

BEYOND 2004 – A DCMS FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON DISABILITY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. The Government’s primary objective in this area, as set out in the Department for Work and Pensions’ Public Service Agreement is to “improve rights and opportunities for disabled people in a fair and inclusive society”. DCMS is fully committed to supporting this objective, and to ensuring that disabled people are able to access and participate fully in cultural, heritage, sporting and leisure activities, including employment in these fields.
- 1.2. DCMS’ original Action Plan was published three years ago, and was developed as a result of a conference, ‘Towards 2004’, which took place in July 2000. It brought together recommended actions for DCMS, the public bodies in its sectors, other public sector and commercial organisations and Government Departments. This first Action Plan noted achievements and set new targets, and provided a good basis on which to encourage DCMS Public Bodies to prepare to implement the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in time for 2004.
- 1.3. DCMS and its sectors have achieved a great deal since July 2000 – The Broadcasters and Creative Industries Disability Network (BICDN) launched a Positive Action on Disability Manifesto; the Arts Council Employment Programme includes an Apprenticeship Scheme to increase disabled people’s access to employment in the arts; and Culture Online will provide disabled people with wider access to arts and culture – to name just a few positive developments. However, there were areas in the original Action Plan which were not specifically for DCMS to take forward, and which DCMS had no direct influence over achieving, and a number of significant new initiatives have been developed since its launch. It is, therefore, time to review the original Action Plan and, in consultation with key partners, such as DCMS’ sponsored bodies and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), to develop a more refined and focused document against which DCMS’ contribution to the disability agenda can realistically be measured.
- 1.4. It has been decided that this new document should be in the form of a Framework for Action rather than an Action Plan. This shows that, while DCMS can and must act to achieve its own objectives in relations to disabled people, it is the Government Department responsible for a much larger constituency of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) and, beyond them, a wide range of cultural, heritage, arts, sporting and business sectors. DCMS recognises that, while it cannot require these bodies and sectors to go beyond their legal obligations in relation to disabled people, it can show leadership and offer support to these partners in their efforts to develop their own plans for dealing with disability issues. The Framework, therefore, is a fluid document. It sets out a range of areas where DCMS, its NDPBs and others can act and offers an opportunity for all interested parties to join together to address a series of agreed objectives. This will ensure that the full scale of the DCMS family’s contribution to supporting and engaging disabled people can be seen in the round for the first time.
- 1.5. DCMS’ approach to disability is firmly placed in the context of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled people in employment (1996), service provision (1996 and 1999), and access to buildings and premises (2004). DCMS’ sectors are already doing much to ensure that they are meeting DDA duties, and many are leading the way in terms of good practice. It is vital

that we continue to build upon this and share experience. However, while good progress is being made, access provision is still disjointed and there is some way to go before all DCMS sectors are able to meet fully the requirements of the DDA. For example, many still equate access requirements with wheelchair access, and tend to ignore audiences affected by sensory and intellectual barriers¹.

1.6. DCMS recognises that its sectors should do more than simply meet the requirements of the DDA, and that they have the clear potential to improve their performance in this area, e.g. their role in promoting positive images of disabled people. DCMS also recognizes the importance of taking account of, and seizing the opportunities presented by, new initiatives and developing policies such as:

- The European Year of Disabled People in 2003;
- the related Council for Resolution on Accessibility of cultural infrastructure and cultural activities for people with disabilities;
- a possible UN Convention on Rights of Disabled People;
- the extension of the DDA to encompass public functions as well as services; and
- the introduction of a duty on public bodies to promote disability equality.

1.7. DCMS' disability strategy is also linked directly to its strategic priorities. These include opening up its institutions to the wider community to promote lifelong learning and social cohesion, and enhancing access to a fuller cultural and sporting life for children and young people, including disabled children, giving them the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. DCMS recognizes fully that it will have to ensure that disabled people's needs are addressed from the outset of policy development if it is to deliver successfully against its strategic priorities.

2. AIMS

2.1. DCMS and its Public Bodies will:

- aim to ensure that disabled people are able to access and participate fully in cultural, heritage, sporting and leisure activities, including employment in these fields;
- aim to ensure that disabled people, including children and young people (in line with the Core Principles), are fully consulted and their needs considered as policies are developed;
- take positive steps to promote equality for disabled people.

2.2. Actions

- DCMS will work closely with its Public Bodies, the cultural, heritage, sporting and leisure sectors, disabled people, disability organisations and other Government Departments (OGDs) to implement and review the Framework for Action.

Timing: Framework to be implemented from Autumn 2003 and reviewed annually.

¹ Sensory barriers include sight and hearing
Intellectual barriers include learning disabilities and mental illness

- DCMS will produce an annual progress report on the Disability Framework for Action which will be published on its website and made available in alternative formats. The report will be based on input from DCMS policy divisions and Public Bodies;

Timing: DCMS to request information in April each year and a report to be published in July.

3. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

3.1. DCMS and its Public Bodies will aim to ensure that disabled people have increased physical, attitudinal², sensory and intellectual access to, and increased participation in activities, places, events, services and jobs within the cultural, heritage, sporting and leisure sectors.

3.2. Actions

- DCMS and its Public Bodies will enhance access to and take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities for disabled children (DCMS Strategic Priority 1, PSA1).

Key DCMS projects: Museums education; PE, School Sports and Club Links; Culture Online; Creative Partnerships

Other DCMS work strands: Space for Sport and Arts; Play Review; Positive Activities for Young People; Libraries Strategy

Timing: Ongoing. Policy Divisions to ensure that disabled children's needs are addressed from the outset of policy development.

- DCMS and its Public Bodies will open up institutions and increase significantly the take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities by disabled people, particularly those aged 20 and above (DCMS Strategic Priority 2, PSA 2).

Key DCMS projects: Coaching; Making Historic Environment more accessible; Increasing Museums admissions; Increasing Arts participation.

Other DCMS work strands: Libraries strategy

Timing: Ongoing. Policy Divisions to ensure disabled people's needs are addressed from the outset of policy development.

- DCMS and its Public Bodies will assess their readiness and capacity to comply with Part III of Disability Discrimination Act, (access to goods, facilities, services, buildings and premises), which comes into force in October 2004. Public Bodies with strategic responsibilities will also assess the extent to which their sectors are ready to comply with the DDA.

Timing: Assessments to be completed and action plans drawn up by April 2004.

- DCMS will lead a collaborative project in conjunction with disabled people, the DRC, Public Bodies and OGDs to develop a common framework of criteria for access to DCMS-related venues building on DDA requirements

Timing: By October 2004

² In this context, attitudinal access means people's behaviour when dealing direct with disabled people and their needs: for eg front of house staff in museums and theatres.

- DCMS will lead a collaborative project in conjunction with disabled people, the DRC, Public Bodies and OGDs to gather research and survey data about accessible venues and events and ensure that it is more widely publicised and available in accessible formats.

Timing: Ongoing. Possible review by DCMS of what information is available by end 2003.

- DCMS and its Public Bodies will ensure that as many publications as possible, including consultation documents, are available on request in alternative formats, eg large print, audio and Braille. Where possible publications should be available on the web so that they can be down-loaded and printed in alternative formats, eg. HTML or PDF.

Timing: Ongoing. DCMS to report on availability and take up of alternative format documents in its annual Framework progress report.

- DCMS will lead a collaborative project in conjunction with disabled people, the DRC, Public Bodies and OGDs to identify measures to improve employment opportunities within the wider cultural and leisure sectors. (Possible link to DCMS Strategic Priority 3 and PSA 3?)

Timing: April 2004

4. DEVELOPING, IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING POLICIES

4.1. DCMS and its Public Bodies will aim to ensure that disabled people's needs are addressed in the early stages of policy and project development; that disabled people are consulted and actively involved throughout; and that the impact of policies on disabled people is measured.

4.2. Actions

- DCMS to include disabled people in the definition of priority groups in relation to its strategies, priorities and PSA targets.

Timing: Ongoing

- All DCMS policies and projects to be assessed against the Disability Framework and the DDA.

Timing: Ongoing, but should be a priority for new policies and projects identified as delivering the four DCMS' strategic priorities.

- DCMS will lead a collaborative project in conjunction with disabled people, the DRC, Public Bodies and OGDs to develop guidance on how to consult and involve disabled people in policy making for its sectors.

Timing: Winter 2003

- DCMS will lead a collaborative project in conjunction with disabled people, the DRC, Public Bodies and OGDs to develop an evaluation framework to ensure that the impact of its policies on disabled people can be measured.

Timing: to be agreed with DCMS Analytical Services Division and DRC

5. PROMOTING EQUALITY FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

5.1. DCMS and its Public Bodies will actively promote equality for disabled people in line with the proposed duty on public bodies to be introduced in 2006. This will include promoting disability policy and practice, and aiming to ensure that disabled people are portrayed in a positive light.

5.2. Actions

- DCMS and its Public Bodies will assess the extent to which they are promoting equality, and will identify and publicise good practice.

Timing: Late 2003/early 2004 onwards

- DCMS will work closely with DWP and in partnership with the Disability Rights Commission as the duty on public bodies is developed and implemented to ensure that they are well equipped to meet this duty.

Timing: 2003-2006

- DCMS and its Public Bodies will identify ways of contributing to the European Year of Disabled People 2003.

Timing: Throughout 2003.

- Public Bodies will be encouraged to commit to promoting a positive and balanced representation of disabled people in all their work, for example through the use of role models, positive portrayal in public broadcasting and the arts, or Lottery funding.

Timing: Start 2003

- DCMS will use its Social Policy and Education Network to promote and disseminate good practice amongst Public Bodies and DCMS-related organisations.

Timing: Ongoing.