



DISABILITY EQUALITY INVOLVEMENT

**Report on Outcomes from the
9th April 2009 event held in conjunction
with Capability Scotland**

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1.0 Introduction

Audit Scotland is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity for all staff, all client groups and the general public. In order to ensure that our work takes account of the particular needs and requirements of diverse groups we are keen to consult and involve a diverse range of stakeholders. Their views and opinions will help shape the way that we do business and help ensure that our practices are inclusive. As part of achieving these aims and to comply with our duty to involve disabled people in our work, Audit Scotland invited Capability Scotland's Training and Consultancy Team to support us in running involvement events with disabled people.

Our second consultation and involvement event was held at the Capability Scotland Head Office on Thursday 9 April 2009 and was attended by eight disabled people who work with Capability Scotland predominantly in providing training, user access surveys and mystery shopping services. Most of the attendees also hold a number of other committee and public appointments representing disabled people and inputting their views to shape public practice. The group has a range of impairments and conditions including physical and sensory impairments and hidden impairments.



For our second event we focused on the following key and current areas of focus:

- IT hardware replacement
- Electronic Working Papers project
- Development of Best Value 2 approach

Overall the event was both informative and enjoyable with everyone fully participating in a lively debate on relevant issues. Audit Scotland is grateful for the contributions made by all attendees and for the facilitation provided by Elspeth Molony of Capability Scotland.

Following the consultation event, various stakeholders across Audit Scotland have been considering how they can take on board the points made by attendees. This document is both a report of the event and a response to the recommendations put forward. For ease of reference, within each topic area we have separated out 'Discussion Themes'; 'Recommendations' (made by Capability Scotland) and 'Response including Actions to be Taken' (by Audit Scotland) and shown these in tabular format.

2.0 Discussion Areas and Recommendations

In the following sections we cover the three main topic areas of IT Hardware Replacement, the Electronic Working Papers Project and the Development of the Best Value 2 Approach.

2.1 IT Hardware Replacement

Allan Davie, Audit Scotland IT Manager, gave a presentation detailing the IT hardware replacement project. The participants heard that all computers have been replaced with new lighter and more reliable computers.

DISCUSSION THEME	RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY CAPABILITY SCOTLAND CONSULTATION GROUP	RESPONSE INCLUDING ACTION TO BE TAKEN BY AUDIT SCOTLAND
<p><u>Ensuring People are aware of the accessibility support available to them.</u></p> <p>The group discussed how best the IT department could ensure that disabled members of staff are aware of all the IT options available to them.</p> <p>It was agreed that disabled people are not always aware of the accessibility software and adapted hardware that could assist them in their jobs and that communication to raise awareness of possible solutions is important. It was also felt that this applied to individuals with IT needs even when those needs were not classified in relation to a disability.</p>	<p>Develop a list of all the potential software, hardware and adaptive accessories available so that disabled members of staff are aware of the range of options available to them including key fobs for home access that automatically enter the PIN, trolley suitcases for transportation and voice recognition software.</p>	<p>Information Services Group (ISG) has a list of all software licensed to our organisation.</p> <p>ISG will focus on the current range of adaptive devices offered to staff and publicise these facilities more widely. In addition ISG has reviewed the list of organisations provided by Capability Scotland who are able to advise on suitable adaptive devices, and believes the devices are compatible with our equipment.</p> <p>An ultralight laptop is already available to staff where there is a need and the implementation of Citrix technology has reduced the need for laptops.</p>

	<p>Contact Dell for information about all accessibility software and hardware that they offer.</p> <p>Contact companies specialising in accessible software to ensure that the menu of options includes all software available.</p> <p>Companies to contact include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User Vision (www.uservision.co.uk) • Regional Support centre Scotland North and East for Access Apps free software (www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/accessapps) • Ability Net (www.abilitynet.org.uk) • Web2Access (www.web2access.org.uk) • Kurzweil for making PDFs accessible (www.kurzweiledu.com/kurz3000.aspx) • Emptech for free software (www.emptech.info) • Oatsoft (www.oatsoft.org) 	<p>Trolley suitcases are already available for staff for transportation of equipment.</p> <p>Key fobs for automatic PIN entry can be purchased when there is a user with this need.</p> <p>ISG has limited resources and would be unable to test all specialist accessible software, unless there was specific demand from a user. ISG has plans to look at voice recognition software in the longer term but will accelerate this if there is demand from a user.</p>
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<p><u>Securing accurate information about disabled employees</u> Participants discussed the fact that Audit Scotland is not confident that they have accurate figures on the number of disabled people in their employment but that a monitoring exercise is to undertaken in the near future to improve on this.</p> <p>The group agreed that it was difficult for the IT department to ensure that they had taken into account the needs of all disabled members of staff they do not have an accurate list of disabled members of staff with whom they can discuss individual needs.</p> <p>The group heard that it is currently it falls to disabled people to ask the IT department for assistance rather than the IT department being proactive in offering support and adaptations.</p>	<p>The HR department should be monitoring the disabled workforce and gathering statistics on the numbers of disabled members of staff and issues such as where they are employed on the salary scale, whether they receive as much training as other members of staff and success rates for promotion compared to non-disabled members of staff. Monitoring and gathering evidence of this kind is a requirement of the Disability Equality Duty.</p> <p>The IT department could use this information to ensure that all disabled members of staff were in receipt of all IT reasonable adjustments that they required.</p>	<p>HR requires that a medical declaration is completed as part of the recruitment process. Regular workplace assessments take place to ensure that the needs of individuals are being met.</p> <p>On an ongoing basis, ISG will ask HR for the results of the workplace assessments to ensure that we are able to make reasonable adjustments for staff.</p>

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<p>The group also discussed that there is no obligation for disabled people to disclose a disability and that it is their own decision to do so. The importance of establishing an inclusive culture whereby disabled members of staff feel confident in declaring that they are disabled was also considered. Everyone agreed that by disclosing a disability the member of staff is able to request reasonable adjustments and is more likely to work at their optimum level. It was also pointed out that this was relevant to staff with progressive conditions or those who become disabled during the course of their employment.</p>	<p>More disabled people will disclose that they are disabled if the question is asked in a positive social model way rather than a negative medical model way. The Disability Discrimination Act definition of a disabled person is a medical model definition and should therefore be avoided.</p> <p>At our previous consultation event recommendations were made about possible wording for monitoring forms and Capability Scotland advocate that this is taken forward with the HR monitoring exercise currently being undertaken in Audit Scotland.</p>	<p>ISG will resource any work that will allow a member of staff to adapt to work at their optimal level and to assist in making reasonable adjustments. The key to success lies in identifying the member of staff, so that their needs can be accommodated.</p>

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<p><u>Methods the IT department can use to obtain more views from disabled people during the hardware replacement project</u></p> <p>The group discussed ways in which the IT department could have obtaining opinions from disabled staff members other than those known to the IT department and to HR.</p>	<p>An article in the staff newsletter calling for volunteers to take part in the project might have encouraged more volunteers to come forward.</p>	<p>Agreed – ISG will seek wider involvement in future and publicise this to staff as part of wider Equality involvement events in Audit Scotland.</p>
<p><u>Changing requirements of disabled staff members and people who become disabled during their working life</u></p> <p>The group discussed the changing nature of people’s impairments and therefore the potential for their requirements for adapted IT equipment and assistive software to change.</p>	<p>Audit Scotland should ensure that mechanisms are in place for disabled members of staff to inform the IT department if their needs change.</p> <p>It is also recommended that line managers regularly discuss adjustments with the staff member, perhaps at supervision meetings, to ensure that it remains effective.</p>	<p>Mechanisms for addressing needs under the DDA requirements will be reinforced through the risk assessments and workstation assessments currently in place in Audit Scotland, and we will ensure that this also covers staff working from home.</p> <p>All staff can contact ISG through e-mail, phone or using the help desk ticketing system to raise requests.</p>

<p>The duty to make reasonable adjustments is a continuing duty that must be kept under constant review. While an adjustment might be effective in tackling a barrier experienced by a disabled member of staff when it is first put into place, it might not remain effective indefinitely.</p>		<p>Libro intranet information including information on the Equality & Diversity pages will be improved to signpost staff to advice and guidance on this.</p>
<p><u>Making reasonable adjustments for new members of staff</u></p> <p>The group discussed the importance of reasonable adjustments being in place ready for the disabled person starting in a new job.</p>	<p>All hardware and software must be in place before the person starts. This should not result in a delay in the person's start date.</p>	<p>ISG will work with HR develop a process to ensure as soon as a need has been identified, In the case of a new start, this should give about one month from the interview to the start date and this is sufficient time to meet a users needs, subject to delivery timescales for specialist equipment.</p>
<p><u>Securing funding for reasonable adjustments</u></p> <p>The group heard that the IT Manager has a budget for reasonable adjustments and does not normally seek external funding.</p>	<p>Audit Scotland may be able to get help to make reasonable adjustments from the Access to Work scheme, run by Jobcentre Plus. Access to Work provides practical advice and financial support to employers to help overcome barriers in the work environment experienced by disabled people.</p>	<p>Audit Scotland will consider options for additional support for adjustments, and will be used when there is a suitable case.</p>

	<p>Access to Work grants can help pay for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adaptations to premises and equipment• Communication support at interview (e.g., BSL interpretation)• Aids and equipment• Travel to work expenses for people who cannot use public transport <p>Access to Work grants are awarded after an assessment has taken place by an Access to Work Adviser. The award may not be for the full cost of the reasonable adjustment.</p> <p>For more information contact:</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus, Access to Work Operational Support Unit</p> <p>Telephone: 0141 950 5327 Email: scotland.atw@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk Website: www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk</p>	
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2.2 Electronic Working Papers Project

Craig Watson and Anne McGregor from the Business Improvement Unit gave a presentation detailing the Electronic Working Papers Project. The participants heard that the traditional paper-based way of working at Audit Scotland is to be replaced with an electronic system. Overall the participants felt that this had great potential to have a positive effect on disabled members of staff.

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<p><u>Navigating through the system without using a mouse</u></p> <p>The groups discussed the importance of the system to be accessible to people who do not use a mouse, such as people with RSI or with reduced manual dexterity.</p>	<p>Ensure that the new system can be used without a mouse, using keyboard links and voice activated software.</p>	<p>Early discussions with the supplier confirm that their software has been tested with voice activated software.</p> <p>At the configuration stage Audit Scotland will discuss with the supplier about using the system without a mouse and using voice activated software</p> <p>We will test the software during the testing phase of the project November 2009 to October 2010. Initial testing will be carried out by Audit Scotland staff and where necessary we will seek the input of people with differing disabilities.</p>

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<p><u>Testing the usability of the system</u></p> <p>The group discussed the importance of ensuring that the system was fit for purpose for future disabled members of staff who might use assistive technology not currently in use at Audit Scotland.</p>	<p>Involve volunteers from external disability organisations to test the usability of the new system with a variety of adapted hardware and software. Capability Scotland can help with this.</p>	<p>At the configuration stage Audit Scotland will discuss with the supplier about using the system without a mouse and using voice activated software</p> <p>We will test the software during the testing phase of the project November 2009 to October 2010. Initial testing will be carried out by Audit Scotland staff and through the DESG we will seek the input of people with differing disabilities.</p>

<p><u>The importance of compatibility with accessibility software</u></p> <p>The group discussed the importance of ensuring that the new system is compatible with accessibility software such as screen readers and voice activated software.</p> <p>To do this, the documents scanned in to the system must be saved as plain text documents, not PDFs or JPEGs.</p> <p>PDF documents are not as accessible as HTML, RTF or Microsoft Word documents. The problem is often due to the PDF not being optimised by adding "tags" to the file. Tags contain information about document structure and substantially increase accessibility. They store information such as header locations, hyperlinks, and alternative text descriptions for graphics. Assistive technology interprets these tags and displays the information on a variety of platforms, from screen readers to refreshable Braille output devices.</p>	<p>Ensure that the new system is compatible with accessibility software such as screen readers, voice recognition software and text enlargement software by avoiding the use of PDFs.</p> <p>Consider the protocol for scanning handwritten notes into the system in such as way that they can be stored as plain text documents rather than as image files.</p>	<p>At the configuration stage Audit Scotland will discuss with the supplier about using the system without a mouse and using voice activated software</p> <p>We will test the software during the testing phase of the project November 2009 to October 2010. Initial testing will be carried out by Audit Scotland staff and through Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group we will seek the input of people with differing disabilities.</p> <p>Protocols on scanning will be agreed with Information Services to ensure the best way of storing of documents. We will liaise with our Communications team and learn from their work on the Audit Scotland website and making documents accessible.</p>
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<p><u>Training on the new system</u> The group discussed the importance of the training on the new system being accessible to all disabled members of staff. Participants agreed that additional training on the use of the new system with accessibility software may be required.</p>	<p>Ensure that the training is fully accessible and offer additional training to staff members who use accessibility software.</p>	<p>Audit Services will adopt a ‘train the trainer’ approach to tailor the training to Audit Scotland’s audit methodology. Feedback from this approach from the testing teams will be included in the training sessions when rolling-out the software to all staff. We will offer additional sessions for staff to sign up for as they consider necessary.</p> <p>Training will be provided by the supplier on using accessibility software.</p>
<p><u>Production of audit reports as PDFs</u> The group heard that audit reports are produced as PDF files and emailed to client organisations. It was pointed out that PDF documents are not as accessible as HTML, RTF or Microsoft Word documents for the reasons given above.</p>	<p>Consider producing audit reports as read only Word files so that staff in client organisations who use screen readers are able to access the report.</p> <p>Copies of reports on the Audit Scotland website should also be stored as read only Word files.</p>	<p>We will liaise with our Communications team and learn from their work on the Audit Scotland website and making documents accessible.</p> <p>Audit Services as a whole needs to consider the options for circulation of all its reports. This will be discussed with the Audit Services Group Management Team in conjunction with the Diversity and Equality Steering Group.</p>

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<p><u>Impact of the new system on visually impaired people</u></p> <p>The participants felt that the new system could potentially make audit work far more accessible to visually impaired people as the requirements to read paper documents would be removed.</p> <p>However the team were concerned about the potential eye strain that could be incurred through the increase in computer use, especially in reading long documents on screen.</p> <p>This was also discussed in relation to staff who work remotely or from home and it was felt that it was important to ensure their support needs were met.</p>	<p>Consider developing a protocol for taking breaks from the computer.</p> <p>Encourage staff to take responsibility for their health and safety and ensure that they do not put themselves at risk of eye strain through excessive computer use.</p>	<p>Audit Scotland provide staff with guidance from the Health & Safety Executive on VDU use – this is provided at Induction and also is available through the intranet. The guidance answers frequently asked questions about VDUs and health, gives a summary of the law on VDU work and outlines what employers and employees can do to comply. It also suggests simple adjustments that users can make to workstations and screens to make them more comfortable and easy to use. Staff are also provided with an on-line workstation assessment training package which will help identify any problems with their work station set up.</p> <p>Audit Scotland complies with legislation and provides free eye tests and subsidised eye wear for VDU users.</p>

		Audit Scotland's Homeworking Policy includes key health & safety considerations and processes to ensure staff working at home have a safe working environment.
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2.3 Development of Best Value 2 Approach

Paul Reilly, Project Manager Best Value Improvement Team, gave a presentation detailing the Best Value 2 Approach. The participants heard that the new Best Value approach includes questions to assess how well public authorities are promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

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<p><u>Auditors' knowledge and understanding of equality issues</u></p> <p>The participants discussed how important it is that auditors have a good understanding of equalities issues in order to ask the right questions of public authorities and assess the evidence they are presented with.</p>	<p>Provide all auditors with disability equality training delivered by disabled people and based on the social model of disability. Capability Scotland can provide this training for you, tailored to the work of the auditors.</p>	<p>A series of training and development activities leading up to the introduction of BV2 Audit is ongoing. This includes training in the effective use of toolkits. Toolkits are to be further tested during a series of pathfinder audits running until the end of 2009. Part of the review of these audits will be an assessment of skills gaps identified during the audits. This will include the equalities Best Value theme, and if a specific requirement for training in disability equality or broader equality issues is identified then training and/or information support will be organised to address these needs.</p>

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<p><u>The importance of the Equalities Toolkit being 'fit for purpose'</u></p> <p>The group heard that an equalities toolkit is being developed to support auditors in undertaking Best Value assessments.</p> <p>It was recognised that the toolkit had been designed to be short and user-friendly but this meant there was little elaboration on the equalities related questions being asked.</p> <p>The participants heard that so far disabled people have not been involved in the development of the equalities toolkit.</p>	<p>Involve disabled people in the further development of the toolkit by hosting an involvement session with the Capability Scotland participants. This is important both in order to make the toolkit as effective and meaningful as possible but also so that Audit Scotland can comply with the Disability Equality Duty to involve disabled people.</p> <p>Consider backing up the equalities toolkit with a guidance document providing further information on different topics, including guidance on the evidence auditors should look for in different areas.</p>	<p>A further Consultative event with Capability Scotland has been arranged for July 2009.</p> <p>Supporting guidance for audit teams using the toolkit is to be developed. This will be discussed as part of the above consultative event.</p>

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<p><u>How Auditors can seek evidence relating to disability equality</u></p> <p>The participants discussed the areas in which auditors could look for evidence relating to disability equality, including access audit reports, disability equality training programmes, and accessible information policies.</p>	<p>Include information about what evidence to look for in the equalities toolkit.</p>	<p>Supporting guidance for audit teams using the toolkit is to be developed. This will be discussed as part of the additional consultative event with Capability Scotland.</p>
<p><u>Encourage more disabled people to become auditors</u></p> <p>The team discussed the benefits of having more disabled people in the Audit Scotland workforce, including the potential for the auditor team to have a greater understanding of disability equality issues.</p>	<p>Consider becoming a “Two Ticks Positive about Disabled People” employer as a way of attracting more candidates.</p>	<p>The two ticks approach is already being considered by HR as part of a comprehensive best value review of recruitment.</p>

<p><u>Ensuring Public Authorities <i>involve</i> disabled people rather than simply consulting them.</u></p> <p>The participants discussed the important distinction between involvement and consultation. Involvement is a much more meaningful exercise than consultation. The Disability Equality Duty requires disabled people to be involved in the development of new services, policies and processes. However many public authorities are failing in this duty by simply carrying out basis consultation such as emailing disability organisations to ask for opinions on policies once they have been written. Involvement is a much more meaningful process and consists of talking to disabled people throughout the process of developing a new policy or service. The involvement events Audit Scotland has run in conjunction with Capability Scotland are good examples of real involvement.</p> <p>Participants discussed what sort of</p>	<p>Include guidance in the equalities toolkit and in disability equality training so that auditors understand the difference between involvement and consultation and can establish that a public authority has complied with the Disability Equality Duty to involve disabled people.</p> <p>Evidence to be sought includes reports from involvement events and details of the process the public authority undertakes to involve disabled people.</p>	<p>A council's delivery of its equalities duties will be an important consideration in the risk assessment process which accompanies BV audits. This risk assessment will establish the depth of equalities work to be undertaken in each audit and thus how the equalities toolkit is applied. Engagement features in the equalities toolkit and to a greater degree in a further toolkit on community engagement. Their application will be tested in the forthcoming BV pathfinder audits and reviewed systematically in the longer term.</p>
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evidence auditors should look for in order to ensure that meaningful involvement has taken place in the organisations they are auditing.		
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3.0 Next Steps

The outcomes and identified actions from this consultation event will be incorporated in the relevant project plans and equality impact assessments where applicable.

A further involvement event will be scheduled to look at the development of the Equalities Toolkit in more detail.

Contact Details for Further Information:

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