

SERVICES COMMITTEE	
Date of meeting	31st October 2007
Agenda item	9
Purpose	Decision
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DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To propose a Disability Equality Scheme. Introduction of a DES is a regulatory requirement recently introduced by the Housing Corporation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee are asked to approve the Disability Equality Scheme.

IMPLICATIONS	Report reference	
Environmental	None	
Equalities	Yes	Whole report
Financial	Yes	Action Plan commitments
Personnel	None	
Policy	None	
Sustainability	None	
Stakeholder Consultation Required	Yes	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Disability Equality Duty (DED), in force since December 2006, requires that disabled people are treated equally based on the 'social model of disability' which says that the disadvantages experienced by many disabled people are not the result of their disability, but rather because of society's attitude towards disability and the physical barriers.
- 1.2 The Housing Corporation requires us to develop a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) by December 2007.
- 1.3 It is noted that the guidance to support development of DESs has only recently been published. Co-op Homes' scheme as attached uses the same format and content plan as RHP and many DESs published by public authorities whose target for developing schemes was much earlier than that for RSLs.
- 1.4 The scheme will be reviewed annually as part of the annual review of Equalities to ensure it remains a dynamic strategy that delivers continuous improvement to disabled people. Customers will be involved in the ongoing reviews.

2 CONSULTATION

- 2.1 If the draft DES is agreed by the Committee it will be presented to resident representatives in November for their involvement and approval. The October edition of the customer magazine (Word on the Street) provided information about the scheme and invited customers to contact us with their views and for further details. We will send copies of the DES to the Tenant Management Groups for discussion at their next meetings. We have reviewed the draft DES with RHP and also used the involvement process they used with their tenants to help shape our strategy.
- 2.2 The approved DES will then be published in December 2007 to meet the Housing Corporation's target date.

3.0 DISABILITY EQUALITY

- 3.1 Co-op Homes celebrates the value of every individual. We believe that equality and diversity is not about treating everyone the same. Instead

"An equal society protects & promotes equal, real freedom & substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value & would choose, so that everyone can flourish... (it) recognises people's different needs, situations & goals & removes the barriers that limit what people can do & can be."
- 3.2 We aim to deliver good quality services to all our customers. We acknowledge that there are barriers that affect our customers with disabilities and are dedicated to removing them. We ask our customers about their experiences and use what they tell us to change the way we do things so that we continuously improve.
- 3.3 As part of our overarching strategy for Equality and Diversity, this is our first Disability Equality Scheme (DES). It is a work in progress - we have a lot still to do - but believe that we have the will, commitment and resource to deliver improved services to all our customers.
- 3.4 We want our DES to be a means by which we continuously improve the services we offer and the ways that we offer them. Each year, we will review our DES as part of our equality and diversity strategy and in the light of progress and experience. We will continue to involve disabled people in its development and implementation.
- 3.5 We are aiming for steady, incremental and achievable improvements and so will concentrate on achieving two outcomes:
 - making our services more inclusive and accessible; and

- making sure that we involve disabled people.

3.6 We are now starting to capture better information on our tenants including disability information. This is being supplemented by data we are gathering on adaptations to tenant's homes as part of our stock condition survey. However, we need to do more to capture equalities information on all of our tenants. This information is important because it can help us to identify trends – good and bad. e.g. If we do not know how many disabled people report anti-social behaviour (ASB) then it is difficult to identify, understand and tackle the causes of their specific problems. For instance, if the number of reports of ASB from disabled people goes down it could be because we have been successful in tackling problems; or it is harder for them to report incidents; or they do not know how to report incidents; or they are reporting to other agencies; or they do not have confidence that we will tackle the ASB or they are too scared to tell us what is going on. We also need to monitor so that we ensure that we are not discriminating e.g. If we do not know how many disabled people apply to us for jobs and whether they are successful or not, we cannot identify if someone within the organisation is discriminating against this group of applicants directly or indirectly.

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Disability Equality Scheme 2007-9: Action Plan

THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN
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
		Investigate benefits of advocacy for disabled people responding to satisfaction survey and offer service	Report on take-up of advocate service	Housing	Commission of STATUS survey
		Report to customers how we have used profile information to improve services.	Publicity about how we have used the information.	Ops Manager	June 2008
	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
		Ensure that all staff receive disability equality training	SCOPE training programme delivered to all staff.	Human Resources (as part of RHP training)	June 2008

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN
	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
		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
		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
		Provide greater flexibility in service delivery	Improve web site so that more information is available for disabled customers	General Manager	February 2008
		Review Co-op Homes' transfer list and protocols with other social landlords to maximise access to appropriate housing.	Reviewed transfer list	Housing	March 2008

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN
	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
		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
		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
	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
		Develop a checklist for staff to use when booking external venues to ensure they are accessible.	Produce a ‘preferred venue’ list.	Housing	March 2008

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN
	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
		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
		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
		Encourage disabled representation on RHP Group consultative forums	Establishment of a role on JCC to represent disability issues	RHP Human Resources	December 2007
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

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THEME	OUTCOME	ACTION	MEASURE	TEAM	WHEN
		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
		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