

# THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SCOTLAND ACT 2003

Best Value Guidance



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## **Best Value Guidance**

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# **Local Government in Scotland Act 2003**

**Guidance approved by  
THE SCOTTISH MINISTERS  
on s1(1):**

**THE DUTY TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO SECURE  
BEST VALUE  
(CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE  
PERFORMANCE OF FUNCTIONS)**

*Issued in pursuance of s2(1)(a) of  
the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003<sup>asp1</sup>*



### ***Introduction: the Best Value framework***

The statutory framework for Best Value provided by the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 puts in place formal links between:

- statutory guidance to authorities on what arrangements should support Best Value, and how best to maintain an appropriate balance between the factors to which local authorities must have regard in securing that duty;
- what are, whether by reference to any generally recognised, published code or otherwise, regarded as proper arrangements for Best Value, agreements for the construction or maintenance of buildings or works, accounting practices, and issues such as the prudential management of capital expenditure and treasury investments;
- the powers and audit duties of the Accounts Commission for Scotland;
- arrangements for scrutiny bodies to make public comment on the adequacy of local authority arrangements for securing Best Value and related statutory duties; and
- on an exceptional basis, arrangements for intervention by the Scottish Ministers on the grounds of unsatisfactory performance.

This statutory guidance is issued by the Scottish Ministers under s2(1)(a) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003. It tells local authorities what they are expected to demonstrate in fulfilment of the statutory duties which make up the Best Value 'regime' provided by the Act. These statutory duties are:

- the duty of Best Value, being to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance (while maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost); and in making those arrangements and securing that balance, to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, the equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- the duty to achieve break-even in trading accounts subject to mandatory disclosure;
- the duty to observe proper accounting practices;
- the duty to make arrangements for the reporting to the public of the outcome of the performance of functions.

Authorities are reminded that they are required to discharge the functions described in Part One of the Act, including observance of the duty of Best Value, in a manner which encourages equal opportunities and the observance of the equal opportunity requirements.

The Act also provides a statutory basis for Community Planning and the Power to Advance Well Being. The Community Planning process at all stages - planning, delivery or reporting - should be informed and supported by the Best Value framework. In turn, Community Planning should feed into a local authority's pursuit of Best Value by providing a way to articulate and respond to the needs of communities. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/recent.aspx>

In the same way, the Power to Advance Well Being should be informed, supported by and subject to the Best Value framework. The PAWB is a function of a local authority (as are all other powers and duties) and as such it should be used in ways which are compatible with the statutory duty of Best Value and other legal obligations. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/recent.aspx>

*By identifying core Best Value characteristics, this guidance is intended to assist local authorities in self-assessment and in planning future improvement activity in corporate management and governance. This process can accommodate and does not replace existing business management, improvement or change frameworks in which organisations have already invested resource and which deliver results. Previous improvement activity such as EFQM, ISO, IIP and Chartermark, and disciplines such as process and metric benchmarking, all contribute towards Best Value and demonstrate commitment to its principles.*

## **REQUIRED BEST VALUE ARRANGEMENTS**

An authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

### **Commitment and Leadership**

- a commitment to delivering better public services year on year through Best Value, and acceptance of the key principles of accountability, ownership, continuous improvement and transparency;
- elected members and senior managers have developed a vision of how Best Value will contribute to the corporate goals of the authority which informs the direction of services and is communicated effectively to staff;
- a commitment to high standards of probity & propriety, to honour the trust given by the electorate;

### **Responsiveness and Consultation**

- responsiveness to the needs of its communities, citizens, customers, employees and other stakeholders, so that plans, priorities and actions are informed by an understanding of those needs;
- an ongoing dialogue with other public sector partners and the local business, voluntary and community sectors;

- consultation arrangements which are open, fair and inclusive;

### **Sound Governance at a Strategic, Financial and Operational Level**

- a framework for planning and budgeting that includes detailed and realistic plans linked to available resources, to achieve the authority's goals (including community planning commitments) at service delivery level;
- effective performance management systems, which include the use of external comparison, through which performance issues can be identified, monitored and addressed;

### **Sound Management of Resources**

- making the best use of public resources, including employees, contractual agreements, ICT, land and property and financial resources – keeping a considered and appropriate balance between cost, quality and price;

### **Use of Review and Options Appraisal**

- an approach to review that is rigorous and robust with no areas of work protected from consideration for review;
- review activity achieves quantifiable benefits for key stakeholders accepting that change may be necessary;
- services are expected to remain competitive and to provide consistently good service quality; in considering opportunities for improvement a fair and open approach will be taken in evaluating alternative forms of service delivery from whatever the sector;

### **Competitiveness, Trading and the Discharge of Authority Functions**

- it is conscious of being publicly funded in everything it does; it has regard to obligations under the state aid rules; and it is aware of the need to conduct its business in a manner which demonstrates appropriate competitive practice;
- account is taken of the potential economic impact of the authority's activities (particularly new activities) on the local business community and others;
- the power to advance well being is not used to raise money, beyond imposing reasonable charges for the work undertaken;

- where the authority's activities count as entering into an agreement to supply goods and services, the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 is observed;
- the requirement to keep trading accounts under proper accounting practice is observed where appropriate to the authority's activities, in order to provide a transparent audit trail;

### **Sustainable Development**

- contribution to the achievement of sustainable development - consideration of the social, economic and environmental impacts of activities and decisions both in the shorter and the longer term;

### **Equal Opportunities Arrangements**

- a culture which encourages both equal opportunities and the observance of the equal opportunities requirements;
- measures are in place to meet the UK-wide equal opportunities requirements e.g.

Equal Pay Act 1970

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

and all relevant subordinate legislation made under these Acts;

- adoption of the meaning of "equal opportunities" as is set out in Schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998, namely, "the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political beliefs";

### **Joint Working**

- a culture which encourages joint working and service provision where this will contribute to better services and customer focused outcomes;

### **Accountability**

- the use of public performance reporting so that stakeholders are told what quality of service is being delivered and what they can expect in the future.

*The Scottish Ministers*

# **Local Government in Scotland Act 2003**

**Guidance by the  
BEST VALUE TASK FORCE  
on s1(1):**

**THE DUTY TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO SECURE  
BEST VALUE  
(CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN THE  
PERFORMANCE OF FUNCTIONS)**

*Issued in pursuance of s2(1)(b) of  
the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003<sup>asp1</sup>*



***PREFACE: THE STATUS OF GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE BEST VALUE TASK FORCE***

The Best Value Task Force<sup>1</sup> has approved the attached guidance on the performance of the duty on local authorities of Best Value. Ministers expect that this guidance will be recognised by authorities and those responsible for local authority audit, inspection and regulation as being consistent with s2(1)(b) of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 which refers to:

“what are, whether by reference to any generally recognised, published code or otherwise, regarded as proper arrangements for the purposes of s1(1) of the Act (or purposes which include those purposes).

This guidance is therefore consistent with and of equal status to other material which outlines proper arrangements for the purposes of s1(1) of the Act, where such material is published by professional associations and is recognised as authoritative by the Accounts Commission for Scotland and/or other bodies with statutory responsibility for the scrutiny of Scottish local government.

*In the event of conflicts between documents, guidance recognised under s2(1)(b) takes precedence over any other published material on Best Value with the exception of statutory guidance published by Ministers.*

<sup>1</sup> The Best Value Task Force was convened by Scottish Ministers in 2002. It consists of representatives of the Scottish Executive, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), Audit Scotland, Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) (ACPOS), Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (CACFOA), the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) and the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC).

## ***INTRODUCTION: SECURING BEST VALUE***

This guidance supports and expands upon the statutory guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers under s2(1)(a) of the Act, in giving more detail about the characteristics local authorities are expected to demonstrate in fulfilment of the statutory duties which make up the Best Value 'regime' provided by the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

This guidance on Best Value is intended to inform and influence authorities' efforts towards continuous improvement in the performance of their functions. It provides criteria against which authorities will be judged and is not aspirational. In assessing improvement, however, the outcomes of the efforts are of particular significance.

The guidance has been developed recognising the wide range of contexts and scales of the authorities for which it is relevant and the potential for changes to their priorities over time. With this need for flexibility in mind no prioritisation or weighting has been given to the criteria. Each authority is better placed to determine its priorities with regard to demonstrating the characteristics of Best Value arrangements.

Authorities should consider proportionality and the appropriateness of their arrangements with regard to all aspects of implementing Best Value, but this does not mean that authorities may freely disregard any part of this guidance. Deviations will require explanation.

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

- **COMMITMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

*a commitment to delivering better public services year on year through Best Value, and acceptance of the key principles of accountability, ownership, continuous improvement and transparency*

*elected members and senior managers have developed a vision of how Best Value will contribute to the corporate goals of the authority which informs the direction of services and is communicated effectively to staff*

*a commitment to high standards of probity & propriety, to honour the trust given by the electorate*

This means:

1. That members are involved in setting the strategic direction for Best Value and there is a mechanism for internal scrutiny by members of performance and service outcomes.
2. That members have discussed, agreed and taken ownership of a vision (i.e. set of expectations) of where they see the local authority's services in 3-5 years' time and how the key elements of Best Value will contribute to those objectives. These key elements include:
  - a) The need to secure continuous improvement;
  - b) The need to provide customer and citizen focused public services;
  - c) The need to achieve the best balance of cost and quality in delivering services;
  - d) The need to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness and the equal opportunity requirements;
  - e) The need to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
3. That overall strategic priorities are informed by a good understanding of the needs of the authority's communities and the setting of priorities and assessment of performance against relevant targets is undertaken with transparency.
4. That members and senior managers ensure their approach to Best Value is reflected clearly in all mission statements, strategies, and plans at a corporate and service level. These in turn integrate priorities identified through community planning and show clearly how the authority is working with major partner organisations to provide services that meet stakeholder and community needs.

5. That objectives and targets in mission statements, strategies and plans are realistic and achievable, are matched to financial and other resources and are explicitly translated into clear responsibilities for implementation.
6. That there is an explicit and systematic approach to integrating Best Value into everyday working practices and involving staff in developing the authority's approach to Best Value at all levels.
7. That members and senior managers ensure accountability and transparency through effective internal and external performance reporting.
8. That senior managers communicate the members' approach to Best Value methodically throughout the authority in terms that are relevant to and set out clear expectations to staff.
9. That members comply with *The Code of Conduct for Councillors*<sup>1</sup> as approved by the Scottish Parliament, and associated guidance issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland. They ensure that employees comply with a local code of conduct, based on generally recognised standards.
10. That effective procedures are in place to help ensure that members and employees comply with relevant codes of conduct and policies. This includes ensuring that appropriate policies on fraud prevention, investigation and 'whistleblowing' are established.
11. That members ensure that their decision-making processes are open and transparent, with council business managed in a manner which supports accountability and where the reasoning which underpins the decisions of the council is clearly documented and traceable.
12. That, unless it is inappropriate, key discussions and decision-making are held in public meetings and reasonable measures are taken to make their agendas, reports and minutes accessible to the public.
13. That appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that the authority complies with the requirements of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and generally recognised guidance.

*1 The Code of Conduct for Councillors came into effect in May 2003. The Code is regulated by the Standards Commission for Scotland. Copies can be obtained from the Standards Commission or from the Commission's Website [www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk](http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk)*

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

- **RESPONSIVENESS AND CONSULTATION**

*responsiveness to the needs of its communities, citizens, customers, employees and other stakeholders, so that plans, priorities, and actions are informed by an understanding of those needs*

*an ongoing dialogue with other public sector partners and the local business, voluntary and community sectors*

*consultation arrangements which are open, fair and inclusive*

1. That members and senior managers recognise the diversity of the communities they serve and the diversity of the need for services.
2. That the authority has developed and implemented:
  - a) an effective and accessible complaints system;
  - b) a methodical approach to identifying who to consult and how to undertake the consultation most effectively;
  - c) a systematic approach for co-ordinating consultation exercises and sharing information (as appropriate) within the local authority and with other bodies;and linked these into its regular planning cycle, using the results of this work in planning, designing and improving services.
3. That consultation exercises have clear objectives in terms of what the authority is seeking to find out, and result in clear recommendations for action (including maintaining the status quo where appropriate).
4. That members and senior managers acknowledge the value of constructive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders such as: the business community; the voluntary and independent sectors; major suppliers; locally active interest groups; trades unions; and other less visible stakeholders. All of these should have genuine opportunities to make their voice heard.
5. That stakeholders feel that the authority listens to, and takes account of, their views and are provided with information about the actions taken through transparency in the decision-making process and performance reporting.
6. That the authority reviews systematically the effectiveness of its approach to consultation to ensure Best Value.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF BEST VALUE ARRANGEMENTS: CHAPTER THREE**

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

- **SOUND GOVERNANCE AT A STRATEGIC, FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL LEVEL**

*A. a framework for planning and budgeting that includes detailed and realistic plans linked to available resources, to achieve the authority's goals (including community planning commitments) at service delivery level*

This means:

1. That the authority has developed a shared vision with its partners to respond to the needs of its community, translated into specific actions to be carried out at both corporate and service levels.
2. That these actions are integrated with other operational activities to produce clear, cohesive plans across the whole authority that are agreed by elected members.
3. That the authority's financial, human and operational resources are matched to its priorities through the integration of its service and budget planning processes.
4. That indicators, which allow performance to be assessed, are formulated as part of the planning process. Senior management regularly receive information that allows them to inform members of progress made.
5. That action is taken in the next planning round to learn from success and address areas of under-performance.
6. That other key processes are linked to or integrated with the planning cycle, including strategic analyses, stakeholder consultations, fundamental reviews, performance management, staff appraisal and development schemes, and public performance reporting.

*B. effective performance management systems, which include the use of external comparison, through which performance issues can be identified, monitored and addressed*

This means:

1. That performance is systematically measured across all areas of activity.

2. That the authority knows the key processes that determine the delivery of a customer centred service.
3. That performance information is accurate, up to date, includes relevant trends, comparisons, standards and targets, and is rigorously monitored on a regular basis.
4. That the authority's performance management system is effective in addressing areas of under-performance, identifying the scope for improvement, agreeing remedial action and monitoring implementation.
5. That comparative analyses are systematically used in order to identify the authority's performance potential and to learn from others as appropriate, including local authorities, other public sector agencies, commercial organisations, and not-for-profit organisations.
6. That performance is reported on systematically to management, elected members, users and the public. The information provided in each case is relevant to its audience and clearly shows whether strategic and operational objectives and targets are being met. The reports are honest and balanced, and include information about what improvements are required during the forthcoming period.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF BEST VALUE ARRANGEMENTS: CHAPTER FOUR**

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

- **SOUND MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**

*making the best use of public resources, including employees, contractual agreements, ICT and other systems, land and property, and financial resources – keeping a considered and appropriate balance between cost, quality and price*

This means:

1. That there is a systematic approach to risk management in relation to the authority's resources.
2. That elected members and senior managers regularly review the management of resources across all services.
3. That employees are treated as a key strategic resource and the authority ensures that it has the organisational capacity to implement its plans and make full use of its staff. Staffing requirements are explicitly related to strategic and operational objectives in terms of numbers, skills, knowledge, deployment, and organisational structure.
4. That the authority ensures that all employees are managed effectively and efficiently, that they know what is expected of them, their performance is regularly assessed, and they are assisted in improving.
5. That staff feel that they are valued and that their skills and knowledge are used effectively and to the full.
6. That the authority has a systematic approach for identifying and managing risks in relation to workforce matters. This may cover such issues as health and safety, business continuity, and public safety.
7. That the authority matches its asset base (including infrastructure, land, property, vehicles, plant, equipment, materials, information and communications technology), to its objectives in terms of suitability and sustainability, and supports this with appropriate asset management.
8. That the authority ensures that fixed assets are managed efficiently and effectively, and takes account of factors such as availability, accessibility, utilisation, cost, condition and depreciation.
9. That the authority has a strategy for procurement and the management of contracts and contractors to ensure that it treats procurement as a key component in

achieving all its objectives, including those relating to sustainable development, equalities, and health and safety. It ensures that the framing of specifications and the vetting of suppliers is consistent with these objectives.

10. That the authority has appropriate procurement expertise, guidance and training to support its procurement activity and contractual relationships, and ensures that advice is available on developments in best practice and procurement law.
11. That the authority complies fully and appropriately with its obligations under European Community law on public procurement and any other relevant international agreements.
12. That when competitive tendering, procurement procedures place the minimum possible burden on suppliers consistent with the achievement of Best Value.
13. That an effective system for financial stewardship is maintained, in that:
  - a) There is a sound system of financial controls that minimises the risk of fraud and error;
  - b) The authority complies with specific statutory financial requirements;
  - c) High standards of effective management are maintained in relation to budgeting, monitoring and reporting;
  - d) The full financial consequences of decisions are assessed at an appropriate level, before major financial decisions are taken or commitments entered into;
  - e) Feedback on major financial decisions is systematically provided to ensure that planned and anticipated benefits were realised;
  - f) Training and support is provided to ensure that the appropriate staff have the necessary skills and information for managing budgets;
  - g) Suppliers are paid promptly and that payment procedures are streamlined, using modern electronic means wherever appropriate;
  - h) The authority has a sound financial position;
  - i) The authority's annual accounts are free from material misstatement and have been prepared in accordance with recognised accounting standards.

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

- **USE OF REVIEW AND OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

*an approach to review that is rigorous and robust with no areas of work protected from consideration for review*

*review activity achieves quantifiable benefits for key stakeholders accepting that change may be necessary*

*services are expected to remain competitive and to provide consistently good service quality. In considering opportunities for improvement a fair and open approach will be taken in evaluating alternative forms of service delivery from whatever the sector*

This means, with regard to review activity:

1. That it is conducted on a regular basis and becomes integrated into the authority's management arrangements.
2. That it covers significant topics where current policies and approaches are challenged explicitly and are justified if retained.
3. That it looks ahead to understand how stakeholder needs and expectations may change in the future due to demography; the natural, social or cultural environment; and the local economy.
4. That it is focused on achieving real improvement for communities. Services supporting front-line service delivery should also be viewed as making a contribution to the well being of communities.
5. That it is undertaken on a systematic basis and concentrates on identified priorities, and areas where performance may be poor, which are of importance to stakeholders, which are of significant concern to the authority or otherwise offer clear opportunities for improvements in services.
6. That it supports high levels of service quality and securing improvement on a continuing basis. Future demands are clearly addressed.
7. That it takes into account the need to achieve improvement in cross cutting agendas such as equalities, joint working and sustainable development.
8. That it recognises the value of working with communities and voluntary sector organisations to achieve service goals.

9. That where a proposal would be expected to have a significant impact upon local business, employment and the economy, and the voluntary sector, the authority can demonstrate that these interests have been taken into account.
10. That it is conducted within a consistent corporate approach which ensures that review teams have the necessary skills, knowledge and aptitudes, and that they themselves are challenged on their conclusions.
11. That it is able to demonstrate that the views of stakeholders have been taken into account in analysis and developing recommendations. This may include consultation exercises, having Community Planning partners or other stakeholders as part of the review team and engaging staff and trades unions in the process.
12. That it produces clear recommendations based on factual analysis and consideration of quality, social impact, and whole-life costs.
13. That it develops actions which are clearly described in sufficient detail to be readily understood; are clearly explained in terms of importance, relevance, and priority; and are realistic and achievable.
14. That it provides specific statements about what improvements are actually intended to achieve.
15. That it involves elected members at key stages and ensures that members approve the overall process and policies.
16. That it is monitored by senior management in terms of progress in implementing recommendations / actions on a regular and systematic basis.
17. That it is validated on a systematic basis to ensure consistency, efficiency, continuing relevance and delivery of improvements.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF BEST VALUE ARRANGEMENTS: CHAPTER SIX

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate:

- **COMPETITIVENESS, TRADING AND THE DISCHARGE OF AUTHORITY FUNCTIONS**

*it is conscious of being publicly funded in everything it does; it has regard to obligations under the state aid rules; and it is aware of the need to conduct its business in a manner which demonstrates appropriate competitive practice*

*account is taken of the potential economic impact of the authority's activities (particularly new activities) on the local business community and others*

*the power to advance well being is not used to raise money, beyond imposing reasonable charges for the work undertaken*

*where the authority's activities count as entering into an agreement to supply goods and services, the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 is observed*

*the requirement to keep trading accounts under proper accounting practice is observed where appropriate to the authority's activities, in order to provide a transparent audit trail*

This means:

1. That service plans and business plans explicitly justify the nature and scale of work for which trading operations are required.
2. That the authority is responsive to the interests of stakeholders and suppliers such as the business community and the voluntary and not for profit sectors, who feel that the authority listens to their views and is prepared to award contracts after competition where that represents Best Value.
3. That the results and implications of decisions about the conduct of business are fed back to managers engaged in planning, to ensure that they take such factors into account.
4. That where proper accounting practice and good management require it, trading accounts are prepared and disclosed.
5. That the transparent and fair allocation of all shared costs is ensured.

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate

- **A CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*contribution to the achievement of sustainable development - consideration of the social, economic and environmental impacts of activities and decisions both in the shorter and longer term*

Sustainable Development is commonly defined as being development which secures a balance of social, economic and environmental well-being in the impact of activities and decisions; and which seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This means:

1. That there is a commitment at both elected member and senior officer level to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and to promote an integrated approach to improving economic, social and environmental well-being.
2. That contributing to the achievement of sustainable development is reflected in the authority's objectives and highlighted in all strategies and plans at corporate and services level.
3. That these plans, priorities and actions are informed by the views of its communities and key local partners.
4. That 'quality of life' indicators are identified to measure performance in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development and reported to the public.
5. That review activities take account of sustainability issues and assess the impact of policy proposals on sustainable development.
6. That sustainable development requirements are taken into account in the procurement strategy.
7. That there is a systematic approach to the management of resources which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate

- **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ARRANGEMENTS**

*a culture which encourages both equal opportunities and the observance of the equal opportunities requirements*

*measures are in place to meet the UK-wide equal opportunities requirements e.g.*

- *Equal Pay Act 1970*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*

*and all relevant subordinate legislation made under such Acts*

*adoption of the meaning of “equal opportunities” as is set out in Schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998, namely, “the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political beliefs”.*

This means:

1. That the encouragement of equal opportunities and meeting the equal opportunities requirements are reflected in the authority’s objectives and highlighted in all plans at corporate and service level.
2. That there is recognition that all groups in the community do not have the same resources, situations and needs, and that this is reflected in planning, designing and improving services.
3. That there is a commitment at both elected member and officer level to mainstream equalities within the Best Value framework:
  - a) when undertaking reviews they take account of equalities issues and assess the impact of policy proposals on equal opportunities;
  - b) equalities requirements are taken into account in the procurement strategy;
  - c) equalities performance measures are identified to measure their performance in the delivery of equal opportunities and reported to the public;

- d) employment policies are fully in line with their commitment to equal opportunities and training is in place to support that commitment;
- 4. That there is a programme of equal pay audits, comparability studies and equal pay reviews of the workforce, to ensure that pay and reward systems meet the legislative requirements and that any existing areas of discriminatory practice are being addressed.
- 5. That authorities take such other action that is necessary to meet their obligations under existing equal opportunities legislation.

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate

- **JOINT WORKING**

*a culture which encourages joint working and service delivery where this will contribute to better services and customer focused outcomes*

This means:

1. That members and senior management actively encourage opportunities for formal and informal joint working, joint use of resources and joint funding options, where this will offer scope for service improvement.
2. That the authority is committed to working with partner organisations to ensure a joined up approach to meeting the needs of its stakeholders and communities. This includes:
  - a) agreeing respective roles and commitments;
  - b) integrated management of resources where appropriate;
  - c) effective monitoring of collective performance;
  - d) joint problem solving.
3. That members and senior management address impediments and barriers which inhibit integrated approaches to joint funding and joint management of services with internal and external partners.
4. That appraisal of joint working approaches takes into account wider policy issues, current local agendas and the potential impact on equal opportunities and sustainable development.
5. That in undertaking its Community Planning duties the authority takes forward the joint vision of Community Planning Partnership and integrates joint objectives into its planning mechanisms.
6. That in joint working with any partners the authority works openly to an agreed vision, objectives and performance management and reporting mechanisms.
7. That it shares information appropriately and seeks to develop data compatibility with partners.
8. That it responds to opportunities to aggregate procurement demand with partners.

A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate

- **ACCOUNTABILITY**

*the use of public performance reporting so that stakeholders are told what quality of service is being delivered and what they can expect in the future*

This means:

1. That the authority has identified what information stakeholders need in order to form a view on the performance of the authority. It recognises that different sections of the community will have different needs in terms of getting information and responds accordingly. It presents this information in a form that people find useful, accessible and that allows stakeholders to form a clear view of the authority's overall performance.
2. That in terms of its **approach** to Public Performance Reporting, the authority:
  - a) Has clearly identified what information will be provided at a service activity level and which at a corporate level;
  - b) Derives the information utilized in Public Performance Reporting from its performance management and information systems;
  - c) Considers a range of media and conveys this information in one or a number of ways that make it easy for stakeholders to find out what they want to know;
  - d) Includes clear guidance as to where and how stakeholders can access more detailed information on specific topics;
  - e) Presents the information in a clear, easy-to-understand and concise form taking account of equalities and accessibility issues;
  - f) Has an accessible feedback system which encourages stakeholders to comment on the information and mechanisms of Public Performance Reporting, and ensures this feedback is reviewed regularly to inform improvement activities.
3. That the **content** of the authority's Public Performance Reporting is easy to understand and concise and includes:
  - a) Information on what services the authority provides, what people can expect of them, and how people can get access to them;
  - b) Information on what the authority has learned from consultation about what matters to its stakeholders and what it is doing to respond to these concerns;
  - c) Information that shows how the authority is working with other bodies to best meet the needs of its communities through Community Planning;

- d) Information that allows the public to see that the authority is spending its money wisely and achieving value for money on behalf of its communities. It shows clearly that the authority is eliminating waste, focusing on priorities, achieving value for money, and doing things that work;
  - e) Information that provides a rounded, honest and balanced picture of how the authority is performing;
  - f) Trend information, comparative information, and performance against targets or benchmarks to help stakeholders assess how performance is changing;
  - g) Information on what the authority is doing to improve its performance and impact, what targets it has for improvement, and what improvements have been achieved since it last reported;
4. That the authority has regard to guidance produced under s13 in relation to reporting financial and performance information matters.

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