

**POLICY REVIEW**

**DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION  
ACT 1995**

**Scrutiny Panel Report**

**July 2003**

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## **MEMBERS OF THE PANEL**

Councillors:

Sheila Knight - Chair

John Cole

Karim

Charles Lucas

Jan Jones

Gilli Lewis-Lavender

Barbara Bampton

Margaret Brierly

David Chung

Judy Saunders

Terence Sullivan

**Chairs Forward**  
To be added

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 28 November 2000 the London Borough of Merton's Scrutiny Commission set up a Scrutiny Panel to review policy and current practise with regard to implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act within Merton. The Panel consisted of 7 members (4 from the majority group and 3 from opposition groups).
- 1.2 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Scrutiny Panel was asked to review how the DDA is being implemented within departments in relation to employment issues, service provision, and access to premises; what further activities are planned or will be required and the resource implications of these. Additionally, the Panel would consider how effectively the DDA was being implemented across the Council and make appropriate recommendations for action if the Panel identified any gaps or weaknesses.
- 1.3 The Panel discussed the concept of disability. Organisations of disabled people believe that it is the built environment and the attitudes and actions of some non-disabled people that disables them. This has become known as the 'Social Model' of Disability'. The DDA Scrutiny panel adopted the Social Model for the purposes of the review and is recommending its endorsement by the council.
- 1.7 The DDA Scrutiny Panel meetings have benefited from the active attendance of invited witnesses, officers, staff and representatives of both commercial and voluntary organisations. The Panel members have also undertaken 'access' audits of commercial and recreational facilities in the borough with members of the community or voluntary groups and associations the DDA is specifically designed to represent. Panel members have also visited voluntary groups to gauge what their perceptions are of the services provided and improvements that can be made.
- 1.8 The panel has made a number of recommendations, however the panel recognises that this is a first step. There is a great deal of work to be done by Merton as –
  - an employer
  - as a partner in the provision of education
  - as a service provider
  - as a community leader.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 1 All the recommendations made by the panel should be incorporated into the Council's Corporate Equalities Plan aimed at achieving the proposed level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by 2005/6.
- 2 That a panel of disabled people is convened from across the community providing the Council with an advisory partnership group for all its activities.
- 3 The Council endorse the Social Model of Disability and aim to make Merton a place where people are not disabled by the attitudes and actions of others.
- 4 That all communications and documents, use language that does not disable people.
- 5 That Merton benchmark equality of service provision against models of best practise.
- 6 That a post of Corporate Disability Policy Adviser be considered by Merton.
- 7 That all staff receive disability awareness training to enable disabled customers to access services.
- 8 That all Council communications are made available on request, in the customer's preferred format .
- 9 That the Council utilises a wide range of communication channels such as the Talking Newspaper.
- 10 That disabled people are consulted and involved in the process of improving access to Council premises as identified in the Environmental Services' comprehensive buildings audit.
- 11 That sufficient resources are made available to meet the adjustments to council premises identified in the comprehensive buildings audit.
- 12 Information regarding the leisure centres and the services they have to offer is provided on tape and in Braille and also sent to the Talking Newspaper.

- 13 Officers contact the All England Tennis Club and the David Lloyd Centre with a view to working in partnership, to ensure facilities for disabled children are increased.
- 14 That leisure facilities for disabled children are increased enabling more disabled children to have access to a wider range of activities.
- 15 That street signage be managed more effectively so that it does not cause a hazard to disabled people.
- 16 That the best value review on transport, investigates the problems faced by disabled people in Merton and ensures disabled people are members of the review team.
- 17 That the work carried out within the guidelines of the National Service Frameworks be integrated and standardised to encourage better communication.

### **Improving Access to Employment**

- 18 That better access to the to the job vacancies lists be provided.
- 19 That Human Resources clearly set out how and when, front line staff will be receive disability awareness training.
- 20 Human Resources reports quarterly on the number and level of staff who have received DDA training in each department.
- 21 That Human Resources consider how Merton's stress management policies link into disability awareness.
- 22 That sickness and absence related to disability are monitored separately.
- 23 That Merton sets the best value indicator relating to the percentage of disabled employees at a level that puts Merton among the top performing quartile of London Boroughs.
- 24 That turnover, pay scale and promotion of disabled staff be adopted as performance indicators.
- 25 That the staff satisfaction survey is used to ascertain the views of disabled staff. And that Human Resources use the information to improve conditions for disabled staff.

- 26 That reasonable adjustments to the workplace are identified and carried out within a stated timeframe.
- 27 That resources are to be made available to enable disabled staff to work effectively.
- 28 That greater flexibility be exercised to accommodate disabled staff who need time off to attend medical appointments.

### **The Role of Education**

- 29 That a commitment to wherever possible for disabled pupils to be educated in mainstream schools
- 30 Recommendation to Central Government that disability be included in the schools curriculum on citizenship.
- 31 Recommendation for borough safety and awareness campaign for schools

### **Recommendations from the Mini - Audit**

- 32 That more disability awareness raising is undertaken across the Authority with serious consideration given to making equality and diversity training mandatory.
- 33 That front line staff attend disability awareness courses and utilise sensory impairment training effectively.
- 34 That the use of symbols and signage is improved generally throughout the Civic building, and that those signs in the Merton Link signalling the accessible toilet and availability of RADAR keys are positioned in a more visible site.
- 35 That a ramp is provided alongside the rear and front stairs to the Civic Centre lifts, to enable improved access to higher floors.
- 36 That a low counter, is provided across the whole of Reception.
- 37 That voice indication is installed in the lift to the Coffee Shop, Council Chamber and Committee Room F.
- 38 That advice is obtained from partner agencies such as the Guardian Centre on door sensors etc.



- 39 That adjustments such as electronic doors be used throughout council buildings to improve accessibility.
- 40 That exit interviews are made available to those moving between departments, as well as those leaving the Authority. These interviews should include questions about disability discrimination

### **3.0 Setting The Scene**

- 3.1 The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was passed in 1995. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in connection with employment or the provision of goods and services. By October 2004 all goods and services should be accessible to disabled people, this includes physical access to premises.
- 3.2 The DDA also established the Disability Rights Commission to promote the rights of disabled people and enforce the legislation.
- 3.3 The DDA definition of disability has been criticised by the DRC as it excludes people with progressive illnesses such as Cancer AIDS and Multiple Sclerosis.
- 3.4 Disabled people are not a homogenous group of people. There is a wide range of impairments and a wide range within each impairment. There is a danger of lumping people together as 'the disabled'. We can take Deafness as an example, Deafness and Hard of Hearing affects 1 in 7 people. Many deaf people dispute that they are disabled. Yet they are often referred to as being disabled. It has been said that there "is a poor relationship between Deaf people and disabled people" (Disability and Society 2002).
- 3.5 Some commentators argue that some impairments are more socially acceptable and therefore more high profile. This has led to a 'hierarchy' of impairments that favours physical disability and disadvantages mental health.
- 3.6 Ascertaining how many people in Merton meet the DDA definition of being disabled is problematic. The most reliable figure we have is from the last census, however this only gives a snapshot and will not count the large number of people who become disabled during the course of 1 year. Furthermore the phrasing of the question used in the census may exclude

some respondents. The term used in the question is 'limiting long term illness', this definition is at odds with the DDA definition. This may result in an underestimation of the number of disabled people in Merton.

- 3.7 The 2001 census indicates that 18.5% of the UK population are disabled. In Merton the figure is 13.8%, just under 26,000 people.

#### **4.0 Merton's Commitment to Equality and Diversity**

- 4.1 Merton Council's vision is 'To make Merton a Great Place to Live, Work and Learn'. Underpinning this are five strategic objectives. The objective that relates to Equalities and Diversity states, – Full and equal access to learning, employment, services and cultural life and the celebration of diversity.
- 4.2 The Equal Opportunities Policy translates the objectives into clear actions required to achieve the vision. In 2002 the Equal Opportunities Policy was reviewed. The new policy reflects the growing culture of valuing diversity.
- 4.3 In July 2002 the Council adopted the Local Government Equalities Standard. The aim of the standard is to draw together and mainstream all equalities issues including disability. Work is now progressing on the implementation of the standard. The standard consists of five levels, the Stephen Lawrence Action Planning Group has proposed that the Council aim to achieve level three by 2005/6.

#### **5.0 Progress towards the DDA**

##### **Internal Information and Training**

- 5.1 A brief survey was conducted in order to gauge what steps had been taken to comply with the DDA.
- 5.2 Departments were asked the following questions –
- 'Has any information about the Act been distributed to staff in your department in relation to: a) Employment issues, b) Access to goods facilities and services.
- 5.3 **The Chief Executive's** department's main function is to support the Council decision taking and policy making. The department provides corporate training general Equality & Valuing Diversity training as well as the Disability Discrimination Act. The amount of DDA specific training was worryingly low and there had been cancellation of some of the limited

courses that were planned. There was a vacant disability officer post in corporate Human Resources, and this was deleted and replaced with a generic equality advisor post. Both employment and service delivery equality advice is available from within the Chief Executive's department. During the period of the scrutiny review, DDA training has been revised and slightly increased from a half day course per year to a full-day course run 4 times per year. This will have negligible impact on disability awareness as a maximum of 64 staff per year were attending corporate DDA courses. Computer based training is being introduced to speed up the delivery of awareness training to Merton's staff. The Panel was concerned about unrepresentative workforce profile and the lack of HR disability monitoring information available.

**5.4 Education Leisure and Libraries** have advised school governors of the implications of the DDA.

**5.5 Environmental Services** have distributed a leaflet 'Welcoming Disabled Customers' to all section heads and new staff. The department provides Equality & Diversity training to all new staff and refresher courses for existing staff.

**5.6 Financial Services** have undertaken a survey to identify training needs.

**5.7 Service Provision**

#### **Education, Leisure & Libraries**

Education had included disability within the schools re-organisation programme that was underway. During this review Education was gearing up to implement the Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination Act (2000). A number of activities are arranged within Leisure. There are concerns about access to some services provided through the Leisure contractor, Greenwich Leisure. Libraries have collections and information in various formats that address different types of disability. The department also provided information on a range of initiatives to enable visually impaired people, people who are house bound and young disabled people to access library services.

**5.8 Environmental Services**

The Planning and Building Control sections give advice on ensuring that buildings comply to the DDA. Environmental Services carried out an audit of all Council buildings to which the public have access and have identified what works need to be carried out for the Council to comply with Part III of the DDA. The Business & Environment Partnership Unit has liaised with local businesses to highlight what changes are needed for compliance.

## **6.0 What is Disability?**

- 6.1 An examination of post war disability research would reveal that although some of these studies have drawn attention to the economic and social inequalities encountered by disabled people, few have questioned the underlying cause of these problems. Most simply assumed that impairment of one kind or another was the main reason why disabled people were disadvantaged. The solution of course was cure or care for the individuals concerned.
- 6.2 The paragraph above was taken from a briefing paper produced by the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP). Organisations such as the BCODP and academics have over the last twenty years challenged the assumptions widely held about disabled people. There response has been to developed a new 'model' of disability.
- 6.3 The Social Model of Disability has been developed by disabled people and their allies in response to what has been termed, the Medical Model of Disability.
- 6.4 The Medical Model is associated with the dominance of the medical profession. The individual is seen as abnormal and requiring special treatment. Individuals 'suffering' a disability are often defined by their condition. For example, he/she has Cerebral Palsy. This describes the individual in a negative way.
- 6.5 The Social Model challenges the assumptions that the person who has an impairment is suffering, is abnormal or less than whole. The focus of the Social Model is not the individual but wider society. People are not disabled by impairments but by the attitudes and actions of others. For example the built environment which most of the population live and work in is created in such a way as to exclude people with some physical impairments. If the built environment was designed differently it could accommodate rather than disable people.
- 6.6 The social Model is widely accepted and endorsed by organisations of disabled people such as Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD) and the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP)
- 6.7 The adoption of the social model as opposed to the medical model is a recognition that society has to change attitudes and behaviour not the individual.
- 6.8 One of the key components of the Social Model is the use of language. Many people argue that in order for perceptions to change we have to use language that does not disable. Furthermore, the use of language

indicates awareness of the main tenets of the Social Model. For example terms such as 'the disabled' and 'people with a mental/learning/physical disability' are often used. The implication is that the person 'owns' the disability. However, the term 'a disabled person' shifts the emphasis away from the person.

- 6.9 The Scrutiny Panel adopted the Social Model of Disability in its investigations. The Panel recommends the council endorses the social model of disability. The Panel recognises that the DDA has been criticised by many organisations, including the Disability Rights Commission, and academics representing disabled people for containing elements of the medical model.

## **7.0 Mini Audit**

- 7.1 The mini audit was carried out in order to provide a corporate picture of how the Council was implementing and therefore complying with, the DDA. The intention was to highlight weaknesses or gaps in service provision and training. This would enable the Council to address these in a structured way. The audit was seen as an opportunity to promote the services delivered by the Council. It could also be used to identify good practice that could be shared across the Council. Information on support available from the Employment Service and Merton Translation Service was included in the audit. The information gathered from the audit provided a benchmark for departments to measure progress. The overall low scoring of 41% shows the amount that needs to be done to address disability in the Council. Data was collected by service managers between March and May 2001. The audit covered:

- Awareness of reception and frontline staff
- Health & safety procedures
- Reasonable adjustments to make services accessible
- Reasonable adjustments made for employees
- Signage and accessibility of facilities and equipment
- Accessibility of information
- Employment and training
- Reasonable adjustments

- 7.1 An evaluation of the audit findings is appended (appendix 2). The audit made a number of recommendations.

## **8.0 Transport**

- 8.1 Transport is an issue that affects a great number people. Transport or the lack of it can disable and isolate. Most disabled people are not able to use public transport due to lack of access. Some disabled people have experienced harassment on public transport. Dedicated services are provided such as Dial A Ride but these are often criticised for being unreliable or not available when required.
- 8.2 Transport is to be the subject of a comprehensive Best Value Review in July 2003. The Panel wish the findings of the Scrutiny Review to inform the Best Value Review.
- 8.3 A best value report on Transport for Children with Special Educational Needs was produced in December 2002.
- 8.4 The review included a survey of parents. A questionnaire was used and a series of open meetings were also held. The key areas of concern raised by parents were around –
- Communication between the transport service and parents.
  - Health and safety.
  - Reliability of services.
  - Continuity of driver and escort and of cab company.
- 8.5 The review made 14 recommendations. The recommendations covered the following areas –
- The need for greater security.
  - Complaints procedure be amended.
  - Measures to improve communications.
  - Processes to ensure and measure quality.
  - Improved communication.

## 9.0 Employment

- 9.11 A comparison between non-disabled and disabled people in employment in the United Kingdom shows -
- 9.12 There are some 29.5 million non-disabled people of working age of these 85% are in work.  
There are 6.4 million Disabled People of working age, of these 40.5% are in work  
( Employers National Conference 'Ability not Disability' Sept 2000)
- Disabled people are five times more likely to experience unemployment (DRC, 2002).
  - 58% of employees with a disability earn less than £10,000 a year
  - 3,000 new people are claiming incapacity benefit every week
- 9.13 The fact that disabled people are disadvantaged in employment is widely acknowledged and well documented. However, the literature on the under representation of disabled people in Local Government is sparse. This indicates the lack of attention local government has paid to the employment of disabled people.
- 9.14 Merton Council is the largest employer in the borough. With strategic objectives focussing on equality and diversity, and progressive approaches to employment such as 'work life balance' the Council should be expected to provide a model of best practise in the employment of disabled people. However, the council has along way to go.
- 9.15 The Council has a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) related to the employment of disabled people. KPI 49 measures the number of employees declaring they meet the DDA disabilities definition (compared to the percentage of economically active disabled people in the borough).
- 9.16 The target is 2%. The figure achieved by the fourth quarter 2003 is 1.69%  
The panel recommends that Merton compare performance against other London boroughs and aims to be among the top quartile.
- 9.17 This target only reflects the number of people employed, it does not measure the turn over of staff, their position in the authority or their chances of promotion.  
The panel recommends that turnover, pay scale and promotion of disabled staff be adopted as performance indicators.

9.18 There is a public perception that disabled people are disadvantaged in employment. This is borne out by the findings of a Disability Rights Commission survey (2001) that found only 24% of the respondents thought disabled people were treated fairly at work, that is in getting and keeping work. The common stereotypes faced by disabled people gaining or retaining employment are, being seen as –

- slow and unproductive
- requiring extra resources
- requiring more 'time off' due to their disability
- needing greater personal support on the job
- needing to have adaptations to buildings and work station
- that other staff or service users will find them 'off putting' and uncomfortable to work with

9.19 Some of the considerations and barriers that disabled people have said that they have to deal with are;

- Fear
- Attitude to people with disability.
- Difficulties with employment agencies.
- The benefit trap.
- Transport.
- Physical access and modified equipment.
- Support in employment
- Sheltered workshops

9.20 Lack of promotion opportunities appears to be an issue for all Merton staff. The 2002 Staff Survey found that 42% of respondents did not feel they have a fair chance of promotion.

9.21 Of all Merton staff, 42% say they don't feel they have a fair chance of promotion. (LBM Staff Survey) An evaluation of the survey found no correlation between ethnicity and perceived lack of promotion. However, there was no study of a correlation between disability and promotion.

The panel recommends that the staff satisfaction survey is used to ascertain the views of disabled staff. And that Human Resources use the information to improve conditions for disabled staff.

### 9.3 **Work Placement**

Work placements have been taking place in Merton with some success. (There have been 10 disabled people taking part in work placements since December 2002). The following case illustrates some of the problems that can face disabled people in the work place. A work placement undertaken



- by a young female wheel chair user (N) was the subject of an Occupational Therapy Team report (2001). The team found the “Physical environment of the Civic Centre removes ‘N’s independence. She will be obliged to rely on others for access within the building, including access to the toilet”.
- 9.31 The report also finds that the photocopier, desk and sink were not accessible. ‘N’ was also unable to access the coffee shop. Transport to and from the work placement by Dial A Ride also proved problematic due to the unreliability of the service.
- 9.32 The report concludes that, “The physical environment is solely responsible for removing ‘N’s independence and reducing her dignity. It segregates her and obliges her to become dependent”.
- 9.33 The report is primarily concerned with physical access and does not comment on attitudes and support of staff.
- 9.34 The mini audit asked whether work placements by disabled people were actively encouraged. Fifty percent of respondents said they were encouraged. However, they were not asked what support they would provide.
- 9.4 **Staff Experiences**  
Evidence was taken from the Staff Side Secretary and disabled staff were invited to relate their experiences. Four people gave evidence. The Staff Side Secretary pointed out that there was a lack of cohesion and consistency and a need for a specific definition of disability. The result was that some people may have to wait for up to 12 months for reasonable adjustments in order for them to be able to do their work.
- The panel recommends that reasonable adjustments to the workplace are identified and carried out within a stated timeframe.
- 9.41 Other witnesses all confirmed that for the most part managers had been very receptive to their needs. However, some people had found that there were insufficient resources to enable them to work effectively.
- The panel recommends that resources be made available to enable disabled staff to work effectively.
- 9.42 Some people pointed out that there was a lack of understanding of the needs of the individual, and that the council did not respond quickly enough to meet those needs.

- 9.43 The panel received verbal evidence that there is inconsistency in managers granting time off to for staff to attend medical appointments.

There needs to be greater flexibility to accommodate staff who need time off to attend medical appointments.

- 9.5 One member of staff commented on problems associated with new computer software not being compatible. When systems used by Merton were being upgraded he required specialist training and on occasion this had not been adequately provided. The lack of forethought led to him feeling he was receiving a second rate service.

## **10.0 Leisure**

- 10.1 Leisure is an increasingly important element of modern life. The Panel wanted to gain a holistic view of issues affecting disabled people in Merton. Therefore the panel investigated the issues affecting leisure provision provided by the borough.
- 10.2 Contact-a-Family, a charity that helps parents caring for young disabled people carried out a survey on access by disabled children to leisure facilities. The report 'Everyone Here' Recommends that service providers ensure disabled children and their families can participate in a full range of mainstream play and leisure pastimes.
- 10.3 Residents of the borough in receipt of a disability related benefit may obtain a discount on membership. They also receive a discount on entry to the leisure centre.
- 10.4 The Leisure Development Manager informed the Panel that there was a long waiting list for the disabled swimming club. This was due in part to the lack of volunteers to assist in the water.
- 10.5 Merton leisure centres are working with the All Saints Day Care Centre who have been auditing the accessibility of the activities. This will be fed into the leisure services strategy.
- 10.6 The Panel visited the Merton Sports and Social Club at the Guardian Centre.  
The Club provides activities for people with visual impairments. The club has about 100 members. (The estimated number of people in Merton with a visual impairment is around 1100).
- 10.7 Attendance is 10 to 15 members at any one time. Current activities include skydiving, tandem cycling, swimming, bowls, canoeing, darts among

others. Activities are also provided for children. On the evening of the visit the members attending were of varying ages. The Panel noted that attendance at this session was predominantly male.

- 10.8 Members were asked about the accessibility of other leisure facilities in the borough. There were no negative comments except for the time allocated for a subsidised swimming session at Cannons Leisure centre at Mitcham.
- 10.9 Members commented on the need for more information to be made available to visually impaired people in the borough. This ranged from information on leisure activities to major road works and the disruption they could cause. Members suggested a weekly advert in the Talking Newspaper.

## **11.0 The Business Community**

- 11.1 The Panel investigated the actions being taken by small businesses to ensure they comply with the DDA by October 2004. The borough has a large number of small businesses, particularly retailers who will be affected.
- 11.2 The Business and Environmental Support Unit informed the Panel that the compliance with the DDA had been considered by the Town Centre Partnership bodies representing, Morden, Mitcham, Colliers Wood and was considered by the Wimbledon partnership in January 2003.
- 11.3 Furthermore an information pack was planned for circulation to independent retailers that included facts about the DDA and the target is to distribute this in Mitcham, Morden, Colliers Wood and Wimbledon by September 2003. When resources are available the same information will be circulated to the shops in Raynes Park.
- 11.4 A mail out was planned for the three main industrial estates. The 2003 Business Directory would also carry information on the DDA.

## **12.0 Town Centres**

- 12.1 The Panel found that there were a number of factors that could disable who people want to use the town centres, for example, lack of sufficient disabled parking spaces, blocked pavements and inaccessible shops.
- 12.2 Centre Court in Wimbledon town centre is generally accessible, having been built for the purpose. However, there are access problems in Wimbledon. For example, it was reported that there are a lot of pubs in Wimbledon with poor access for wheelchairs.
- 12.3 The issue of dropped kerbs was discussed. Dropped kerbs are beneficial to people with pushchairs and wheelchairs but not for those with guide dogs. It was found that Merton is good at providing dropped kerbs.
- 12.4 The Wimbledon Town Centre Manager outlined proposals for a Shopmobility Scheme. Meetings were taking place to set up a company with charitable status for this. This would allow provision of 30 electric wheelchairs, to be administered by Centre Court. It was envisaged that this would be a town-wide scheme, to include the new leisure centre and cinema opposite Safeway.
- 12.5 An award scheme is planned for stores who facilitate disabled access, in recognition of the initiative.
- 12.6 Other issues, such as pedestrian crossings, inappropriately placed street signage, litter and rubbish bags, loose shopping trolleys, 'A' boards outside shops and the limitations of narrow pavements were discussed. It was found that signage did not seem to be co-ordinated or rationalised, although there is reference in the Unitary Development Plan to management of urban furniture.

The panel recommends that signage be managed more effectively so that it does not cause a hazard to disabled people.

- 12.7 The Panel found that illegal street signs were also a hazard. The Head of Street Management has started undertaking walks around the borough with disabled residents to understand the extent of the hazards faced.

## **13.0 Education**

- 13.1 Nationally, one in five children in England and Wales is identified by their school as having special educational needs. Special educational needs (SEN) is a very broad term, covering the full range of children's needs – from mild Dyslexia to behavioural problems to complex medical conditions. What children with SEN have in common is the need for some “additional or different provision” in school. This could range from their teacher organising carefully structured group work for them, to needing a full-time assistant and help with feeding and toileting.
- 13.2 Most children with SEN will have their needs met by their school, often drawing on advice from the Local Authority or other agencies, but without any direct support from outside the school. In most cases, their teacher will work with the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) to draw up an individual education plan, setting out targets for them, such as occasional one-to-one tuition or special learning materials. Plans should be discussed with the child and their parents and reviewed at least twice a year.
- 13.3 The SEN Code of Practice sets out a graduated approach to meeting children's needs in school, in light of the progress they make in response to different interventions.
- 13.4 A small minority of children require more support than their school is able to give them. For these children, the Local Authority draws up a Statement of special educational needs. The Statement is for children aged 2 and above who qualify by residence irrespective of school attended in either the Local Authority or private sector and in most cases provides extra help of some kind for them in school. This may include aspects of health or social services. Just over 3% of children in England and Wales have a statement.
- 13.5 Most children with Statements go to their local mainstream school, where they receive special provision of some kind. For example, some are supported by learning support assistants, some receive extra tuition and others are able to use specialist equipment according to their needs. A significant proportion of children with Statements are educated in special schools, which are funded by the Local Authority to make appropriate provision for children with higher levels of need. Just over one-third of the children who have Statements in England and one-fifth in Wales attend a special school. In addition, some children attend residential schools, these are usually run by charities or privately.
- 13.6 Merton provides for pupils with SEN and their families through a range of services. Home based support for pre-school children, educational

psychology, specialist teachers in various disciplines (including hearing impairment and visual impairment), assessment and monitoring and SEN policy development. These are all located within the Education, Leisure and Libraries Department. Colleagues in other Council departments and partner organisations support the work by providing transport, health input, therapy, legal and social work advice and assistance.

- 13.7 Merton's current SEN 'Achievement Plan' broadly reflects the national view of SEN provision. Evidence from the District Audit Studies (SEN Comparative Data – London Borough of Merton 2001/2002) does however indicate that Merton is a low overall spender on SEN. This is reflected in aspects of the improvement plan.
- 13.8 In Merton Approx 934 pupils resident in Merton are the subject of a statement of SEN. 711 children attend mainstream schools or units attached to a mainstream school. Boys represent 76% and girls 24%. The majority (44%) live in the Mitcham area. 160 children attend schools outside the borough.
- 13.9 The main findings of the SEN Best Value Review are summarised as the need:
- a) To improve the quality of communication;
  - b) To improve equality and transparency in the way special educational needs funding is allocated to schools.
  - c) To ensure greater delegation of special educational needs funds to schools and developing ways of monitoring the funding;\*
  - d) To ensure reduction in the number of Statements maintained by the LEA, along with greater delegation to schools;\*
  - e) To ensure greater equity in the placement of children with special educational needs;
  - f) To review the way in which children are supported; and develop alternative packages of support in order to improve their attainment levels/ achievements;
  - g) To strengthen partnerships and joint initiatives with professionals and agencies that support children with special educational needs;
  - h) For more Strategic Financial Planning.\*
  - i) For revision of the SEN Policy Achievement Plus.

The panel did not wish to make additional recommendations in relation to education.

**1.0 Terms of Reference**

- 1.1 To review how the council is implementing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in relation to employment issues, service provision and access to premises, including how the Council is implementing its responsibilities in its role as a leader in the local community.
- 1.2 To review progress on the implementation of the key areas of the DDA Act across all departments and services and identify any areas where satisfactory implementation required to date has not been achieved.
- 1.3 To be advised of proposals for the further implementation of activities planned or required under the act, including the timescale and resources required for its delivery.
- 1.4 To identify any gaps or weaknesses in plans for full implementation of activities required under the Act by Council departments and to consider provision by external organisations/services where the Council has a role to have an overview of services in the wider community.
- 1.5 Where appropriate, to request and receive submissions and information from members, officers and external organisations and individuals, inviting their attendance at meetings and visiting organisations where necessary.
- 1.6 To consider whether it would be appropriate to co-opt members from outside organisations onto the panel, in line with the guidelines drawn up.
- 1.7 To make periodic recommendations to the Scrutiny Commission on the panel's progress and findings.

## EVALUATION REPORT OF THE DDA MINI AUDIT 2002

### ***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

The work of the Policy Review Scrutiny Panel was organised to reflect the key areas where the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) would impact on Merton. As part of this, a mini audit was undertaken in spring 2002 to assess how effectively the Act was being implemented in Council departments.

The mini audit provides a baseline of the existing provision in the Council and will feed into a more comprehensive audit to be completed as part of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Audit forms were completed and returned by approximately 60 divisions or sections, at over 25 sites across all five of the Authority's departments. This report provides an evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the course of the audit.

### ***Methodology***

A total of 34 questions were asked relating to accessibility, layout, services, facilities, signage staff support and dealing with disability. An additional nine questions were asked relating to employment and training. Corporate Human Resources completed this section on behalf of the Authority. However comments were made on employment and training by 17 divisions or sections across all five of the Authority's departments and these were incorporated into the evaluation.

For the purposes of scoring the 34 questions were translated into 37 questions as some had more than one component. Each question was given a score, zero for not met, one for partially met and two for met taking into consideration the qualitative information provided.

The raw scores were totalled and a percentage score allocated for each of the subheadings, that is accessibility, layout, services, facilities, signage staff support and dealing with disability. A percentage score per department was also calculated. A similar method was followed to calculate a percentage score for the employment and training section.

Qualitative data also came from disabled staff, service users and an occupational therapy workplace assessment.

### ***The Authority as a whole***

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on the audit is 74 points. The overall score for the Authority is a disappointingly low 41%, taking the number of divisional responses into account. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:



Chief Executive's (CED)	48%
Education, Leisure and Libraries (DELL)	42%
Environmental Services (DEnvS)	43%
Financial Services (DFS)	23%
Housing and Social Services (HSSD)	46%

The five highest scoring divisions or sections were:

Brightwell, HSSD	84%
Jan Malinowski Centre, HSSD	80%
Donald Hope Library, DELL	82%
Community Resource Centre, HSSD	76%
Merton Link, CED	73%

The five lowest scoring divisions or sections were:

Environmental Services Financial Section, DFS	1%
Corporate, Strategic Finance & Business Solution, DFS	7%
Training, HSSD	9%
Audit Risk and Compliance, DFS	15%
IT, CED	14%

In part these low scores can be attributed to the way in which the audit forms were completed. Some sections had clear opinions as to what areas they were responsible for and did not take a global view. For example some sections thought issues such as signage were not applicable although they may have visits from colleagues from other departments or even external people.

### ***Earlier DDA Audits***

Some services were aware of the need to undertake work to improve facilities and accessibility and had planned accordingly. The Youth Service, for example, had just conducted a premises audit and calculated the resources required to improve accessibility and facilities to all its premises. The Housing & Social Services Department had already conducted a physical and service accessibility audit to assess their compliance with the DDA. H&SS examined services provided to the following groups –

- People with Learning Difficulties
- People Substance Mis-use
- People who are Sensory Impaired
- People who are Physically Impaired
- Disabled Children
- Disabled Older people
- People who are HIV positive

The H&SS audit investigated the following issues –

- How people contact the service
- The assessment process
- Availability and quality of information
- Auxiliary aids
- People with Multiple impairments
- What Services are available

At the time of the corporate mini audit in spring 2002, some of the earlier H&SS findings had been implemented, with the result that three of the top five performing Council divisions were from that department.

### ***Accessibility***

The accessibility questions focused upon the provision of an appropriate service. For example whether staff are trained to provide assistance to disabled customers or clients; to communicate in sign language; or to provide physical assistance if necessary.

The maximum possible raw score per division or section for accessibility is 18 points. The overall accessibility percentage score for the Authority is 31%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	24%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	29%
Environmental Services	30%
Financial Services	24%
Housing and Social Services	40%

Merton Adult College, ELL (94%); Brightwell, HSSD (89%); and Jan Malinowski Centre, HSSD (83%) attained high scores. It is possible that because these services have a high level of disabled service users there is a greater awareness of what training frontline officers need to ensure they can meet the needs of disabled customers or clients. Officers' general lack of understanding of accessibility beyond physical access, shows a pressing need for compulsory disability training.

Three divisions or sections attained zero scores. One division did not have a reception and may have taken a narrow view in completing its responses. However, service users may benefit from greater accessibility in the service. The other two services provide support to other departments and may perceive customers and clients to be members of the public rather than other officers, colleagues or partners, who too may benefit from greater accessibility in the service.

The newly established Merton Link provides many divisions' reception services. Respondents were keen to refer to the Link in answer to these questions without considering their own roles or responsibilities in this area. However, it should be noted that despite the Link providing reception services, many members of staff are required to meet with service users at the Link or in meeting rooms elsewhere. Some floors have meeting rooms and members of the public or colleagues from partner organisations may gather here.

Merton Link attained a score of 12 points or 67% in the area of accessibility. The entrance to the Merton Link has automatic sliding doors and there is level access. Merton Link officers have undergone sensory impairment, customer care and evacuation training. All staff have been trained in assisting those with wheelchairs or poor mobility. However, there are no officers trained in British Sign Language and there are no vibrating or flashing alarms.

### **Information**

Three questions focussed on whether information about services is accessible and up-to-date.

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on information is six points. The overall accessible information percentage score for the Authority is 48%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	50%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	53%
Environmental Services	33%
Financial Services	39%
Housing and Social Services	49%

Merton Adult College; Business and Administration; School Effectiveness; Grounds Maintenance, and Donald Hope and Morden Libraries from Education, Leisure and Libraries attained maximum scores. As did Brightwell; Russell Road; Jan Malinowski Centre; Lettings, and High Path Community Resource Centre from Housing and Social Services.

Ten divisions or sections attained zero scores. These were dotted across all departments with the exception of Environmental Services. This was mainly due to information not being accessible to all and to a lack of awareness as to how often information was updated. Several sections stated that information was updated as and when necessary.

### **Services**

The services questions focussed upon service reviews, inspections and the involvement of disabled people in such reviews.

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on services was eight points. The overall services percentage score for the Authority is 38%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	60%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	26%
Environmental Services	64%
Financial Services	16%
Housing and Social Services	41%

Merton Link, CED; Donald Hope Library, ELL; Pollards Hill Day Centre, HSSD, and High Path Community Resource Centre, HSSD attained maximum scores.

Nineteen divisions or sections attained zero scores. This was due to the respondents not being aware of what reviews or inspections of their services took place or how often. This meant that they also felt unable to comment about the recruitment and involvement of disabled service users in reviews.

Relatively few adjustments have been made to make services more accessible to disabled people. A summary of adjustments made is included at the end of this report.

### ***Facilities***

The facilities questions focussed upon issues such as counter accessibility, seating levels and lighting.

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on facilities is 12 points. The overall facilities percentage score for the Authority is 46%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	55%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	43%
Environmental Services	49%
Financial Services	34%
Housing and Social Services	50%

Social Inclusion, ELL; Donald Hope Library, ELL; School Effectiveness, ELL; Brightwell, HSSD; and Gifford House, HSSD all attained 10 points or 83%. These high scores were attributed to the existence of low counters, induction loops, a variety of seating levels and room for wheelchair access.

Eight divisions or sections attained zero scores, dotted across all departments with the exception of Chief Executive's. This was due to respondents giving either no response, or negative or not applicable responses to questions. There was often an assumption made that all the questions applied to reception areas only and also narrow interpretations of the word 'reception'.

Many divisions based in the Civic Centre referred to the Merton Link in their responses. The Link scored 67%. While the Link has facilities, which enable some access there is room for improvement. There is no telephone for public use, other than one on the end of the counter. The lower counter to one end of the Link reception desk might be considered as segregated provision, which is discriminatory under the Act. A staff member who discussed this with Corporate Health and Safety understood that concerns had been raised regarding disabled staff using the lowered counter.

Although there is a hearing loop at the main reception desk this facility does not extend to interview rooms. The seating provided in these rooms and in the main waiting areas is all of the same height. There is room in the waiting areas to site a wheelchair alongside the other chairs. This would also be possible in the interview rooms, provided that one or two other chairs were removed first.

### **Signage**

The signage questions focussed upon the occurrence and visibility of signs throughout the building.

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on signage is 14 points. The overall signage percentage score for the Authority is 56%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	66%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	77%
Environmental Services	36%
Financial Services	20%
Housing and Social Services	65%

Merton Link, CED; Youth Service, ELL; Donald Hope Library, ELL; School Effectiveness, ELL; Leisure (Technical), ELL; Jan Malinowski Centre, HSSD; Looked After Children, HSSD; and High Path Community Resource Centre, HSSD attained maximum scores. This was due to there being signs, which were written in plain English, in appropriate contrasting colours, finishes and heights and the use of symbols. There were examples of some sites having signs and symbols both inside and outside the building.

Thirteen divisions or sections attained zero scores dotted across all departments with the exception of Education, Leisure and Libraries. This was due to respondents giving either no response, or negative or not applicable responses to questions. Some respondents commented that their areas were not open to the public overlooking the fact that appropriate signage could assist visitors or staff members as well as the public.

According to a member of staff there are few directional signs in the Merton Link. The sign indicating where the disabled toilet is, hangs from the ceiling above the normal arc of vision. Most of the walls and partitions are the same colour and coloured edging would assist those with visual impairments. The signage indicating the availability of RADAR keys could be better situated.

### ***Staff Support***

The staff support questions focussed upon the provision of resources to enable disabled staff to work effectively.

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on staff support is six points. The overall staff support percentage score for the Authority is 37%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	52%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	31%
Environmental Services	67%
Financial Services	12%
Housing and Social Services	46%

Vestry Hall (Partnerships), CED; Merton Translation Service, CED, and Gifford House, HSSD attained maximum scores. This was due to these services having made reasonable adjustments to support disabled members of their team and being aware of the Disability Employment Advisory Service.

Fourteen divisions or sections attained zero scores dotted across all departments with the exception of Environmental Services. This was mainly due to negative responses accompanied by the comment that there were no disabled staff members. It was apparent from some of the qualitative comments made, that several respondents thought of disability in visible terms, for example, wheelchair use and were not aware apparently that a disability need not be visible.

### ***Dealing with Disability***

The questions on dealing with disability focussed upon flexible working arrangements within divisions or sections, the provision of reasonable adjustments, consultation about and evaluation of such adjustments. Very few adjustments have been made to make for disabled staff. A summary of adjustments made for employees is included at the end of this report.

The maximum raw score possible per division or section on dealing with disability is 10 points. The overall dealing with disability percentage score for the Authority is 32%. The departmental percentage scores are as follows:

Chief Executive's	44%
Education, Leisure and Libraries	31%
Environmental Services	41%

Financial Services	18%
Housing and Social Services	29%

Vestry Hall (Partnerships), CED and Donald Hope Library, ELL scored 80%. Merton Translation Service, CED and Brightwell, HSSD scored 70%. Scrutiny and Policy, CED; Wimbledon Library, ELL; Jan Malinowski Centre, HSSD; Information and Business Support, HSSD; and Gifford House scored 60%. Points were allocated to those services offering flexible working arrangements to disabled staff, consulting on any adjustments to be made and reasonable adjustments being made for staff and service users.

Nine divisions or sections attained zero scores dotted across all departments with the exception of Environmental Services. This was mainly due to no response or negative or not applicable responses. As with the questions on dealing with disability, respondents frequently commented that there were no disabled staff members in the section.

### ***Employment and Training***

The employment and training questions covered a range of topics, including provision of application forms in alternative formats, work placements and training.

The maximum raw score for employment and training is 18 points. The percentage score for employment and training across the Authority is 45%.

Corporate HR was awarded 11 points or 61%. Others services that responded to employment and training questions attained widely varying scores. Responses from Merton Translation Service, CED (78%) and Scrutiny and Policy, CED (67%) were scored relatively highly. Others were scored relatively lowly, the lowest being 17% and 22%.

It was clear that there are differing views throughout the organisation about the existence of certain policies or facilities. For example, on request, Merton Translation Service is able to advise and make most documentation and application forms available in Braille, large print on or tape. However, some services were not aware of this, or that job application forms are available via the internet.

Some services were not sure of the corporate policy on exit interviews or sickness and absence monitoring. Others were unaware agencies that could assist with work placements or that Corporate HR already worked in partnership with various disability organisations. They were also unaware that Corporate HR work with Disability Employment Advisors to provide opportunities and maintain the 'Two Ticks' status, which indicated that Merton Council is positive about employing people with disabilities.

There was a higher take-up of recruitment and selection training than there was of other diversity training. The amount of disability training provided and the take up of this training was exceedingly poor, only nine attendees in the previous twelve months. Although some respondents recognised the importance of such training, they commented that other matters had taken priority.

### ***The Civic Centre***

The Civic Centre is the main site of Council Services and as such has a higher number of visitors and staff than any other Council site.

There are disabled parking spaces around the outside of the building, but these are against the kerb, which only permit safe entry and exit from the driver's side of the vehicle. There is a slope-resistant surface and ramp on one side of the building.

There is no direct wheelchair access to the main lifts from the main entrance. However, there is an automatic door off the lobby area, which leads to the rear where there is access to the one lift that has both high and low level control buttons. Turning space here is tight and the control buttons are assessed to be too high for a wheelchair user. The lift call button is often disengaged and a request for the lift must be made through a passing colleague or a call to security on the nearby phone.

This lift is often used to deliver goods, which can result in a lengthy wait. This lift has a recorded voice message that indicates location and the way to proceed. However, this is incorrect on at least one floor where the voice's instructions lead to a wall.

Most doors to offices in the Civic Centre are spring-loaded and have card key access. Getting through doors was further complicated as they open outwards which is difficult for wheelchair users or those with reduced strength. Some doors are opened by use of a keypad. This could be difficult for wheelchair users or those with limited strength or mobility as it is necessary to press a combination of buttons, then turn a handle and push the door simultaneously. The number indicators are not always clear nor in contrasting colours.

There is generally enough space in the corridors for a wheelchair user to navigate. However, turning space can be limited. In some areas there is minimum space, and items such as chairs may have to be moved in order to allow access for a wheelchair user, which could lead to health and safety problems for other members of staff, if this is not managed carefully.



Access to the disabled toilets on the second, fifth and eighth floor is by key through sprung loaded doors. Access to the ground floor disabled toilet is by a RADAR key, which is obtainable from the Link or security. Various alarms and grab-rails are present. One staff member commented that the toilet is not particularly large or clean and there might not be sufficient room for a carer to be present.

Although a wheelchair user may be able to use desks and PC with some adjustments, items such as sinks may be inaccessible. The control panels of photocopiers and printers are above the height of most wheelchair users and the keys of some machines are particularly sticky or awkward to press.

A wheelchair user on work experience in the Civic Centre commented that:

There are lots of lifts for wheelchairs and where I work has lots of space for me to get around the building. It's really hard to open the doors so I think it would be a good idea to have some electric doors for wheelchairs.

The preliminary conclusion of an occupational therapy work place assessment for this person was that the physical environment limited her independence, as she was obliged to rely on others for access including access to the toilet. Certain situations removed her from the general public, thereby reducing her levels of security, independence and sense of belonging.

### ***Mystery Shopping***

A visually impaired person and escort visited the Link, and made an enquiry in person which they felt was dealt with very well. The observations made during this visit were that the counter is a little high and the play area spills out into the walkway, which could be hazardous for many people, particularly those with visual impairment.

It did not appear to the mystery shoppers that the staff had had training on visual impairment awareness, particularly the security guards. They reported that they had heard that an officer on reception had refused to fill a cheque for a partially sighted person, excluding the signature.

Other remarks were that the lift to the Coffee Shop and Council Chamber would benefit from a recorded message that announces which floor it is at and which direction to proceed in. Similarly it would be useful to have a sensor near the door that announces that visitors had arrived at the Civic Centre.

A visitor from the Hard of Hearing Centre also conducted a mystery shopping exercise. The mystery shopper wears a hearing aid and needs communication to be clear and face to face, she also felt the officers were helpful in their attempts to deal with her query.

## ***Conclusions***

Some services are more committed to disability equality than others and this can be seen in the varying efforts taken to complete the audit forms or the absence of audit forms altogether in the case of some divisions.

Under the DDA the Council must ensure that disabled people have access to goods, facilities, services, employment and training. By 2004 the Council must have identified and taken steps to remove physical barriers to the access of services. Whilst it can be seen that several services are taking appropriate steps to ensure that they comply with the relevant aspects of the Act, there is a lot of work to be done. Few adjustments had been made to make services or employment accessible to disabled people. All of the Council's five departments attained a score of less than 50%.

There is a widely held perception among some services, particularly those that are not frontline, that it is only the public who need to be considered. It also appears to be the case that several officers forget that disability is not necessarily visible. It may be possible that assumptions are being made as to the disability or otherwise of staff.

There also appears to be a high degree of divisional or departmental thinking, with officers forgetting that although there might not be any disabled staff in their own section, there may be in another section with whom they work closely. Furthermore, there may be occasions when even support services are visited by inspectors, partner organisations, colleagues or potential suppliers and consideration will need to be given to how the needs of these people will be met should any of them have a disability.

## ***Recommendations***

1. That more disability awareness raising is undertaken across the Authority with serious consideration given to making equality and diversity training mandatory.
2. That front line staff attend disability awareness courses and utilise sensory impairment training effectively.
3. That the use of symbols and signage is improved generally throughout the Civic building, and that those signs in the Merton Link signalling the accessible toilet and availability of RADAR keys are positioned in a more visible site.
4. That a ramp is provided alongside the rear and front stairs to the Civic Centre lifts, to enable improved access to higher floors.
5. That a low counter, with safety glass if necessary, is provided across the whole of Reception.

6. That voice indication is installed in the lift to the Coffee Shop, Council Chamber and Committee Room F.
7. That advice is obtained from partner agencies such as the Guardian Centre on door sensors etc.
8. That adjustments such as electronic doors be used throughout council buildings to improve accessibility.
9. That exit interviews are made available to those moving between departments, as well as those leaving the Authority. These interviews should include questions about disability discrimination

## **Chief Executive's**

## **Service Adjustments Made**

*Merton Link*

Payments on-line  
Providing accessible one-stop-shop services on the ground floor  
Large format documentation

*Corporate Human Resources*

Were working with the Employment Service on the Workstep Scheme, now also working with Remploy, Disability Alliance Merton, Carshalton College Employability Centre. Complies with Positive about Disability criteria.

*Civic Centre*

Ground floor automatic doors fitted and handles made more accessible.

*Partnerships – Vestry Hall*

Redecoration colour contrasted, alteration to doorframe and light switches for ease of access

*Scrutiny & Policy*

Information in alternative formats on request, Portable hearing Loop for externally held meetings, transport arranged.

*Electoral Services*

Device to enable sight impaired people to vote unaided

*Merton Translation Service*

Information on alternative formats printed on key documents.  
Training provided on working with BSL interpreters and lipspeakers

## **Housing & Social Services**

*Brightwell Centre*

3 Hoists. House purpose built. Specialist beds. Client moving & handling training for all staff

*Russell Road Offices*

A small step into the portakabin

*Pincott Road*

Hearing Loop & literature in large print. Maintenance contractor fixes appointments to suit tenant

*Worsfold House*

Reception 'window' designed for wheelchair users, telephone can be plugged in at an appropriate height for people who are seated. Use of symbols on signs

*Worsfold House Children's*

Electronic door. Improved leaflet rack enables the clear display of information to the public

*Jan Malinowski Centre*

Shower facility & shower chair, electric hoist. Repainting door frames to assist definition, moving & handling training, Makaton,

Deaf Awareness & hearing impairment, Visual Impairment training.

*Employment Assessment Centre* The centre was designed for disabled client group. Information in picture form. Symbols used on signage. Building is wheelchair friendly. Desks are at wheelchair level.

*High Path Community Resource Centre* Fully accessible, purpose built centre.

### **Environmental Services**

*Whole department* Tactile pavement/audio alert at most pedestrian crossings  
Lower curbs to accommodate buses to lower their ramps  
Special arrangements for refuse collection, free green waste collection, discount offered on pest control.  
Advising & supporting retailers in town centres to comply to the DDA. Officers will carry out home visits if necessary.  
Negotiations with developers regarding 'vulnerable road users'.

### **Education, Leisure & Libraries**

*Pollards Hill Library* People's Network hardware and software caters for disabled users. Commonsense Open Learning Centre also provides hardware and software of disabled learners.

*Donald Hope Library* Talking Eyes Project for visually impaired library users. Magnifier available and counters accessible to all.

*Morden Library* Lift access to other floors, electronic doors and low counters.

*Merton Adult College* Ramp to access art block

*Youth Service* Identified and costed necessary adaptations to make 7 youth centres accessible.

*Morden Pool* Ramps for wheelchair users leading into building and into picnic area.

*Leisure Development* Provision of a severely disabled children's playscheme

### **Financial Services**

*Facilities - Security* Security will control the lifts to evacuate the Civic Centre. They will also send the lift to the appropriate floor if a wheelchair user or someone with mobility difficulties needs it. If made aware,

Security will provide intervention or support if necessary.

*Benefits*

Application form and letters can be produced in large print. Minicom/textphone number is publicised. 2 staff can communicate in BSL. Email address on all documents. Home visits available.

*Local Taxation*

Bills available in large print. Minicom/textphone available and publicised on all correspondence along with email address.

**Chief Executive's**

**Employment Adjustments Made**

*Corporate Human Resources*

Large print application packs available on request. Applications can be made on-line. Appropriate key boards, provision of designated parking bay. Exit interviews offered to all employees leaving Council

*Merton Link*

Appropriate software, computer screens and desk

*Partnerships*

Customised chair, taxi-fares, IT equipment and divisional laptop to enable working from home.

*Merton Translation Service* Orthopaedic chair

**Housing & Social Services**

*Lettings*

Modem available for staff working from home. Staff based in Merton Link

*Gifford House*

Ramps to entrance & exits, accessible toilet, low level filing cabinets, ergonomic desks. Adjustments to working hours

*Information & Business Support*

Appropriate desk, pedestals, light switch changed. Software

*Employment Assessment Centre*

Symbols used on signage. Building is wheelchair friendly. Desks are at wheelchair level.

*Children's Services*

Space for Guide dog

**Environmental Services**

*Whole department*

Large PC screens, special chairs, minicom/textphone service, parking permits, Dictaphones, trolleys to carry files around

## **Education, Leisure & Libraries**

*Morden Library*

Adapted telephone

*Wimbledon Library*

Adjusting hours of work and nature of the duties performed

*Youth Service*

Computer adaptations