

# Disability Equality Scheme



**General Register Office**  
*for*  
**SCOTLAND**  
*information about Scotland's people*

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## **Foreword by Duncan Macniven, Registrar General for Scotland**

From December 2006 the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 places a duty on all public bodies to promote disability equality. The Disability Equality Duty requires GROS to actively promote disability equality and is similar to the duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Our fundamental aim is to work with Scottish Ministers to improve the well-being of Scotland and its people by collecting, processing, safeguarding and making available information about Scotland's people in a useful, responsible and efficient way. We produce reliable information which central and local government use to support the planning and provision of improved public services for local communities throughout Scotland, including health care, housing, education and transport. We also play an important role with local authorities in overseeing the Registration Service in Scotland.

So our work gives us a real role in helping to promote equality for people with a disability and we must bear that specially in mind. We must ensure that there is no discrimination in access to our services. As we move ahead with the preparations for the 2011 Census and initiatives such as the new Scottish Family History Centre (ScotlandsPeople) we will focus on what we can do to reinforce our Department's commitment to equality for all the people of Scotland.

**DUNCAN MACNIVEN**

**Registrar General for Scotland**

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 introduced a new duty on public sector bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled persons. Under the terms of the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Regulations, the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) and a number of other bodies are required to publish a disability equality scheme setting out what they plan to do to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. Within the scheme we are required to state:

- ❖ the ways in which disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme;
- ❖ what we have in place to measure the impact of our policies and practices on disabled people;
- ❖ what steps we will take to fulfil our obligations; and
- ❖ what arrangements are in place for gathering information on the effect of our policies on disabled people and our arrangements for making use of that information.

## 2. Background

2.1 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, places on all public authorities a general duty to promote disability equality. In carrying out its functions GROS must have due regard to:

- ❖ the need to eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- ❖ the need to eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability;
- ❖ the need to promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- ❖ the need to take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people 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.

### 3. About the General Register Office for Scotland

- 3.1 The General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) is a Government Department established by Act of Parliament in 1854. We are an Associated Department of the Scottish Executive and we form part of the Scottish Administration. Our statistical operations form part of the Government Statistical Service and we prepare our main statistical products in line with National Statistics procedures.
- 3.2 The fundamental aim of GROS is to work with Scottish Ministers to improve the well-being of Scotland and its people by collecting, processing, safeguarding and making available information about Scotland's people in a useful, responsible and efficient way.
- 3.3 To enable us to meet our aim, GROS is organised into four Divisions, namely Census Division, Demography Division, Registration Division and Corporate Services Division. The general responsibilities of these Divisions are as follows:

#### Census Division:

- ❖ to make arrangements for taking periodic Censuses of Scotland's population; and
- ❖ statistical methodology and geography.

#### Demography Division:

- ❖ to prepare and publish demographic and other statistics.

#### Registration Division:

- ❖ to administer civil registration of vital events - births and deaths, plus marriages, civil partnerships, divorces and adoptions and the statutes relating to the formalities of marriage and the conduct of civil marriage; and
- ❖ to make available public records about individuals to customers.

#### Corporate Services Division:

- ❖ to provide financial, procurement, accommodation, IT, learning and other support for the Department.

## Business Functions

3.4 The main business functions of the four Divisions in GROS are set out in our Management and Business Plan (GROSplan) and are as follows:

### Census Division

- ❖ planning and taking periodic censuses of Scotland's population (the next census will take place across the UK in 2011);
- ❖ maintaining a postcode index to geographic areas in Scotland and related boundaries; and
- ❖ providing expertise for statistical aspects of the Census Project including form design and testing and developing the 2011 census questions.

### Demography Division

- ❖ preparing and publishing demographic statistics for Scotland and its constituent areas on an annual basis;
- ❖ maintaining the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) of patients in Scotland; and
- ❖ promoting effective use of the statistics.

### Registration Division

- ❖ providing support, materials, guidance and instructions, examination and performance information to Scottish Registration Authorities (ie local authorities);
- ❖ operating a change of name, re-registration, gender recognition and adoption registration service;
- ❖ making available to Scottish Registration Authorities, IT systems which allow registrars to record events on-line and access the records of events recorded in the past;
- ❖ enabling members of the public to access the open public records held by GROS through the search rooms at New Register House, on line at [www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk) and by supplying extract copies on request; and
- ❖ developing the new Scottish Family History Service *ScotlandsPeople* with the National Archives of Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon in the combined genealogy centre in Edinburgh.

## Corporate Services Division

- ❖ assisting in the development of strategic issues across the Department;
- ❖ overseeing all finance related activity, including procurement and purchasing;
- ❖ maintaining a safe, secure and comfortable working environment for customers and staff;
- ❖ maintaining the Department's Information and Communications Technology infrastructure and developing the Department's common information systems; and
- ❖ maximising each member of staff's overall effectiveness by co-ordinating HR activity with the Scottish Executive and offering training and development opportunities.

## 4. GROS's Priorities in 2006-2009

### 4.1 Current priorities are:

- ❖ to complete implementation of the Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Bill;
- ❖ to develop an e-registration service as an additional channel alongside registration at local registration offices;
- ❖ to launch the ScotlandsPeople Centre to create a one-stop-shop for the genealogy services currently offered by the General Register Office for Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon. The Centre is scheduled to open at the end of 2007;
- ❖ to continue planning for a 2011 Census, including working with the Office for National Statistics and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, in a way that will deliver a Census that meets both Scottish needs and UK needs; and
- ❖ to play a full part in the consideration of, and preparation for, population registers in co-operation with the Home Office (National Identity Register), ONS (Citizen Information Project) and SE (Citizen's Account).

## 5. GROS's Key Policy Areas

### Registration

- 5.1 From 1 January 2007 The Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Act 2006 makes provision for births and deaths to be registered at any registration office in Scotland. This will make it more convenient for members of the public to register vital events.
- 5.2 From 1 January 2008 a birth will be able to be registered on-line.
- 5.3 **This should lessen the need for potentially inconvenient journeys which may be difficult for some disabled people.**
- 5.4 Local Registration Offices are run by the local authorities. GROS's involvement is limited to prescribing how registrations should be carried out and what information should be recorded in the registers of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships. The operation of each Registration Office is managed by the appropriate local authority; therefore the local authorities' Disability Equality Schemes will apply.

### 2011 Census

- 5.5 Plans for the 2011 Census are at an early stage. In April 2006 we ran a Census Test to try out some new questions and to trial some new field procedures. We are currently analysing the results of the Test.
- 5.6 We consult widely on the questions we might ask in the Census and discuss form design and methods of enumeration with special interest and community groups. **As with previous Censuses we will have particular regard to the needs of disabled people.**

## 6. Involving Disabled People

- 6.1 GROS has involved (and will continue to involve) disabled people in discussions about the potential difficulty in completing a census form. This means that when planning for the 2009 Census Rehearsal and the 2011 Census their needs can be taken into account.
- 6.2 The Census Community Liaison Programme (CCLP) seeks to foster partnerships with the disabled in a bid to make the Census as inclusive as possible to stimulate response. The better the response the better public services can be made, for disabled people as well as other groups.
- 6.3 We meet with all the major disability groups in Scotland including representatives of visually impaired people, people with hearing loss and mental health organisations, to seek views on the census questions and enumeration procedures.

- 6.4 In the 2006 Census Test, we tested 2 questions relating to disability; one asked about types of disability and one asked about accessibility needs. Following the evaluation of the Census Test, decisions will be taken on whether to include these questions in the 2009 Census Rehearsal and in the 2011 Census.

## 7. Assessing the Impact of our Policies and Practices

### Records Services in New Register House

- 7.1 We regularly seek feedback on the services we provide in New Register House, that enable members of the public to access open public records in our search rooms. We do this face-to-face, by means of comment sheets and customer surveys. Our most recent customer survey included a question aimed at understanding how we might make a visit to New Register House easier and a better experience for disabled people.
- 7.2 Our plans for the new ScotlandsPeople Centre include developing services for disabled people. In the first instance we will use findings from the customer survey (mentioned above) but we will follow this up with further surveys and liaison with groups representing disabled people.
- 7.3 Access to the front doors of General Register House has been forbidden by Historic Scotland as it is a list "A" building. However, a disabled lift has been installed in General Register House and disabled parking will be available at the front of New Register House. Also at New Register House a ramp will be created to allow access to the Dundas Search Room. Tactile signage will be available throughout the Centre. The new and refurbished search areas at the Centre have been designed to provide easy access to the records for disabled people and there will be some specialised desks for wheelchair users. Once the ScotlandsPeople Centre is up and running we will involve disabled people as appropriate to determine how well it meets their needs and we will carry out modifications as required where it is possible to do so.

### ScotlandsPeople genealogy research website

- 7.4 The majority of the Scotlandspeople website is written to be accessible and complies with W3C's "Priority 1" Guidelines on accessibility. The accessible pages include the free public search, the members search, the results pages and the help pages. However, the millions of images in the database are in a format (.tiff or.jpg) that need third party software to view them. This means that tools designed to help increase accessibility, such as alt tags and extended descriptions are currently unavailable. Consequently there are

limitations for visually impaired people because of the age of the records that have been imaged.

## GROS website

7.5 We are working towards meeting the standards of the Web Accessibility Initiative - [see www.w3.org](http://www.w3.org). In particular, we have reformatted tables to make them easier to read.

## 2011 Census

7.6 The design of the 2006 Census Test included an assessment of how well the needs of disabled people would be met in the Census in 2011. A consultation exercise was undertaken to find out how blind and partially sighted people would like to receive information about the Census and how they would like to complete the form. This work was carried out by a blind member of staff who was specifically recruited for the task. He prepared a report of the findings which will help develop the enumeration strategy for the 2011 Census, in particular for blind and partially sighted people.

7.7 In the run up to the Census Rehearsal in 2009 the CCLP will continue to meet with disability organisations and groups to inform their policies and procedures.

## 8. Recruitment, Development and Retention of Disabled Employees

8.1 GROS is an Associated Department of the Scottish Executive. We follow their procedures for our Human Resources processes and they are responsible for all our staff recruitment. Information on the effect of the Scottish Executive's policies on recruitment and retention of disabled staff rests with them. One exception is the recruitment of Census field staff, the responsibility for which lies with GROS, Census Division.

8.2 GROS has a dedicated Development Centre which aims to meet the learning needs of all GROS staff and holds learning records for all staff. For certain development needs we make use of the Scottish Executive's Corporate Learning Services but we also arrange specific learning and development events in house.

8.3 Although GROS has oversight of the registration service, Registrars in Scotland are employed by Scottish local authorities who have their own Disability Equality Schemes.

## 9. GROS's Key Achievements on Disability & Plans for Improvements

9.1 Throughout GROS in recent years there has been considerable progress in advancing disability equality.

9.2 Our key recent achievements are:

### Registration

- ❖ search places in New Register House are available which are suitable for wheelchair access;
- ❖ the Dundas search room is due to be completed early in 2007. This will increase the number of places available which are suitable for disabled access. All search rooms will have the Induction Loop System for hearing appliances;
- ❖ making our records available on the internet has reduced the need to make visits to New Register House ;
- ❖ procedures are in place to assist mobility-impaired customers to gain access;
- ❖ in our customer service areas we actively seek feedback in a number of ways: face to face with customers, customer comment sheets and customer surveys. Feedback has shown that customers find the staff helpful and friendly;
- ❖ our latest customer survey included a question on disability and welcomed suggestions on how we might make a customer's visit easier e.g. access arrangements, special equipment;
- ❖ in our search rooms helpers may come in free of charge to aid customers with disabilities;
- ❖ on our Public Counter we have an Induction Loop System for customers with hearing impairments;
- ❖ we held a one day course in June 2005 for staff on deaf awareness;
- ❖ Registration Offices' information leaflets and forms are available in large print format;
- ❖ magnifying glasses are available in our search rooms;
- ❖ search terminals allow customers to enlarge the images on screen;

- ❖ we have adapted a monitor and keyboard for a regular customer who has visual impairments; and
- ❖ Customer Care courses have been run for staff and have included techniques and approaches to assist customers with a disability. There is an ongoing programme to deliver these courses.

### Registration - plans for improvement

- ❖ we need more information on the different types of disabilities and how we can best provide access to our services and interact with customers; and
- ❖ feedback shows that access for mobility-impaired customers could be better: New Register House is a listed building and alterations are therefore severely restricted; however we will address some access issues within the Scottish Family History Service (ScotlandsPeople) Project. (See paragraph 7.3 above).

### Census

- ❖ one of the important facets in the development of our census enumeration strategy is our Census Community Liaison Programme which identifies, *inter alia*, people who might have difficulty completing a census form whether through physical or mental disability, learning disability, language difficulties etc. We take account of their stated needs in enumeration strategy development;
- ❖ the Census Community Liaison Programme seeks to foster partnerships with various communities, including the disabled, in a bid to make the Census as inclusive as possible to stimulate response;
- ❖ in order to seek views on the census questions, we met with and explored the census needs of a number of key stakeholders in this area. These included representatives of visually impaired people, people with hearing loss, mental health organisations and representatives of other disability groups;
- ❖ we adhere to RNIB recommendations on the accessibility of printed materials;
- ❖ leaflets and forms are available in large-print and Braille and there are special deaf telephone helplines;
- ❖ we have already undertaken to ensure that the next census form (for 2011) will be much more user-friendly for groups such as the visually impaired. For example, we know that some colour schemes for public forms are more difficult to deal with for visually-impaired people than others;

- ❖ we recently employed a blind person to develop proposals for better enumeration of blind and visually impaired people;
- ❖ we are actively considering whether we can offer an on-line completion option which might benefit disabled people; and
- ❖ we encourage our staff to attend disability awareness seminars as a way of keeping track of changing needs.

#### Census - plans for improvement

- ❖ depending on the outcome of studies conducted on the Census test this year, we will decide whether to include questions on disability.

#### Scottish Census (2001) Results on Line (SCROL)

- ❖ extensive consultation and involvement with various user groups was an integral part of the development of the SCROL service. This showed a variety of expectations regarding ease of use and depth of functionality. The service was tailored to meet the differing needs of these users; and
- ❖ an on-line consultation exercise was conducted in 2005, but the number of responses was disappointing.

#### SCROL - plans for improvement:

- ❖ we know that certain aspects of the service (eg computerised mapping functions) are difficult for the visually impaired to use as these are graphics rather than text. More structured exercises will take place to consult with and involve disabled people as part of the preparation for dissemination of the 2011 Census results;
- ❖ SCROL has been reviewed by the Plain English Campaign which expressed some reservations about the design for the visually impaired. The visual appearance of SCROL will be upgraded in 2007 (subject to available resources) to bring it into line with the main GROS web site; and
- ❖ we need to continue to improve our understanding of how best to disseminate information to individuals with disabilities and we will work to ensure that our paper and web outputs follow the appropriate standards.

#### General

- ❖ all of our web material complies with the current accessibility laws and our web site was awarded the 'Crystal Mark' by the PEC;
- ❖ we offer statistical data in PDF format which can easily be re-sized for customers with a visual impairment; and

- ❖ we will make changes to the formats etc of documents we produce where required if they are found or reported to be not easily accessible by any group of customers.

### **Modification in GROS Buildings**

We have been working towards ensuring that our buildings comply with the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. For example we have recently:

- ❖ improved access for disabled staff and visitors;
- ❖ introduced tactile signage; and
- ❖ started to look at improving our lifts.

## **10. Reviewing the Scheme & Annual Reporting**

10.1 We will review our scheme on an ongoing basis to ensure that we continue to meet our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

10.2 In particular, we will review the needs of disabled people in terms of the census form and enumeration as a result of the lessons learned from the Census Test during 2007. We will further review the needs of disabled people in terms of the Census before, during and after the Census Rehearsal in 2009.

10.3 We will review our facilities for disabled people in the ScotlandsPeople Centre early in 2008 once it is up and running.

10.4 We will publish a revised Scheme by 30 November 2009.

10.5 We will publish an annual report summarising the information we have gathered during the year about disabled people who use our services and their needs, and the use we will make of the information.