources staff**
4. **Ensure informal and formal learning and development to raise awareness of disability equality through for example joint work with Tower Hamlets and consider if any of the Tower Hamlets initiatives could be useful in Merton**
5. **Introduce other supported employment tailored to meet the needs of disabled people, e.g. business administration trainee scheme, and including people with mental health problems**



## PART EIGHT – ACCESSIBILITY

### 8.1 Accommodation

Disabled staff would ideally work in a disability friendly authority. Their judgement of Merton Council will be influenced by the environment they find upon first contacting the Council. Merton Link represents one of the first contact points. The impression they gain from Merton Link is therefore very important. The task group heard from disabled staff and local disability groups that Merton Link was not particularly welcoming to disabled people.

8.2 The Council had a programme of capital access works following an audit of buildings (0.5m in each of 2004/5 and 2005/6). In the first year the focus had been on key Council buildings used most frequently by the public, although some works were of benefit to staff also e.g. making Civic Centre 4 lifts and the library and coffee shop passenger lifts DDA compliant.. This year there were works of direct value to staff.

8.3 The voluntary sector had been consulted on the programme and It had also been agreed that they should audit the works after completion and report upon their impact for disabled people. This had happened only spasmodically.

8.4 An important item for staff in this year's programme was a new accessible second entrance at the rear of the Civic Centre and the task group has been concerned since August that it might not be completed on time – the end of March. It has now been confirmed that it will not be completed on time and because the SERCO contract is due to expire, a new consultant will manage it. A revised completion date is not presently known.

8.5 The task group has learned that building works are planned for Merton Link and access issues are being addressed during them. Representatives from disability groups and disabled members of staff have 'test driven' the current facilities and given their views on the proposed changes. Issues around finish, colours and signage have been taken on board in the proposed building works. A video signing service is to be available in one interview room and the Merton Link induction loop is being reviewed. However, the lowering of the counter remains an issue where there is conflict between staff perception of safety and an environment which is disabled friendly. A group of staff, including 2 disabled employees, will visit Ealing's new "open" reception area in February to evaluate the potential in Merton. Because of the DDA, there will need to be very clear reasons for not lowering the counter. The scheme will cost and estimated £196,000 and is likely to be funded from the capital programme in 2006/7

- 8.6 The task group had been concerned about access to car parking spaces for staff and had had similar concerns expressed by staff. The Disability Rights Commission reminded us of the need for parking spaces to comply with the Department of Transport guidance. It is understood that the car parking spaces at the Civic Centre will now be looked at since the rear entrance design is complete. Staff had also expressed concerns about the difficulty of opening doors within the Civic Centre and the value from having powered ones. Automatic power assisted openings can be provided if needed although the task group were alerted to a possible affect on the level of security.

## **8.6 WEBSITE**

The Council's website is in the top 50 of local authority websites ranked by an independent company SiteMorse and this includes an accessibility test. The Council has a target of reaching the AA standard for web accessibility by March 2006 – a standard recommended by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. This target will be reached. The Disability Rights Commission and the British Standards Institution are developing a web accessibility standard which should be ready in April 2006. The Disabled Employees Staff Forum and local voluntary groups have indicated their willingness to work with the Council to continue to improve the web's accessibility.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. That pressure be maintained on the contractor to complete the new rear entrance to the Civic Centre by April 2006 or as soon as possible thereafter**
- 2. Install powered openings onto each Civic Centre floor and improve the accessibility of Merton Link including lowering all the counter as part of the 2006/7 capital programme**
- 3. Review the accessibility of disabled staff to disabled car parking bays at Council offices and ensure that all bays comply with Department of Transport guidance**
- 4. Maintain the current annual allocation of capital resources for access works as a priority within the Council's capital programme for works benefiting staff as well as the public – since the value of works required was some £8m in total**
- 5. A process be agreed with the Disabled Employees Forum and the voluntary sector to ensure that they are consulted on all access programmes and asked to audit completed works and report back on whether they achieved the improvement expected**
- 6. Council's website and intranet to be reviewed with disabled people with a range of impairments, especially on-line recruitment, employment and training materials, to become more disability friendly – at least by offering text, colour and sound options and aim**

**to get the new British Standards Institution standard on web accessibility**

## **PART NINE – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Task Group has drawn the following conclusions from the information and evidence which it has gathered during this review:

- Disabled staff do not believe the Council welcomes or supports them well
- Voluntary sector groups with whom the task group met do not believe the Council welcomes applications from disabled people
- Managers think the Council could be more welcoming to disabled staff
- Managers believe that clear information about the legal obligations and Merton's policies and practices is not available
- All staff thought there was no clear identification of where anyone could go for information and support about employment and disability
- There are good practices within Merton around this issue
- There is evidence that Merton is changing but the pace needs to increase
- There are policies which are fit for purpose but a lack of confidence about the commitment of the organisation to make improvements in the employment position of disabled employees a priority of the Council, and its capacity both to deliver them monitor and evaluate their effectiveness and so plan for continuous improvement
- Merton was about average within London in relation to its workforce profile and employment practices in relation to disability
- Many examples of good practice from elsewhere which could make a difference and which could be applied within Merton had been identified
- There are local and national experts and partners who would welcome working with the Council on making positive changes in this area
- Disability equality in employment, along with all other equality issues, is essential if the Council is to be seen as a fair employer providing opportunities to all sectors of the community – it is critical for the individual, for their families, for their work colleagues and critical for the provision of fair services to Merton's residents.
- It is the organisation's responsibility to deliver disability equality – it is not an HR issue alone
- Human Resources have a key role to play in delivering this equality agenda, have been short of capacity in the recent past and continue to have a substantial work programme – this disability agenda will not be delivered if sufficient resources are not made available to deliver it
- The respective roles and responsibilities between Human Resources and line managers in respect of disability employment issues need to be made clear
- Delivering disability equality in employment requires leadership from the top both managerially and politically

- Merton could become an exemplar and a community leader on this issue amongst its local strategic partners

The task group has identified a series of actions to address these conclusions and make improvements, which are listed in the Summary of Recommendations at the start of this report, under the heading “Making Sure Change Happens”. The conclusions and recommendations are supported by the Disabled Employees Forum.

## **9.2 Next Steps – Implementation and Evaluation**

The task group believe that their recommendations can make a difference and will demonstrate that the Council is offering equal opportunities to disabled people in employment. They will also constitute a substantial start to the development of the statutory disability equality scheme. The task group has been concerned that previously agreed initiatives addressing disability have not been fully implemented and is concerned to ensure that this does not happen in relation to the actions recommended by this review. The set of recommendations under the heading “Making Sure Change Happens” have therefore been identified which seek to

- embed accountability at the top of the organisation
- integrate the action plan within the existing performance management framework, the Corporate Equality Programme, and the Corporate Equalities Steering Group
- ensure there is capacity to deliver with joined up working both across departments and with local partners
- provide measures for evaluating the impact from implementing the recommendations

An Equalities Impact Assessment of the review has been completed.

## **9.3 Financial and resources implications of the recommendations**

There are financial and resource implications in implementing the recommendations of the review. It is the view of the task group that meeting the disability equality duty is both a statutory and a Council business plan priority and as such, existing budgets and staff work programmes should be reprioritised to focus upon delivering the recommendations. Where additional resources are required, new budgets have already been agreed from existing corporate budgets for some items, such as the capital programme, and for others, growth proposals are already included within the 2006/7 budget proposals. Preliminary costings have been produced below – it is anticipated that all other recommendations can be delivered within existing resources. Revenue costs are for a full year and it is accepted that in the first year these may not be required in full. Further prioritisation and phasing of

expenditure may be possible alongside the Council's formal action plan for taking all the agreed recommendations forward.

The new budgetary implications are estimated to be in summary:

ITEM		COMMENT
<u>Revenue costs 2006/7</u> <u>£000</u>		
1 corporate disability adviser	40 pa	)these 2 posts are high priority and )included in 2006/7 growth proposals.
0.25% corporate diversity adviser	10 pa	
Disability equality training	50	High priority
Members disability training	2	High priority - should be funded from Member Development Programme
Information, guides & Communications strategy	10	Should be met from existing budgets
Supported work experience	10	Should be met from existing budgets
<u>Capital costs</u> <u>£000</u>		
New Civic Centre rear entrance	75	An agreed scheme in the Capital Programme – high priority
Review of car parking bays	NYA	Should be priority scheme in Capital Prog.
Merton Link remodelling	196	DDA aspects must be funded – high priority
Electronic powered doors in Civic Centre	10	Should be part of capital access works programme
Access To Work Fund	20	Contingency pending receipt of Access To Work funding for reasonable adjustments
Web accessibility	up to 10	Should be met from existing budgets

Diane Bailey/Lynette Ametewee  
February 2006

## APPENDIX 1

### DDA 1995 SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLAN RELATED TO EMPLOYMENT (Extracted from Corporate Equality Programme Report to Council July 2005)

**Key**

**M = Action met**

**PM = Action partly met**

**NM = Action not met**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action to be carried out</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Panel of community disabled people to be convened providing the Council with an advisory partnership group for all its activities	Equality officers to work with Disability Alliance Merton to set up a forum	CED 2004	Initial meeting with Merton Disability Forum in Oct 2004. Work will be subsumed into the Disability Partnership Board  <b>M</b>
A post of Corporate Policy Adviser be considered by Merton	Councillors to consider funding for this post in 2005/6 budget	Cllrs Oct 04- Mar 05	Due to reorganisation, post will not be filled but work will be integrated into the Human Resources and Policy, Partnerships and Performance functions  <b>M</b>
Council endorses Social Model of Disability and aims to make Merton a place where people are not disabled by attitudes and actions of others	Promote inclusive training and anti-discriminatory communication that promotes the social model of disability	HR Oct 2004	<b>NM</b>
All communications and documents use language that does not disable people	Effective Merton – Communication Strategy to set out guidance on communicating with people with sensory impairments. Negotiate Disability Awareness and Communications courses for staff and councillors to challenge attitudes, and to improve awareness and communications	All dpts Ongoing	The needs of those with sensory impairment will be taken into consideration. A training programme will be developed as a result of this. The Communications Excellence panel will establish methods by which communications outputs can be monitored  <b>PM</b>

	All public documents to carry translation/alternative formats information		'Translation trigger' used on key public documents. Investigate extending this to other documentation in 05/06 <b>M</b>
Sufficient resources to be made available to meet the adjustments to council premises identified in the comprehensive buildings audit	All Council buildings to which the public needs to have access have been audited for sensory and physical accessibility. The 2004/5 programme of work to be completed.	EnvReg Mar 05	2004/5 works not completed and allocated spend not met. Remaining 04/5 budget for this work will be incorporated into budget for 05/06. Work will be combined with 05/6 work programme <b>PM</b>
Disabled people are consulted and involved in the process of improving access to Council buildings as identified in the EnvReg comprehensive buildings audit	Disability Alliance Merton have been consulted on prioritising of works have agreed to carry out reality checks in selected areas before and after the work has been carried out.	EnvReg and CED	Some reality checks have taken place  <b>PM</b>
All scrutiny recommendations to be incorporated into the Council's Corporate Equalities Plan aimed at reaching Level 3 of Equality Standard by 2005/6	CEP and departmental equality plans and service plans to include DDA recommendations	CED	Completed  <b>M</b>
All staff receive disability awareness training to enable disabled customers to access services	Roll out appropriate disability awareness and diversity learning to front line staff Introduce and monitor take up of e-learning on DDA and generic equalities issues	Corp Serv (HR) 2004	New inductees prioritised.  Introduced on a limited number of computers. Roll out to more PCs in 2005/6. Monitoring to continue <b>NM</b>
Better access to job vacancies is provided	Vacancies to be sent to community groups, Job Centres and placed on Internet	Corp Serv (HR)	<b>M</b>
Use of symbols and signage is improved generally in Civic Centre, and those signs in Merton Link		All dpts Qrtrly review	To be completed New large scale signs for fire exits and entrances have been installed in Merton Link. Work to



signalling the accessible toilet and availability of RADAR keys are positioned in a more visible site			improve signage on 1 <sup>st</sup> floor is under consideration with a view to installation early 2005/6 <b>NM</b>
All Merton Link counter to become low		Corp Serv	The existing part of the counter, which can be lowered, has been. But lowering the counter across its length would create an unacceptable security and safety problem <b>NM</b>
Advice is obtained from partner agencies such as the Guardian Centre on door sensors etc		Corp Serv	Not proceeding, as the whole of the building will not be accessible to the public. <b>M</b>
Adjustments such as electronic doors be used throughout Council buildings		Corp Serv Qtrly Review	Not necessary as the building will not be accessible to the public throughout its entirety. Where a staff need arises, doors can be pegged open with electronic devices linked to the fire alarm <b>M</b>
HR to report quarterly on the number and level of staff who have received DDA training in each department	Equality training to be monitored quarterly to comply with equality legislation, raise awareness and challenge attitudes	Corp Serv (HR) 2004-6	Corporate guidance on monitoring both quantitatively and qualitatively will be produced in 05/6, allowing managers to monitor both the numbers of staff attending, and the outcomes of the training. Directors will receive service reports on training and how far it is being implemented. <b>NM</b>
HR to consider how Merton's stress management policies link into disability awareness	Equality impact assessment of policy to address this issue	Corp Serv (HR) 2004-6	Yet to take place <b>NM</b>
Sickness and absence related to disability to be monitored separately	To be monitored regularly through Payroll and Human Resources Information System, PAHRIS	Corp Serv (HR) 2004-6	For completion in 2005/6 <b>M</b>

BVPI relating to the percentage of disabled employees at a level that puts Merton among the top performing quartile of London Boroughs	Current target is 1.85% by 2006 (BVPI16a). Increase target to be in line with outer London top quartile 2.35%	Corp Serv (HR) June 04	Target changed. Employment profile shows Merton Council at 2.01%  <b>NM</b>
Turnover, pay scale and promotion of disabled staff to be adopted as performance indicators	Human Resources to monitor the implementation of the 2 ticks accreditation	Corp Serv (HR) June 04	Information on PAHRIS. EnvReg Departmental Equalities Group is piloting at departmental level the use of HR analyser, an IT package that will help to analyse PAHRIS information. Will be rolled out to dpts. <b>NM</b>
Staff satisfaction survey to be used to ascertain the views of disabled staff. Human Resources to use the information to improve conditions for disabled staff		Corp Serv (HR)	Staff Attitude Survey completed and published December 2004. Findings include: Disabled staff are significantly less likely than their non disabled colleagues to feel their access to training is equal Disabled staff are more likely to feel that access to promotion is less equal for them Disabled staff were less likely to find their appraisal useful  Survey discussed at CMT and with Staffside. <b>HSS</b> Will share plan with staff early in 2004/5 <b>ELL</b> Have an action plan within their dept IIP plan for 2005/6 and all managers are expected to have an appraisal target related to the Staff Satisfaction survey <b>EnvReg</b> Response prepared through Dptl Equalities Group and monitored through

			Equality Impact Assessments <b>NM</b>
Reasonable adjustments to the workplace are to be identified and carried out within a stated timeframe	Managers to proactively follow up adjustments so they are made to schedule and report adjustments that take longer than anticipated to HR. Employees can raise with the Disabled Employees Forum	All mgrs but Corp Serv (HR) to lead 04-06	ELL and EnvReg report do follow up and report to HR any adjustments that take longer than anticipated  <b>PM</b>
Resources to be made available to enable disabled staff to work effectively		All mgrs but Corp Ser (HR) to lead 04-6	This happens as needed  <b>M.</b>
Greater flexibility to accommodate disabled staff who need time off to attend medical appointments	Managers to use HR guidance and DDA awareness, work/life balance options in managing staff	All mgrs but Corp Ser (HR) to lead 04-6	Absence management policy will be in place for May 2005 and include DDA awareness and necessary guidance. Best practice coaching programme to be established. <b>M</b>
More disability awareness raising to be undertaken with serious consideration given to making equality and diversity training mandatory	Induction day for all new staff to include diversity module and all new staff to attend equality training as part of employee induction	Corp Serv (HR) Ongoing	Under investigation with an aim to introduce this in 2005/6 Youreable e-learning module included as part of training for new inductees <b>NM</b>
That front line staff attend disability awareness courses and utilise sensory impairment training effectively		All dpts Qtrly review	Under investigation is a regular programme of diversity training such as a monthly 1 day course for all new inductees <b>NM</b>
	All dpts to implement and review all DDA recommendations pertinent to them in line with monitoring of departmental equality plans and performance management framework		Ongoing  <b>M</b>
Exit interviews to be made available to those moving		Corp Serv (HR)	Exit interviews are available and the interviewee can opt to

<p>between departments as well as leaving the Council – and should include questions about disability discrimination</p>		<p>Qtrly Review</p>	<p>have his/her line manager present or to have HR representation instead. Any issues arising from the interviews are dealt with by HR</p> <p><b>PM</b></p>
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APPENDIX 2

**SUMMARY OF ADVICE FROM NATIONAL EXPERTS**

Organisation	Recruitment	Retention	Awareness
<p><b>RNIB</b>  <b>Janet West,</b>  <b>Employment</b>  <b>Adviser.</b></p> <p><b>(25% people with visual impairments are not working)</b></p>	<p><b>Jobs</b> – ensure qualifications are not discriminatory  <b>Advert</b> –            Use 12pt at least;            Leave decent space; for completion;            Boxes problematic;            Two Ticks logo +            Offer recruitment packs in all formats with phone number to discuss job;            If ansaphone leave time for message to go in – and monitor that do follow up on messages;            Place ads in specialist sites, e.g REMPLOY, Ready Willing and Able, Jobs Go Public, Total Jobs.com.  <b>Interview</b> –            Ensure interview letter asks if they have any additional requirements, e.g. room layout  <b>Manager support</b> –            HR policies and procedures to be to hand;</p>	<p>Online web pages for staff giving guidance on disability, retraining, etc.            Have dedicated members of staff/disability experts/disability champions, e.g Southwark;            Use DRC Code of Practice for Employment and Occupation;            Corporate budget for reasonable adjustments;  <b>Training</b>            Powerpoint presentations cause problems – check with visually impaired person ahead of course to ask what would help. Often they would like presentation beforehand but with boxes taken out.  <b>Initiatives</b>            Offer paid work experience – RNIB offer 50 weeks with one day per week for training;            RNIB offer to train;            RNIB do assessments for Jobcentre Plus            RNIB will offer guidance if an applicant declares visual impairment.</p>	<p><b>Training -</b>            Priority should be for all new staff to have some training on visual impairment as part of induction (2 hrs or 0.5 day);            Then priority is HR and front line staff.            Training nomination forms should ask about special requirements;  <b>Image</b> –            Is website accessible            talk RNIB we accessibility adviser or <a href="mailto:webaccess@mib.org.uk">webaccess@mib.org.uk</a></p> <p>25% of people with visually impairments are not working, that there is a disproportionate number of visually impaired people on incapacity benefit and many of them want to work.</p> <p>Remember – first impressions count.</p>
<p><b>RNID</b>  <b>Stephen</b>  <b>Franks,</b>  <b>Employment</b></p>	<p><b>Jobs</b> –            Ensure job spells out as much of what is meant by,</p>	<p><b>Training</b>            If powerpoint as staff ahead about preferred method of</p>	<p><b>Awareness Raising</b>            Key.            First training priority is HR so they can take</p>

<p><b>Training and Skills Service. (Low awareness Amongst employers of how to meet their needs)</b></p>	<p>for example, good communication skills as it may not mean capable of answering phone; Get rid of jargon – signing language plain speaking; <b>Adverts –</b> Keep simple; Offer meeting rather than discussion to deciding to make an application; Mention minicom or Tynetalk if have but make sure managers can use; Keep to application form; RNID happy to review sample Specialist websites – Disability Now, Connexions, RAD, Channel 4, et al. <b>Interviews –</b> Interview letter should ask about any needs, enclose info about Access To Work but be prepared to help fill in AT interview; and organise interpreter if necessary although make sure interpreter is invoiced; If using Assessment Centre then</p>	<p>communication; Presenter should put up slide then pause for a minute so people can read it – or cannot follow talk and interpretations simultaneously.</p>	<p>first enquiries and talk to mgrs, contact RNID etc; Sec. priority is staff answering phones or one stop shops; Then get to departments.  <b>RNID do half day courses which are both pan disability and focussed upon hearing</b>  <b>Key Barriers are communication issues and the attitude of potential employers.</b></p>
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	<p>contact RNID if you know candidate has hearing difficulties – allow longer setting up time, etc.</p> <p><b>Adjustments</b> Sometimes not time to do before person starts job so tell Jobcentre Plus so they will pay for them.</p>		
<p><b>Mental Health in the workplace</b> <b>SW London &amp; St George's NHS Trust</b> <b>S London &amp; Maudsley NHS Trust</b> <b>(1 in 6 people will have a mental illness)</b></p>	<p><b>Jobs</b> Add to strap line where reference to under-represented groups ...including people with experience of MH problems; (Trust did this and doubled no of new staff with mh problems in 4 years – from 7% to 15%); Introduce desirable criteria in all person specs that “have you had personal experience of a mental health problem” – LEGAL??</p> <p><b>Adverts</b> Set up telephone help lines for candidates, which could link to RNID, RNIB, etc; Support for managers through recruitment involving disabled</p>	<p><b>Basically, good management practice:</b></p> <p>Tackle if there is a symptom such as consistently late to work – speak to them’ No textbook rule answer but agree a line and also what will be said to the team; If solution involves less work, then less pay so money available to fill gap; Best to keep in work rather than go sick but make sure Unions in line with you; Come back to work not on Monday when manager busy;</p> <p><b>Initiatives</b> Support programme for people with mh problems; Charter; Annual review of new recruits, and what has happened to candidates who said they had experience of mh problems Identify job(s) where essential to have experience of mental</p>	<p><b>Awareness</b></p> <p>Get rid of myths – schizophrenia or depression make no difference to whether a person can work or not although they may need to attend regular counselling service; Get rid of ‘not perfect’ ‘can’t work’ ‘ must performance manage’; Promote mental health and well being; Training is vital, to include action plans and follow up surgeries.</p>

	<p>candidates needed;  <b>Interview</b>  You can ask questions about adjustments they would be seeking;</p>	illness	
<p><b>An Employer's Guide to Dyslexia - British Dyslexia Association (BDA) (Occurs in 10% population)</b></p>	<p>Important for job applicants to disclose dyslexia to allow for adjustments and understanding;  Recruitment should contact an applicant who has disclosed to agree adjustments for interview;  Applicant may want application form in different colours, individual support for those with difficulty reading or writing.</p>	<p>Be aware of indicators of dyslexia, including reluctance to complete written reports or refusing promotion.  Employers need to be aware of different working styles and have multi sensory approach to training;  Encourage employee to prepare a disclosure document explaining how dyslexia affects them day to day and what adjustments help – to use at internal promotion;  Good practice to have designated disability officer usually in HR - contact for people with dyslexia, to give support to managers;  Have clear routes for referral;</p>	<p>Information about dyslexia – a specific learning difficulty that affects the learning process;  HR should have BDA checklist for initial identification of dyslexia;  Share experiences through staff magazines  Key to development of a dyslexic person is to focus on their strengths;  Adjustments likely to be around method of working/working practices – technology may help only in some cases  Provide factsheets  Provide training;</p>
<p><b>Disability Rights Commission</b></p>	<p>Is web accessible – simplify text, get rid of background images, size of text, contrast, easy to read language for people with learning disabilities, navigational software like JAWS – British Standards Institution standard on web</p>	<p>Do our disabled car parking bays meet Dpt of Transport guidelines;  Are training arrangements/methods disability friendly?  Are disabled staff offered training opportunities  How satisfied are disabled staff?  Generally one review meeting a year with staff is enough;  Review meeting at same time as annual</p>	<p>Know what constitutes a disability/long term health condition;  See world from a disabled persons point of view;  All managers must meet equality duty not just HR function;  Disability awareness is top priority – different content for different staff;</p>



	<p>accessibility  Are main entrances accessible?  Is Merton Link accessible?  Can you apply on line - downloadable?  Can people pick up vacancies list to take away?  Do we offer a contact person?  Do we ask about any special arrangements required for interview?  Do we advertise in disability sites?  Interview must focus on job, decide best candidate and then talk reasonable adjustments.  Know about Access To Work – consider equipment fund</p>	<p>performance appraisal meeting BUT specifically ask if there are any issues around adjustments/anything more organisation should be doing to enable disabled person to do their work;  Have dedicated person with responsibility for work experience type schemes;  Create jobs linked to skills of an individual;  Work experience useful if been out of work long time or become disabled and changing direction;  Disabled people did not have much confidence that organisations actually committed to Two Ticks  Need to know how many people become disabled.</p>	
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**Archibald v. Fife Council**  
**Disabled Woman wins House of Lords case**  
**Thursday, July 01, 2004**

A landmark ruling by the House of Lords has strengthened the employment rights of disabled people.

The law Lords unanimously ruled that there is a duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people if they become unable to carry out the job they are in due to their disability. This duty includes considering whether it is reasonable to transfer the disabled person to another vacant post, even if that post is at a higher grade.

The Disability Rights Commission, who took the case to the House of Lords on behalf of Scots woman Susan Archibald, welcomed today's decision. Bert Massie, chairman of the DRC, said: "We are delighted that good sense has prevailed and the Lords agree that the law is there to make sure disabled people are given equality of opportunity. This is fantastic news for disabled people everywhere, as it confirms they have the right, where it's reasonable, to be transferred to a new job if they become disabled and can no longer carry out their existing job."

Mrs Archibald, of Kelty, Fife, said: "I am very happy that the Lords supported us and the law is now hopefully much clearer. I did not go through all this for financial gain but to ensure that no-one would have to go through what I went through. Now disabled people in a similar position will have the opportunity to challenge any employer they feel is discriminating against them."

The 38-year-old mother-of-four worked as a road sweeper with Fife Council from May 1997 until March 2001. In April 1999 complications following surgery caused severe pain in her heels, leaving her unable to walk. She initially used a wheelchair and later was able to walk only with sticks.

She had previously worked as an administration assistant and went for retraining to update her skills. She had to undertake competitive interviews in accordance with the council's redeployment policy and applied unsuccessfully for over 100 posts within various departments. In March 2001, the council dismissed her on the grounds of capability.

Mrs Archibald later successfully applied to Fife Council to become supervisor of a local community centre. Lynn Welsh, the DRC's Head of Scottish Legal Affairs, said: "This appointment acknowledges that Mrs Archibald was capable of this level of job. Had the council transferred her to a similar post at the time, she would not have lost a substantial amount of earnings over a considerable period of time."

Mrs Archibald complained she had been discriminated against on grounds of disability. She argued she should not have had to compete for alternative employment if she could show she could perform the duties and responsibilities of the post and that her employers had failed to comply with a duty to make a reasonable adjustment under section 6 of the Disability Discrimination Act. However an employment tribunal dismissed her complaint, stating Fife Council had not failed to comply with any duty of reasonable adjustment. The Employment Appeal Tribunal dismissed an appeal, holding there was, in fact, no duty of reasonable adjustment on the employers at all.

The DRC appealed to the Court of Session who ruled that an adjustment duty was not triggered by becoming physically incapable of carrying out the job and that transfer to a different job was not a reasonable adjustment. The DRC then appealed to the House of Lords, who have ruled that the EAT and Court of Session were wrong, and that the case should be referred back to the employment tribunal.

Lynn Welsh said: "It was always clear to us that there was a duty on Fife Council to consider transferring Mrs Archibald into one of the 100 jobs, she applied for, and that the Employment Tribunal were wrong to say this would have been more favourable treatment. At last we can get a Tribunal to look at the case properly."

Ends

Notes to editors

- Section 6 is a key section of the DDA. It provides that there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments "where any arrangements made by...an employer... place the disabled person concerned at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled".
- This section distinguishes the DDA from other discrimination legislation. It is not enough to treat disabled and non-disabled people the same, but instead employers must actively change physical features and arrangements in the job so that disabled people are not put at a disadvantage.
- This case examines whether an employer has any duty to make a reasonable adjustment when an employee becomes disabled and unable to perform the basic tasks of their job. It also looks at how far that duty goes: should the disabled person be transferred to another suitable job, or be made to compete for it; and can a duty to transfer include transfer into a promoted post, if the person is capable of carrying out that job.
- The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is an independent body set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000 to enforce the rights of Britain's 9.8 million disabled people.
- The reference number for the Law Lords' opinion is 2004 UK HL 32. A full copy of the judgement can be found at <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/ld199697/ldjudgmt/ldjudgmt.htm>

**Source: Disability Rights Commission website**  
**<http://www.drc-gb.org/newsroom/newsdetails.asp?id=679&section=2>**

**LESSONS LEARNED FOR SCRUTINY METHODS**

Working with Disabled Employees Forum – Learning from experiences of members of the Forum influenced the work programme.

Question Time Panel – this interactive session encouraged contributions from staff and sharing of expert information from a diverse group of partners.

Meeting with Community and Voluntary Sector Partners – these meetings revealed interesting perspectives on the council as an employer of Disabled People and proposals for collaborations on improvements.

Focus Groups – use of external/intrenal facilitators allowed us to gain the perspective of different people.

Visits to Other Local Authorities – this facilitated benchmarking and gathering of large amounts of good practice including ideas which could be easily adopted by Merton

Visits to National Experts – extremely important to contextualise Merton work within the current and pending national policy framework

Poster Campaign – designed to encourage staff contributions to the Review as well as prompting discussions in the workplace. Disappointed response but would still recommend use in future reviews.

**SOURCES OF EVIDENCE**Employees

Disabled Employees Forum – Focus group and meeting with Task Group  
 Managers – Two focus groups – 24 participants  
 Individual meetings with 4 members of staff  
 Staff, Councillors, Local Partners - Question Time Panel - almost 60 participants  
 Sue Ross, Interim Director of Children, Schools and Families  
 Jeff Hobden, Interim Director of Community and Housing  
 Richard Rawes, Director of Environmental Services  
 Mike Parsons, Director of Corporate Services  
 Richard Mycroft, Head of Human Resources  
 Steve Key, HR Services Manager  
 Keith Brown, Interim Learning and Development Manager  
 Irene White, Occupational Health Nurse  
 Mark Humphries, Facilities Manager  
 Pauline Lansdell, Facilities Management  
 Helen Cook, Manager, Merton Disabilities Service  
 Andy Ottaway-Searle, Direct Provisions Manager – Day Opportunities  
 Clive Duke, Employment Advisor Weir Road (based at High Path)  
 Sarah Lilly, Manager, Weir Road  
 Users of Weir Road Employment Assessment Centre  
 4 Workstep participants and one Supervisor  
 Geoff Patmore, Welfare to Work Officer, Community and Housing

Submissions from Councillors

Councillor Stephen Alambritis, Cabinet Member for Diversity, Community  
 Engagement and Partnerships  
 Councillor David Chung, Cabinet Member for Schools  
 Councillor Maurice Grove  
 Councillor David Simpson

Local Partners

Ann Hoblyn, Childcare Partnership and Disability Support Manager Jobcentre  
 Plus  
 Frank Anti, Merton Race Equality Partnership Director  
 Joint Consultative Committee with Ethnic Minority Organisations – focus group (3  
 attendees)  
 Local disability groups – focus group (4 attendees) and attendance at Question  
 Time Panel

Visits to National Experts

Action for Blind Employers Open Day

Disability Rights Commission  
 Royal National Institute of the Blind  
 Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust  
South London and Maudsley NHS Trust

Visits to other authorities

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham  
London Borough of Kensington & Chelsea  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets

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- 17 *Health, Work and Well-being – Caring for our Future: a strategy for people of working age* (2005) (Department for Work and Pensions and Department. for Health and Health and Safety Executive)
- 18 *Choosing Health: Making Healthier Choices Easier White Paper* (2004) (Department of Health)
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- 21 *“Charter for Employment of Disabled People,”* (SW London and St. George’s Mental Health NHS Trust)
- 22 *Staff Attitude Survey, London Borough of Merton* (2005) (The Work Foundation)
- 23 *London Borough of Merton Workforce Profile* (January 2004) (London borough of Merton Payroll and Human Resources Information System)
- 24 *Disabled Employees Forum Constitution* (2005) (Disabled Employees Forum)
- 25 *London Borough of Merton Adult Learning Inspectorate Workstep Improvement Action Plan 2005 – 06* (2005) (London Borough of Merton)
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- 29 *Report of Question Time Panel Discussion on Employment and Disability* (2005) (London Borough of Merton)
- 30 *Corporate Equalities Programme 2004 – 2006* (London Borough of Merton, 2004)



- 31 *The Equality Standard for Local Government Self-Assessment Checklist* (Employers Organisation website)
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