

Disability Equality Scheme (2007 -2009)

Introduction

Our commitment

It is our vision to be the most admired groups of museums in the world and thus be a source of pride to the public, our sponsors and our staff. I am therefore pleased to introduce the Disability Equality Scheme for the National Museum of Science & Industry.

The past year has seen NMSI working with a number of specialist advisers to improve the working environment for staff, in addition to building consultation forums to improve access to our collections.

The Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan will see an expansion of programmes across the organisation to embed equality and diversity in all that we do.

As Director, I will ensure that our commitment to this DES leads to real outcomes and practical improvements in the day to day life and experience of disabled people in their engagement with our Museums. The commitment of our staff will help us deliver those outcomes making our Museums a place where everyone feels welcome.

Martin Earwicker
Director, NMSI
December 2006

The Disability Equality Duty

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 means that, from December 2006, all public bodies have a duty to promote disability equality.

The Act sets out what is known as the 'general duty', that public authorities must, in carrying out their functions, have due regard to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life;
- Take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

The purpose of this Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan, is to help the NMSI achieve equality in employment, service provision, access to premises and education. The Scheme will set out our overall objectives to deliver improvements in these areas specifically by:

- Making sure that we take the needs and views of disabled people into account when we design and deliver services;
- Measuring, and improving ways in which we deliver services to disabled people;
- Building a positive and disability-confident culture, with a common understanding and approach through which we can integrate disability issues into everyday work.

Consultation

The Disability Equality Scheme has grown through consultation directly with users and experts in disability organisations, such as Disability Kensington & Chelsea, the Centre for Accessible Environments, The Shaw Trust, the RNIB, RNID and others.

We will continue to work with these and similar organisations, our users and disabled staff to build a stronger platform for our work. This will be done in a number of ways. To improve accessibility to our collections a Standing Panel of Disability Users will be recruited and consulted on a regular basis to be fully operative by Spring 2007. We have already successfully piloted this process to suggest improvements to our largest gallery project - the £5 million redevelopment of the Science Museum's Launch Pad.

Another aim of our Action Plan is to develop a Disability Staff Network Group; this group will be consulted on policies and employment practices to ensure that all issues of disability equality are addressed as appropriate.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of the DES Action Plan is to help the Museum improve equality in all aspects of its work.

The Scheme sets out our Museum's plan of action for a period of three years and will be reviewed and updated regularly. The Action Plan will be taken forward by designated members of staff who will work with employees across the organisation to help implement our vision.

The Executive Board will be responsible for monitoring the DES Action Plan and will receive regular reports to monitor progress. The Disability Staff Network Group will continue to play a key role.

Where are we?

We have been working on developing access to our collections and services for many years now. The provisions cover specific areas such as:

- Adjustments to premises;
- More accessible information;
- Improved use of auxiliary aids; and
- Staff training.

Access and Information

The Museum map is available on entry to the Museum from the information and ticket desks. The Map provides information about the location of stairs, lifts, ramps, eating areas and toilets. A Museum floor plan is also available on the network of touch screen terminals located throughout the museum. Museum staff are on hand to give assistance and can also provide help with the lifts for groups of visitors.

Our current provisions include:

- Adult and child wheelchairs;
- Induction loops located at the main admission desk in the Energy Hall and the IMAX Box Office in the Welcome Wing, at point of sales in the Science Museum Shop and Ottakers Bookshops and in the Lecture Theatre. Infrared system in the IMAX cinema;
- Four parking spaces available for use by blue badge holders on Exhibition Road outside the Main Entrance to the Science Museum;
- We currently have a number of dining areas. The Revolution Café is located in the Energy Hall on the ground floor and is a self-service café with moveable seating, some of which have backs and arms;
- The Deep Blue Café is located on the ground floor of the Welcome Wing and provides a waiter service. If you have specific dietary requirements, allergy information is provided on food packaging and on menus;
- Picnic areas are located in the basement, first floor and second floor;
- Emergency evacuation procedures are currently under review to ensure that the museum is fully compliant with DDA requirements;
- Accessible toilets are located throughout the Museum;
- Guide dogs and hearing dogs are welcome throughout the Museum.

Access to the Collections

Ground Floor

The Main Entrance provides level access to the Museum. The Ground Floor galleries and shops are accessed via the large ramp and two staircases in the Energy Hall. All other galleries are accessible by lifts apart from the upper level of the Exploration of Space Gallery which can be reached by chair lift or stairs. Please note that some areas of the museum have lower levels of lighting due to the conservation of objects.

IMAX 3D cinema

Disabled visitors receive concessionary prices for our IMAX cinema and an enabler/support person is eligible for free entry. We do have lifts available if required. There is an induction loop at the IMAX box office on the ground floor of the Welcome Wing. There is also an infra red system in the IMAX theatre and neck loop receivers can be borrowed from IMAX staff.

Simulators

Disabled visitors also receive concessionary pricing on all simulators and an enabler/support person is eligible for free entry

Learning

The Disability Discrimination Act Part IV - Education, gives disabled people rights to equal provision to education and facilities. As a provider of educational courses and library and study facilities, the Museum will be taking appropriate steps to meet this provision. Development of the educational programme, with an emphasis on making it more inclusive, will be an important part of delivering service equality.

'Hands-On' Galleries staffed by Explainers throughout the Museum

We have a rolling programme of temporary exhibitions. There are also a number of exciting 'Hands-On' galleries for children throughout the Museum.

In the basement - The Garden and Launch Pad.

On the ground floor - Pattern Pod.

On the second floor - Energy: Fuelling the Future

Most of these areas are staffed by Explainers - our professional science communicators who provide personal guidance, explanations and demonstrations on gallery. These galleries can sometimes become very crowded and visitors with additional needs are advised to contact our Enquiry Line or our Education Bookings before their visit.

- Enquiry Line: +44 (0)20 7942 4446
- Educational group visits: +44 (0)20 7942 4777
- Minicom line: +44 (0)20 7942 4445

Please also visit: <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitors/specialneeds.asp>

We can provide private tours on request.

Employment

The Museum's Human Resources team advises on issues regarding disabled staff and requirements to make reasonable adjustments at all stages of the employment relationship. The Museum funds reasonable adjustments both through HR and Health and Safety requirements such as workspace improvements for employees. The Access to Work Scheme and the Shaw Trust has been used to fund adjustments for employees, most notably equipment for employees, furniture and other workspace improvements. They have also provided advice on the installation of induction loops in meeting and conferencing rooms and improved ramp access to premises.

Moreover, we recognise that staff training is key to increasing awareness on disability and achieving improvements in service delivery. The Museum is committed to a programme of training including:

- (i) Disability Equality Training for all staff
- (ii) Advanced Disability Training for all front line staff

We are currently recruiting for a new Disability Awareness Coordinator to ensure implementation of the Museum's disability policy, to direct the development and delivery of a programme of Museum-wide initiatives for disabled visitors, and to provide training and advice for museum staff about disabled provision.

Procurement – Goods and Services

The Museum will ensure that all procurement policies and procedures take account of the legal duties to promote equality as required by the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. We will do this by ensuring that our systems for selecting providers of goods and services identify those who support our equality and diversity requirements in the first instance.

Appendices

The Museum takes seriously the active promotion of its collections to under-represented audiences, such as disabled people. Our aim is to truly embrace diversity by developing an inclusive inspiring organisation. The following documents set out fully in detail our aims and action plans for disabled people at the Museum.

Appendix 1 Access and Information Policy for Disabled People and Action Plan

Appendix 2 Employment - Human Resources Policy on Disability Equality Duty and Action Plan