

Legal Services Commission

Disability Equality Scheme 2006

“The legal aid system is fundamental to social and legal justice. Our work protects people’s rights and helps enable them to play a fuller role in society.”

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	4
Introduction to our scheme	5
The role of the Legal Services Commission	7
Our vision for the future	8
Responsibility for our Disability Equality Scheme	9
Equality impact assessments	10
Our commitment to involvement	11
Equality of opportunity for employees with a disability	12
Equality of opportunity for legal aid clients with a disability	15
Equality of opportunity for providers of legal services who have a disability	24
Arrangements for gathering information	26
Using the information and complaints	28
Your feedback and comments	29
Annex A: Disability Equality Programme of Action 2007 - 2009	30
Disability Equality Scheme Questionnaire	49
Annex C: Reference section	53

Foreword

Joint statement by Sir Michael Bichard, Chair and Carolyn Regan, Chief Executive of the Legal Services Commission

Welcome to the Legal Services Commission's (LSC) Disability Equality Scheme.

The LSC is committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination on any ground: including age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation. This applies in our role as an employer, a service provider and in carrying out our functions. Our vision sets out how we want to be resolutely focused upon legal aid clients and an organisation where people are proud to work.

One of the key requirements of the new duty is to involve people who have a disability. Involvement is more than consultation. In some areas, such as advice provided by a solicitor, it can be particularly challenging for the LSC to involve legal aid clients in our work as the main relationship is between the client and legal advisor.

However, we are committed to involving people with a disability to help us develop and improve and we are putting in place a range of involvement measures which we will need to support and develop. It is our intention to review our action plan next year to ensure these measures are working and are driving forward our improvement activity.

This is the first Disability Equality Scheme we have prepared under the duties introduced by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. However, we are building upon the work started when preparing our first Equality Scheme in 2002, when we took the decision to include disability, in addition to race and gender.

We will review our progress towards disability equality annually and will publish an update. We will consistently challenge ourselves to move away from mainly monitoring to proactively taking action.

This scheme also includes a feedback questionnaire. We want to know what you think of our scheme and action plan. Please do take the time to complete and return it so that your views can be built into our future plans.

Introduction to our scheme

At the Legal Services Commission (LSC) we are committed to promoting equality as an employer, as a service provider and when carrying out our functions. We appreciate that disability can be in many forms, with some being physically recognisable while other forms may not, for instance depression. Some people who have impairment may not necessarily regard themselves as disabled. Nonetheless, we have tried to ensure that this Scheme takes account of all forms of disability as far as is practicable.

We set out our plans for making equality happen for people we deal with who have a disability, including our employees, our legal service providers and the clients they serve. The action plan will evolve as we progress, with other priorities being added. We will be actively looking to involve people with disabilities to help us identify the key areas for action that should be given priority. If you would like to be involved please provide your contact details in the form at the end of the Scheme or contact our Equality & Diversity Manager (see page 52).

Our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005

When carrying out our functions, we must have due regard to the duties placed upon us by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. These are to:

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

Further information about the disability equality duty can be found on the website of the Disability Rights Commission: www.drc-gb.org

The LSC is a member of the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD): www.employers-forum.co.uk. The EFD provide support to help us improve through auditing our policies and providing a telephone helpline through which we can seek advice. This scheme will be subject to an audit by the EFD and we will amend the scheme to reflect the audit findings in due course.

The role of the Legal Services Commission

The LSC manages the provision of legal aid in England and Wales. We are also responsible for ensuring that people get the information, advice and legal help they need to deal with a wide range of problems.

We work in partnership with solicitors and not-for-profit organisations to provide information, advice and legal representation to people in need. Research has shown that legal aid clients are often vulnerable and socially excluded people who may have a variety of problems such as debt, housing or welfare benefits, or issues relating to crime.

We deliver legal services through two schemes: the Community Legal Service and the Criminal Defence Service.

The Community Legal Service (CLS) is a network of organisations which funds, provides and promotes civil legal services from general information to advice and representation.

The Criminal Defence Service (CDS) is run by the LSC in partnership with criminal defence lawyers and representatives. The purpose of the CDS is to ensure that people suspected or accused of a crime have access to advice, assistance and representation, as the interests of justice require.

The LSC currently employs around 1,650 people working in fifteen offices across England, one in Wales, and a Head Office in London. We also operate seven Public Defender Service (PDS) offices, where we directly employ people to deliver criminal legal aid.

You can find out more about the LSC on our website: www.legalservices.gov.uk

There is also the Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC), which is the independent research division of the LSC. The LSRC conducts research in the areas of criminal and civil justice. More information can be found on the website: www.lsrc.org.uk.

Our vision for the future

The core purpose of the LSC is to help people in genuine need to receive high quality legal advice, assistance and representation.

Our vision for the future is that we want to be:

- Resolutely focused on legal aid clients;
- Delivering innovative, high quality, high value legal advice and services through top quality service providers; and
- An organisation inspired by strong, visible leaders where people are proud to work.

We will take positive steps to secure and promote equality for our employees who have a disability. We value the variety of backgrounds, perspectives and ideals that people bring.

As a result of the reform programme, the LSC is currently going through a period of fundamental change, impacting on us as an organisation and also on the legal services we deliver. These changes will focus upon what legal aid services we buy, who we buy them from and how we buy them. Where appropriate, Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken on proposed changes to ensure that the changes do not unlawfully discriminate against employees, service providers and clients but do promote disability equality.

For legal aid clients and service providers of legal aid, we aim to become an organisation where equality is promoted and barriers and disadvantages are removed, which may require positive action to be taken. We will work with the Law Society to support our suppliers to develop equality and diversity policies that ensure they can deliver quality legal services that meet the diverse needs of clients, including those with a disability and in particular, people with a learning disability; a mental health condition; a long-standing illness as well as a physical, sensory or cognitive impairment.

By 2025, disabled people in Britain should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life and will be respected and included as equal members of society.

(Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People, Government Strategy Unit 2005)

Responsibility for our Disability Equality Scheme

The Legal Services Commission Board has overall responsibility for our Disability Equality Scheme. The Commission Board is made up of independent Commissioners who oversee our work. Commissioners are appointed by the Secretary of State and Lord Chancellor and have a number of key responsibilities within the organisation. Their role can be compared to that of the directors of a public company.

Commissioner Tina Fahm is the LSC's equalities mentor. Tina uses her considerable experience of equality and diversity issues across a range of other activities to guide and inform the mainstreaming of equalities within the LSC and its public functions.

Our Chief Executive is accountable for the delivery of this Scheme and, with our Executive Team, is responsible for ensuring that our Scheme is put into action across the LSC.

All employees have a role to play in helping us to meet our duty to promote equality for people with a disability.

We have an Equalities Task Group which helps co-ordinate activity across the LSC and contributes to the development and implementation of strategies intended to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation. Membership is drawn from employees with experience in key business areas. The Equalities Team within the Secretariat leads the Task Group.

The LSC focuses on improving access to justice

We are constantly working with our partners to develop the way we deliver legal services so that we can help more people in more cost-effective ways. Community Legal Service Direct provides help and advice on a range of common legal problems through a national helpline (0845 345 4 345), website (www.clsdirect.org.uk) and a series of free information leaflets.

The helpline and website both offer a legal advisor directory service to help callers find their nearest local advice provider. The helpline offers a translation service for callers who do not speak English as their first language. Deaf or hard of hearing callers can use Typetalk by calling 180010845 345 4 245.

Equality impact assessments

Where appropriate, we carry out equality impact assessments on our policies, procedures and practices. These help us decide whether the impact of what we are doing or planning to do is likely to disadvantage people with a disability. We also look at other equality issues such as race and gender.

Where an adverse impact is identified, we look at what practical steps we could take to reduce or remove the impact subject to the policy objectives. Where possible we will modify the policy or practice.

The LSC has produced guidance for employees carrying out assessments and we have incorporated this into our own project management standards to ensure equality is considered at the outset. However, we are currently looking to improve this guidance and to deliver further training during 2007. As we are currently going through a period of change, our attention will be focused on conducting impact assessments on these changes initially, during the first half of 2007. Once the training programme has been completed, we will set out a schedule of other policies and procedures and projects that will be subjected to an impact assessment during 2007/08.

The new guidance and training will help ensure that any unjustified negative consequences of LSC strategy, policy and projects are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.

Equality impact assessments are published as part of our consultation documents so that comments can be submitted.

In the future, we will use the Supplier Diversity Reference Group (see page 24) as a way of involving a wide range of people in reviewing and providing feedback on our assessments.

Our commitment to involvement

The LSC is committed to involving people with a disability in developing, progressing and reviewing all aspects of this Scheme, to help us improve decision-making and achieve better outcomes – for legal aid clients, service providers and employees.

The LSC has extensive experience of carrying out consultation activity as part of delivering its services and functions. However, we recognise that the duty to involve goes beyond this and we will strive to improve and develop the ways in which we involve employees, legal aid clients and legal service providers. We will listen to feedback when deciding how to involve people in our scheme.

Ways in which we will involve people with a disability on employment matters and the services we provide include:

- Asking if people are satisfied with the services we provide e.g. through surveys;
- Providing opportunities for comment and feedback on our services;
- Looking at the impact of proposed policies when equality impact assessments are conducted; and
- Involving people in the testing and development of new services.

The LSC has adopted the social model of disability, which recognises the negative impact on people with a disability of a society designed for non-disabled people. The social model moves away from the medical approach to disability that concentrates on medical conditions and impairments as the main reason for the difficulties experienced by people with a disability.

We will seek to identify the barriers and disadvantages that people with a disability experience and take active steps to remove them to promote equality. The kind of barriers which could arise may include prejudice and stereotypes, inflexible organisational procedures and practices, inaccessible information or inaccessible buildings.

Some people have disabilities which are not visible or immediately apparent. We will always respect a person's view as to whether they would regard themselves as disabled or as a person with a disability and their decision on whether or not to disclose a disability to us.

Equality of opportunity for employees with a disability

Involvement of employees

Each year, we use an external company to conduct an annual employees survey to capture the views of our employees about different aspects of the way in which we work. For example, questions are included about the way in which we communicate and about our attitude to equal opportunities. In total 77.1% of our employees completed the 2006 survey. This compares very well to the average take up for work place staff surveys of 64%.

All responses remain confidential and the external company provides the LSC with a national report, as well as reports for each business unit. These reports are shared with employees and are used to inform local and national action plans to address the issues raised by the survey.

The survey results do not currently separate results for people with and people without a disability. We will look into how we could do this for future surveys whilst ensuring that individuals cannot be identified and confidentiality is maintained.

What we are currently doing

Our most recent Equalities Annual Report (2004/05) showed that 2.4% of employees considered themselves disabled. This was a reduction from the previous year where the figure was 3.1%. The LSC is committed to disability equality and will be taking action to gain the JobCentre Plus "Positive About Disability" mark as well as consulting about establishing an employee disability forum (see page 14).

The LSC is opposed to harassment of any sort and is committed to providing a climate free of harassment in which the dignity of all individuals is respected. Any allegations of harassment are treated seriously and, where appropriate, are investigated in accordance with our grievance procedure. This procedure sets out for employees how complaints relating to bullying, harassment or discrimination either formally or informally can be raised.

Our equal opportunities employment policy sets out our aim to ensure that positive steps are taken to secure and promote equality for all employees, including those with a disability. The policy covers equal opportunities in roles

and responsibilities, recruitment and selection, training and development and assessment and feedback.

We will provide reasonable adjustments to enable our employees who have a disability to work with the maximum convenience and efficiency based on a clear understanding between us of their needs. If an employee becomes disabled or an existing disability worsens, we will work with them to find ways that allow them to continue working wherever possible.

The LSC has established a confidential reporting line with an independent external company called "InTouch". This reporting line allows employees to report in confidence, and anonymously if they wish, any behaviour they experience or witness that they feel amounts to bullying, harassment or discrimination.

All employees and their immediate family members have access to the BUPA Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP is a confidential freephone telephone service that enables employees to access professional telephone or face-to-face counselling services as well as legal advice on any personal or work related matter.

All employees receive compulsory general training on equality and diversity as part of their induction process. In addition to this, all employees with line management responsibility attend a compulsory one-day training course for managers, which is delivered by an external company.

Areas for action

- We are keen to gain the JobCentre Plus "Positive About Disability" mark, as a visible symbol of our commitment to disability equality. To do this means we will agree to take action to meet five commitments regarding the recruitment, employment, retention, training and career development of employees with a disability.

These are:

- To interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and consider them on their abilities;
- To ensure there is a mechanism in place to discuss at any time, but at least once a year, with employees who have a disability whether they need anything further to be done to address their development needs;

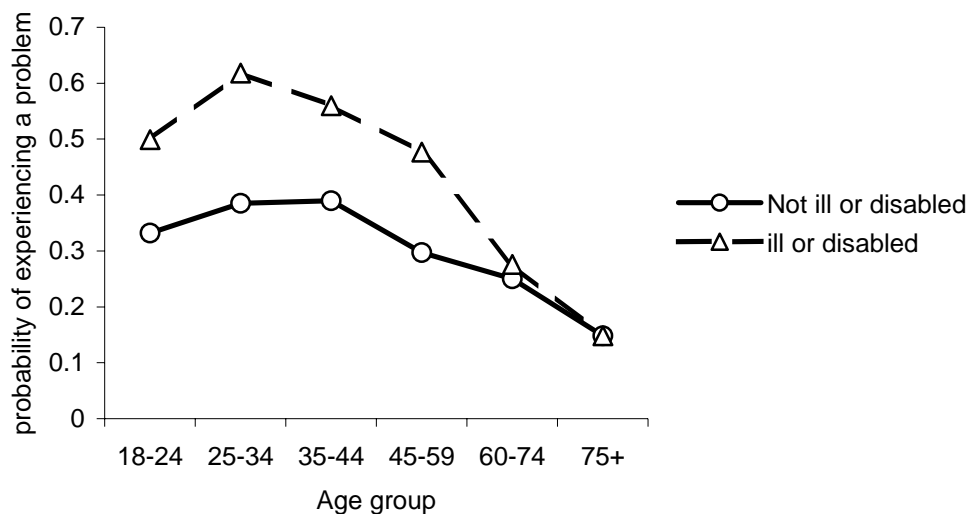
- To make every effort when employees become disabled, to make sure they stay in employment;
 - To take action to ensure that all employees develop the appropriate level of disability awareness needed to make these commitments work;
 - Each year to review the five commitments and what has been achieved, plan ways to improve on them and let employees and Jobcentre Plus know about progress and future plans.
- Develop ways in which to involve employees who have a disability in what we do, including establishing an employee disability forum. We will use the forum to engage with employees on matters relating to disability equality and to provide a support network for employees.
 - We are also examining the possibility of launching a new employee award category that specifically focuses on recognising achievement in the area of equality and diversity.

Equality of opportunity for legal aid clients with a disability

The legal services context

The LSC’s Legal Services Research Centre’s Civil and Social justice survey found that whereas 38% of respondents with a long-standing illness or disability had experienced a civil justice problem over a three and a half year period, only 32% of non-disabled people had done so.

The graph below shows the experience of civil justice problems by age and long-term illness or disability status of the respondent.



Overall, findings from the survey suggest that more than one and a half million people with a disability of working age in England and Wales will face a civil justice problem over a three and a half year period. It is therefore vital that we look for practical ways to engage with, and involve, people with a disability in what we are doing to deliver legal services.

Involvement of disabled legal aid clients

i. Customer Focus Groups

In 2005 we engaged a private consultancy firm to conduct focus groups and in depth interviews to obtain feedback about client experiences of the legal aid process. Each focus group included people with disabilities.

Participants considered that disability and health problems had been relevant to their experiences of seeking a legal remedy for their problem and in some circumstances had added to their stress and practical problems.

These particular focus groups were small and were carried out on a one-off basis. Engaging with clients is quite a challenge for us, as our suppliers deliver legal services to legal aid clients and we do not have direct contact with them. We shall be looking to see how we can do so effectively, for example by setting up consultative panels (see page 18) as well as looking at other methods of engaging with them, such as working jointly with others.

ii. Legal Services Commission customer service surveys

The customer service teams within each of our regional offices and our central customer service team carry out client feedback surveys.

The survey captures information about whether the legal aid client has a disability. It has recently been amended so that where a legal aid client discloses that they have a disability they are then asked to consider whether the LSC could make its services more accessible. There is currently a low response rate to the survey and the LSC is exploring how this can be increased.

iii. Complaints from people with a disability

The LSC is committed to providing the best possible service and our aim is to get it right first time, but we are aware that mistakes sometimes happen.

Overall, the number of new complaints received by the LSC has been decreasing year-on-year. Of the complaints received in the last year, four individual complaints related to disability.

The complaints received related to:

- A lack of sign language facilities provided by solicitors listed on the CLS Direct Website. This was due to a website fault and has been rectified.
- Poor access to an LSC building to attend a review body meeting. The LSC has taken steps to carry out the actions identified in our access audits programme (see action plan).
- A complainant was unhappy at having a reassessment of financial means. Financial means are reviewed throughout the lifetime of a case, for example, when a person's income changes. This will apply whether or not a person is disabled to ensure they continue to be eligible for legal aid funding.
- A corporate leaflet was not available in large text format. The LSC is able to provide a large text version on request and all leaflets are available on our website or by contacting us.

What we are currently doing

○ Improving LSC website accessibility

The LSC's website (www.legalservices.gov.uk) contains accessibility functions that include resizable text and access keys which allow navigation through the main areas of the website using keyboard shortcuts.

Our website is currently compatible to be used with Browsealoud software. This is a simple to download, free program which will read the text on our site. Once the software has been installed you simply need to scroll your mouse over the text and Browsealoud will read it out loud. The speed, pitch, volume and pronunciation of words can be altered.

The content of our website is currently being reviewed to ensure it follows plain English principles where possible. This can be difficult when writing about legal issues which often include technical legal terms, and reviewing our website will be an ongoing process.

We will also be adding an accessibility statement to our website to ensure that everyone is aware of how they can access our information.

○ Increasing the confidence of employees

The LSC has produced an employee support package called "Welcoming Disabled Customers." This toolkit provides useful information on dealing with people with a disability as well as practical information on topics such as using text phones.

An on-line training module is provided by the Employers' Forum on Disability which employees are able to access. This covers the law relating to customer service, confident communication and customer service over the telephone.

In addition, from 2007, we shall be introducing an internal on-line diversity training package for all our employees. Line managers will also take part in an additional classroom based training course.

The LSC has set itself a target for 2006/07 that 90% or more of employees will have completed a diversity training course.

○ Access to legal advice for hearing impaired clients

To ensure legal aid clients who have a hearing impairment can access legal advice, the LSC will pay the reasonable cost incurred by a legal service provider of English/British Sign Language interpretation or other Language

Support Professional (such as Speech to Text Reporters, LipSpeakers and DeafBlind Manual Communicators) if the engagement of such professionals is reasonable and necessary to communicate effectively with the particular disabled client.

Areas for action

- We will develop versions of the Practical Guide to CLS Funding and Practical Guide to CDS Funding in an accessible format that people with a disability are able to read more easily. We are currently revising the Practical Guide to CLS Funding to make it more accessible and a revised version will be available by February 2007. Development of easy read versions of the Guide to CLS Funding and CDS Funding will follow.
- As part of this work, we are currently investigating the production of an easy read version of the leaflet ‘How to complain to the Legal Services Commission’. A draft version of this leaflet has been consumer tested by a group of people with learning disabilities and their carers and their feedback is being considered in its ongoing development.
- It can be difficult for the LSC to involve legal aid clients with our work as the main relationship is often between a client and their legal advisor. However, we are taking steps to improve our understanding of the views and experiences of legal aid clients.

In March 2006 we published our strategy for the Community Legal Service, “*Making legal rights a reality*”. Part of our strategy is to set up a Consultative Committee, which will provide leadership and direction for the CLS in England and Wales. This will include the other main funders of legal advice services. There will also be a Wales Consultative Committee.

One of the aims of the Consultative Committee will be to listen to the views and experiences of legal aid clients, including people with a disability. In order to obtain this client view, it is proposed that the Consultative Committee set up a sub-group of client representatives.

CLS Direct

Community Legal Service Direct (CLS Direct) is a free government-funded confidential advice service. People living on a low income or benefits can get independent advice about debt, education, employment, housing and welfare benefits problems by calling **0845 345 4 345**. It also delivers its services through the CLS Direct website (www.clsdirect.org.uk) and a series of free legal information leaflets.

Client feedback

Client feedback questionnaires are sent out each quarter to a sample of clients to ask about their experiences of the service to assist CLS Direct in its further development. These are anonymous and currently do not ask any information about a client's disability. A new Customer Service and Monitoring Feedback Strategy has been developed and will be implemented over the next six months. This will collect basic data, including disability information, from all callers to the National Telephone Service and a sample of callers will then be contacted to collect more detailed feedback.

In October 2006, the Operator Service took over responsibility for asking clients whether they have a disability and recording it. They are also responsible for sending out feedback questionnaires to clients.

The Operator Service will answer all calls made to CLS Direct and will replace the existing automated menu system. The new system will provide improved access for people with a disability. The operators will diagnose the caller's problem, offer general information about rights and give callers further options about where to get help. Callers who have a benefits and tax credits, debt, education, employment or housing problem will complete a means test over the phone. If they are financially eligible and need specialist help they will be put through to specialist advisers or, if they need help in other areas of law, will be referred to another Quality Marked legal advice provider or transferred to another helpline. Ineligible callers will be referred to helplines or sources of self-help such as websites or printed materials.

New areas of law will be added to the Operator Service in phases between November 2006 and March 2007.

Making CLS Direct accessible

o National Telephone Service

The CLS Direct national telephone helpline (0845 345 4 345) enables callers to:

- Get advice from qualified legal advisors about benefits and tax credits, debt, education, housing or employment;
- Order free legal information leaflets;
- Find quality local advice services.

The Telephone Helplines Association and RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) call centre were consulted when the service was set up to identify how different users prefer to use such services. The resulting recommendations were then taken into account in the build.

The helpline can be accessed through Type-Talk, which enables those who have hearing difficulties to access telephone advice. Once a caller has contacted an adviser, the service can adapt to their needs and they can continue to be advised through either Type-Talk, written correspondence or fax.

There are time limits in place for the amount of advice callers can receive if they are ineligible for free legal advice, have not been means tested or are eligible but need to return a signed Legal Help Form before further advice can be given. However, these limits are treated with a degree of flexibility if a client requires longer than others to explain the nature of their problems due to a disability.

In some cases telephone advice may not be the most appropriate source of help for a client, for example if they have difficulties in communicating and receiving advice about their problem over the telephone. Advisers are encouraged to try and diagnose such situations as early as possible and refer the client to a face-to-face adviser where this is seen as more appropriate.

- **CLS Direct website**

The CLS Direct website has undergone an accessibility overview audit from RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind). The site will undergo a rebuild next year and each stage of this will be tested by the Shaw Trust, a national charity providing people who are disadvantaged in the workplace due to disability, ill health or other social circumstances with training or work opportunities.

The website has achieved the Plain Language Commission's 'Winning Websites' award for the content being written in clear English. The site includes hyperlinks (which change colour when accessed to show that they have been used), downloadable versions of documents which can be saved and read off line and a trail showing which pages have been accessed.

The site is compatible with screen readers and speech enabled with Browsealoud allowing users to use the website screen reader on the site. All PDF versions of the CLS Direct leaflets on the site have been tagged so that they are accessible to screen readers.

The rebuilt site will be tested and accredited each year by the Shaw Trust to maintain accessibility levels.

- **Information leaflets**

CLS Direct produces a series of information leaflets, which provide basic information on key areas of law that affect people's lives.

The overall design and layout of the leaflets is clear and simple and all content is written in Plain English and accredited by the Plain Language Commission. All of the leaflets are available in Braille and Audiotape and produced by external specialists. The Audiotape versions include different voices and cover all the information included in the leaflet. Braille versions are currently A4 and comb bound.

Following a review of the leaflets changes to the range and format will take place in 2007. Equalities legislation and guidance will be taken into account in their future development. Once revised versions of the leaflets are available we will look to produce easy read formats of this range.

- **Digital TV**

Information about CLS Direct is available through Digital TV, currently via the DirectGov pages and DiGiTV. Users can download the information leaflets or search for an adviser. DirectGov services are designed to meet all accessibility requirements and DiGiTV's templates and palettes have been developed to take into account accessibility.

- **Marketing of the Service**

The marketing materials for CLS Direct have recently been redesigned and the Shaw Trust tested the new range for accessibility. Marketing strategies are reviewed using an Equalities Impact Analysis and we promote the service through third party agencies including disability groups.

Areas for action

- CLS Direct have developed and are in the process of implementing a client feedback strategy to capture who uses the service and what they think about it.
- New versions of the information leaflets will continue to be written in Plain English and will include changes to make them more accessible.
- All national telephone service operators will receive equality and diversity training.
- CLS Direct are considering best ways to involve clients in service developments.

CDS Direct

CDS Direct provides independent telephone advice by qualified advisers to those detained at police stations for certain types of offences. If a client has difficulty in understanding the advice being given over the telephone, CDS Direct will not continue to advise them and a Duty Solicitor will be deployed to the police station to advise the client face-to-face. Under the Police And Criminal Evidence (PACE) codes, the police are responsible, for vulnerable clients i.e. those aged 17 or younger, clients with learning disabilities/mental health issues or otherwise seen as vulnerable, for arranging attendance by an appropriate adult to ensure that the client understands the detention process and to safeguard the interests of the client. The police will also arrange a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, where appropriate, for deaf clients.

Public Defender Service

Client Feedback

The Public Defender Service routinely collects equal opportunities information on clients at the start of each case, including data on disability. Up until now, the information has been used for monitoring purposes only.

A client feedback questionnaire is sent to all clients when their case is closed, however, the form in use does not currently ask for any further equalities information.

Areas for action

The PDS is currently liaising with CLS Direct to promote consistency in feedback forms across both these areas of work. Obtaining feedback specifically from people with a disability will be reviewed as part of this initiative.

Auditing the accessibility of our buildings

In order to carry out an assessment of all of our buildings, the LSC worked with the Bury & District Disabled Advisory Council (BADDAC) Access Group in 2003 to formulate a robust specification for DDA consultants to tender against.

In 2004 The Trevor Patrick Partnership (TTPP) were chosen by the LSC in conjunction with BADDAC to undertake access audits in all the LSC premises. These audits were extended, where appropriate, into landlord areas to identify any issues that may exist that may affect our customers and employees.

Following on from the initial audits, the LSC has taken steps to improve access to all premises such as providing hearing induction loops, combined standard text / Braille signage and training front-line employees in disability awareness. All works considered as having the highest priority, for example, installing handrails and visible glass, have been completed.

Areas for action

Further works are still required, such as improving some office reception areas, and we anticipate that all the necessary outstanding works will be completed during 2007 (see action plan).

Equality of opportunity for providers of legal services with a disability

Review of legal aid procurement

In July 2006, Lord Carter published his report of his review of legal aid procurement. The recommendations contained within the report will lead to major changes in the way public legal services are delivered and paid for.

The LSC believes that the recommendations offer an important opportunity to ensure that legal aid has a sustainable future - one that continues to safeguard people's fundamental legal rights while providing value for the taxpayer and opportunities for good quality, efficient service providers to grow and prosper.

It is essential that legal aid clients have access to good quality legal advice, and confidence in the service they are given.

The LSC and Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) have already consulted on the initial recommendations contained in the report, which closed in October 2006. The responses to that consultation will be fed into a further joint LSC/DCA publication outlining the proposals for the way ahead.

Involvement of legal service providers

Supplier Diversity Project

We have a strong commitment to developing our vision and strategy for the promotion of equality and diversity in the providers of legally aided services. One way we can do this is to use our contract terms to promote diversity within our providers and to ensure they are equipped to respond to their diverse client groups.

We have set up this project, which is one of our top priority projects, to look at the impact of Lord Carter's proposals and address the equality and diversity issues that are identified.

Lord Carter recommended that the LSC should create a wider diversity advisory group to report on the state of diversity within the providers of legal aid services and make recommendations for improvements where necessary. We have established a Supplier Diversity Reference Group (SDRG) to work with us in developing our strategies for the delivery of Lord Carter's proposals.

This Group will advise and constructively challenge the LSC as it develops its vision and strategy. Commissioner Tina Fahm chairs the Group, which met for the first time in July 2006 and again in October 2006. Both meetings were well attended with all of the members present expressing a willingness to engage.

Meetings will be held at least twice a year but the LSC will look to foster on-going discussions outside of the formal meetings.

As at December 2006, membership included representatives from:

Society of Asian Lawyers	Association of Muslim Lawyers
Association of Women Barristers	Young Solicitors Group
Group for Solicitors with Disabilities	Law Society
Commission for Racial Equality	Bar Council
Advice Services Alliance	Black Solicitors' Network

Group members are being asked to review this Scheme and provide their comments.

○ **LSRC diversity questionnaire**

The Legal Services Research Centre conducts an annual equal opportunity survey of legal aid service suppliers. The survey findings, covering ethnicity, gender, disability and age, are published each year and are available on the LSRC website at www.lsrc.org.uk. This information feeds into the LSC's policy work and will inform the Supplier Diversity Project as it develops.

□ **Supplier Survey**

Each year we carry out a survey of the views of legal service suppliers on the service they receive from the LSC - for example, when they telephone us.

The 2005 survey showed that 62% of those suppliers who responded felt that the LSC promotes equal opportunities; 6% of providers felt that we did not and the remainder did not know. We will promote this scheme to help raise awareness among providers of what we are doing to improve services for people with a disability.

Arrangements for gathering information

In relation to employment

The LSC gathers a wide range of information in its role as an employer. This information is reported through our Equalities Annual Report which is published on our website and provides details of the position of employees with a disability compared to other employees.

Examples of the range of information we collect include those listed in the table below.

Recruitment	Applications Successful appointments
Development & retention	Employee numbers Training Promotion Performance ratings Grievances Disciplinary proceedings Pay awards Exit interviews

In the delivery of our functions

The LSC also gathers and publishes information on the impact of the delivery of its functions and services.

Examples of this information include:

- Success rates for individual applications for case funding;
- Organisations which have been awarded LSC contracts;
- Results of our equality impact assessments (as part of the consultation process);
- Organisations in receipt of grants from the LSC;
- Recipients of LSC training contract grants;
- Demand for telephone information from CLS Direct; and
- Complaints of discrimination made to the LSC.

Addressing gaps in our information gathering

We have identified some areas where we currently do not gather the information that we need to assess whether we are effectively promoting equality of opportunity in all areas of our business.

For example, in the past we have not asked the providers of criminal legal aid work to gather equal opportunities information about clients benefiting from Criminal Defence Service funding. In November 2006, we issued amended CDS forms so that the relevant equalities data, including data about disability, is collected and recorded.

We want to be clear about the type of information we need to track our performance towards meeting our commitment to providing equal opportunities and which areas we will need to address. A small project team will be looking at our data and deciding what information we require and the purpose for which we require it. This will ensure that we do not collect unnecessary data and that information we do collect will be put to practical use to improve our services.

We will make it a requirement for this information to be supplied to us by providers of legal aid.

We are also taking steps to strengthen our information gathering in relation to employment matters by creating a human resource information system.

The LSC offers quality assurance.

Poor advice can be worse than no advice at all. The LSC ensures that providers of legal services meet ever more demanding quality standards.

Using the information

The LSC will publish an annual report setting out the steps we have taken under our action plan, the results of our information gathering and the steps we have taken to promote equality of opportunity. We anticipate that this will form part of our Equalities Annual Report.

We will review our action plan at least once a year to ensure that the actions we have prioritised remain the right ones.

This Disability Equality Scheme will be revised at least every three years.

Complaints

The LSC is committed to providing the best possible service for all our customers. Our aim is to get it right first time, but we are aware that mistakes sometimes happen.

If you feel that our employees have treated you in a discriminatory manner, you have a right to complain to us. Information on how to complain to us can be found in our complaints leaflet available on our website at www.legalservices.gov.uk/aboutus/contactus/index.asp.

Your complaint will be dealt with by employees with experience, knowledge and authority to investigate and respond to your complaint as quickly and fairly as possible.

We also require providers carrying out publicly funded legal services to have an equal opportunities policy and operate complaints procedures. If you feel that a provider has treated you in a discriminatory manner, you should complain to them using their complaints procedure in the first instance.

Further information about bringing a complaint against a legal aid provider is available on the above webpage. There is additional information on the website of the Law Society:

www.lawsociety.org.uk/choosingandusing/redressscheme.law

Your feedback and comments

As part of the development of our scheme, a questionnaire has been included which invites the views of people with a disability on the content of our scheme on areas such as:

- How easy it is to understand;
- Whether the steps taken to involve people with a disability go far enough;
- Whether any changes are required to our action plan; and
- Whether the priorities we have set are the right ones.

We also welcome feedback on other issues associated with our scheme and action plan.

If you have a disability or have significant expertise on disability matters and would like to actively engage with us to help plan our services and continue to develop this Scheme and action plan, we would like to hear from you. Please send your contact details to Kirstie Adams. This will not in itself place any commitment on you but we may get in touch to discuss specific matters with you or invite you to join any focus group we set up.

Please address any comments to:

Kirstie Adams
Equality & Diversity Manager
Legal Services Commission
4th Floor, 85 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8TX

DX328 London/Chancery Lane WC2
Tel: 020 7759 0427
Fax: 020 7759 0419
E-mail: kirstie.adams@legalservices.gov.uk

You can also use the "contact us" section of our website to let us know your views: www.legalservices.gov.uk/aboutus/contactus/index.asp

Thank you for taking the time to read our scheme.

Annex A: Disability Equality Programme of Action 2007 - 2009

Equality of opportunity for employees with a disability

General and Specific Duties under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>Improve our equal opportunities monitoring by implementing a central HR database to record monitoring data across all HR activities.</p> <p>We will continue to analyse the workforce profile of our employees and publish our findings annually.</p>	<p>Implementation of a human resource information system, providing accurate equality and diversity data on LSC employees.</p> <p>Employment data reported within our Equalities Annual Report with commentary on the steps we are taking to promote equality of opportunity.</p> <p>Data collection system producing accurate information leading to an action plan to tackle identified areas.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>January 2007</p> <p>January 2008</p> <p>On-going</p>

General and Specific Duties under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duties</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p> <p>Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act</p>	<p>Deliver disability equality training, to LSC Commissioners and members of the Executive Team.</p> <p>This will support our aim to ensure disability equality is considered within all strategy, policy and projects.</p>	<p>All LSC Commissioners and members of the Executive Team will have completed disability equality training and will ensure that disability matters are fully considered in all LSC policies, procedures and practices.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>	<p>January to June 2007</p>
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involvement of disabled people in the development of Scheme</p> <p><u>General Duties</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>We will establish a network of employees who either have a disability or who have significant experience of dealing with people with disabilities to input to the continued development of the LSC's Disability Equality Scheme and action plan.</p> <p>We will also establish disability forum to involve employees in the development of employment policies and strategies that affect them.</p>	<p>Effective engagement with employees on matters relating to disability equality.</p> <p>We will be able to demonstrate the contribution of our employees to our Disability Equality Scheme.</p> <p>A support network provided for employees, which they feel confident to use.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>January 2007</p> <p>January 2007</p>

General and Specific Duties under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<u>Specific Duty</u> Arrangements for gathering information in relation to employment and delivery of LSC functions	Continue to measure employees' perception of equality and diversity through our annual employees survey and respond to feedback in both local and national action plans, as appropriate.	Gaining a more positive response to questions relating to equality and diversity in the employees survey. Gaining a better insight into the barriers and disadvantages that employees with a disability may face and taking positive action to remove them.	Human Resources	annually
	Implement consistent processes within HR functions for sending, receiving and recording equal opportunities monitoring forms relating to all job applicants.	Consistent monitoring data received on which to base sound employment policies. More informed data reported in our Equalities Annual Report, along with actions we will take to promote equality of opportunity.		2006/07

General and Specific Duties under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p> <p>Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.</p>	<p>We will continue to provide equality and diversity training for our employees.</p> <p>Implementation of an online equality and diversity training package that all employees can access.</p> <p>Continue to deliver a classroom-based equalities training course for managers.</p>	<p>90% of employees will have completed the training course by April 2007.</p> <p>All employees are aware of the rights and responsibilities relating to equality law and LSC policy.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p>	<p>April 2007 and on-going</p>
	<p>Introduce a new employee award category to recognise achievement in the area of equality and diversity.</p> <p>This would be an addition to our existing annual National Employees Awards process.</p>	<p>Increased awareness and activity relating to equality and diversity throughout the LSC.</p> <p>Reward employees who are recognised as having demonstrated a high level of achievement in the area of equality and diversity.</p>		<p>May 2007</p>

General and Specific Duties under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duty</u> Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities and make reasonable adjustments.</p>	<p>Undertake individual risk assessment of all employees who have a disability to ensure they have equal opportunity and access to all facilities and services</p>	<p>Any barriers or disadvantages faced by employees with a disability in gaining access to services and facilities are removed to the satisfaction of the employee.</p>	<p>Human Resources/Information Systems Department</p> <p>Human Resources</p>	<p>As required</p>
<p><u>General Duties</u> Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people</p> <p>Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>Work towards achieving the JobCentre Plus "Positive About Disability" mark as part of our commitment to good practice in the recruitment, employment and retention of people with a disability (pages 14 & 15 of Scheme refers)</p>	<p>Increased awareness both internally and externally as a disability friendly employer.</p> <p>Improved recruitment and employment practices and procedures relating to disability.</p> <p>Achieving the "Positive about Disability" mark.</p> <p>An efficient and effective diverse workforce.</p>		<p>2006/07</p>

Equality of opportunity for legal aid clients with a disability
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Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>Specific duty</u> Arrangements for gathering and putting information to use</p>	<p>Legal Services Research Centre to continue to conduct research into Civil & Social Justice to identify the strategies people adopt to deal with their problems, the barriers to advice, sources of financial support for advice, the impact of problems and the impact of advice.</p> <p>The findings from this research will be used to inform the development of LSC strategy and policy for the delivery of legal services to meet the needs of client groups including people with a long-standing illness and people with a disability.</p>	<p>Sound empirical research, particularly relating to the advice needs of client groups including people with a long-standing illness and people with a disability will be published to inform policy decisions.</p>	<p>Legal Services Research Centre</p> <p>Policy Developers</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duties</u> Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities</p> <p>Encourage participation by disabled people in public life</p>	<p>Implement policy to make enquiries in advance of meetings whether any special arrangements or reasonable adjustments are required to enable full participation at events.</p> <p>Ensure all LSC organised meetings held externally are in accessible venues and reasonable adjustments are made to allow full involvement.</p> <p>Review accessible room hire standards and raise employee awareness.</p> <p>A record of requests for special assistance will be maintained and regularly reviewed to identify best practice.</p>	<p>All delegates are able to attend and participate fully at LSC meetings.</p>	<p>Secretariat/ All business units</p>	<p>From January 2007</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involve disabled people and their organisations more with our work</p> <p><u>General Duty:</u> Encourage participation by disabled people in public life</p>	<p>Establish a client representative sub-group under the Community Legal Service (CLS) Consultative Committees. Seek the views and experiences of legal aid clients, including disabled people to identify the barriers they face and any unsatisfactory outcomes.</p>	<p>Positive input from the sub group to the policy development of legal services provided by the Community Legal Services as part of the CLS Strategy to ensure we deliver access to justice for all.</p>	<p>CLS Policy</p>	<p>2006/07</p>
<p><u>General Duties</u> Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.</p> <p>Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>We will add an accessibility statement to the LSC website so that people are aware of the different ways they can access the information contained on the website and engage with the LSC's work.</p> <p>We will continue to keep reviewing the content of our website.</p>	<p>People are aware of the different ways in which they can access the information on our website.</p> <p>People with a disability are able to engage with the LSC and participate in consultation on policy development of services that affect them.</p> <p>All website content meet Plain English principles.</p>	<p>Communications Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involve disabled people in identifying the barriers they face and any unsatisfactory outcomes</p> <p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>To gather, within our complaints monitoring reports, information on whether the complainant is disabled as well as the reason for the complaint.</p> <p>Analyse complaints from people with a disability to understand where improvements to our service can be delivered.</p>	<p>The views of people with a disability are recorded, understood and acted upon and we are able to evidence the action we have taken to remove barriers identified by complainants.</p>	<p>Service Delivery Team</p>	<p>2006/07 and ongoing on a quarterly basis</p>
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involve disabled people in identifying the barriers they face and any unsatisfactory outcomes</p> <p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>The Public Defender Service (PDS) to review their equal opportunities monitoring feedback forms to ensure that the outcomes and barriers experienced by people with a disability are captured and acted upon.</p>	<p>A review of data collection will take place to ensure that feedback from people with a disability can be identified when clients return feedback forms.</p> <p>This information will be used to understand the experiences of people with a disability who use the PDS and as the basis for action to remove barriers and work towards equality of opportunity.</p>	<p>Public Defender Service</p>	<p>2007</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involve disabled people in identifying the barriers they face and any unsatisfactory outcomes</p> <p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>CLS Direct will develop and implement a client information and feedback strategy. This will detail who is using the service as well as capturing what they think about the service.</p>	<p>Implementation of a client information and feedback strategy, which monitors who uses CLS Direct and the views on the service received.</p> <p>Data will be reviewed quarterly and an action plan will be implemented based upon the findings.</p>	<p>CLS Direct</p>	<p>Review to be completed by January 2007 and implemented by June 2007</p>
<p><u>General Duties</u> Encourage participation by disabled people in public life</p> <p>Take account of peoples' disabilities</p>	<p>We shall amend the font size used in the leaflet order form. We will also assess production of leaflets in Braille and audio tapes.</p>	<p>New versions of the leaflets will be written in Plain English and include changes to formats, for example to include bullet lists and flow charts, to improve accessibility. Matt as opposed to glossy paper will be used.</p> <p>Easier to read leaflet order form.</p>	<p>CLS Direct</p>	<p>2006/07</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duties</u> Take account of peoples' disabilities</p> <p>Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people</p> <p>Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>As part of the expansion of the National Telephone Service, all operators will receive equality and diversity training before the service is launched, particularly on how to deal with clients who have learning disabilities or difficulties or mental health conditions.</p> <p>The new service will be user tested by relevant groups, including people with a disability. The findings of the user testing will be used to further develop the accessibility of the service.</p>	<p>All operators will have taken part in equality and diversity training prior to the launch of the expanded telephone service.</p> <p>People with a disability have equal access to telephone legal advice as non-disabled people.</p>	CLS Direct	Ongoing

Equality of opportunity for legal service providers
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Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involve disabled people in identifying barriers faced by disabled people and unsatisfactory outcomes</p>	<p>Establish and take forward the Provider Diversity Project as one of the LSC's top priority projects to consider the reforms for procuring legal services and any adverse equal opportunities impact on legal service providers (solicitors and Not for Profit organisations).</p>	<p>An effective reformed scheme delivering quality services by diverse suppliers to meet diverse client needs.</p>	<p>Preferred Supplier Director</p>	<p>2006 - 2009</p>
<p><u>General Duty</u> Encourage participation by disabled people in public life</p> <p>Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>Establish a Provider Diversity Reference Group to help inform LSC's strategies and vision for the provision of legal services in the future.</p>	<p>Effective contributions provided to inform the development of sound strategies developed to provide a sustainable legal aid scheme for the future. The Group effectively informs and contributes to the development of LSC policy and strategy towards delivering a sustainable legal aid system for the future.</p>	<p>Secretariat</p>	<p>Established by July 2006.</p> <p>Thereafter meetings held at least twice per year</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>Specific Duty</u> Involve disabled people in identifying barriers faced by disabled people and unsatisfactory outcomes.</p> <p><u>General Duty</u> Encourage participation by disabled people in public life</p>	<p>The LSRC to conduct annual monitoring of LSC funded supplier diversity.</p>	<p>The LSRC will publish an annual report measuring the diversity of the LSC's supplier base and assessing changes over time.</p> <p>The report will monitor the impact of the LSC's policies and practices on the ethnic, gender, disability and age profile of suppliers. This information will be used to assess existing practices and to inform the development of future strategy and policy.</p> <p>The findings from this research will be used to assess existing practices and to inform the development of LSC strategy and policy.</p>	<p>Legal Services Research Centre</p>	<p>annually</p>
<p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>We will continue to carry out a customer survey of legal service providers to understand their views of the service they receive from the LSC.</p>	<p>The feedback received will be analysed and used to inform improvements in the service we deliver.</p>	<p>Service Delivery Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p> <p>Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act</p>	<p>We will consult on changes to the equality and diversity requirements of our contracts with legal service providers.</p> <p>Following the consultation, we will determine which changes should be included in the contract from April 2007.</p>	<p>Changes to the contract include requirements in relation to promoting disability equality.</p>	<p>Corporate Legal Team/ Policy Directorate</p>	<p>Consultation begins December 2006</p> <p>New contracts in place from April 2007(civil) and 2008 (crime)</p>

Creating an accessible built environment

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duties</u> Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities</p> <p>Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>Complete those works evaluated as required within LSC demise, using the DDA audit as the base document.</p> <p>The Procurement process guidelines with regard to tendering for works or services will be followed.</p>	<p>Complete points identified.</p> <p>LSC premises will be accessible as far as reasonably practicable in relation reception areas and committee room(s).</p>	<p>Procurement & Estates Management Team</p>	<p>2007 - 2009</p>
	<p>In multi-tenanted buildings where LSC are present, advise the Landlord of DDA requirements.</p>	<p>Work with Landlord to understand their approach and timetable to DDA issues.</p>	<p>Procurement & Estates Management Team</p>	<p>2007</p>

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duties</u> Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities</p> <p>Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p>	<p>Develop a Fire Safety Management System (FSM) for each LSC office. This will inform all key staff of their roles and responsibilities in the event of a fire.</p> <p>The Fire Safety Management System will include guidance for the safe evacuation of disabled people from the building.</p>	<p>All Fire Wardens will be aware of the fire safety plan within their building.</p> <p>Fire Wardens will be aware of their roles and responsibilities. All staff will be made aware of the their Fire Wardens contacts for their particular location.</p> <p>A Fire Safety Management safety system is in operation, which will ensure that any disabled people on the premises can be safely evacuated in the event of an emergency.</p>	<p>Procurement & Estates Management Team</p> <p>Competent person at each location.</p> <p>Competent person at each location.</p>	<p>All offices to have their own system by end 2006</p>
	<p>A daily office "fit for use" check, to ensure operation of alarms are functioning, induction loop systems are working, and that disabled toilets and fire evacuation routes are not impeded.</p>	<p>Each location will use the document to ensure accommodation; services and equipment for disabled people are fit for the use/purpose.</p>	<p>Competent person at each location.</p>	<p>2007</p>

Equality Impact Assessments

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<p><u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people</p> <p>Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act</p>	<p>Equality Impact Assessments are carried out as part of our policies, procedures and practices.</p> <p>These will be published within consultations.</p>	<p>Equality Impact Assessments are carried out and opportunities to promote equality are identified.</p> <p>Disability equality improvements and amendments are captured and reported in our Equalities Annual Report and/or within consultation documents.</p> <p>Where appropriate, policies are modified/amended or the justification for the policy is clearly set out.</p>	<p>Secretariat and appropriate Policy/Delivery Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people</p>	<p>Internal guidance on conducting Equality Impact Assessments to be reviewed updated and implemented.</p> <p>Further training on equality impact assessments delivered to key LSC employees.</p> <p>Develop schedule of equality impact assessments to be undertaken in order of priority.</p>	<p>Positive feedback received from employees on their confidence in implementing the new guidance.</p> <p>Equality Impact Assessments conducted on all key policy developments</p> <p>Outcomes demonstrate that, as far as possible, any negative consequences of LSC strategy, policy or projects are eliminated or minimised and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.</p>	<p>Secretariat/Head of Provider and client Diversity /Equality & Diversity Manager</p>	<p>2006/07</p>

Using the information

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<u>Specific Duty</u> Arrangements for making use of the information gathered	Review the requirements for the collection of equalities data.	The information we do collect is put to practical use to improve our policies, strategies and performance.	Secretariat	March 2007
<u>Specific Duty</u> Arrangements for making use of the information gathered	<p>Feedback from stakeholders on the draft scheme will be taken into account in final version of Scheme and in prioritising actions in Action Plan</p> <p>Feedback from the Provider Diversity Reference Group to be taken into account in final Scheme and Action Plan.</p> <p>Scheme and Action plan audited by Employers' Forum on Disability.</p>	<p>The Draft Disability Scheme is published on the internet and feedback responses are reflected in the final scheme and action plan.</p> <p>Audit findings are reflected in improvements to the scheme and action plan.</p>	Secretariat	October/ November 2006
<u>Specific Duty</u> Publish a Disability Equality Scheme demonstrating how we intend to meet our duties	Final version of Disability Equality Scheme published.	Our Disability Equality Scheme is published by 4 th December 2006 and sets out how we intend to meet our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005	Secretariat	December 2006

Duty under DDA 2005	What actions will we take?	Success is...	By whom	By when
<u>Specific Duty</u> Publish an annual report containing a summary of steps taken under the action plan	We will review our action plan annually and report on our performance and future plans.	Our action plan is reviewed annually and our performance against the action plan is published. We will update our action plan following each review to ensure that it remains relevant and is focussed on promoting equality of opportunity.	Secretariat	By December 2007
<u>Specific Duty</u> Within three years of the scheme being published, take the steps set out in the action plan	Our Disability Equality Scheme and action plan will be reviewed at least every three years.	An updated Disability Equality Scheme and action plan will be published in 2009. The updated scheme will detail the steps we have taken to meet our action plan and will detail our planned activity for the period 2009 – 2012.	Secretariat	December 2009
<u>General Duty</u> Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people	We will continue to support an internal Equalities Task Group, which will bring together key LSC employees to contribute to equalities activity and share best practice.	We are able to demonstrate improved co-ordination of equalities activity across the LSC. We will report on the contribution of our Equalities Task Group as part of our annual reporting	Secretariat	Ongoing



Disability Equality Scheme 2006 Questionnaire

The Legal Services Commission Disability Equality Scheme sets out how we will promote disability equality in our role as a service provider and employer.

We would like to know your views and comments on our scheme. Please feel free to complete any or all of the questions below or to return your feedback in an alternative format.

If you would like this questionnaire in an alternative format, please telephone Kirstie Adams on 020 7759 0427 or e-mail kirstie.adams@legalservices.gov.uk

Question 1

How easy did you find our Disability Equality Scheme to understand?

Very easy

Fairly easy

Neither easy
or difficult

Difficult

Very Difficult

Question 2

In our scheme we explain the Commission's role and vision for the future (see pages 7 and 8). Based upon this, what do you think are the top three priority areas where we should be taking action to make a difference to the lives of people with a disability?

1.

2.

3.

Question 3

Our scheme details how we have and will continue to involve people with a disability in developing, progressing and reviewing our scheme and action plan. Do you think these steps go far enough to involve people with a disability in our work? If not, can you suggest better ways for us to involve people with a disability in our work?

Yes No Partially

Comments:

Question 4

Our action plan sets out the steps we will take to promote equality of opportunity for people with a disability. Do you think that any actions should be deleted, amended or added? If so which ones?

Question 5

General comments: Please feel free to provide any additional comments or continue on an attached separate sheet.

Getting involved

If you are keen to be involved we will log your details and may get in touch with you to discuss specific matters. This may only involve e-mail/phone correspondence, or we may set up a focus group. Signing up in itself does not place any commitment on you.

If you are interested please provide:

Your name:

Your organisation/area of expertise:

Contact address:

Contact telephone number:

Your e-mail address:

About You

This information will help us to understand who we are engaging with and any gaps that may exist. The information will be stored confidentially.

Are you responding as:

- A person with a disability who has applied for or received legal aid funding
- A member of the public with a disability
- An organisation of people with a disability
- An organisation for people with a disability
- An employee of the Legal Services Commission who has a disability
- A voluntary sector organisation
- Other – please state:

Completed questionnaires can be returned by e-mail, fax or post to:

Kirstie Adams
Equality & Diversity Manager
Legal Services Commission
4th Floor
85 Gray's Inn Road
London
WC1X 8TX

E-mail: kirstie.adams@legalservices.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7759 0427

Fax: 020 7759 0419

Annex C: Reference Section

Legal Services Commission

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www.clsdirect.org.uk**Legal Services Research Centre:** www.lsrc.org.uk**Useful websites:**Disability Rights Commission: www.drc-gb.orgEmployers' Forum on Disability: www.employers-forum.co.ukLaw Society: www.lawsociety.org.uk