

DISABILITY EQUALITY INVOLVEMENT

**Report on Outcomes from the
7th July 2009 event held in conjunction with
Capability Scotland**

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1.0 Introduction

Audit Scotland is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity for all staff, all client groups and the public. In order to ensure that our work takes account of the particular needs and requirements of diverse groups we are keen to consult and involve a diverse range of stakeholders. Their views and opinions will help shape the way that we do business and help ensure that our practices are inclusive. As part of achieving these aims and to comply with our duty to involve disabled people in our work, Audit Scotland invited Capability Scotland's Training and Consultancy Team to support us in running involvement events with disabled people.

Our third consultation and involvement event was held at the Capability Scotland Head Office on Monday 7th July 2009 and was attended by nine disabled people who work with Capability Scotland predominantly in providing training, user access surveys and mystery shopping services. Most of the attendees also hold a number of other committee and public appointments representing disabled people and inputting their views to shape public practice. The group has a range of impairments and conditions including physical and sensory impairments and hidden impairments.



For our third event, we focused on the following key and current areas of focus:

- Best Value Audit Equalities Toolkit
- Physical Recreation Study

Overall, the event was both informative and enjoyable with everyone fully participating in a lively debate on relevant issues. Audit Scotland is grateful for the contributions made by all attendees and for the facilitation provided by Elspeth Molony of Capability Scotland.

Since the consultation event, various stakeholders across Audit Scotland have been considering how they can take on board the points made by attendees. This document is both a report of the event and a response to the recommendations put forward. For ease of reference, within each topic area we have separated out 'Discussion Themes'; 'Recommendations' (made by Capability Scotland) and 'Response including Actions to be Taken' (by Audit Scotland) and shown these in tabular format.

2.0 Discussion Areas and Recommendations

In the following sections we cover the two main topic areas Best Value Audit Equalities Toolkit and the Physical Recreation Study.

2.1 Best Value Audit Equalities Toolkit

Mark McCabe, Audit Scotland Project Manager, gave a presentation detailing the Best Value Audit Equalities Toolkit. The participants heard that auditors have toolkits for every aspect of Best Value Audits and that while equalities concerns run through every part of an audit, this toolkit looks specifically at how well a council is promoting equality and supports auditors to make consistent judgements. Audit Scotland will review and update toolkits on an annual basis to support continuous improvement.

Participants were asked to consider:

- Is Audit Scotland examining the right issues?
- Is Audit Scotland asking the right questions?
- How relevant are the sources of evidence Audit Scotland has identified?
- What should Audit Scotland prioritise?

As part of the discussion, participants were asked to consider which questions in the Equalities Toolkit were most relevant to the points raised.

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>Mainstreaming of disability equality throughout an organisation</u></p> <p>Participants felt that a crucial issue to examine was how well a council had mainstreamed disability equality. It was felt that every member of staff within a Council should recognise the importance of disability equality, not just one or two designated “equalities officers”.</p>	<p>Priority questions in the toolkit which reflect this point are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To what extent is equality embedded into a culture of continuous improvement?” • “How well are staff supported in meeting the organisation’s equality and diversity goals?” 	<p>We recognise the importance of mainstreaming equality and the BV equality toolkit will assess this.</p>

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>Whether or not “basic practice” should cover all strands of equality or just the three strands that have public duties</u></p> <p>Some participants felt strongly that basic practice should cover all six strands of equality and not just disability, race and gender. It was felt that for an organisation to be promoting equality at even a basic level all strands should be covered.</p> <p>It was highlighted that although race, disability and age alone have public sector duties, that the other strands of age, religion & belief and sexual orientation have rights under employment legislation and will soon be subject to comparable equality duties with the introduction of the Single Equality Act.</p>	<p>Pre-empt the Single Equality Act by including all areas of equality in basic practice requirements.</p>	<p>We expect organisations to consider all six equalities strands and this is reflected in our approach to our best value assessment of equalities performance. The toolkit refers to basic practice covering 3 strands in reference to the equalities duties and associated practice.</p> <p>In light of the forthcoming Single Equality Act, and to ensure consistency with our own approach to equalities that covers all strands, we will revise our expectations and seek internal agreement on revising the toolkit to reflect this point.</p>

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>The importance of a Council having awareness of the make-up of their community in order to spend resources effectively</u></p> <p>The participants agreed that it was important that councils are aware of the proportion of disabled people in their community in order to ensure that resources were effectively allocated.</p>	<p>Priority questions in the toolkit which link to this issue were identified as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How well does the organisation know the profile and needs of its diverse communities?”, and the two sub questions: • “How effectively does the organisation understand the diversity and inequality within its communities?” • “How effectively does the organisation engage its diverse communities to understand their needs?” 	<p>We recognise the importance of organisations understanding the make up of the communities they serve, including an understanding of the various equalities groups and their specific needs. We designed the equalities toolkit to reflect this.</p>

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<p><u>The importance of a council's activities having a positive impact on the community</u></p> <p>The group discussed the importance of focussing on <i>outcomes</i> not just strategies and plans. It was agreed that the actual impact on the community is what is important rather than what a council plans to do.</p>	<p>Priority questions in the toolkit were identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Does the organisation deliver positive outcomes for its diverse communities?”, and the three sub questions: • “To what extent are services delivered in ways that meet the needs of their diverse communities?” • “How effectively can the organisation demonstrate improved outcomes for its diverse communities?” • “How satisfied are communities that services meet their diverse needs?” 	<p>The essence of BV2 is to focus on the delivery of outcomes for service users and the wider community.</p> <p>We will examine the effectiveness of the systems that organisations have in place to deliver outcomes as well as the delivery of outcomes. We designed the equalities toolkit to reflect this.</p>

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<p><u>The importance of equality impact assessments</u></p> <p>The group discussed the importance of councils carrying out effective equality impact assessments so that any potential negative outcome of a policy or practice would be identified prior to a policy being put into practice.</p>	<p>A priority question in the toolkit is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How effectively is equality built into decision making and scrutiny arrangements?” 	<p>We recognise that EqlAs are an important source of evidence for integrating equality considerations into decision-making and the toolkit covers this issue.</p>

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<p><u>The importance of all staff in an organisation being equipped to implement the policies developed by senior managers</u></p> <p>The group agreed that staff must be supported to understand the equality objectives of an organisation. They must have sufficient understanding of the potential barriers so that they do not undermine what the organisation is trying to do by failing to tackle disabling barriers at grass roots level.</p>	<p>A priority question in the toolkit linked to this area is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How well are staff supported in meeting the organisation's equality and diversity goals?" 	<p>The BV audit will look at whether equality training is incorporated into training and staff development programmes. An assessment of the quality of the training provided is not within the scope of a BV audit.</p>

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<p><u>The importance of high level involvement of disabled stakeholders in the policy development of a council</u></p> <p>Participants agreed that all councils should hold involvement events with disabled people to ensure that disabled people’s views are taken into account in planning for change.</p>	<p>A priority question in the toolkit is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How effectively does the organisation engage its diverse communities to understand their needs?” 	<p>Involving appropriate stakeholders in the development of policy and practice is an important element of best value.</p> <p>BV audits will assess an organisation’s effectiveness in relation to community engagement including engagement with equalities groups.</p>
<p><u>The importance of letting the public know how well a council performs on equality</u></p> <p>Participants felt that it was important for councils to communicate performance on equality to the public so that members of the public can compare how well their council performs on equality issues compared to other councils.</p>	<p>A priority question in the toolkit is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How effectively does the organisation report on equality to the public?” 	<p>We agree that organisations should report on their performance. This is covered in the BV equalities and public performance reporting toolkits.</p>

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>The importance of disability equality training for Council Members as well as all staff</u></p> <p>The participants agreed that a council demonstrating best practice in disability equality would have disability equality covered in training provided for both staff and Council Members.</p> <p>The training should be tailored to meet the needs of the different groups.</p> <p>At councillor level, the training should tackle the attitudinal barrier that equality costs more.</p>	<p>Auditors should look for evidence of the level of training in disability equality that has been provided for staff and whether only front line staff are trained or also senior staff and council members.</p> <p>Training should be delivered by disabled people and based on the social model of disability.</p> <p>Auditors should look for evidence of policies and procedures being put into place at the front line.</p>	<p>We expect that trainers should have a thorough understanding of equality issues, including disability issues.</p> <p>BV audits will examine whether equality training is incorporated into training and development programmes for staff and elected members.</p>

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>Impact assessing policies and procedures effectively from the outset with input from disabled stakeholders</u></p> <p>The group discussed the importance of council's complying with the Disability Equality Duty requirement to involve disabled people in the planning and impact assessment process.</p> <p>Participants stressed the importance of taking into account the views and requirements of disabled people from the outset rather than retrospectively, which can often be costly.</p>	<p>The Equalities Toolkit should ask a specific question regarding whether the council has complied with the Disability Equality Duty requirement to involve disabled people in planning and impact assessment.</p> <p>This should stress that meaningful involvement is required as opposed to tick box consultation and that involvement should take place from the outset.</p>	<p>BV audits will consider organisations progress in delivering its range of equalities duties and equality scheme requirements.</p>

2.2 Physical Recreation Study

Claire Richards, Audit Scotland Performance Auditor, gave a presentation detailing the forthcoming physical recreation study. The study will focus on four key objectives covering strategic planning and delivery of services, service costs and performance, responsiveness to customers' needs and the impact of pricing on service delivery and participation. The brief for the study has been approved and the study is underway. The study team is developing the study methodology and will use stakeholder feedback to inform this.

The participants at the involvement event heard that the study is going to look into how councils perform in delivering physical recreation services for the public, and will examine a number of issues including barriers to participation, consultation and community engagement. The study will look at how councils deliver physical recreation services for the different groups within their communities including equalities groups, disadvantaged communities and other hard to reach groups.

Participants were asked to discuss:

- Their own views/experiences of using physical recreation services
- What councils are doing well and what could be done better
- Potential equalities questions for the survey and fieldwork
- Potential sources of evidence

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<p><u>Where to source evidence of Council's practice</u></p> <p>The group heard that Capability Scotland has previously researched access to sport and published a report at the beginning of this year, which details 10 barriers to accessing sport.</p>	<p>The project team could use the report as evidence in relation to barriers to physical recreation.</p>	<p>We will undertake a review of existing research and guidance covering physical activity, sport, participation and barriers to participation. We will review Capability Scotland's research report as part of this exercise.</p>

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<p><u>Physical accessibility to leisure facilities</u></p> <p>The group discussed their own experiences of accessing leisure centres. Several members of the group reported that physical access is a particular problem for disabled people. The accessibility problems discussed covered access to, and within facilities.</p> <p>Some examples given by the group included a lack of access to adequate changing facilities for wheelchair users and lack of access to gym equipment due to the positioning of machines.</p> <p>The group felt that councils could do more to improve access within sports facilities and that whilst some</p>	<p>Investigate the impact of the physical inaccessibility of venues on the participation of disabled people in physical recreation.</p> <p>This is not just the main entrance but also toilets, parking, changing facilities, hoists, the layout of gym equipment, provision of seating, size of signage and locker numbers etc.</p>	<p>The study team understands that physical access is a particular problem for disabled people.</p> <p>In carrying out the study, we will investigate councils' awareness of the needs of equalities groups (e.g. BME community, women, disabled people) and barriers to participation and will seek to examine how councils address these issues.</p> <p>A detailed investigation covering accessibility of leisure facilities is out with the scope of the study.</p>

improvements have been made following the Disability Discrimination Act, more needs to be done so that disabled people can use leisure facilities independently.		
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<p><u>Staff attitudes and practices</u></p> <p>The group discussed their experiences in using leisure facilities and in particular, their experiences of staff. Individuals discussed their experiences of unhelpful staff. The group felt that staff often lack understanding or awareness of how to engage with disabled people. Participants felt that it is often assumed that disabled people will have a personal assistant or carer with them.</p> <p>The group discussed their individual experiences at sports facilities and in some cases, reported that their experience has put them off re-attending.</p>	<p>Investigate the impact of negative staff attitudes and practices on the participation of disabled people in physical recreation.</p>	<p>The physical recreation study will focus on four main objectives outlined in the project brief.</p> <p>An investigation of staff attitudes and practices is outwith our remit and out with the scope of the study.</p>

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<p><u>The hidden costs of taking part in physical recreation</u></p> <p>Participants in the group who require support to take part in physical recreation spoke about the additional costs of having a carer or PA with them while taking part in physical recreation.</p>	<p>Investigate the hidden costs of disabled people participating in physical recreation and the effect this has on participation.</p> <p>Look at the potential solutions being offered by Councils.</p>	<p>This discussion provided valuable insight into some of the wider barriers that disabled people experience in accessing sports and recreation activities.</p> <p>Our study will examine pricing of activities and various subsidies that councils have in place for members of the community. An investigation of the hidden costs of participation for specific groups, including disabled people (such as childcare, personal assistant and carer costs), is outwith the scope of the study.</p>

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>Specific activities for disabled people compared with participation in mainstream recreation activities</u></p> <p>The group discussed the pros and cons of taking part in activities specifically set up for disabled people compared to taking part in mainstream activities. The participants' opinions differed depending on their impairment type. Participants who could take part in mainstream activities and have their needs met preferred this to taking part in activities specifically for disabled people. However, participants whose needs could only be effectively met in a specific group felt that this was preferable, for example, wheelchair basketball and tandem riding for blind people.</p> <p>The conclusion is that choice should</p>	<p>Investigate council's provision of activities specifically for disabled people but also the level of adaptation that they make (or would be willing to make) to mainstream activities so that disabled people can take part.</p> <p>It is important that councils do not think that if they fund specific groups for disabled people that this means they do not need to make mainstream activities as accessible and inclusive as possible.</p>	<p>In carrying out the study, we will investigate council's awareness of barriers to participation for a number of hard to reach and low participation groups, including disabled people. We will also look at the action councils are taking to address these barriers and gather examples of good practice for dissemination in the study report.</p>

be provided for disabled people and the appropriate support provided to take part in mainstream activities where possible.		
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<p><u>Links with health care</u></p> <p>The group discussed issues relating to the people working at leisure centres and reported mixed experiences in relation to the guidance and support provided by staff. There was some concern that staff are not adequately trained to provide guidance to disabled people and that there is often an inadequate number of staff available to help.</p> <p>Participants also reported that greater co-ordination between medical professionals and leisure centres would help to encourage disabled people to use services and improve their experience of physical activity by providing tailored support.</p>	<p>The research should recognise that many people start physical recreation on the advice of doctors or physiotherapists after accidents or operations. Councils should understand this, provide adequate support, and ensure effective liaison between agencies.</p>	<p>Our study will investigate how councils respond to customer needs, their awareness of barriers to participation and action taken to address these and will gather examples of good practice.</p> <p>The study will also look at how councils work with private, public and third sector partners in delivering physical recreation services for the whole community including equalities groups.</p>

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<p><u>Inflexibility in the provision of services</u></p> <p>The group discussed the lack of choice of activities that are open to many disabled people and that support is often provided at a set time and day, meaning that disabled people have limited choice about when and how frequently they access facilities.</p>	<p>Coaches should be trained to be responsive and to use creative solutions to meet service users' needs. For example, Capability Scotland provides this sort of training to coaches who work with Edinburgh Leisure and West Lothian Leisure.</p>	<p>Our study will seek to gather evidence of positive work that councils have undertaken to encourage participation and improve the experiences of specific groups.</p>
<p><u>Lack of consultation of disabled service users</u></p> <p>The majority of participants reported that their council had not consulted them about physical recreation services.</p>	<p>Councils should comply with the Disability Equality Duty to involve disabled people in the development of services, including physical recreation services.</p>	<p>Our study will investigate how councils consult and engage with their communities including equalities groups.</p>

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<p><u>Questions to include in a Survey</u></p> <p>The group discussed questions that could be included in the survey of service users.</p>	<p>Issues to ask about include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of disability equality training provided to staff • What specialised activities they run • What efforts have been made to make mainstream activities inclusive • How accessible their venues are (using a wide understanding of access discussed above) • How they involve disabled people in developing activities and services. 	<p>This discussion provided a useful insight into some of the issues to investigate in relation to barriers to participation for equalities groups (e.g. BME community, women, disabled people etc).</p> <p>We will use this feedback to inform the preparation of our audit tools for the fieldwork element of the study.</p>



3.0 Next Steps

The outcomes and identified actions from this involvement event will be considered and reflected in the Best Value Equalities Toolkit and Physical Recreation Study, where applicable.

A further involvement event looking at the Audit Scotland Single Equality Scheme will take place within later in the summer.

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