Written response to the recommendations from Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF)

Thank you very much for your letter of 13th September asking SAIF for our views on the above report and our intentions regarding the implementation of the recommendations that are relevant to us.

General view of the report

The entire report has been wholly welcomed by SAIF. Our advisory body were impressed and pleased by the range of written and oral evidence taken by the committee and welcomed the opportunity for one of our project workers to provide oral evidence on 9th May 2006.

SAIF regards the report as very comprehensive and the recommendations as wide ranging and well targeted. If the Scottish Government and others act on them disabled people in Scotland will take significant steps forward with regard to the issues of access to work, further and higher education and leisure.

Particularly welcome

In addition to those recommendations about the provision of accessible information SAIF welcomed the recommendations which address the key issues which are important to all the main themes of the report.

In particular SAIF was pleased to see those recommendations supporting the social model of disability, mainstreaming, disability-led equality training, national standards and equalities promotion. These are issues which are fundamental to our own work in promoting and providing guidance on accessible information.

Recommendations referring to SAIF

The recommendations are:

133: The Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive and relevant agencies work with organisations such as the Disability Rights Commission, Scottish Accessible Information Forum and Update to disseminate information to businesses across Scotland on the need to provide alternative formats and where to obtain relevant assistance and training.

135: In view of the importance of promoting the provision of accessible information, the Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive consider its current level of support for services such as the Scottish Accessible Information Forum with a view to significantly expanding capacity in the provision of advice and training to organisations throughout Scotland on the provision of accessible information and accessible formats.
The Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive investigate, in partnership with organisations such as the Disability Rights Commission, the Scottish Accessible Information Forum, Update and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, mechanisms to develop a strategic approach for the effective sharing of good practice in the provision of accessible information across Scotland.

Progress and future plans

With regard to the above recommendations we are pleased to report that we have already made some progress in implementation and planning.

Training initiative

During 2006 we developed for the first time, in partnership with Update, a series of training seminars and courses under the heading Beyond The Ramp. So far we have run nine such events and we are hosting another later this month. All have been on a theme relating to the provision of accessible information, so far all have been oversubscribed and all have been very successful according to the feedback we have received. They have included an action plan and a six month follow-up to assess progress with that plan.

During 2006 the Beyond The Ramp courses were attended at least once by 29 local authorities, 8 health boards, 11 colleges and universities and 14 other national public bodies, national utilities and national voluntary organisations. We produced a summary report of the 2006 training initiatives which we sent to the Scottish Government and can be found on our website. During 2007 we successfully targeted secondary schools with a training initiative entitled Beyond The School Gate and later this month we are hosting one called Beyond The Web.

Funding application

SAIF currently receives Section 10 funding from the Scottish Executive until March 2008. Our application for funding for the period April 2008 - March 2011 contains plans to further develop and expand the training both in terms of the target audiences and the issues to be covered, and also to provide a promotional training pack.

Business sector

Again working with Update, our funding application contains plans to create a new website and support materials dedicated to promoting accessible information, alternative formats and good practice to the business sector. This will be promoted, advertised and supported by the option of training, and will be a considerable step up on the promotional work we have done in the business sector since 2004 with one targeted publication and links from business organisation websites.
SAIF publications, good practice and alternative formats

SAIF has continued to develop, update and expand our range of publications, many of which demonstrate and promote good practice and all of which can be downloaded from our website. The distribution of hard copies and the number of downloads has reached unprecedented levels during 2007.

The SAIF publications include the *Standards for Disability Information and Advice Provision in Scotland* and the *Scottish Formats Resource*. The latter is a guide to where to get materials transcribed into other formats and we produce it in partnership with Update. Both publications are the only ones of their sort in Scotland, the Standards were revised and updated in 2007 and if the funding application is successful we plan to update and reproduce the Formats Resource in 2008.

Research projects

During 2007 we commissioned research, funded by the Scottish Consumer Council, into work being done by local authorities on accessible information, into work being done in England and Europe by organisations with a remit similar to that of SAIF and into quality assurance systems with which we could negotiate the inclusion of the SAIF Standards. Amongst other things the results of this research will enable us uncover more examples of good practice which we can highlight and promote, and will provide us with pathways to influence mainstream quality assurance systems.

I am very pleased to respond to your request and provide you with this progress report from SAIF. If you want any more information please get back to me or contact the SAIF project staff Steve Harvey or Joanne Martin.

Ben Forsyth
Chairman
SAIF
14 November 2007