

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 021677
Date 12 February 2016

Councillors

Request:

S149(3)c deals with encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Please provide details of how the Council is discharging its public sector duty to enable disabled people to participate in public life where there representation is low for example, participation as councillors, accessing leisure centres using concessionary schemes etc

As you mention the Council is under a duty to consider these issues as a result of S149 of the Equality Act 2010, but the requirements of the Act go well beyond offering concessions. The Council, as with any public body, has to look at the design of services themselves and make judgements about what are the most inclusive services they can provide with the resources they have to provide them; in legal terms this is known as having "Due Regard".

Throughout this service development process and after the policy has been agreed, the Council still looks to provide reasonable adjustments to services if disabled people or a disabled person appears to be at a disadvantage.

Through its arrangements with the "WV Active scheme" concessions are offered to some disabled people who wish to use these leisure services.

The Council, which offers financial support to Centro; a local public transport provider also, as part of this support, participates in the West Midlands wide scheme that offers public transport at concessionary rates for some disabled people. Concerts and other events organised at the Civic Hall and other venues are sold via a scheme which allows a disabled person, who requires a carer, to attend an event at no additional cost for the disabled person's carer.

As described, offering a concession is only one way that the Council can recognise the additional or different situation in which a disabled person may find themselves in relation to the way the Council provides a service. The Council will respond to these different situations in a variety of ways. To illustrate this point refuse collection services support disabled people, who live in Wolverhampton and who have difficulty putting their bin out for collection by collecting the bin from the back of their property

(for example) and returning the empty bin there after collecting the refuse.

The Council also tries to provide services that are accessible to all from the outset rather than requiring concessions or adjustments. For example the Council is working with local people when playgrounds are being refurbished so that all of the play equipment is inclusive.

In response to your final point about participation in political life and disabled councillors, it has been established after careful consideration that the Council does not hold the above information as this is an issue over which the Council has no control. Each of the political parties will have policies in place by which candidates are chosen. Importantly however whenever a disabled person is elected as Councillor the authority will ensure that they are supported to participate in public life by offering various reasonable adjustments to provide for this. Consequently, we are unable to provide any information relating to the above, and are informing you as required by Section 1(1) (a) of the Act, that states:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request".

If you would like more information on their work here can I suggest you contact them directly. You can contact each of the parties at the Civic Centre. The Council is currently made-up of Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and UKIP councillors.