

BRIEFING FOR SOLACE

WITH INCLUSION IN MIND

The Local Authority's Role in Promoting Well-being and Social Development

People with a mental disorder are among the most excluded in our society.

The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, which came into force in October 2005, places a clear statutory duty on the whole local authority and, by association, its community planning partners to promote well-being and social development for those who have, or have had, a mental disorder. In terms of the Act, mental disorder includes mental illness, learning disability and personality disorder.

The local authority already has powers to promote well-being and, under the Disability Discrimination Act, with proactively seeking out those with disabilities, to ensure equal access to services.

The Scottish Executive has produced guidance "With Inclusion in Mind" that will be sent out to Chief Executives in the Autumn.

The guidance provides background and advice about how to fulfil the statutory duties, sections 25 to 31, under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 and tool kits to support implementation of the duties, particularly in relation to promoting social, cultural, recreational, training and employment opportunities.

There are 2 sets of tool kits. The first suggests how local authorities engage with people who have or have had a mental disorder, to encourage them to work alongside, to audit services and assist with improving access and engagement with these services. This will also help local authorities to comply with one of the DDA plan requirements. The second set of tools are provided to encourage different service departments to review their current activities and to consider action that would improve the engagement of those with a mental disorder.

The reason for this briefing is that it is essential that this guidance is not regarded as a document solely for social work. As whilst they will want to be engaged, it is now necessary for other services, such as life long learning, economic development and housing, to take a lead on these important issues. This is truly a corporate agenda.

It is only by a concerted effort from all sections of the local authority and their community planning partners that those who have, or have had, a mental disorder will once again be able to participate and contribute to the communities in which they live.

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