

# EQUALITY SCREENING: Transforming Community Equipment and Wheelchair Services Programme – Wheelchair Review Phase 2

## 1. What you are trying to achieve in this policy or part of the policy?

Phase 1 of the TCEWS Programme was to develop a radical new model of service delivery for community equipment and wheelchair services in collaboration with all key stakeholders. For community equipment services a new model, supported by a robust outline business case and indications of market appetite for change were delivered to the Minister in March 2007.

The intention was to look at the two services in parallel, but this has not been feasible. A similar collaborative process was undertaken for wheelchair services and two possible models for delivery were developed but without further data, it was not possible to make robust recommendations for the way forward.

The next phase for wheelchair services is a further data gathering exercise approved by the Review of Central Returns Steering Committee – ROCR – Reference number ROCR/O7/010) to enable Ministers and the NHS to determine the future shape of wheelchair services.

## 2. Which population groups the policy (or section) is intended to benefit and how

Any collaborative model developed through this process will support access to information and services to enable all people (including children) to make informed decisions about access to wheelchair services.

## 3. Related policy areas that may be affected by changes in this policy (or section)

It supports many key policy drivers including OHOCOS, 'Improving the life chances of disabled people' and the NSFs. It also supports the recent HMT/DfES report '*Aiming High for Disabled Children*' which identifies access to equipment, including wheelchairs, as key to ensuring disabled children are able to participate in normal activities as fully as possible.

It provides an opportunity to model how the modernisation of wheelchair services might be taken forward, supported by evidence about current practices and a robust business case for change.

## Screening

### Question 1

	Age	Disability	Race	Religion and Belief	Gender	Sexual Orientation
1.a) Do different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the proposed policy?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes	No

<sup>1</sup> Early evidence from Whizz-Kidz pilot partnership with Tower Hamlets PCT to provide wheelchairs for children suggests that religion and belief can result in differences of approaches and attitudes towards supporting disabled people.

1.b) Is there potential for or evidence that the proposed policy will promote equality of opportunity for all and promote good relations between different groups?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1.c) Is there potential for or evidence that the proposed policy will affect different population groups differently (including possibly discriminating against certain groups)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
1.d) Is there public concern (including media, academic, voluntary or sector specific interest) in the policy area about actual, perceived or potential discrimination against a particular population group or groups?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
1.e) Is there doubt about answers to any of the above questions (for instance there is not enough information to draw a conclusion)?	No	No	No	No	No	No

If the answer to any of the above is “yes”, you will need to carry out an equality assessment in the relevant equality area(s).

## Question 2: Why have you come to these conclusions?

Wheelchair services are available to those who need support and meet the eligibility criteria. The assumption is that the NHS is delivering a service that meets equality legislation needs. However, successive reports over the last 20 years have consistently argued for modernisation and investment in the wheelchair services without which wheelchair services will not be able to meet the expectations of any users (*Out & About*, CSIP, Oct 2006, *Services for disabled children a review of services for disabled children and their families*, Audit Commission, 2003)).

The models that have been developed in Phase I in collaboration with stakeholders including people with complex needs, disabled children and their families and older people. They have met with overall approval from service users, providers, suppliers from the third and independent sectors and professionals. The deliverables are a first stage only, with theoretical models and outline data to support parts of the models.

With Ministerial agreement, participation of the NHS and funding to take this to the next phase we will continue to ensure that the range of needs and opinions are considered and an equality impact assessment will be undertaken.

The reason I have answered “yes” in response to certain of the screening questions is for the reasons outlined below:

### ***a) Do different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the proposed policy?***

Some groups have different health and social care needs than others. Although wheelchairs are available to all groups, the range of need and complexity of solutions may vary with age. For example, many older people will often benefit from a number of relatively inexpensive items to ensure they maintain a level of independence at home. In the case of young disabled people and children their needs change rapidly as they grow and the equipment required is often more complex and specific to their needs, enabling them to attend school or work.

There is evidence that wheelchair services do not serve people of any group well (Audit Commission, TCEWS stakeholder workshops). Research suggests that this is particularly

acute for children. A number of reports, both independent and government, highlight the significant disadvantage experienced by children in accessing wheelchairs in a timely manner.

***d) Is there public concern (including media, academic, voluntary or sector specific interest) in the policy area about actual, perceived or potential discrimination against a particular population group or groups?***

There are access issues for all groups. However, the research and the press reflects significant concerns about the support and services for disabled children and their families, most recently in *Aiming High for Disabled Children* (June 2007) which sets out a strategy for improving their life chances, and identifies equipment and wheelchairs as key in this.

For other groups, such as older people or people from BME communities There is a general awareness in the press, amongst users, user led organisations and those working in the field that these services do not meet peoples needs or expectations.

**Based on the information set out above I have decided that an equality impact assessment is not necessary at this stage:**

This programme is still only at a data gathering stage seeking to build an outline business case to support a new model for delivery. The collaborative process to date has taken into account issues from the full range of stakeholders but is not looking in sufficient detail at this point to warrant an equality impact assessment.

However, in the process of data collection we will be asking service users to feedback on the type of chair they have & it's suitability, their experience of the services and other aspects of the service they have received. This questionnaire will include an opportunity for the participants to identify their age, race, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief. The assumption is that all those who use a wheelchair would be classed as disabled under the legislation and details of impairment are not requested in the form.

If the programme proceeds to beyond autumn 2007 then an Equality Impact Assessment will need to be undertaken as part of the full business case to implement significant change in delivery of services. At this time, we will need to test the accessibility for disabled people from all groups.

**Signed: Helen Tomkys**

**Business area: Social Care Policy and Innovation Team**  
**Date: 17/09/07**