

Equality and Diversity Case Studies

Directorate: Adult Social Care & Health

Service: Health & Wellbeing

Title: Commissioning of a 1,000 venue 'DisabledGo' online Access Guide for Cheshire West and Chester.

Introduction:

'DisabledGo' provides online access information to buildings and venues in different towns and cities across the UK and Ireland, helping to break down the barriers and improve choice for disabled people.

The Council has secured funding to commission 'DisabledGo' to produce an online Access Guide that will provide detailed accessibility information on up to 1,000 venues.

The guide will contain detailed access information on a wide range of buildings and venues, such as Shops, Banks, Restaurants, Public Buildings, and Public Transport. Each venue will be surveyed and information will be provided on facilities such as car parking, entrances, reception, internal doors, accessible toilets, stairs/lifts etc. The information will enable disabled people to make informed decisions on whether to visit a venue based on the accessibility information and photographs provided in the Guide.

The need for an Access Guide was identified during consultation with disabled people and disability organisations in relation to the Disability Equality Duty. Therefore, the Council has listened to its residents and has commissioned this Guide.

Challenges: The previous Council had commissioned local disability organisations to carry out surveys and gather accessibility information for local venues and facilities. However, the biggest challenge was keeping this information up-to-date. The great advantage of DisabledGo is that the information can be readily updated and kept publicly available online.

The DisabledGo initiative has been available for some years. However, the lack of available funding had been the main barrier to commissioning a DisabledGo Access Guide for Cheshire West and Chester.

How the challenges were overcome: The Council was innovative in its approaches to identifying and securing the necessary funding for this guide. The guide will be match-funded (50%) from a grant from Marks & Spencer, and also from a range of sources within the Council.

Outcomes: The Access Guide will bring a number of positive outcomes including:-

Welcome visitors:

The Guide will provide accessibility information to visitors - helping them to plan where to go and what to do on their visit.

Create safer communities:

It will enable disabled people to access services and facilities in the area, as well as increasing awareness of disability among non-disabled people.

Provide Accessible information:

All pages on DisabledGo will be WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) and AA approved, complying with all priority 1 and 2 guidelines of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

Enable people to achieve:

The Guide will improve people's independence, choices, and wellbeing

Offer employment opportunities:

Up to 4 local disabled people will be employed to carry out the surveys.

Encourage participation in leisure and creating a healthier community:

Accessibility information will be provided for sports and leisure venues.

Community cohesion:

Information will be provided so that disabled people can find services suitable for their own needs, which should encourage more people to access the area, making communities more inclusive.

Supports Local Businesses and Economic Regeneration:

There are approximately 11 million disabled people living in the UK, with a spending power of approximately £80 billion a year. The Guide will

provide useful information to disabled people as well as their families and carers.

Value for Money:

The Guide will use match-funding from the private sector which represents good value for money.

What we could have done better:

We could have commissioned a DisabledGo Access Guide at an earlier date.

Further information:

The online Access Guide will be complemented by the leaflet – ‘Chester City Centre Access – A Guide for Disabled People’ – which the Council produces annually. The leaflet will promote the Guide to local disabled people and visitors to the area.

The Access Guide will also provide links to relevant sections on the Council website, and likewise, the Council website will link to DisabledGo.

Monthly reports will be provided to the Council providing useful information such as number of visitors to the website, as well as the geographic origin of visitors.

The Access Guide will be launched in 2012.