



General Register Office for Scotland
information about Scotland's people

Disability Equality Scheme
ANNUAL REPORT

4 December 2008

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Introduction by Duncan Macniven, Registrar General for Scotland

I am pleased to introduce our second Annual Report, which provides progress on the General Register Office for Scotland's (GROS) Disability Equality Scheme.

We first published our Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan on 4 December 2006. The Scheme can be reviewed on our website <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files1/about-us/disability-equality-schemev4.pdf> as can our last Annual Report at: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files1/about-us/disability-equality-scheme-annual-report-january2008.pdf>

Since our last report in 2007, we have been steadily working to improve our services for disabled people. This is particularly demonstrated in the completion of the refurbishment of one of our two main buildings and in the ongoing preparatory work for the 2011 Census.

We are determined to continue to meet our disability equality duty.

1. Progress made since December 2007

1.1 ScotlandsPeople Centre

The ScotlandsPeople Centre, a joint venture between GROS, the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) and the Court of the Lord Lyon (CLL) opened with a shop and introductory taster sessions in General Register House on the 25 August 2008. The remaining facilities for the Centre should be fully open by Spring 2009. We have ensured equality for people with disabilities who visit the Centre by making improvements to facilities and services as follows:

- Facilities are located on the ground floor of New Register House and General Register House. These can be accessed via a ramp rather than lifts, with automatic doors to both the Matheson Dome and the Dundas Room, which in turn lead to all parts of the Centre;
- A lift has been installed at the west entrance to General Register House. Alternatively, Customers can also use the ramped access to the Matheson Dome;
- The door to the New Register House Dome has been widened, to improve access for people in wheelchairs to the seminars and other events which are held there;
- All the supervisors' desks have been fitted with induction loop systems for hearing appliances; these are at desk height to make them easier to use for wheelchair users. There is also a recess at each of these desks which allows wheelchair users to get close to the desk to speak to the supervisor;
- Electronic rise and fall desks (two in the Reid Room and one in the Adam Dome) have been installed to provide better access;
- Additional toilets for disabled people have been installed in the front reception area and in the Robertson Wing;
- The new seminar facility in New Register House has been fitted with an induction loop system;
- Two disabled parking spaces are available in the courtyard outside New Register House, which can be booked in advance by ringing the Centre; and
- To help people who are visually impaired, each search room has access to a 19" monitor. Software on each monitor allows the text on the entire screen to be enlarged using the 'zoom text' function. This allows the image on every screen to be altered to give a 'negative' appearance, which can be helpful for some forms of visual impairment.

1.2 Public Access to our Systems (via web or locally)

Our main website (www.gro-scotland.gov.uk) currently complies with the Cabinet Office AA standard for accessibility.

All GROS documents and templates in MS Word are now in a format that meets best standards for accessibility. This means that internal documents can go straight onto the web without rework. Internal staff with accessibility issues are also provided for as all electronic text (ie e-mail and intranet) meets best practice.

1.3 e-Registration

We have devised a strategy that will enable citizens to register births online, which will lessen the need for inconvenient travel for some disabled people. Originally scheduled to be piloted in January 2008, this has now been deferred to mid 2010, at the earliest, to allow time to coordinate work with the NHS and for adequate funding to be put in place. The service will “go live” as a pilot in one local council area. It is intended to extend online registration to include registration of deaths once the online birth registration service has been successfully launched.

1.4 Health & Safety Committee

The Disability Equality Duty is now an Agenda item on our quarterly Health & Safety Committee meetings.

1.5 Recruitment

We have completed the recruitment of our Census Regional Managers. We have commenced recruitment for the staff required for the Census Rehearsal in March 2009. In November 2008 we commenced our recruitment campaign for 109 Census Enumerators and a Census Coverage Survey Team Leader. GROS participates in the “Positive about Disabled People” Scheme. Under this scheme, all candidates who consider themselves to be disabled in terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and who meet the minimum criteria for the post, are guaranteed an interview.

2. Collection and Results of Information Gathering

2.1 Records Services in New Register House

We continue to obtain feedback from the public on the service we provide. This is usually obtained by paper comment sheets, customer surveys and face to face. To date we have had no requests for any modifications to services or equipment.

2.2 ScotlandsPeople

To improve and encourage feedback it is planned to put an electronic customer feedback form on the new system / network.

2.3 Census Rehearsal & Questionnaire

GROS will conduct a census rehearsal in the same way as a full-scale census. This will allow us to see how well people understand the proposed questions and how well questionnaire delivery, collection and processing arrangements work. Further information about the rehearsal can be found at:

<http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/2009-census-rehearsal/frequently-asked-questions.html>

The questions have been finalised for the 2009 Census Rehearsal and will include a new question about “nature of illness/disability”. The conditions presented as response options are:

- deafness (or severe hearing impairment);
- blindness (or severe vision impairment);
- a physical disability (a condition which substantially limits one or more basic activities such as walking, climbing stairs, lifting or carrying);
- a learning disability, a learning difficulty;
- a mental health condition (such as depression or schizophrenia);
- a chronic illness (such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, heart disease or epilepsy);
- other condition.

This question will meet user demand to help improve the planning and provision of services for people with a specific long-term health condition. The wording of the question avoids the use of the word “disability”, since many people affected by these health conditions may not consider themselves disabled.

In view of the increasing amount of unpaid personal help given to people with ill-health, it is intended to repeat the 2001 Census question about “unpaid personal care” provided for a friend or relative with a long-term illness, health problem or disability, and the time spent each week providing such care. The question provides information which will help to improve the understanding of variations in the need for care and the pressure on social services, in an attempt to target resources more effectively. Five tick boxes will be provided for response, instead of four in 2001, in order to obtain more information about part-time carers.

The Census questionnaires will be produced in large print and Braille. A telephone capture service will also be available. This service complies with accessibility standards.

We will also introduce the option for online completion of the questionnaire as part of the Rehearsal.

We recognise the need to continue to improve our understanding of how best to make the results of the Census easily available to disabled people and we will work to ensure that our paper and electronic outputs (ie web or CD/DVD) follow the appropriate standards.

3. How we work with and involve Disabled People

3.1 The 2011 Census

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)

Following several meetings with the RNIB we have agreed that we will provide Large Print questionnaires for the visually impaired, and Telephone Capture via the contact centre. On line questionnaires will be able to be accessed if the person has the appropriate software on their PC.

Deaf Connections

We are currently working with Deaf Connection to produce video clips which will sign the questions using British Sign Language (BSL). These will be available on our helpline. Text phones will be able to be used to access the contact centre.

City Literacy and Numeracy (CLAN)

After meeting with CLAN we have adopted their suggestion to use Arial in point 14 as this is easier for people with poor reading skills to read.

Awareness

We arranged for the RNIB, Deaf Connections and CLAN to give a presentation to the Census Regional Managers on awareness / sensitivity. They each gave an overview of some of the difficulties / problems their clients may encounter with the questionnaire and gave some practical tips on how best to approach their client groups.

3.2 Scottish Census Results on Line (SCROL - www.scrol.gov.uk)

We will continue to consult and involve disabled people as part of the preparation for the dissemination of the 2011 Census results. Development of a strategy for outputs from the 2011 Census is in its early stages. Consultation on issues such as taking into account the particular needs of disabled people is planned for 2009 and beyond.

4. CONCLUSION

We continue to make progress with the Key Objectives of our Disability Equality Scheme. We see opportunities to do more, and will continue to work towards ensuring that we offer an accessible and equitable service to all.