

8th April, 2005

New Disability Act improves rights for disabled people in public sector

In welcoming the new Disability Discrimination Act today, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) is highlighting a major duty in the legislation to tackle institutional discrimination and ensure disabled people are treated fairly in the public sector.

DRC Chairman Bert Massie said:

"The Act's Disability Equality Duty for the public sector represents the best tool to substantially ratchet up equality and fairness to disabled people. It marks a shift from piecemeal improvements based on taking individual legal cases, to the public sector itself becoming a positive and proactive agent for change."

The DRC played a key role in ensuring the Act's new duty on the public sector fully included schools - helping to ensure equality for disabled children in the education system.

The DRC is currently consulting public sector chiefs on a draft Code of Practice which will give guidance on the new legislation when it comes into operation next year.

Mr Massie continued: "It is hard to overstate just how big a deal the new duty will be for disabled people.

"The DRC's Code of Practice will help people understand major changes to duties on the public sector, so it is important that public sector chiefs help us get the Code right".

Copies of the consultation are available from the DRC's website at www.drc-gb.org or from the DRC Helpline on 08457 622 633. The DRC's consultation ends on 22nd April, 2005.