



General Register Office for Scotland
information about Scotland's people

Disability Equality Scheme
ANNUAL REPORT

January 2008

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Introduction by Duncan Macniven, Registrar General for Scotland

I am pleased to introduce the Disability Equality Annual Report 2007 for the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS).

We first published our Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan on 4 December 2006. The Scheme is available on our website <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/files1/about-us/disability-equality-schemev4.pdf>.

Since then we have been steadily working on improving our services for disabled people. This is particularly demonstrated in the refurbishment of one of our key buildings and in the preparatory work for the 2011 Census.

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

1. ScotlandsPeople Centre

1.1 The new ScotlandsPeople Centre, a joint venture between GROS, the National Archives of Scotland (NAS) and the Court of the Lord Lyon (CLL) is scheduled to open later this year. We have ensured equality for people with disabilities by making improvements to facilities and services which include:

- Location of facilities on the ground floor of New Register House and General Register House, which can be accessed via a ramp rather than lifts, with automatic doors to both the Matheson Dome and the Dundas Room;
- Installation of a lift at the west entrance to General Register House, though customers can choose to avoid using the lift, if they wish, by using 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 will be held there;
- All the supervisor desks have been fitted with induction loop systems for hearing appliances; these will be at desk height to make it easier for wheelchair users; and
- Two disabled parking spaces will be available in the courtyard outside New Register House.

To help people who have difficulty seeing:

- Each search room will have access to a 19" monitor;
- The software on each computer terminal will allow the text on the entire screen to be enlarged using the 'zoom text' function; and
- The software will allow the image on the screen to be altered to give a 'negative' appearance, which can be helpful for some forms of visual impairment.

1.2 Website

A specialist consultant has been appointed to ensure that the information presented on computer monitors to customers at the Centre and those using our external website (www.scotlandspeoplehub.gov.uk) comply with relevant design standards relating to disability. Our main website (www.gro-scotland.gov.uk) currently complies with the Cabinet Office AA standard for accessibility.

1.3 e-Registration

Work continues on developing the service 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 2009 to allow adequate time to coordinate work with the NHS. The service will “go live” as a pilot in one local council area.

1.4 Terminology

Our Disability Equality Scheme will be amended to replace the term “the disabled” with “disabled people”.

1.5 Records Services

To improve the service to disabled people, staff were encouraged to participate in a Deaf Awareness Course, recognised by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID).

1.6 Health & Safety Committee

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

2. Collection and Results of Information Gathering

2.1 Records Services in New Register House

It is our practice 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. Because of feedback obtained from a comment sheet a terminal and screen in the West Search Room was modified and the letters on the keyboard enlarged.

2.2 Search Rooms

When the Dundas Room opened in January 2007, the public desks were at a standard height. It was suggested by some customers with walking aids that it would be easier to access the desks if the height were to be raised. In response to the request and in consultation with the Centre for Accessible Environments, all of the desks were raised in height to the recommended 750mm.

2.3 Scotlandspeople

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

2.4 2006 Census Test

Findings from the voluntary Census Test of 52,000 households, carried out in Spring 2006 to try out a new questionnaire and different enumeration procedures in preparation for the 2011 Census, showed that:

- Fewer than 3% of respondents indicated that their house required disability adaptations.
- Of those respondents who indicated a disability, 92% provided details of type.
- 27% of respondents indicated that they had more than one disability.

2.5 2011 Census Questionnaire

The content of the questionnaire is still being finalised. A final decision on questions to be included in the 2009 Census Rehearsal and the 2011 Census will be made later this year and will take into account:

- length of the questionnaire
- level of user demand for the data
- the uses of the data; and
- whether there is tested, robust questions available which will meet user needs

The Census questionnaires will be produced in large print and Braille. A telephone capture service will also be available. We are also planning to have an on-line version of the questionnaire.

We recognise our 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 web outputs follow the appropriate standards.

3. How we Involved Disabled People

3.1 The 2011 Census

In October 2007, we met with City Literacy And Numeracy (CLAN) who provided us with ideas on how to reach the groups with whom they work.

In December 2007, we met with the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) and were provided with useful links to raise awareness.

In January 2008, we met with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) who provided us with useful statistics and information about types of software used on PCs, to aid with reading, and advice on forums for publicity. We are currently taking advice from the RNIB about the best colour for our Census questionnaire.

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

We will 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. Initial consultation in the first half of 2008 will focus on users' high-level needs. Further consultation on issues such as

taking into account the particular needs of disabled people is planned for 2009 and beyond.

It had been intended to upgrade the visual appearance of SCROL to bring it more in line with our main GROS website. However higher priorities have prevented progress.

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