

General Teaching Council for Wales

Disability Equality Scheme 2008 – 2010

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About GTCW

The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) is the statutory, self-regulating professional body for teachers in Wales. It seeks to raise the status of teaching by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of teachers, pupils and the general public.

The GTCW aims to provide an independent, representative and authoritative voice for the teaching profession in Wales and seeks to provide robust advice to the Welsh Assembly Government and other organisations on teaching issues.

Glossary

BATOD – British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

BDA – British Dyslexia association

DES – Disability Equality Scheme

DTRP - Disabled Teacher Reference Panel, an e-mail based teacher consultative panel made up of disabled members from across Wales

DTTF - the Disabled Teacher Task Force, hosted by GTCE

EHRC - The Equality and Human Rights Commission (formerly the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and the successor body to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC))

GTCW - The General Teaching Council for Wales

HEFCW - the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

IIP – Investors in People

ITET – Initial Teacher Education and Training

PATOSS - Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

RNIB – Royal National Institute for Blind People

Staff Forum – Meeting for staff

The Act – The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

TTRF - the Teacher Training and Recruitment Forum

RNID – Royal National Institute for Deaf People

UCET - The Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers

Introduction

The General Teaching Council for Wales is responsible for regulating and delivering services to the teachers of Wales. We are committed to meeting our statutory responsibility within the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. As an employer, we also have a responsibility to promote equal opportunities for disabled people in respect of our current and future staff.

This document is our second Disability Equality Scheme. We acknowledge that there is work to be done to demonstrate our commitment to disability equality amongst registrants, staff, Council members and the public. This is a 'live' document which has and will continue to be amended following continued involvement of disabled people in the various engagement processes and the monitoring of the action plans produced as a result of these processes.

The Council has made significant progress in involving disabled people since the publication of its first scheme and this has informed the development of the revised version. However the absence of coherent representative groups and structures for disabled teachers in Wales has hampered the speed of development of the scheme. Similarly the evidenced concerns of disabled teachers in disclosing disability and engaging with consultations has meant securing input from disabled teachers with a range of impairments has not been fully achieved. Similarly representing more general demographics around age, gender and ethnicity has been unrealistic at this stage. The Council has engaged with all staff declaring a disability but is aware of the need to continue foster a culture that supports disclosure amongst existing staff and those applicants for employment.

Key features of our scheme:-

1. Our scheme is designed to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and eliminate discrimination and harassment, removing many of the barriers encountered in accessing services. This approach includes improvements to services, the built environment and policies to make the Council more accessible to all.
2. Adoption of the Social Model of disability, which means that we are committed to pro-actively removing barriers that disabled people meet rather than just being reactive when complaints are received.

3. A commitment to increase engagement with disabled people as the scheme develops to ensure that it reflects and addresses the experiences of disabled registrants, staff, Council members and the public. Our DES Action Plan reflects the key priorities that have been identified through the ongoing engagement processes.
4. The overall aim of the scheme is to build disability equality into all our processes and systems to ensure that it is 'mainstreamed' into our policies and service delivery. This scheme identifies issues that we will be working on to December 2010. Our programme of impact assessments, together with consultations, has identified the priority areas for development. The code of practice "The Duty to Promote Disability Equality" issued by the former Disability Rights Commission, forms the foundation for the scheme.

This scheme covers all areas of GTCW's activities as a regulator, service provider, employer, a public body and a purchaser of services.

Included in our action plan is the commitment to further increase the involvement of disabled people in identifying issues and in publicising the results and the actions to develop our practices and monitor our progress.

We will continue to challenge the way we provide services, develop policies and employ and retain disabled people to ensure that they are treated fairly and favourably.

We will continue to support and encourage increased involvement of disabled people within the Council through the elected, directly appointed and nominated routes.

This scheme is a positive sign of our commitment to promote equal opportunities for all.

Mal Davies
Chairperson

Gary Brace
Chief Executive

The General Teaching Council for Wales

What is a Disability Equality Scheme?

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on a wide range of public bodies to promote disability equality (the general duty). It also created a specific duty for us to produce and publish our first disability equality scheme (DES) by 3rd December 2007 and to report on it annually. The scheme would usually be completely reviewed and revised every three years but the Council committed to completely revise the scheme by July 2008, after securing greater engagement with disabled teachers, staff and disabled service users.

The Scheme means that the Council, in carrying out its functions, must have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life;
- take account of disabled people's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The Duty To Promote Disability Equality

The statutory Code of Practice defines a disabled person as:

“A person who has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out day-to-day activities”.

Social Model of Disability

“The poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. “

(An extract from Statutory Code of Practice - The Duty to Promote Disability Equality).

The GTCW has adopted the **Social Model** of disability.

This Disability Equality Scheme has been prepared to ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the Act and the statutory code of practice. However, we recognise that whilst this is a legislative requirement, we see it as essential to the efficient delivery of our services and effective engagement with our stakeholders.

This scheme sets out how the Council will meet its statutory obligation through to December 2010 and our overall commitment to:

- increase involvement of disabled people in processes and undertake impact assessments on our services with relevance to our general duty to eliminate any disability discrimination and/or harassment;
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations both in our service delivery and as a good employer.

The specific requirements or duties in the legislation cover service delivery, policy-making, employment, the composition of the Council and all undertakings by GTCW and its agents.

GTCW's Disability Equality Scheme

Aims of the Scheme

Our strategic aims for disability equality are to:

- create and sustain services which are accessible and barrier free to disabled people;
- create and sustain a culture, both within our organisation and our stakeholder communities, of positive relations with disabled people, which promote the benefits of creating a barrier-free environment.

Objectives of the Scheme:

To achieve these aims we need to continue to:

1. involve disabled people in identifying our priorities for this scheme;
2. undertake an assessment of the Council's functions and policies to identify any adverse impacts on disabled people and develop action plans to address these where reasonable;
3. monitor our policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of disability equality and establish a 'rolling-review' mechanism, which will shape positive change;
4. ensure equitable access to services, information and employment for people regardless of their impairment;
5. train staff and Council members in connection with their duties, responsibilities and moral obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005;
6. monitor our staff, Council members, registrants and other service users through the collection and analysis of disability data (to find any patterns of inequality and improve service delivery) and publish the results of our monitoring each year;

7. take positive action to promote equality of opportunity for employees, potential employees and Council members who are disabled;
8. further review the scheme by December 2010 and at 3-year intervals thereafter, making any changes found to be necessary based on the involvement of disabled people in the evaluation and planning process and the out-turns viewed against the Action Plan;
9. provide an annual progress update within the Annual Report and half-yearly reports to the Executive Committee.

1. Involving disabled people within the Disability Equality Scheme

1.1 What we have achieved so far

The GTCW recognises the need to have access to a wide range of opinions and views in carrying out its decision making and planning processes. The Council already uses a virtual reference panel of disabled teachers and staff as part its engagement processes. These methods will continue to be used and developed in order to consult on new, revised and proposed policies and functions and have regard to statutory requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and best practice. Training and support will be provided to all persons undertaking consultation exercises to ensure an inclusive approach.

We have recognised the need to achieve greater involvement amongst disabled people (and representative groups for the disabled) that is reflective of a range of impairments and other demographic factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. The relationships being developed with disabled individuals and groups will provide a firm foundation on which to build the engagement channels.

The GTCW consultation and involvement processes will continue to ensure that there are opportunities to participate available to everyone who wishes to do so. We need to:

- continue to identify and prioritise those policies where we need to involve or consult disabled people;
- refine appropriate involvement/consultation processes;
- analyse the results to inform further action planning;
- provide feedback to all people and organisations involved;
- where reasonably practical implement the outcomes;
- publish the results.

1.1.1 Public involvement

Securing involvement of the general public will continue through relationship development with disability representative groups (including Mencap, Disability Wales, the British Dyslexia Association,

the RNIB and the RNID) and parental representative groups such as the National Council for Parent Teacher Associations.

1.1.2 Staff involvement

As part of the process of formulating the original scheme we recognised the limited data that had been historically captured about disability amongst current staff.

As part of the scheme's development we have started evaluating the data held to allow the monitoring of employment' training & development, and promotion patterns around disability.

Despite the use of various communication channels and meetings only one member of staff has declared a disability and they have been fully involved in the further development of the scheme. Managers recognise the need to continue to foster a culture that encourages disclosure as a positive process to allow adjustments to take place and ensuring that there is no fear of negative repercussions.

1.2 Planned action

Although we have taken account of the comments received during the staff and stakeholder involvement exercises when preparing our action plan, we recognise the limitations of the inputs we have received. To address this we will:

- continue to work with individuals and groups, through involvement and consultation, to enhance their ability to influence the decisions we take;
- we will also continue to work with the EHRC, Disability Wales and other relevant representative groups to assist the Council to undertake the necessary involvement and outreach work;
- undertake relevance and impact assessments for all new and revised policy developments;
- where possible work with other relevant stakeholders to organise common involvement/consultation processes to avoid duplication of communication with various groups and

- individuals, helping to avoid overload and ensuring a better response;
- continue to improve our engagement and consultation to ensure the maximum involvement and influence on the outcomes when considering the employment and retention of disabled people.

To implement these we will:

- continue to support and develop the Disabled Teacher Reference Panel;
- continue to support setting up a disabled staff forum if disabled staff want it;
- continue the expansion of web based communications that offer greater scope for accessible information for, and dialogue with, disabled teachers;
- provide opportunities for public involvement as required;
- provide feedback opportunities for disabled employment candidates who have experienced the recruitment process;
- monitor complaints relating to disability as integral part of our standards of service processes;
- actively participate in the UK wide Disabled Teacher Task Force and continue to promote a disability focus within the Teacher Training Recruitment Forum;
- continue to develop links with groups specifically representing the interests of disabled teachers including trades unions and professional associations;
- further develop formal links with bodies representing disabled people in general;
- further develop links with EHRC and Disability Wales.

2. Identifying functions and policies and assessing impact of those that are relevant

2.1 What we have achieved so far

We have undertaken initial internal reviews of functions and policies;

This approach ensured that we:

- identify the aims of any function or policy and how it works.
- examine any data and research available;
- assess the likely impact of the function or policy on disability equality;
- if the function or policy leads to unlawful disability discrimination, identify another way of meeting our aims;
- adapt the function or policy to compensate for any adverse effects or remove them;
- involve disabled people who are likely to be affected by the function or policy;
- ascertain differing needs of people with disabilities and identify a way of meeting those needs;
- ensure that the function or policy does not harm good disability equality relations;
- make arrangements to monitor and review the function or policy and its impact;
- consult and involve disabled people on proposed significant changes to functions or policies.

2.2 Planned action

The Council will:

- continue to work with disabled people to ensure that our internal review process has identified all relevant functions and policies;

- continue to work with disabled people to ensure subsequent impact assessments are adequately robust in terms of disabled user involvement;
- where services are provided either in partnership with another agency or by a third party, the Council remains responsible for ensuring that all third parties comply with our Disability Equality Scheme duties. Existing contracts will be reviewed alongside procurement procedures and other relevant function/ services/ policies.

3. Monitoring and publishing relevant information

3.1 What we have achieved so far

Service Users

In order to monitor our standards of service effectively, and to ensure we deliver appropriate services that meet the needs of all of our customers (regardless of disability), we ensure that we maintain up to date contact records of how and when our services are used and any adjustments people may have needed to access services and information more effectively.

As part of our standards of service policy we also monitor complaints to identify issues of potential concern (including disability); levels of satisfaction or complaint rates; barriers or problems with Council services; and the way we deal with people. This enables us to identify any underlying causes that could result in some disabled people being treated less favourably than non-disabled people.

3.2 Planned action

3.2.1 Service Users

We will continue to collect, monitor and publish relevant information on a regular basis to help inform our decision-making process and to keep interested parties informed of progress made through the GTCW web site, Teaching Wales and other publications such as the Annual Report.

3.2.2 Service Managers

All service managers will continue to collect relevant monitoring data to ensure we can demonstrate a policy of fair service delivery.

3.2.3 Employment Monitoring

To meet our Specific Duties under the Disability Discrimination Act we will monitor the number of disabled:

- staff currently working for us;
- applicants for employment, training and promotion;
- staff who receive training;
- staff who are involved in grievance and bullying/harassment procedures;
- staff who are the subject of disciplinary action, including sickness absence warnings;
- staff who end their service with us.

By monitoring our workforce (and potential workforce) we can evaluate the fairness of all employment practices. Where we identify discrimination in our policies or practices we will take action to remove discrimination by changing these policies or practices as appropriate.

3.2.4 Publishing Results

The Council will continue to make use of diverse and relevant media to inform our registrants, staff and the public of our performance and in this instance provide information specific to disabled people. In addition increasing the level of information available from the GTCW web site, key documents will be made available in alternative formats (including large print and electronic format). The availability of our services and information in alternative formats will be highlighted within Teaching Wales, the Council's quarterly journal which is delivered to every registrant and other stakeholders.

We will publish specific sections of Teaching Wales on equality issues including the Council's performance, targets and results.

Our employment monitoring reports will be published for all employees through team meetings and staff fora and also published on our website annually so that staff and the public can have access to this information.

4. Service Delivery

4.1 What we have achieved so far

Many items identified during the self-review relate to the provision of services and will share solutions with other action points.

We currently adapt service delivery to suit the needs of our disabled users on an 'as requested' basis. This can include assistance with access or communications where necessary arising from individual impairments of our users.

We also aim to ensure that our service delivery is barrier free and that there are suitable alternatives available to those with impairments, which take account of the impairment and will ensure that reasonable access to the service concerned is provided.

4.2 Planned action

4.2.1 Service Users

We will improve upon the collection and storage of registrant data to avoid registrants having to ask each time they receive a service for adjustments that will help overcome their individual impairment. We will ensure that all relevant persons are aware of this provision.

When disabled people visit our offices we will work to ensure that they have barrier free access to services.

We will endeavour to ensure that disabled people can engage with a number of required services at one visit rather than having to make separate visits to resolve a multi faceted issue involving more than one team.

4.2.2 Employment

We will review the effectiveness of our policies and practices using monitoring data and ascertain any areas of potential unintentional discrimination.

We will compile an action plan each year from the monitoring report and these actions will be used when reviewing this and any future revisions of this Disability Equality Scheme.

We will follow up action plans with a report summarising the steps taken under the action plan, and the use to which information gathered has been put.

5. Employment and Staff/Council Member Development

We recognise that our workforce is our greatest asset and that a diverse workforce will more readily be able to respond to the needs of the diverse communities we serve. We are committed to facilitate the integration of disability equality into the business culture and processes of the Council. We believe that this is not only essential for reasons of equal opportunities, but it makes good business sense to design and deliver policies and services which respond to the needs of all individuals. Achieving this vision will encourage greater openness in policy and decision making.

5.1 What we have done so far

5.1.2 Recruitment & Selection Policy

We are positive about disabled people within our recruitment processes and guarantee an interview to all disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria of the post. We are committed to achieve the effective employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees.

We have specific shortlisting and interview protocols to support the recruitment policy that ensures that a fair and transparent process is adopted.

5.1.2 Adjustments to enable independent working

We have encouraged currently employed staff to declare impairments as part of a positive process of adjustment and monitoring.

When an employee becomes disabled in the workplace, managers (in conjunction with our occupational health advisers if needed) will agree with the employee what is necessary to help the employee return to, or remain in, work. Similar adjustments are made for disabled people who are successful in gaining posts with GTCW.

5.1.3 Training and Development

Individual training needs are identified through the Performance and Development Review process, which is carried out annually by all employees, and this enables identification of disability equality training needs where appropriate. The Investors in People (IIP) standard requires monitoring and evaluation of training and development activities of all employees and training courses attended require delegates to complete a course evaluation form. The outcomes of these evaluations are monitored as part of the training plan.

5.2 Planned action

We will:-

- train the staff responsible for carrying out impact assessments to ensure a consistent approach to disability equality when reviewing our services and policies;
- we will train all those involved in the recruitment and selection process in equality issues to ensure we meet our specific duties and eliminate discrimination. Training for new recruiters will be provided as part of their induction prior to their involvement in a recruitment exercise;
- equality training will be focused on the needs of specific roles within the Council i.e. front line staff, supervisors and managers. We will also ensure that where relevant an impact assessment on employment (and other policies) identifies specific training needs on the equality implications;
- external training providers will be required to include disability equality aspects in the programmes they deliver where appropriate;
- all in-house programmes will include separate elements on equality and diversity issues in the workforce;
- use the evaluation process to help us make adjustments to programmes as appropriate, identify any further training requirements and to ensure that equality issues are mainstreamed;
- continue to develop policies to promote disabled people in the work place.

To implement these broader actions we are currently planning the following specific activities:

- further enhance our training plan to raise the profile of equalities training through the inclusion of equalities within staff performance and development review process;
- introduce a 'Basic Awareness of Disability' training programme for all staff and Council members in 2008;
- implement training for 'front line' staff and managers in 2008;
- review new staff induction processes to ensure specific disability equality elements;
- review the Staff Handbook to incorporate this policy.

6. The Built Environment

We have adopted the Social Model of disability whereby it is the environment and attitudes that disable people, not their individual impairment. It is therefore essential to ensure that the Council's offices, associated areas and external venues are free from barriers to engagement with disabled people.

6.1 What we have achieved so far

GTCW's leased Cardiff office

The Council has adopted a strategy for managing Part III of the DDA to ensure that barriers are removed from the built environment when considering access to services. The landlord has addressed the most urgent matters identified in relation to disabled access, but there remains much to do in respect of readily available toilet facilities for disabled people, powered doors and the GTCW reception desk (in terms of accessible height and an induction loop for the hearing impaired). Car parking facilities are not appropriate for disabled visitors.

The lack of adequate resources available to the Council has been a limiting factor on the progress made to date in this area, along with contractual commitments to the existing leased premises.

External venues

Generally the GTCW uses external venues that are modern commercial buildings that are 'disability friendly'. The suitability of WAG's disability friendly audit tool for external venues has been considered by teams.

6.2 Planned action

GTCW's Wood Street office

Continue to press the landlord of the building (in conjunction with other public bodies that are required to meet the DED) to adapt the main entrance, floor specific entrances, toilets and car parking facilities to meet the DED.

External venues

Introduce a disability equality protocol for all external venues.

7. Access to Information / Communications

It is vital that our registrants and other stakeholders have access to information concerning the activities of and services provided by the Council. We currently provide information to a wide range of stakeholders including registrants, potential registrants, the Welsh Assembly Government, local authorities, other relevant bodies, governors, parents and the general public.

We can provide information in a number of ways, but mainly by printed publications, letters, the GTCW Web site and e-mail.

One of the potential barriers to our services and information is the method of delivery. In today's society we recognise that we need to make information available in a way that suits the needs of our registrants and other users. This will mean that disabled people will be more aware of our services, their entitlement to our services, will have confidence about using our services and will be less likely to face barriers when trying to use our services. Our continued investment in the increased availability of web based services and information will benefit many disabled service users.

7.1 What we have achieved so far

Service users and employees

The Council can communicate with a range of disabled people through its recently redesigned web site that adheres to industry standards for accessibility.

Key printed publications are available in alternative formats on request, including large text and electronic files readable by various ICT packages.

7.2 Planned action

Service users and employees

Access to services will be considered as part of the impact assessment process for new or reviewed services. Each service that undertakes an

impact assessment will need to identify improvement actions (if required) that will be included in their operational plans for implementation. Many of the improvement actions are likely to include monitoring of service users and their perceptions. Analysis of monitoring exercises will help us to understand if any of our service users (or potential service users) is experiencing problems accessing Council services or information provision.

The Council is working towards producing an access to services strategy and this policy will be impact assessed prior to implementation. We will continue to work with other relevant bodies to share information about best practice and potential problems.

8. Promoting Disabled People

We work with disabled people to ensure that we positively promote a fully accessible and inclusive delivery of our services to all. We accept that this may mean that we will take positive actions where required to ensure that disabled people will receive a service on no less favourable terms than non disabled people.

8.1 Planned action

We will continue to promote disabled people to ensure involvement in Council activities and functions. We are particularly keen to encourage disabled people (and other underrepresented groups) to come forward as candidates at election times to seek to represent teachers. We will also seek to influence the process of nomination and appointment to increase disabled person involvement.

In our advice to the Welsh Assembly Government we will promote the value of disabled teachers, particularly in relation to advice around the Fitness to Teach health standards.

We will work with HEFCW, the Teacher Training Recruitment Forum (TTRF) and providers of ITET in Wales to promote the value of disabled potential teachers.

We will continue to be actively involved in the pan UK Disabled Teacher Task Force hosted by GTCE.

Many of the actions outlined earlier will have a positive impact on this action point.

9. Reviewing the Scheme

This Scheme will be a 'work in progress' which will inevitably have to change to reflect Council, community and disabled people's needs on an ongoing basis. Therefore the action plan will continue to be monitored by the Senior Management Team, Executive Committee, Audit & Scrutiny Committee and the Council. It will be reported on annually and will take into account the result of the ongoing involvement and monitoring activities. We will assess our performance against the actions that we have set out to achieve and also identify new actions based on any changes in disabled people's needs, legislation and supporting guidance.

9.1 Planned action

Council would normally completely review and revise the scheme every three years, but in light of the difficulties encountered with engagement of disabled teachers in the first scheme this revised scheme has been published in July 2008.

Administration of the Scheme

Responsibility and Accountability

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for our Disability Equality Scheme and will work closely with the Senior Management Team to oversee it.

Co-ordination of the day to day running of the scheme rests with the Policy and Planning Manager. Responsibility for the implementation and continued update of the action plans rests with the individual teams.

Contact Us

If you would like to comment or have any questions about this Disability Equality Scheme please contact the Policy and Planning Manager:

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Copies of this scheme can be made available on request in large print or as an audio file. Please contact us by any of the above means to arrange this.