



# **Bedfordshire Police Authority**

*Bedfordshire Police Authority, working with the  
community to build a safer Bedfordshire*

# **Disability Equality Scheme**

If you have any questions about this document please contact:

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## **Accessibility**

**If you require information contained in this document in an alternative format, such as large print, Braille or audio tape, or if you would like the Scheme explained to you in your language, contact:**

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## Forward

I am delighted to introduce the first Disability Equality Scheme to be produced by Bedfordshire Police Authority. The scheme represents just part of our work to implement an overarching approach to equality and diversity which is designed to ensure that there is no opportunity for unlawful discrimination in any area of our work and to promote equal opportunities for everyone.

We are aware that there are some people who may fear exclusion for reasons relating to their ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation or religion. This scheme illustrates what we intend to do to ensure fair and equal access to employment and services in all areas of the Authority's work and how we will monitor the similar scheme and plans of Bedfordshire Police Force.

In Bedfordshire Police Authority we believe that disabled people, whether they are employees or service users, should expect to be treated with respect and to have their needs met. The service they receive will not be diminished because they are disabled. To ensure the successful implementation of this scheme we will raise awareness of this commitment to both staff and customers alike.

In compiling this scheme we have engaged with a diverse group of disabled people: members from the deaf community, the partially sighted community, those with learning difficulties and physical disabilities have worked alongside our members and staff to develop the scheme and action plan. Many of their recommendations have been included.

If you have any views or recommendations that you would like to see taken into account then please let us know.

We hope that this scheme will make a real difference to the lives of disabled people, who work and live in Bedfordshire, as we firmly believe in equality and fairness for everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter M.', written in a cursive style.

Peter Conniff. Chair of Bedfordshire Police Authority.

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## Introduction

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 has amended the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 so that it now places a duty on all public authorities, including Bedfordshire Police Authority and Bedfordshire Police.

Disabled people do not have the same opportunities or choices as non-disabled people. Nor do they enjoy equal respect or full inclusion in society on an equal basis. The exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers.

For many disabled people environmental barriers play as important a role in restricting opportunities as attitudes. Although these barriers may be unintentional, that does not make their impact upon disabled people any less significant.

Police Authorities and Police Forces can make an enormous contribution towards removing the barriers (both environmental and attitudinal) to equal opportunities for disabled people. We can do this by addressing the way in which we carry out our functions and by improving the service we provide to disabled people.

The role of the police authority in relation to the Disability Equality Scheme is twofold:

- To meet the general and specific duties in relation to the police authority's own functions/policies and staff;

- To ensure that the police service meets the general and specific duties

The police authority's key functions that will be examined in relation to this scheme are:

- To secure an efficient and effective police service;

- To secure best value;

- To make arrangements for obtaining the views of local people about policing of their area and the co-operation of local people in preventing crime.

## **Organisational structure and decision-making process**

### **Membership of the Police Authority**

There are seventeen members of the Authority. They represent a cross-section of Bedfordshire County Councillors and Luton Borough Councillors, Magistrates and the general public – coming from a wide variety of personal, career and ethnic backgrounds.

Six are elected Bedfordshire County Councillors

Three are elected Luton Borough Councillors

Three are Magistrates nominated by the Magistrates Courts Committee

Five are Independent members selected from applicants responding to public advertisements and appointed by the Home Office

### **Officers of the Police Authority**

The Police Authority is located in Bridgebury House at the Police Headquarters site in Kempston, Bedfordshire. The police authority employs seven officers with responsibilities varying from day to day management, policy, committee services and administrative support.

Clerk

Treasurer

Head of Strategic and Policy Development

Assistant Policy and Research Officer

Manager – Members' Services

Chairman's Secretary

Administrative Assistant

In addition the Authority retains a marketing communications and public relations consultancy (Better Times Limited) who handle communications with the various partners and stakeholders with which the Authority deals.

### **Organisational Structure and Decision Making**

The police authority's business is structured around a range of Committees which meet quarterly to monitor and scrutinise Bedfordshire Police. The committees are:

**Performance and Best Value Committee** – responsible for overall strategic planning, Best Value and Performance;

**Audit Committee** – monitors and makes recommendations covering all areas of best practice on Corporate Governance;

**Finance Committee** – responsible for revenue and financial management;

**Human Resources Committee** – responsible for recruitment, retention and training.

1. **Complaints and Professional Standards Committee** – considers complaints from the public and internal discipline matters
2. **Community Engagement Committee** – considers the involvement of the public, either as individuals or as a community, in policy and service decisions which affect them.

Each committee is managed by a Chairperson and comprises members of the Authority with pertinent experience.

The full police authority meets in public five times a year. There is a fifteen-minute “Question Time” session at the beginning of each full meeting of the Authority. If members of the public have a question, the Clerk needs to be informed by post, fax or email.

The Authority has also established a Standards Committee to oversee, promote and facilitate high ethical standards by our members.

In addition to the formal committee structure the police authority has a number of advisory panels and working groups to ensure the smooth execution of all areas of the authority’s responsibilities. These include the Youth Issues Group and the Race, Diversity and Equality Advisory Panel. The panel/groups meet at least on a quarterly basis.

#### **Role of the Race, Diversity and Equality Advisory Panel**

The role of the panel is to: -

Embed, within the Authority and Bedfordshire Police, the values of fairness and respect, through raising awareness of race, equality and diversity issues both internally and externally.

Ensure effective community engagement with all diverse communities in Bedfordshire and Luton.

Undertake a scrutiny role, on behalf of the Authority, on race, equality and diversity issues.

Represent the Authority on Bedfordshire Police Equality and Diversity Programme Board at Force and Basic Command Unit level and external bodies.

Monitor the implementation of the Authority’s Equality Schemes.

The Advisory Panel therefore effectively ensures that:

We have complied with our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act;  
Equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons is promoted during the life of the schemes  
Improvements are achieved in areas we have identified  
Lack of progress is identified and acted on  
Consultation is undertaken to monitor public perception and satisfaction

The Race, Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel will oversee and monitor the implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme and will present a report on the progress made against the action plans contained within the Scheme on an annual basis to the full Police Authority.

## **Vision**

### **Our Vision**

“Bedfordshire will be a place where the police and authority engage with citizens and key partners to provide high levels of reassurance and public safety”.

### **Our Values**

The police authority is committed to equality of opportunity and valuing diversity in both the provision of services and in ensuring an efficient and effective police service for the people of Bedfordshire. The authority believes that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. The authority is committed to the elimination of unfair and unlawful discrimination in all our policies, procedures and practices.

We are customer focused, actively engaging with citizens to put people at the heart of what we do and valuing their opinions;

We will be fair and open in what we do, enabling equal access to opportunities for all;

We will make the best use of our resources, seeking to give value for money and continuous improvement in their use;

We will value and appropriately develop staff to face current and future challenges, recognising achievement;

We will enable Members’ skills to be developed and effectively utilised;

We will work in partnership with others to improve what we do and the way in which we do it

Together with Bedfordshire Police we have personal responsibility and accountability and give of our best by:

- Being ethical in everything we do;
- Caring and supporting each other;
- Building trust and respect;
- Being open and honest;
- Valuing diversity;
- Providing equality of opportunity for all;
- Listening to and appreciating one another;
- Encouraging and promoting initiative;
- Learning from experience

### **Disability Champion**

The Authority has taken its responsibility to promote disability equality very seriously. A small budget has been allocated in order that we can involve disabled people in the ongoing development of our scheme. Our Race, Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel will act as our disability champion and will take every opportunity to ensure the Authority complies with its legal duties and to successful outcomes.

### **Definition of the Social Model of Disability**

Bedfordshire Police Authority will use the 'social' model of disability. In the past much of our understanding of disability used a 'medical' model. Issues and solutions tended to focus around the idea of curing the individual or making them 'better'. The social model approaches disability from the viewpoint that what 'disables' the individual is social structures, barriers and attitudes not the person's impairment or medical condition. This means we will no longer use the traditional approach based on what a disabled person cannot do and instead will focus on what they can do. Following the social model should result in a better environment for all service users and the entire community and better access for disabled and service users generally.

### **Legal Responsibility**

Bedfordshire Police Authority fully accepts its legal obligations and duties including those defined under the following legislation:

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Building Regulations 2000

Part 'M' Requirements (Building regulation amendments 2003)

Fire Precautions Act 1971 and Fire Precautions (workplace) regulations 1997 as amended 1999.

We will also work within guidance and future proposals from the:

Disability Rights Commission

Disability Rights Commission Statutory Code of Practice, 'The Duty to Promote Disability Equality'

Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a legal duty on all public authorities to promote disability equality.

The duty will require Bedfordshire Police Authority to:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination;

Eliminate harassment;

Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;

Be pro-active in taking account of disabled persons' disabilities.

The duty places positive responsibilities on us to work towards a more equal society by mainstreaming disability equality into the way in which we carry out our functions.

The duty has two elements, a General Duty and Specific Duties, which are intended to assist public authorities in meeting the general duty.

### **The General duty**

Every public authority is under a general duty to promote disability equality. This means that a public authority 'shall in carrying out its functions have due regard to –

The need to eliminate unlawful discrimination;

The need to eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;

The need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;

The need to take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons;

The need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons; and  
The need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.'

### **Specific Duty**

**A Disability Equality Scheme (DES) must be produced by December 2006.**

**The DES is required to include statements on:**

How disabled people have been involved in the DES development;

How Bedfordshire Police Authority intends to impact assess its policies, procedure and practices;

How Bedfordshire Police Authority proposes to meet its General Duty within a 3-year period;

How Bedfordshire Police Authority consults with disabled service users on the effect of policies, procedures and practices;

How recruitment, development and retention affects disabled people;

How the provision of services take account of disabled people;

How Bedfordshire Police Authority makes use of information to assist in meeting its General Duty obligations and in particular;

How Bedfordshire Police Authority intends to review the effectiveness of its General Duty Implementation;

How Bedfordshire Police Authority intends to prepare later DES's

How Bedfordshire Police Authority intends to publish an annual report to include steps taken, results of information gathered and the use made of such information.

## **Arrangements For Meeting The General And Specific Duties**

### **Monitoring Bedfordshire Police Disability Equality Scheme**

The Police Authority is responsible for holding Bedfordshire Police to account for its progress on disability equality. The Authority regularly monitors the Force to satisfy itself that they are meeting the General and Specific duties of the Act:

Employment data is presented to the Human Resources Committee on a quarterly basis

Outcomes from consultation and surveys will be reported to the Community Engagement Committee

At least two members and an officer of the authority will be actively involved with the Force's Equality and Diversity Programme Board

The Chief Constable will provide annual updates to the Authority's Race & Diversity Advisory Panel

The Authority will satisfy itself that the force has properly screened, prioritised and consulted on its full range of functions and policies

To make sure we address the General Duty in a positive way Bedfordshire Police Authority will:

Define clear objectives for improving disability access and set out priorities in our Annual Policing Plan;

Make sure that an equality impact assessment is carried out on existing policies, practices and procedures to identify where action needs to be taken to make improvements or changes, and to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people;

Make sure that when we commission services, work in partnership or buy goods and services from others, that the organisations we work with understand, adhere to and practice the principles of equality and diversity;

Make sure that there are resources and support available to deliver our Disability Equality Scheme core priorities.

Oversee and monitor the implementation of Bedfordshire Police Disability Equality Scheme

Benefits that we anticipate will come from this Disability Equality Scheme include:

better targeted policies

improvements in perceptions of services, and greater satisfaction and confidence in services

filling gaps in services

greater involvement and more participation by members of the public

better targeted information about the police authority and police service

better access to the police

## **Strategic Priorities**

### **Our Strategic Priorities**

The role of the Police Authority can be identified in all the six areas outlined in the current Policing Plan, however, we have a particular focus on:

**Maintaining a citizen focus in all that we do**

**Managing resources in an effective and efficient manner**

### **Involving People with Disabilities**

Our Disability Equality Scheme has been developed with the involvement of disabled people. A small reference group with representatives from the deaf community, visually impaired community, mental health, physical disabilities and learning difficulties have met at the Police Authority on two occasions to identify the areas the police authority need to concentrate on. The group identified three areas:

**Communication and access to Information**

**Access to policing services**

**Consultation**

In addition to the formation of the reference group the Authority has also gathered disability monitoring data by issuing all its Members and staff with a questionnaire.

The approach we have taken has been proportionate in the context of the size of our organisation and the available resources. It has been agreed with the reference group that they will meet on a quarterly basis to monitor the Disability Equality Scheme. The reference group will also work with the Authority over the coming months to develop their action planning for years 2008 and 2009.

## **Delivering the Disability Equality Scheme**

The Authority will seek to mainstream disability equality in all its functions and policies over the lifetime of the scheme. The action plan will provide the framework from which our work will emerge over the next three years. The action plan will be formed around the following areas:

**Impact Assessment**

**Accessibility**

**Community Engagement (with a priority on access to information, access to services and consultation)**

**Employment**

**Procurement**

### **Impact Assessment**

Bedfordshire Police Authority is currently impact assessing its core functions, strategies, policies and practices for any adverse equality impact on race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief and disability. The purpose of impact assessment is to ensure that all our decisions and activities do not disadvantage disabled people, and also to identify where they might better promote equality of opportunity, including consideration of where the different parts of the disability equality duty (such as promoting positive attitudes) might be built into those policies and practices.

We have developed a template for use when assessing our policies, procedures and practices and this can be viewed by visiting our web-site ([www.bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk](http://www.bedfordshirepoliceauthority.co.uk))

The impact assessment process is managed within the Policy Unit of Bedfordshire Police Authority. All our staff and some Police Authority members have received training in how to impact assess. Each core function to be assessed has an identified team comprising a Lead Officer and Police Authority member, an IAG member, an expert in the area being assessed and an equality advisor.

There is still a significant amount of work required to impact assess our functions, procedures and practices and to make sure that the process of impact assessments is effective and becomes a mainstream activity of the organisation.

It is our intention to improve the current impact assessment process through the involvement of disabled people and to make sure we publish the results of all our assessments.

The Authority intends to use the findings from the impact assessments to develop their action planning for years 2008 and 2009.

We will also ensure that the process for impact assessment, undertaken by Bedfordshire Police, is robust and the results published.

### **Accessibility**

The Bedfordshire Police Authority building, based at Police Headquarters in Kempston, Bedford was built in 1995 and has disability access. We have

recently carried out an access audit on the building and issues highlighted in the report will form part of this Scheme's action plan.

Our actions for the coming year will include:

Undertaking any building modifications that are required

## **Community Engagement**

We know from existing data that a great many disabled people respond to our consultation. However, community engagement is much more than consultation. Community engagement encompasses a variety of different approaches: consultation, communication, information gathering, provision of information and feedback. Community engagement also takes place at a number of different levels: the strategic level (service wide); the operational level (divisional level); and the community level (neighbourhood and ward level) that empower residents to both express their views and influence how their particular policing needs and priorities are met.

Our actions over the next year will include:

### **Consultation**

Exploring different ways of seeking the views of disabled people at the strategic level.

Monitoring Bedfordshire Police's community engagement activity to ensure that the views of disabled people are being taken into account at the divisional and local level.

### **Communication**

We will look at different ways of communicating with disabled people, including looking at how we distribute our publications.

We will impact assess all our statutory publications to ensure they are DDA compliant.

We will monitor Bedfordshire Police's corporate communication strategy to ensure that disabled people have access to information in the format required.

### **Information**

Raise awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the Police Authority

Ensure people with disabilities know how to contact their local safer neighbourhood policing team

## **Employment**

The Authority has a small number of staff and does not undertake recruitment on a regular basis. Independent members are recruited once every four years with guidance on recruitment procedures provided by the Home Office. The recruitment of Chief Officers is also undertaken on an infrequent basis and again recruitment is conducted in line with Home Office guidelines. However, through impact assessment we will ensure that in our own recruitment procedures the Authority takes account of the DDA and establishes, where appropriate, what reasonable adjustments might be required to enable a disabled person to carry out the particular role in question. The Authority will seek to ensure that reasonable adjustments can also be applied not only to recruitment of our own staff but also to independent members, independent people sitting on our Standards Committee and Independent Custody Visitors.

Our actions will reflect the following priorities:

- Impact assessing the Police Authority's recruitment policies and procedures

- Train our Members and staff in disability awareness

- Ensure that Bedfordshire Police promote disability equality in employment opportunities

## **Procurement**

Bedfordshire Police Authority will make sure that its procurement policies and practices take account of our legal duties to promote equality and in this instance to make sure we are meeting the disability equality duty. We will do this by undertaking the following;

- Approving and monitoring Bedfordshire Police's procurement service.

## Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan

### Action Plan 1 – Impact Assessment

Objective	Action	Target	Lead	Outcome
Refine equality impact assessment process.	Pilot project approach	December 06	Race, Equality and Diversity Panel/ /Head of Policy	Compliance with DDA and structured approach to impact assessment
Monitor Bedfordshire Police's Impact Assessment process	Work with Force to develop reporting system	March 07	Race, Equality and Diversity Panel/ Head of Policy	Bedfordshire Police compliant with DDA

### Action Plan 2 – Accessibility

Objective	Action	Target	Lead	Outcome
Carry out works to improve or remove barriers to Bridgebury House	Prioritise recommendations from Access Audit	April 07	Member Support Services Manager	Compliance with DDA
Ensure that all Police Buildings are accessible to disabled people	Estates Strategy - Quarterly monitoring	On-going	Finance Committee/ Race, Equality and Diversity Panel	Compliance with DDA

### Action Plan 3 – Community Engagement

Objective	Action	Target	Lead	Outcome
Raise awareness of Police Authority roles and responsibilities with disabled groups	Devise a programme of 'road-shows'	June 07	Community Engagement committee	People with disabilities able to influence strategic decision-making
	Include disability groups in consultation	On-going		
Ensure that people with disabilities can access Police Authority information	Impact assess Police Authority Publications	Dec 06	Race, Equality and Diversity Panel/ Community Engagement Committee	Police Authority publications available in different formats
	Impact Assess access to information to include web-site	March 07		

Ensure people with disabilities are able to express their views and influence policing in their local area	Oversee and monitor joint community engagement strategy	On-going	Community Engagement Committee/ Race, Equality and Diversity Panel	Increased satisfaction and reassurance within disabled communities
Ensure that disabled people can access Bedfordshire Police	Monitor joint community engagement strategy	On-going	Community Engagement Committee/ Race, Equality and Diversity Panel/ Performance and Best Value Committee	Increased satisfaction with policing service within disabled communities

### Action Plan 4 – Employment

Objective	Action	Target	Lead	Outcome
Ensure we are promoting disability equality in employment opportunities	Impact assess Police Authority recruitment policies and procedures	April 07	Member Support Services Manager/ Race, Equality & Diversity Panel	DDA Compliant
Ensure existing members and staff are trained in disability awareness	Incorporate diversity training into Police Authority training strategy.	April 07	Race, Equality and Diversity Panel/ Head of Policy	Increased awareness of disability issues
Ensure Bedfordshire Police promote disability equality in employment opportunities	Monitor employment data, policies and procedures.	On-going	Human Resources Committee	Compliant with Two-Tick symbol

### Action Plan 5 – Procurement

Objective	Action	Target	Lead	Outcome
Ensure Bedfordshire Police comply with DDA requirements	Monitor Procurement Strategy	On-going	Finance Committee	Open and transparent procurement policies and procedures

## Outcomes

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

Our Disability Equality Scheme and action plan will be monitored and scrutinised by the Police Authority Race and Diversity Advisory Panel and our 'reference' group of local disabled people.

The Police Authority will monitor and scrutinise Bedfordshire Police's Disability Equality Scheme through the Performance and Best Value Committee, the Human Resources Committee, the Finance Committee and the Community Engagement Committee. The Police Authority will also be represented at the Force Equality and Diversity Programme Board chaired by the Chief Constable.

We will involve disabled groups and individuals in the evaluation of our scheme and action plans and make sure that the scheme is evaluated each year. This process will include making any changes to the scheme so that continuous performance improvements and overall effectiveness demonstrate our commitment to the disability equality duty.