

SERVICES COMMITTEE	
Date of meeting	8th May 2008
Agenda item	6
Purpose	DECISION
Author	Harriet Smith

**BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND
REVISED BEST VALUE REVIEW PROGRAMME FOR 2008/09**

PURPOSE OF REPORT		
<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <p>Agree the recommendations of the best value review of services for people with disabilities and note the revised best value review programme for 2008/09.</p>		
RECOMMENDATIONS		
<p>The Committee is requested to agree to the recommendations of the best value review.</p> <p>The Committee is also requested to note the best value review programme for 2008/09. The programme has changed following the original plan agreed in Quarter 1 of 2007/08.</p>		
IMPLICATIONS		Report reference
Environmental	None	-
Equalities	Yes	Whole Report
Financial	None	-
Personnel	None	-
Policy	None	-
Sustainability	None	-
Stakeholder consultation required	No	-

Co-op Homes

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of our best value review programme for 2007/08, it was agreed a review of our services for people with disabilities would be carried out during quarter four.
- 1.2 Co-op Homes provides a service for people with disabilities through many of its' core services. This review examines the current services we provide and identifies areas that require planning and implementation to manage any current or potential risks. It also considers the alternative available options. The review focuses upon providing a high quality service that achieves value for money, customer satisfaction and promotes our strategy for equality and diversity.
- 1.3 The aim of the best value review process is to deliver step change in order to achieve improvement in performance. The review compares our performance against key performance indicators for the relevant service areas, provides feedback following consultation with customers, challenges the current practice and alternative options in order to deliver an excellent service and provides evidence of how we have competed and liaised with other RSLs (Registered Social Landlords) to demonstrate value for money and the provision of good customer service.
- 1.4 The best value review programme for 2008/09 has been revised to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the business and our customers. The following reviews are now due to take place:
- Anti-social Behaviour – Quarter 1. Review to be presented to Services Committee in July 2008
 - Estate Services – Quarter 2. Review to be presented to Services Committee in October 2008
 - Health and Safety – Quarter 3. Review to be presented to Services Committee in February 2008

The original programme for 2008/09 that was agreed in 2007 included Repairs and Finance. These have been replaced by Anti-social Behaviour and Health and Safety which were originally scheduled to take place in 2009/10.

The repairs service will be looked at as part of the annual review of the repairs service provided by DWC. We continually consult and receive feedback on the service from our customers.

Our approach to financial management and service provision is discussed at Group level and we are looking at ways of improving efficiency with the service through the possible move to RHP financial systems and accounting processes.

2. PROFILE OF CO-OP HOMES' CUSTOMERS

- 2.1 Co-op Homes has been building up the profile of our customers through tenancy verification visits, capturing information through tenancy sign ups and core lettings data, through the completion of a tenant needs survey in 2006, tenancy file auditing, aids and adaptations work and through satisfaction surveys.

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- 2.2 We have collated data on 64% of our permanent housing customers and 62% of our temporary housing customers through the first year of our two year tenancy verification programme. We will be increasing the profile data we hold for our customers by progressing with the second year of the programme. We will also capture information through a tenant survey which is due to take place in the new financial year. The information that is gathered following this will be analysed to build up an even more detailed profile of our customers. It will also be used as part of the ongoing review of our services with the aim of ensuring our services are accessible for all customers.
- 2.3 We currently have 11% of customers recorded with a disability within the household which is lower than the national UK average of 21%. 80% of our customers are recorded with no household needs and we have no disability information available for 9% of our customers.

For our new lettings for permanent housing for 2007/08, 14.7 % of customers considered themselves to have a disability and for 2006/07 6% of customers considered themselves to have a disability.

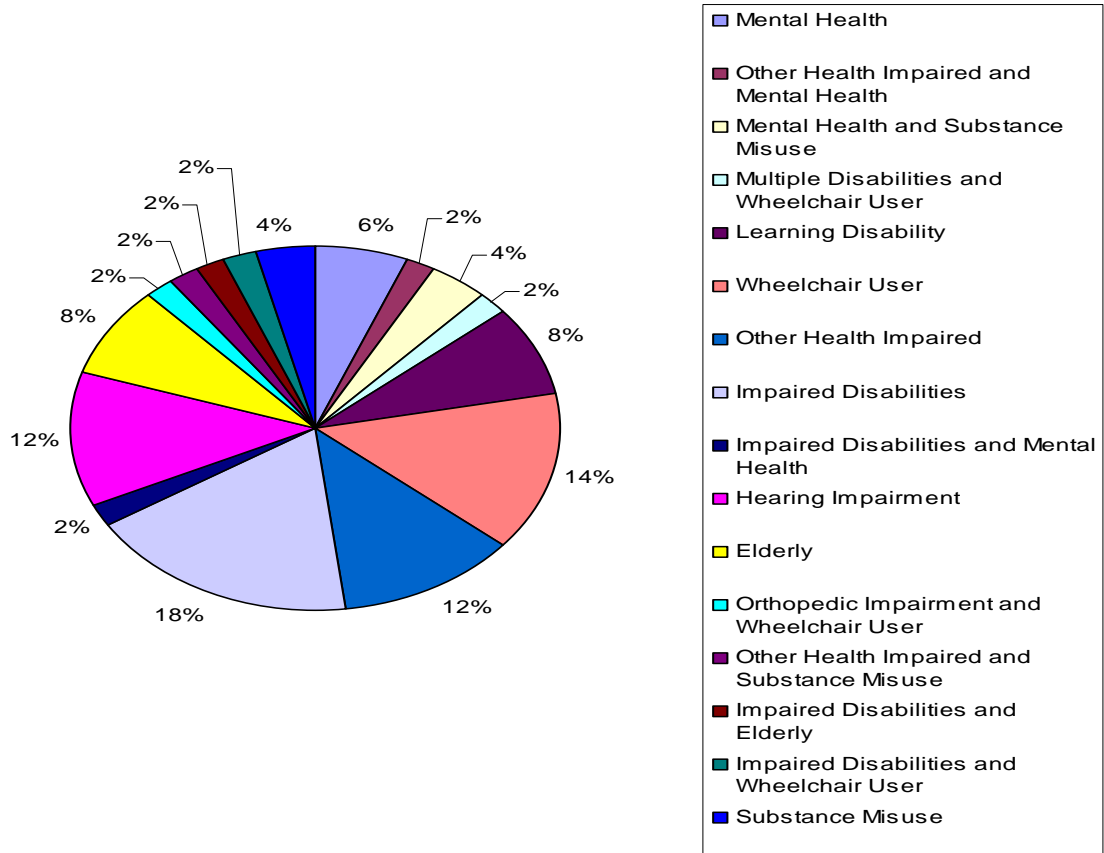
In England, the national average for a disability within the household for the East is 20%, in London it is 18% and it is 17% for the South East area. The national percentage of customers with a disability also differs by socio-economic status, gender, age, religion and ethnicity.

- 2.4 The UK Disability Discrimination Act (1995) defines a disabled person as someone with 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities'.

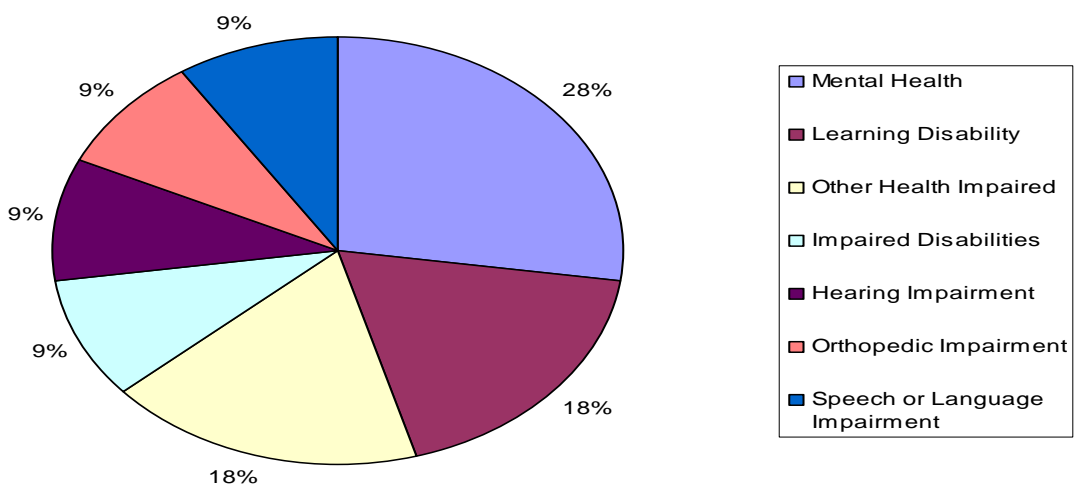
Disabilities can be visible, invisible or both and the key types of disability relate to problems with mobility, sensory mechanisms, learning and communication difficulties, mental health issues and hidden disabilities like diabetes, epilepsy and heart disease. The tables below profile customers in permanent and temporary accommodation who have defined their household as having a disability:

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Disability Data Profile - Permanent



Disability Data Profile - Temporary



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Fifty of our permanent housing customers identified themselves as having a disability. The highest needs categories for permanent housing are customers with an impaired disability (9 customers), wheelchair users (7) and customers with a hearing impairment or those who have another health impairment (6). As described earlier, other health impairments cover medical conditions such as diabetes or heart disease.

Eleven of our temporary housing customers identified themselves as having a disability of which three (28%) have mental health problems and two (18%) have a learning disability or have another health impairment.

- 2.5 In comparison to other local housing associations, Co-op Homes has a lower number of households with customers who consider themselves to have a disability. However, many of these associations have retirement housing schemes where elderly customers are more likely to have a disability; Co-op Homes does not have any retirement housing schemes. Our tenant needs survey in 2006 revealed that more than half of our permanent housing customers were aged between 25 and 45 and only 6% of customers were aged over 65 (in comparison to a range of 30% to 50% for most London RSLs).

3 ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SERVICE

3.1 Service Provision

Co-op Homes provides a service for people with disabilities mainly through its' housing and customer services. These two core services are continually being reviewed and improved to ensure they provide accessible services for all.

Co-op Homes has three offices which are located in Brentford, Reading and Stowmarket. All of our offices are DDA compliant; work was completed in 2007 to bring our Reading office based in Rowdell Drive up to the required standard. Our Brentford reception was also refurbished during 2007 which created more space for wheelchair users and customers have access to the internet at our Brentford Office. Our receptions have hearing loops installed for customers with a hearing impairment and a telephone translation service is available for customers whose first language is not English.

3.2 Information and Communication

Co-op Homes' website was reviewed and revamped at the end of 2007. Although feedback indicated the website was user friendly, it did not include sufficient information on how to contact Co-op Homes or on the services that we provide. The website now includes the facility to report repairs online and has e-mail address links for various contacts such as ordering rent cards, requesting rent advice, reporting ASB and making complaints. There is also a translation facility on the website. The revamp of the website means customers do not have to rely upon visiting the office or using the telephone as their main point of access to Co-op Homes. We are currently looking into using the website for customers to access their rent accounts and to make rent payments online.

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3.3 Service Standards

Co-op Homes' service standards have just been reviewed and new service standards are being introduced for 2008/09. The new service standards have been split into areas: customer services, corporate, paying your rent, voids and lettings, repairs and planned maintenance, anti-social behaviour, estate management and resident participation. The new service standards provide customers with clear guidelines on what they can expect from Co-op Homes. The standards have been revised with the aim of making the services we provide accessible for all. These include:

- Customer Services - Provide home visits if you have difficulties in visiting us at our offices
- Customer Services - Provide clear ID on request and wear ID when we visit you at home
- Corporate - Aim to respond to your enquiries and complaints in Plain English within 10 working days
- Voids and Lettings - Accompany you on viewings of our offered properties
- Repairs and Planned Maintenance - Provide morning or afternoon appointments for a contractor to carry out a repair

All of Co-op Homes' publications can be produced in large print, Braille, on audiotape and can be translated. This facility is offered on request as it would not be financially viable to produce every document in the different formats. However, we have produced our customer newsletter, Word on the Street, in large print on a trial basis to assess the uptake of the different format.

3.4 Access to Housing

Co-op Homes has recently introduced an annual review of customers on our housing transfer list. This ensures we have up to date information on customers whose needs have changed and this assists in building up the profile we have of our customers. We have also revised our housing transfer application form in order to capture more relevant information on our customers and the type of accommodation required that customers feel is suitable for their needs.

3.5 Working with Partner Agencies

Co-op Homes works with support agencies and local authority teams such as Social Services in supporting new and existing tenants with needs. We recently worked with a Social Services team in assisting a new customer who is a wheelchair user to ensure the property met the required adapted standard and there was sufficient time for the customer to move into their new home and to be set up with the relevant support packages prior to the tenancy start date. We have also arranged for existing customers to be provided with facilities such as a secure key deposit box for entry to their home that can only be accessed by authorised key holders such as Social Services.

3.6 Aids and Adaptations

Co-op Homes' approach to aids and adaptations has been reviewed over the past year. The Audit Commission inspection in January 2007 stated there was not an effective or well publicised approach to the provision of aids and adaptations. Following the inspection, a number of improvements have been made to the service:

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- Aids and adaptations policy updated in October 2007. The revised policy focuses upon treating customer's needs as a priority whilst clearly setting out the approach the company takes to managing aids and adaptations. It also focuses upon working with our partner organisations, demonstrating good practice and delivering a service that provides value for money.
- Aids and adaptations procedure updated in December 2007 which reinforces the aims of the policy. The procedure includes target timescales in accordance with best practice guidelines.
- Aids and adaptations service publicised through customer newsletter, 'Word on the Street' and on our website. The revised policy and procedure can also be downloaded from our website.
- In-house training to improve staff knowledge of managing aids and adaptation applications and approved work whilst ensuring best practice guidelines and procedures are adhered to.
- Monthly in-house case review meetings with lead officer for aids and adaptations and housing management team.
- Dedicated budget set up for aids and adaptations work under £500. For work over £500, Co-op Homes assists and supports applications to local authorities for a Disabled Facilities Grant and applications for funding from the Housing Corporation.
- Aids and adaptations register set up and information from recent stock condition survey added to register. There are currently 58 properties on the register.
- Aids and adaptations log set up to record and track requests which includes financial data on Housing Corporation and Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) funded work.
- Draft Performance Agreements for partnering Local Authorities. Draft agreements have been drawn up for the London Borough's of Hounslow and Hillingdon. The purpose of the agreements is to provide our customers with access to support from the local authority private sector housing units for the completion of adaptation work to their homes (in relation to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970). The agreements apply to work funded by the local authorities with DFGs.
- Introduction of aids and adaptations satisfaction surveys which are sent out following the completion of any works. Out of the survey responses received to date, there is currently 100% satisfaction with the service.

The improvements to the aids and adaptations service were made following consultation with the London Borough's of Hounslow, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hillingdon plus local RSLs, Notting Hill Housing Trust and Shepherds Bush Housing Association and SBHA's partner organisation, Staying Put. Co-op Homes liaised with these parties to compare current practices and adopt best practice where demonstrated to strengthen the development of the service. The work that has been completed with these organisations has resulted in changes to our policy and procedure and a draft DFG agreement has been produced for properties in Hounslow and Hillingdon.

We also met with Staying Put in October 2007 to discuss the possibility of using their services to manage major aids and adaptations projects. However, this is not currently being pursued as it does not represent value for money for Co-op Homes with the number of major aids and adaptations projects the company manages.

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3.7 Customer Feedback

We have recently sought views from our customers who consider their household to have a disability on what they want us to provide through our services. The consultation took place through our customer reference panel and through feedback from individual customers. Customers did not feel they received a poorer service in comparison to customers who were recorded with no household needs. The main issues that arose were for Co-op Homes to provide meaningful and measurable service standards, to improve the remote services we offer such as providing more facilities on our website with on-line rent payments, to introduce more flexibility with our repair appointments by offering Saturday and evening repair appointments and to increase the use of e-mail for communicating with customers.

3.8 Disability Equality Scheme

The Housing Corporation required housing associations to introduce a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 2007; Co-op Homes introduced its' draft scheme in October 2007 followed by the approved scheme in December 2007. The scheme focuses upon making our services more inclusive and accessible with a focus upon involving disabled people to influence and shape the service. The DES is reviewed annually as part of our equality and diversity strategy with disabled customers continuing to be involved in the scheme's future development and implementation.

The current DES set out a timetable to implement improvements to our services over a twelve month period. Our achievements to date have included the review of our housing transfer list, the improvement of our website including the expansion of information for disabled customers, increasing and recording the profile information held on our customers, setting a style guide for publications to ensure consistency with language, fonts, definitions etc and offering the option of providing publications in alternative formats.

The timetable confirms there are still many improvements required for our services over the twelve months such as the monitoring of trends in satisfaction to ensure disabled customers' satisfaction does not diverge from other customers' satisfaction, improving staff awareness through disability equality training and developing the options to encourage disabled customers to be more involved in the organisation's decision making.

A progress report on the DES action plan is attached in appendix one.

4 AUDIT COMMISSION'S KLOE FOR ACCESS AND CUSTOMER CARE (APPENDIX 2)

4.1 The Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) represent a framework of questions and statements to assess and measure the effectiveness and efficiency of a service and it considers the service delivery outcomes in the areas of access, diversity and value for money. A self assessment of the KLOE for Access and Customer Care has been carried out to measure the current service and to assist in identifying areas for improvement. A traffic light system has been used to distinguish which areas are of immediate concern.

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- 4.2 Areas where we have performed well include our approach to delivering customer service, customer's accessibility to our services and our management of obtaining and acting upon customer feedback.
- 4.3 Areas where improvements are required are in relation to providing a more expansive out of hour's service and analysing costs of the different means of accessing services and consulting customers in relation to this.
- 4.4 However, some of the areas hi-lighted for improvement in appendix two may not be appropriate for an RSL of Co-op Homes' size where there is a small stock and limited funds for improvements.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

A comprehensive review of our approach to services for people with disabilities was carried out through the introduction of the Disability Equality Scheme in December 2007. Implementation of the action plan agreed by the Services Committee forms the key recommendations of this service review. The recommendations are to:

- 5.1 Implement the recommendations of the Disability Equality Scheme (Target for completion – Quarter 4 2008/09).
- 5.2 Carry out a tenant survey to review and improve information on all of our customers (Target for completion – Quarter 1 2008/09).
- 5.3 Complete tenant needs profile through visits and general survey to capture information on all tenants (Target for completion – Quarter 1 2008/09).
- 5.4 Review data from needs and tenant surveys and report to the Services Committee the recommendations to improve services and access to services for all customers (Target for completion – Quarter 2 2008/09).

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The review of our services for people with disabilities has revealed that the company and our staff are clearly committed to ensuring we provide an accessible and high quality level of service. Excellent progress has been made over the past twelve months and improvements have been made in previously weaker areas such as our aids and adaptations service. The introduction of the Disability Equality Scheme has also reinforced Co-op Homes' approach to providing accessible services for people with disabilities with the setting of clear, specific and measurable objectives that will drive our services forward.
- 6.2 The Audit Commission have now confirmed that Co-op Homes will not be re-inspected until 2009/10. Our priority during 2008/09 in providing services is to ensure we build upon performance and the recommendations of the 2007 Audit Commission inspection; many of the inspection recommendations relate to improving services for people with disabilities.
- 6.3 Following the review of the needs and tenant surveys, we will report the recommendations and focus upon ensuring any agreed recommendations represent value for money and provide our customers with an even better standard of service that is accessible for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Disability Equality Scheme – 2007/09 Action Plan

Appendix 2 KLOE – Access and Customer Care: Self Assessment

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Appendix One: Disability Equality Scheme 2007/09 - Action Plan

THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN	UPDATE
DELIVERING SERVICES THAT ARE INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE	Use information about the diversity of our customers to inform our decisions.	Continue to ask for, capture on OMNI (IT system) and record information about our customers' profile.	Year-on-year increase in the number of households about whom we hold profile information – including those who 'prefer not to answer'.	ALL	rolling programme	In progress
		Investigate benefits of advocacy for disabled people responding to satisfaction survey and offer service	Report on take-up of advocate service	Housing	Commission of Tenant Survey	Survey to take place in Q1 2008/09
		Report to customers how we have used profile information to improve services.	Publicity about how we have used the information.	Ops Manager	June 2008	BVR plus findings of Tenant Survey to be published Q2 2008/09
	Identify, understand and mitigate potential negative impacts of changes to what we do or how we do it.	Develop the process for assessing the potential for disproportionate impact of any new policy or procedure and of considering how to reduce or remove it.	Diversity impact assessments reported with all new, or fundamental changes to existing, policies.	SMT	March 2008	In progress
		Ensure that all staff receive disability equality training	SCOPE training programme delivered to all staff.	Human Resources (as part of RHP training)	June 2008	To be addressed as part of staff training programme 2008/09
	Delivering services that our disabled customers want in the way they want them.	Include reference to disability harassment in ASB and Harassment policies and encourage reporting by disabled customers.	Disability harassment monitored and reported.	Housing	March 2008	To be addressed as part of BVR for ASB in Q2. No evidence yet to suggest there

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN	UPDATE
						have been any recent incidents of disability harassment.
		Monitor trends in satisfaction to ensure disabled people's satisfaction level does not diverge from other customers' satisfaction	No more than 5% divergence in satisfaction levels as reported in annual or ad hoc survey.	Housing	March 2008	In progress
		Find out how disabled customers feel about the process for identifying and installing aids & adaptations.	Satisfaction surveys on adaptations in tenants homes. Establish performance measures for monitoring performance.	Housing	March 2008	In place – no current issues.
		Provide greater flexibility in service delivery	Improve web site so that more information is available for disabled customers	General Manager	February 2008	Completed
		Review Co-op Homes' transfer list and protocols with other social landlords to maximise access to appropriate housing.	Reviewed transfer list	Housing	March 2008	Completed
	Our disabled customers are as informed about what we do and how we do it as other customers.	Publish a style guide to ensure all publications are consistent in terms of language, definitions, categories, colours, fonts etc. and that information is accessible to all – including those with learning difficulties or visual impairments.	Style guide produced and recommendations from it actioned.	RHP Communications	As existing information, forms, leaflets, posters etc. are re-printed or when new are designed	In progress
		Ensure procedures to provide information in alternative formats are robust and accessible.	Register of customers who require information in other alternative formats.	Housing	March 2008	In progress

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN	UPDATE
		Manage and monitor customer communications preferences in OMNI and through database system	Year-on-year increase in the number of households about whom we hold communication preferences information	Housing	rolling programme	In progress
	Facilities are accessible to all staff and customers.	Carry out regular access audits of all premises – reviewing access for both customers & staff	Improvement plan to progress access beyond DDA standards for all offices	H&S Officer	March 2008	In place
		Develop a checklist for staff to use when booking external venues to ensure they are accessible.	Produce a 'preferred venue' list.	Housing	March 2008	In progress
	Be an employer of choice for disabled people.	Review information on, and monitoring of, the effect of HR policies and procedures e.g. including questions in employee surveys that identify to what extent disability discrimination exists	Report of satisfaction for disabled staff.	RHP Human Resources / General Manager	September 2008	Q2 2008/09
		Review sickness absence processes to ensure reasonable adjustment is considered at every stage and train managers on identifying and providing adjustments for staff	Management training programme delivered and staff/management handbooks, policies and procedure	Human Resources/ General Manager	December 2008	Q3 2008/09
		Identify ways in which career development can be offered to disabled staff	Report on number of disabled staff working for RHP and number in management positions	Human Resources/ General Manager	December 2008	Q3 2008/09
		Encourage disabled representation on RHP Group consultative forums	Establishment of a role on JCC to represent disability issues	RHP Human Resources	December 2007	Disability issues discussed where relevant at JCC meetings – CHS representative

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN	UPDATE
						attends meetings.
INVOLVING DISABLED PEOPLE	Disabled customers are involved in the organisation's decision-making.	Develop options to encourage disabled customers' to be involved, including on the Board	Identify disabled customers already involved, or who have indicated a desire to get more involved, and include them in the training programme for residents.	Housing	December 2008	Q3 2008/09
		Work with disabled tenants to develop alternative ways to involve them to avoid travel – especially that do not involve internet access	Review current communication methods.	Housing	December 2008	Q3 2008/09
		Report number of disabled people actively participating in formal involvement forums	Report number of disabled people who attend Resident Association/Estate Board meetings, who are Area Panel Members, who are Board and associated committee members.	General Manager /Housing	December 2007	In place

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Appendix 2: Access and Customer Care Key Lines of Enquiry – Co-op Homes Self Assessment

Key: Green = Much evidence, Amber = Some Evidence, Red = Little or no evidence

KLOE QUESTIONS	EXCELLENT SERVICE	CO-OP HOMES	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET CRITERIA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there clear and consistent leadership ensuring that the whole organisation has a clear customer focus? • Have service users and relevant stakeholders been involved in evaluating the service and determining standards and priorities for improvement? How have these priorities been disseminated? • Are external requirements – legislative or good practice being addressed? • Do the governance structures receive the reports necessary to judge whether the organisation is delivering on customer focus? • How does the organisation respond to service users? 	<p>Has an impressive and appropriate corporate approach to customer care that is very well understood throughout the organisation. There is a regular, consistent message and ethos that focuses on the customer. Has staff that all demonstrate user focus in their work, and who treat people with respect at all times.</p>	<p>Staff committed to customer service (all trained in Gober Method®) and coaching programme in place. Complaints performance reported to Services Committee on a bi-annual basis.</p> <p>Customer care is a key area of revised service standards due to be introduced in April 2008. Customer enquiries monitored and customer care focused upon during team meetings.</p>	
	<p>Sets clear standards in consultation with customers for all aspects of customer service. Customer services and standards are regularly tested and monitored including by customers themselves in all sections of the organisation.</p>	<p>Revised service standards due to be introduced in April 2008. The revised standards were produced following consultation with our customers and our performance against the standards are reported to Services Committee on a bi-annual basis. Mystery shoppers test the service and the results of our performance against the service standards is published on our website and in our resident newsletters. They are also reviewed at Customer Reference Panels and at Tenant Management Groups.</p>	
	<p>Regularly updates and reviews the approach in light of external and internal requirements. Training programmes on customer care are regularly updated and delivered to relevant staff. Experience and</p>	<p>Customer care training is provided through Gober Method® training courses and coaching sessions (which were recently changed to group coaching sessions following a review of the coaching programme). Employee's use and</p>	

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KLOE QUESTIONS	EXCELLENT SERVICE	CO-OP HOMES	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET CRITERIA
	<p>good practice is shared in an effective and structured way.</p>	<p>understanding of the Gober Method® is also reviewed through 1-2-1 sessions and coaching lunches.</p> <p>Good practice including compliments and the way complaints and enquiries have been managed are discussed through team meetings and through 1-2-1 sessions.</p>	
	<p>Knows what its strengths and weaknesses are in delivering a customer focussed service. It is taking appropriate actions to improve the areas where customer service standards are not high. Customers' views are taken into account when prioritising actions for improvement.</p>	<p>Satisfaction surveys (postal and telephone) carried out and feedback used from surveys to identify and implement areas for improvement.</p> <p>Status survey due to be sent out Q1 2008/09.</p> <p>Performance against service standards is reviewed through 1-2-1 and appraisal process, performance reports and Services Committee and Group meetings.</p> <p>Areas for improvement are also identified through Services Committee meetings (where the committee is made up of residents) where performance against the service standards and KPI's is assessed.</p>	
	<p>Has comprehensive reports supplying information and statistics on the quality of customer care in all parts of the organisation. Measures have targets or benchmarks.</p>	<p>Targets in place for key areas of housing management service such as our reception and voids and letting services where customer satisfaction is measured. Performance for these services is reported to Services Committee and to the Board. Overall target for Co-op Homes' customer satisfaction for 2007/08 is 80%.</p>	

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KLOE QUESTIONS	EXCELLENT SERVICE	CO-OP HOMES	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET CRITERIA
	<p>Tells service users what will happen as a result of their enquiry/request at the first point of contact, including outside normal office hours. Arranges the appropriate response, at a time to suit the service user, mainly by appointment.</p>	<p>Customers are provided with information regarding what will happen concerning their enquiry once they have contacted Co-op Homes. This has been reinforced with Gober Method® training which focuses upon this.</p> <p>The Repairs service is currently the only outside of office hours service where emergency repairs are dealt with. We do not currently offer after hours appointments for any other service areas.</p> <p>Home appointments are offered during office hours for customers where possible.</p>	<p>Consider the expansion of the out of hour's service to include housing management services.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are customers easily able to contact the organisation by telephone, in person or via the internet? • Have appropriate decisions been made on where to locate offices, at what times services are available and how to structure the service? • Are customers aware of the services available and how and when to access them? • Are services standards comprehensive and are 	<p>Has services that are easily accessed through conveniently located offices, by telephone and internet and by visits to residents where appropriate.</p>	<p>Wheelchair accessible offices based in Brentford and two Reading offices (Stowmarket office closed to visitors). All offices can be accessed by customers by telephone and e-mail. Website contains contact details and links for contacting Co-op Homes where repairs can be ordered online.</p> <p>Visits to customers are offered where appropriate.</p> <p>Central Customer Service Team set up to deal with repairs and for customer's first point of contact. All CHS staff have personal e-mail addresses and contact numbers.</p> <p>Customers can also use internet facility at Brentford Office.</p>	
	<p>Makes it easy for residents to access the</p>	<p>Customer Service Team operates from 9am to 5pm for telephone enquiries. Out of</p>	<p>Consider the expansion of the phone</p>

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KLOE QUESTIONS	EXCELLENT SERVICE	CO-OP HOMES	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET CRITERIA
<p>customers aware of them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the organisation identify customers who are not accessing the service and is appropriate action being taken to remove barriers to access? 	<p>service by telephone, in person or electronically, including outside normal office hours – all of which are dealt with efficiently and effectively</p>	<p>hours repairs service available after 5pm. Brentford office is open from 9am to 5pm for visitors; satellite offices have restricted opening hours.</p> <p>All CHS staff have personal e-mail addresses and contact numbers. Dedicated team e-mail addresses also set up for repairs, ordering rent payment cards etc which are included as contacts on website. Service level agreements are in place for response times for enquiries and complaints. These are monitored and reported to Services Committee.</p>	<p>service from 8am to 6pm by increasing Co-op Homes staff hours or by using RHP's customer service centre between 8am to 9am and 5pm to 6pm.</p>
	<p>Has carried out a full analysis of the costs and benefits of the different means of accessing services and residents have been consulted.</p>	<p>Full analysis of the costs and benefits of the different means of accessing services has not been carried out. Consultation has taken place with residents through Wots but further consultation required.</p>	<p>Further consultation with residents could take place through Customer Reference Panels and TMG meetings.</p>
	<p>Has signs leading to offices and receptions that are clear and effective.</p>	<p>All offices have clear signage.</p>	
	<p>Successfully publicises all methods of access along with opening times and arrangements for out-of-hours contact which are clear, and have been agreed following consultation with users.</p>	<p>Access and opening times are published in Wots, on website and at offices. The opening times have been agreed with customers where possible.</p>	
	<p>Has service standards that are realistic and challenging. Customers are aware of the</p>	<p>Revised service standards produced and are due to be introduced from April 2008. The revised standards will be promoted</p>	

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KLOE QUESTIONS	EXCELLENT SERVICE	CO-OP HOMES	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET CRITERIA
	standards, understand them and are informed on how well the organisation is meeting those standards.	through Wots and website. Customers were aware of previous standards and performance against the standards was published on website and through Wots.	
	Can provide significant evidence that customer service is delivered to a high standard including a high level of customer satisfaction.	Performance reports submitted to Services Committee on a six monthly basis and there is a high level of customer satisfaction for services such as our reception service. Further work required to improve all standards to record high levels of customer satisfaction.	Stronger focus to be implemented across the company on monitoring and managing service standards.
	Has staff and contractors that deal with customers who are professional, informative and polite. They are well trained and well supported by information technology to deliver an effective service. They are able to tell customers about relevant services in other organisations.	Staff trained in Gober Method® and ongoing coaching that focuses upon customer care. Positive feedback received from customers regarding main contractors used by CHS. IT technology supports customer service role and staff have good knowledge of relevant services in other organisations.	
	Offers a range of services and information via the internet and forms can either be downloaded or submitted on-line	Website enables customers to access services online such as reporting repairs, giving feedback or making a complaint. Forms can be downloaded and the website offers a range of information about other services.	
	Has information from surveys and databases that inform it of groups of customers who are not accessing the service as frequently as others. Action is taken to remove any barriers to accessing	Tenancy verification programme in place and customers are being identified who do not access service as frequently as others. Reception surveys also supplement data held on customers who are not accessing the service.	Tenant survey due to take place in Q1 2008/09 and data from survey to be used to identify groups of customers who are not accessing the service as frequently as others. Verification programme will also

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KLOE QUESTIONS	EXCELLENT SERVICE	CO-OP HOMES	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED TO MEET CRITERIA
	the service.	Home visits are offered to customers where possible and customers are encouraged to access the service through e-mail and telephone contact instead of having to rely upon office visits.	continue throughout 2008/09.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the information provided to customers easy to read? Was it developed in consultation with customers and does it meet their needs and expectations? 	Has front-line staff that demonstrate a wide range of knowledge about the full range of enquiries they receive or know who or how to access the necessary information to help service users.	Customer Service Team demonstrate wide range of knowledge about the services we provide. All new staff are provided with induction and customer care training.	
	Provides a variety of leaflets, posters, handbooks and other relevant information covering, all that customers reasonably need to know including for example, customer services, complaints, contact information, opening hours, approach to rent arrears and dealing with anti-social behaviour.	New Tenant Handbook and tenancy agreements produced in 2007. Information leaflets on areas such as ASB and rent arrears are available and are on display in our reception areas. CHS website updated in December 2007 with more customer information and improved customer friendly version of Wots introduced in March 2008.	
	Provides all information in plain English and other formats required by customers (see diversity KLOE). These are easily available on paper and electronically on the website.	All documents produced using plain English and are available in paper and electronic formats. Documents can be provided in alternative formats such as large print or Braille on request. Documents can also be translated upon request. CHS has database of customers with needs such as requiring documents in large print or a translation service.	

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	Produces regular newsletters about policies, procedures and performance that are interesting and informative and residents are involved in production and decisions on content	Customers were recently involved in revision of service standards (consultation took place through customer reference panels). Information is available on website regarding policies, procedures and performance. Wots also includes information on performance. Policies and procedures are agreed through Services Committee which involves residents.	
	Routinely consults residents about the nature and content of leaflets and handbooks. Residents are satisfied with the quality and timing of information.	Review of content of leaflets and handbooks has taken place through customer reference panels and tenant management groups where good levels of satisfaction have been recorded.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the complaints service well publicised and easy to access? • Are standards for complaint handling high? • Are results from the complaints process publicised to customers and do they result in improvements to the service? • Are customers reasonably satisfied with the responses to their 	Has customers that know about the complaints system and find it easy to use. The complaints process runs as it is says it will run.	Complaints procedure well publicised (website, leaflets in reception etc). Review of complaints takes place on a six monthly basis and this is reported to Services Committee. Regular reviews also take place through 1-2-1 sessions with staff.	
	Deals with complaints in a professional manner.	Three part complaints stage and only 1 complaint has reached stage 3 during 2007/08. No complaints have proceeded beyond stage three with a referral to the Housing Ombudsman.	
	Has clear standards for handling complaints and performance is reported to customers. Staff and customers are clear about procedures and standards	Performance reported to Services Committee and overall performance reported in Wots and on website. Detailed complaints reviews have not been published on website or in Wots. Staff are clear about procedures and standards –	Detailed complaints reviews to be included on website in future.

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<p>complaints?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the organisation implemented determinations by the Housing Ombudsman? 		<p>complaints management is reviewed through 1-2-1 process.</p> <p>Complaints procedure advertised on website, in leaflet form and in reception areas and customers are advised of process when they contact us.</p>	
	<p>Analyses complaints and learns from them, using them to drive improvements to services.</p>	<p>6 monthly review of complaints to Services Committee. Satisfaction surveys also take place and feedback from customers is taken into account in making improvements to services. Response time for responding to complaints was recently amended from 15 to 10 working days.</p>	
	<p>Involves customers in monitoring performance on complaints and identifying service improvements</p>	<p>Involve customers in monitoring complaints through Services Committee. Service improvements identified through satisfaction surveys.</p>	
	<p>Monitors customer satisfaction with complaints and has customers who are satisfied with the way complaints are handled.</p>	<p>Customer satisfaction is monitored through satisfaction surveys and results of this is reported to Services Committee on a six monthly basis. Complaints procedure contains an appeals process if customers are not satisfied with the way their complaint has been handled. Reasons for dissatisfaction with outcome of any complaints is analysed.</p>	
	<p>Implements promptly, and in full, determinations made by the Housing Ombudsman.</p>	<p>There have not been any recent cases that have resulted in determinations made by the Housing Ombudsman. However, recommendations would be implemented promptly and in full if a complaint reached</p>	

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		this stage.	
	<p>Has guidelines on compensation made in response to complaints and service failure that ensures that compensation is fair and relatively consistent.</p>	<p>Guidelines in place for compensation made in response to complaints and service failure. However, this could be reviewed as not currently published for customers.</p>	<p>Consider publishing guidelines for customers and include in future updating of complaints procedure leaflet.</p>
	<p>Has guidelines which meet statutory requirements, for example, LAs on the Right To Repair in Sections 121 and 122 of the Leasehold, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 and regulatory requirements for RSLs in HC circular 33/94</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there a variety of methods of consulting and obtaining feedback from customers and are they effective? • Does the approach take account of local context and ensure that a wide range of user views are obtained? • Is good use made of this information? • Are customers informed about what happens as a 	<p>Actively canvasses the views of service users and uses them to review or improve services. Service users are consulted and involved in major decisions that affect the service.</p>	<p>Views of service users are canvassed through a variety of methods: satisfaction surveys, customer reference panels, tenant management groups, Wots, website, feedback from customers. Service users are consulted and involved in major decisions where appropriate.</p>	
	<p>Provides customers with a range of opportunities to put forward their views. The approach was developed in consultation with users.</p>	<p>As above.</p>	
	<p>Seeks views from a broad cross section of users using methods that encourage good</p>	<p>Views of customers from three business streams are sought through various methods: postal and telephone satisfaction surveys to customer reference panels and</p>	

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<p>result of providing their views?</p>	<p>response rates.</p>	<p>tenant management groups. TMGs and customer reference panels are made up of representatives from three business streams.</p>	
	<p>Use HC recommended (if RSLs) survey methodology on satisfaction and uses comparison with other similar organisations in order to set targets for improvement.</p>	<p>HC recommended methodology on satisfaction used where possible and benchmarking exercises carried out in comparison with other RSLs when setting improvement targets.</p>	
	<p>Uses consultation and feedback from users to drive changes and improvements to the way services are delivered.</p>	<p>Consultation and feedback is used to drive changes and improvements to the way services are delivered. Recent changes made to switchboard with call queuing facility were as a response to feedback from customers.</p>	
	<p>Has high levels of satisfaction with opportunities to inform management and affect decision making and service delivery</p>	<p>Customer feedback informs management of services and affects decision making and service delivery. Higher levels of satisfaction required across the service.</p>	<p>Stronger focus to be implemented across the company on monitoring and managing service standards with aim of improving satisfaction levels.</p>
	<p>Has customers who understand the purpose and value of participating and replying to surveys and questionnaires. Customers are confident that their input will be valued and acted upon.</p>	<p>Customers on reference panel and TMGs understand the value of participation. Response to surveys varies for different parts of the service and greater response across the service needs to be targeted. Greater focus required too on ensuring customers are confident their input will be acted upon. This was recently featured in Wots (March 2008)</p>	<p>Include customer feedback and the role customers play in shaping services as a regular feature of Wots. Alternative means of communication should also be considered – customer forum on website etc.</p>