

## Disability Equality Duty for Public Sector, London TravelWatch Steering Group

2pm Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, London TravelWatch office

### Notes

**Attendees:** John Cartledge, Chair of Group and London TravelWatch Deputy Chief Executive  
Dolores Keane, Accessible Transport Officer  
Patti Tobin, Director of Personnel and Finance  
Tracey Proudlock, London TravelWatch member

**Apologies:** Lisa Egan, London TravelWatch member  
Ron Brewer, London TravelWatch member  
(Bryan Davey, London TravelWatch Director, Public Liaison)

**Notes:** Nigel Grey, Research & Development Support Officer

### Agenda

1. General overview and Introduction of suggested framework
2. Open discussion of London TravelWatch approach
3. Designation of appropriate Senior Management Team member per relevant issue:
  - (a) Our recruitment and employment practices
  - (b) Our physical accommodation, both at our offices and at meeting venues
  - (c) Our publications and communications
  - (d) Our policies for transport provision and operation.
4. Dates of future meetings
5. Any Other Business

Dolores was thanked for her current work on the disability equality duty.

## **1. General overview and Introduction of suggested framework**

Whilst the Disability Rights Commission (DRC)'s statutory code of practice suggests that organisations may use their Annual report as a basis for their own code of practice (or include it in their annual report) this was deemed unrealistic for LTW as our next one will be produced in June; the time frame therefore being considered too constrained. However, in the following year it is our intention is to include in the annual report an update of our progress on this issue.

## **2. Open discussion of London TravelWatch approach**

Dolores:

- Noted that the DRC focuses on every aspect of an organisation.
- With respect to recruitment and employment due regard must be given for general duties, e.g. staff interaction with the public.
- We need to show what has happened in the past and what we plan to do in the future. If there is a reason we can not make an improvement or it is impractical the reasons must be outlined.
- LTW's Disability Equality Duty must be renewed every three years.

John:

Noted that what is important is to engage with the issue.

Patti:

Noted that we need to map where we currently are.

Dolores:

Informed the group that she has asked Jane (LTW Personnel Assistant) for copies of all existing practices.

John:

The point was made that we don't have responsibility for recruiting Members and therefore the DED will not take into account the selection process of Members.

Patti:

Asked how far down the line are the GLA in their disability Code of Practice?

Dolores:

Answered that she is still chasing a response to her queries.

Patti:

Will make enquires with her GLA contacts to ascertain where they are with this.

Dolores:

Mentioned that the organisations she has spoken to are behind with the Code of Practice; in fact they are a bit lost.

*Recruitment/Employment Practices:*

Patti:

We could create a form which will provide information in an easy read format.

Employees with specific relevant roles i.e. fire officer, first-aiders, etc. need to show that they are aware of the code of practice over and above other staff.

Tracey:

The question arises as to whether the external relations panel should be involved.

John:

Answered that the communication strategy is evolving, e.g. electronic bulletin. We need to review what is happening in light of this and involve the external relations panel.

Tracey:

Whilst a lot of what is currently done on disability is linked, we need to have more obvious disability themes in the external relations panel and also in the document Dawn Cummings is currently preparing.

Dolores:

There are currently accessibility options on the website for ease of use. However, we need to give further options and not just fall back on the website when material is not available in the necessary format. Disabled people should have the freedom to surf the net and not be channelled down the 'disabled' path with respect to the website. We need to ensure there is a necessary budget for this. In fact the budget allocation for the entire DED needs to be reasonable and appropriate.

Patti:

There currently is no budget for the code of practice and this has not been discussed as yet.

Tracey:

What is necessary is to have a process in place. We can't do everything but should have a general platform above which we should be flexible. We need to be proactive and know how we're going to respond to disability issues. Disabled people should not be made to feel special but normal wherever possible.

There should be appeal letters in large print.

Dolores:

We should give options of different prints such as easy read, large print etc.

*Transport Provision and operation:*

John:

Whilst we want operators to fulfil the requirements of the Disability Rights Commission Code of Practice we need to do so ourselves first. However, most transport is public and therefore operators already have an obligation to have some form of code of practice.

At the senior levels they're awareness of the issue is fairly advanced. However, we need to check that what we say about them takes due cognisance of the disability agenda. This should be done at a later date.

It was noted that the communication panel is normally left to their own devices – this should change. Jo is in the lead with this.

Tracey:

The DED should concentrate on looking forward rather than back. We have to ask ourselves what we want to achieve both culturally and in the way we do things; disabled people should be included because that is the way we are. This view should come from management.

Dolores:

However, it should be noted that it is staff that directly deal with the public. Furthermore, all Members should be involved as they need to be aware of London TravelWatch's policies and views on the subject. This is not just about disability; it is about opportunity to input. Nil responses are valid as they show that consideration has been given.

Tracey:

This is about how we publicly do this. It will allow people to think well of the organisation by promoting progressive ways of working and not just box ticking. For e.g. the organisation of meetings could be more sympathetic to the needs of disabled participants. Also, we need to know how we're going to respond to these issues. We should have a general platform and above that we should be flexible.

Dolores:

Will write up an overview of the Disability Rights Commission's Statutory Code of Practice.

Tracey:

One way to help promote disability would be to commission disabled photographers.

Dolores:

We are pro-accessibility but we need to be aware of other transport users who openly state they don't support wheelchair users – i.e. they are also our passengers to represent.

Tracey:

There are also others such as older people who have access issues.

Dolores:

Bryan could do data analysis of appeals regarding accessibility. We could then use the output to inform our policy decisions.

Tracey:

It is useful to use the same venue for regular meetings so that participants can become familiar with them. Also route planning needs to give further details such as the location of the accessible entrance.

It was decided to inform staff in March/April through a short 1-2 page introduction into the issues.

*Examples of what is in the Disability Rights Commission Statutory Code of Practice;*

To promote equity of opportunity - this may mean acting more favourably to somebody with disabilities.

Eliminate discrimination and harassment.

Encourage participation of disabled people in public life.

Government objective to have disabled people to be full members of society by 2025.

To consider environmental attitudinal barriers.

Bodies should consider the way they regulate the activity of others i.e. their criteria for selecting contractors.

Policy of body needs to be a reasonable adjustment.

A long term aim should be that disabled and non-disabled people feel equally about outcomes.

To consider how a body measures itself.

Certain public bodies such as the GLA (but not London TravelWatch) have to have a general duty in force on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2006 but this is something we would like to aim for.

Widening of DED to include mental disabilities.

Equality is not achieved by treating disabled and non disabled people alike.

Learning difficulties should be catered for, for e.g. providing staff to help them in interviews (we have done this before).

To have a plan of action in place that is acted upon.

Consider disability in refurbishing offices.

The DED is a continuous duty on organisations.

Bodies have a requirement to draw up an action plan.

To consider reporting and transparency.

Staff to be trained in order to complete duties.

Conduct Impact assessments.

Gather evidence.

Must include a way disabled people have an input.

Recognise barriers outside our control.

Need to set out how policy impacts recruitment/retention of employees.

Consider staff surveys, customer surveys, etc.

Do not treat people solely in terms of their disability.

Find out what happens to disabled people after interview.

We may want to include mystery shoppers.

We may wish to look at performance indicators for our sector.

The code of practice excludes parliament.

Tracey:

How do we let stakeholders know policies and anyone else we can include?

Dolores:

The policy needs to go out to stakeholders but not too early as not to be developed and not too late so as to not allow an opportunity for input.

Tracey:

We could ask a London-wide body to support this financially.

Dolores:

Will ask different boroughs, as and when opportunities arise. Also organisations such as DPTAC.

**3. Designation of appropriate Senior Management Team member per relevant issue:**

(a) Our recruitment and employment practices

**Patti**

(b) Our physical accommodation, both at our offices and at meeting venues

**Bryan, Rufus, Paul, Dan, Paula**

(c) Our publications and communications

**Bryan, Jo, Jaz**

(d) Our policies for transport provision and operation.

**Tim**

**4. Dates of future meetings (noting known Apologies; others may arise. All members to advise)**

15<sup>th</sup> March

12<sup>th</sup> April (advance apologies from Lisa, Patti and Jo due to Annual Leave). Also Tim (? - tba).

10<sup>th</sup> May

21<sup>st</sup> June

12<sup>th</sup> July

16<sup>th</sup> August

13<sup>th</sup> September

11<sup>th</sup> October (possible advance apologies from Dolores – exam period yet to be confirmed to her)

15<sup>th</sup> November

13<sup>th</sup> December (post-publication round-up, if required/desired)

**5. Any Other Business**

Regular future reviews will be required, so future dates will be advised as appropriate.