

THE MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME
2010 - 2013

STATEMENT OF INTENT (SOI)

4 December 2009

DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME
2010 - 2013

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A. Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

1. The Museum, which is based in the buildings of the world's oldest surviving passenger railway station, is one of the most popular attractions in the North West and welcomes around 700,000 visitors a year. As one of the top science museums in the world, visitors are attracted to the lively, participative way the Museum interprets the past, present and future of the Manchester region.

2. This SOI describes the framework that provides the foundation for the Museum's relationship with all staff, visitors, volunteers, contractors and 'other' associated persons connected to the Museum.

3. The Museum is committed to equality of opportunity for all, regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, religion, political belief, social or economic class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital or parental status or any other unjustifiable criteria. The Museum will always demonstrate best practice and work within the requirements of all current legislation. Policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary.

4. The Museum will always aim to employ a workforce that reflects diverse communities of the local, national and international populations. As an organisation, the Museum encourages and supports the recruitment, retention and career development of individuals from as wide a range as possible of ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds.

5. The Museum is committed to developing an organisational culture which values all individuals and the contribution they make across all areas of activity. This includes shaping, prioritising and developing the Museum service to visitors.

6. In order to ensure that this SOI and any associated Policy is fully implemented and integrated, the Museum Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees aim to create an environment where people really want to work, within the Disability Equality Scheme (DES). This will be achieved by promoting equality across the whole of the Museum for all to benefit in line with the Museum Equality and Diversity SOI and the Museum Access Statement, as follows:

"We aim to ensure that the Museum is widely accessible to all sections of the community regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or ability. Further we aim to reduce any barriers affecting the Museum's appeal to the wider community or their visitor experience."

7. This document outlines the steps the Museum is taking to develop and promote disability equality at all times.

RESPONSIBILITIES

8. The Director has overall responsibility for the DES and as chair of the Museum Access Forum, the Head of Operations has responsibility for overseeing the success of the Museum in meeting the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty (DED). This will be achieved by the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the DES in line with the overall Museum strategy. Subject matter experts and selected staff from all areas of the Museum are members of the Museum Access Forum. They contribute their expertise and experiences during meetings that are held every three months to proactively help develop the Museum DED within the overall DES.

GENERAL DUTY

9. The DED came into force on 4 December 2006 and legally requires all public bodies to actively look at ways of ensuring that disabled people are treated equally in terms of Employment, Access and Services. This requires the Museum to be proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly; it is not just about changes to buildings or adjustments for individuals, it is also about including equality for disabled people into the culture of the organisation in practical and demonstrated ways. The DED sets out that when carrying out their functions, public bodies must have due regard to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people.
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act.
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability.
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people.
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life.
- Take steps to meet the needs of disabled people, even if this requires giving a disabled person more favourable treatment than would be afforded a non-disabled person in the same situation.

10. The DED reflects the social model of disability, which takes the approach that what stops disabled people from doing something, or hinders them, are barriers that society has built or failed to remove. It is society that disables a person, not the impairment of that person. The DED protects disabled people even if they do not consider themselves to be disabled.

11. The General Duty builds on the foundations of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, which included the duty to make reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people can access employment, goods, facilities, services, functions and premises. The Action Plan, which can be seen at Annex A, clearly identifies what the Museum is to achieve during the next three years and how it is to be done. The Action Plan will remain an active document and performance against it will be measured and reported accordingly. Updates will be provided to the DES and Action Plan given that existing discrimination legislation is proposed to be consolidated into a single

Equality Act in order to provide a simpler, more consistent legal framework for preventing discrimination.

12. The Equality Bill was formally introduced in the House of Commons on 24 April 2009, and received a second reading in May. On 7 July 2009, it completed the House of Commons Committee stage, where amendments were made in relation to pregnancy and maternity discrimination and dual discrimination claims. It is expected to reach the House of Lords at the beginning of the new parliamentary session. The Government has stated that, subject to the approval of Parliament, it expects the Equality Bill to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2010.

13. The Government published the text of the Equality Bill on 27 April 2009. If the Equality Bill (on the UK Parliament website) is enacted in its current (amended) form it will, among other things:

- Establish the existence of a provision, criterion or practice that puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage as the single threshold for the trigger of the duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- Introduce a specific provision making it unlawful for a person to instruct, cause or induce someone to discriminate against, harass or victimise another person, or to attempt to do so - both the recipient of the instruction and the intended victim will be provided with a remedy, whether or not the instruction is carried out, as long as the recipient or intended victim suffers a detriment as a result; and
- Create a single equality duty requiring public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Bill; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations - the duty will replace the existing race, disability and gender equality duties, and extend to age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

14. The Government has stated that, subject to the approval of Parliament, it expects the Equality Bill to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2010.

SPECIFIC DUTY

15. The general Museum operation is directed by specific duties and it must therefore produce a DES, which sets out a framework to assist in meeting the General Duty. Within the scheme the Museum must:

- Publish a Disability Equality Scheme SOI (including within it an Action Plan).
- Involve disabled people in helping to producing the Scheme and Action Plan.
- Demonstrate that actions within the Scheme have been taken and that appropriate outcomes have been achieved.
- Report on progress and identify outcomes achieved (must be reported and published annually).

- Review and revise the Scheme annually.

16. The DES and Action Plan must achieve equality in employment and access to its facilities and services through consultation with disabled people, identifying the barriers preventing disabled people from using the Museum and setting out ways of both improving services to disabled people and integrating disability issues into everyday work.

PUBLICATION

17. The DES will provide the essential framework for promoting disability equality across the Museum, and for making a positive and lasting difference to the experiences of all disabled staff and visitors. It will be published on the Intranet and Museum website. Other formats, such as Large Print etc, will be made available as required.

INVOLVEMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN DEVELOPING THE SCHEME

18. The Museum established an Access Forum consisting of representatives from key Museum departments in 2004, from which the Museum Access Statement was produced. The Access Forum also oversaw the commissioning of an access audit undertaken by a disabled access advisor to assess compliance to the DDA. An Action Plan was produced that addressed the recommendations from the audit. Led by the then Head of Visitor Services and Human Resources, the Forum was reconvened in 2007, not only to look at access issues across the Museum but also to co-ordinate the DES. Subsequently, a new Access Policy 2007 - 2009 was drawn up to dovetail in with the Museum Strategic Plan 2007 - 2012 which, along with the drafting of the Museum DES at the time, led to producing an Access Action Plan for the period 2007 - 2009. These additional documents have built on the Museum Equality and Diversity Policy, demonstrating the commitment of the Museum to disability equality issues. The Museum is in the process of revising the Strategic Plan and it is in this context that the Museum DES 2010 – 2013 has been produced.

19. Between September and October 2006, a programme of consultation involving those with both physical and sensory impairment was undertaken. Following this, an impact assessment on access at the Museum was carried out and the results were incorporated into the production of the Access Plan 2007 - 2009. A review of this Plan informed the development of the Action Plan 2009 – 2010.

20. The Museum will continue to update all disability equality Policies and procedures by using the Disability Equality Impact Assessment. This is the process of assessing the impact of existing or proposed policies and practices in relation to their consequences for disability equality. It includes looking for opportunities for positive impact that may have been missed or that could be better exploited, as well as the detection of actual or potential negative impact for disabled people.

21. Future plans for the Museum will continue to involve regular consultation with disabled people and access advisors as follows:

- Quarterly meetings of the Access Forum to monitor progress with the implementation of the Access Plan.
- Commission access, physical and sensory impairment audits as required.
- Review and Revision of the Plan as necessary.
- Analysis of visitor feedback.
- Continued external consultation with disabled people.
- Carrying out of Impact Assessments.

22. The first draft of the Scheme will be circulated to a range of people/groups for comment. Primarily through the Access Forum, Disabled people and their representatives will continue to be involved in the ongoing development and review of the scheme.

IMPROVED ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

23. In recent years a number of initiatives have been implemented to improve access provision at the Museum. As early as July 2000, the 'new look' Museum was opened, which included a network of smooth pathways accessing all buildings on site and a stair/lift access tower on the west end of the Main Building, providing access to the Lower Yard. This resulted in almost all publicly available spaces in the Museum being accessible for people with physical disabilities. Subsequently, installation of induction loops in all meeting rooms was completed and all signage around site was updated and improved.

24. As previously mentioned, in 2004 the Museum set up an Access Forum and one of the first examples of work undertaken as a result of the Forum was the development of "opening our eyes through partnership". This was a visual impairment programme undertaken with Henshaws Society for Blind People and the VIP unit at Manchester Central Library to pilot ways of linking together Museum and library resources and making them accessible to people with visual impairments, e.g. piloting the use of objects for handling sessions. The Access Forums have also overseen the commissioning of an access audit, undertaken by an access advisor to assess compliance to the requirements of the DDA. The Forums have produced and reviewed Action Plans to address the recommendations arising from audits. In essence, these actions have been concerned with improving physical, sensory and intellectual access, thereby seeking to remove some of the main barriers preventing access to all the Museum's facilities and services. These principles very much remain the focus with the current Museum DES.

25. Work has just started on a redevelopment of the Museum Main Building and will take just under a year to complete, due to finish in late 2010. The redevelopment will see the removal of access ramps that were not DDA compliant, the fact of which has previously been reported by Access Audits.

The development will be completely DDA compliant and will offer the best of facilities to people with disabilities. This will include two additional lifts which will provide easier access to all parts of the Museum Main Building. Further redevelopment work on other areas of the Museum, particularly Galleries, is scheduled until 2012, which will continue to demonstrate that the Museum is working hard to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

THE BARRIERS TO DISABLED ACCESS PROVISION

26. The Museum is committed to minimising the barriers to access provision and after regular consultation with people with disabilities, there has been significant development in two main areas:

- Organisational. The nature and location of the Museum has created minor obstacles and logistical issues which have needed to be overcome in order to make the overall visit to the Museum enjoyable. Self promotion, brand new clear on site signage orientation information, details on facilities and services and Museum access have all been addressed recently, subsequently improving the Visitor Experience for all.
- Physical and Sensory. The vast majority of the Museum is accessible for people with physical disabilities and the Main Building refurbishment and future modernisation plans (described above) are examples of the commitment that the Museum has to fully meet the requirements of disabled people. Work is continually ongoing to improve Galleries and public programmes (including access to collections and demonstrations) for people with sensory impairments and this area forms an integral part of the latest Museum Action Plan.

CONSULTATION ON DISABLED ACCESS PROVISION

27. Building on the meetings of previous Access Forums, work has been undertaken since to establish further the detailed needs of existing and potential audiences. An extensive audience research programme was undertaken in 2006 that involved consultation with people who had both physical and visual impairment. They were accompanied throughout a visit to the Museum and were asked to highlight both good and bad points overall. In general the progress made by the Museum was recognised although it was noted that further development work would be required in order to maintain the aims set within the DES. The main points raised overall were:

- Friendly and welcoming staff that are always willing to help.
- The availability of staff trained in guiding/audio description was adequate. The pre-booking for this service was considered acceptable.
- Provision of adequate ramps, lifts and toilet facilities was good although the ramps were considered to be long and steep (current refurbishment to the Main Building will alleviate this problem).

- In some, but not all areas, there was good low level, large text interpretation.
- Interactive exhibits were sited at the right height and allowed wheelchair access.
- Periodically, public programme demonstrations are tailored to meet the needs of those with disabilities.
- Tactile exhibits and maps and large print guides are available for visitors.
- There are adequate seating and rest places.

28. Nonetheless, there was also recognition that there was room for improvement in disability provision in order to meet standards of best practice. Physical, sensory and intellectual access improvements were suggested and these have been addressed, to varying degrees, as follows:

a. Physical Environment.

- Consistent lighting has been produced throughout the Museum site as far as practicable.
- Narrow corridors/ spaces and 'dead ends' have been alleviated where possible.
- Smooth pathways have been implemented avoiding the need to cross cobbled grounds.
- Ways of enabling access to see inside the airplanes and trains have been developed although for Health & Safety reasons, not all exhibits can be easily accessed by disabled people.
- Barriers inhibiting close access to exhibits have been removed where practicable.

b. Information and Interpretation.

- The provision of clear, simple and well-lit text panels at wheelchair level is ongoing.
- The provision of large text signage and tactile plans, along with multi-sensory interpretation is being introduced.
- Audio-tours and descriptions, enabling independence for those with disabilities, have been introduced in some Galleries on a trial basis and certainly with the current special exhibition, 'Da Vinci - The Genius'. Induction loops in all Galleries will be developed in due course.
- Little progress has been made with the provision of small-scale models of key large exhibits to facilitate tactile appraisal. This work has been identified within the new Museum Action Plan.
- The number and range of demonstrations and special programmes for those with disabilities have been either increased or suitably adapted where possible.

DISABILITY EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

29. The Museum will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy. All recruitment literature including job adverts, application packs and job descriptions/person specifications will be non-discriminatory and limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective recruitment process and performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability.

30. The Museum will always consider any possible direct or indirect discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done. When considering such requests for variations to these standard working practices the Museum will refuse such requests only if it considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any prohibited ground of discrimination, for doing so. The Museum will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations.

31. The Museum will also look to make reasonable adjustments to standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability and will take Health & Safety legislative requirements into account when doing so. These may include, but are not limited to, provision of specialist equipment and training, job redesign, retraining, flexible hours, remote working and/or redeployment to a suitable alternative vacancy.

32. When taking proactive measures to remove barriers from the working environment for disabled people, it is recognised that this will benefit not only disabled employees and prospective employees, but also in many cases customers and visitors. This will ensure that the Museum is able to recruit and retain the best employees on the basis of their abilities and individual merit.

33. The Museum will monitor the ethnic, gender and age composition of the existing workforce and applicants for jobs (including promotion and pay levels), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups. It will consider and take any appropriate action to address problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

INFORMATION GATHERING

34. In producing the DES, information gathering is required regarding how the Museum performs in the areas of Employment, Access and Services. This is included in the Museum Equality and Diversity Policy, along with mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring employment and access issues. Impact assessments are an essential tool for achieving disability equality and will be carried out during the year on all current and proposed Museum policies, practices and procedures.

35. In addition to Market Research carried out, the Museum has undergone several annual inspections by professional and leisure cultural organisations, all offering recognition of a significant service standard. Within these inspections, disability, race and ethnic observations have been considered and any recommendations have been incorporated into Action Plans. Notable inspections have included service excellence awards for the Museum from the following organisations:

- World Class Service.
- Customer Service Excellence.
- Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme.

MUSEUM PRIORITIES

36. The Priorities for the Museum for the period 2010 – 2013, and which have been incorporated into the Action Plan, are:

- Review of current Policy.
- The speedy implementation of Access Audits, as necessary.
- Post Main Building redevelopment review.
- Implementation of recommendations and amendments.
- Review of progress, including evidence gathering and reporting.
- Completion of the Action Plan.

REVIEW

37. The DES will be reviewed annually where the previous Action Plan will be interrogated to measure performance and delivery throughout the previous year. Relevant action points not achieved previously will be transferred to the new Plan and given a higher priority for completion in line with new entries. The Museum DES will be updated and amended as necessary and a revised Action Plan will be implemented accordingly. Both documents will be published in accordance with the appropriate regulations and guidelines.