

SLH Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2008-2010

1. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Policy Details

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3. INTRODUCTION

Background to the Disability Equality Duty

For the majority of public service organisations the Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into affect in December 2006 through the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. It challenged organisations to reconsider the way they thought about people with disabilities and how they have traditionally accessed services with the emphasis on proactively demonstrating how they are improving services, rather than reacting to individual complaints or challenges. The overall objective being to mainstream disability within organisations. Main public service organisations then had to produce a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) that would demonstrate how the organisation was working towards improving disability equality.

The Legal Context

This new law requires organisations across the public sector to be proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated fairly.

There are two levels of duty under the Disability Equality Duty, a general duty and specific duties, explained below.

The **General Duty** requires authorities, in carrying out their 'functions', to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons

Secondly there is the **Specific Duty** the essential elements of which are:

- A statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme
- An Action Plan
- Arrangements for gathering information about performance of the public body on disability equality
- Details of how the authority is going to use the information gathered, particularly in reviewing the effectiveness of its action plan and preparing subsequent schemes
- Arrangements for assessing the impact of activities on disability equality

4. THE DISABILITY EQUALITY DUTY AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Housing Associations (HA's) are not bound by either of the above duties as they do not legally constitute public authorities. However both the Housing Corporation and Audit Commission are covered by both the duties.

The Housing Corporation published their DES in December 2006 and have released a statement confirming that it intended to pass down the duty to Housing Associations through regulation. While it recognises that HA's *"do not have a statutory duty to publish their scheme, it is clearly good practice to develop schemes that demonstrate how disabled people have been involved in establishing plans and actions that improve the performance of housing associations."* Clare Miller, Director of Regulation at the Housing Corporation.

5. THE DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

The definition of disability within Disability Equality Schemes will match that of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005;

'A person has a disability if he has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

6. WHAT WE KNOW NOW

British disabled people and their families are twice as likely to live in property owned by local authorities and RSL's as their non-disabled peers. (*Barnes, mercer and Shakespeare, 1999 Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*).

42% of housing association households in England contain a member with a, long term illness or disability and of those 1 in 7 use a wheelchair. (MORI/Housing Corporation 2001).

Of Liverpool's total population, 439,473, 24.6% have a Long Term Limiting Illness (2001 Census).

Neighbourhood Profile		Speke/Garston	Liverpool	England
People with a limiting long-term illness	%	33.9	24.6	17.9
People of working age with a limiting long-term illness	%	30.1	20.8	13.3

Long-term illness – National Statistics 2001

Even taking all of the above into account disability has traditionally been seen as a 'Special Needs' issue rather than as a mainstream customer issue. This is compounded by the use of language such as 'vulnerable people' which can further marginalise individuals.

The DED requires organisations to move away from this approach and work to deliver an equal experience for disabled people within everything that a housing organisation does, not just where disabled people have traditionally accessed services.

As the social model approach suggests, people with impairments are disabled by physical and social barriers. Ultimately the need is for all these barriers to be removed at every level, from when someone with a impairment enters SLH offices or homes to when policies and strategies are being developed and approved, this would ensure a mainstream approach at SLH.

This is what SLH Group are aiming to do by examining all service areas, not specialist supported services. SLH aims to involve all disabled residents' from Speke and Garston so they feel they can express their views and feelings in a way they feel listened to and valued in order for SLH to improve services to them.

7. SLH GROUPS APPROACH – 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE'

What we do now

Following the DDA in 2006 SLH took great interest in preparing and changing aspects of services to ensure compliance with the Act. Some of the improvements made included:

- Hearing loop fitted to meeting rooms and reception area
- Resident involvement venues to be accessible to all
- E&D monitoring form in place for all public meeting
- SLH Reception area redesigned to be fully accessible
- Venues are subject DDA audit outcomes
- All staff have received E&D training
- Front line staff have received deaf awareness and basic sign language training
- SLH website conforms to accessibility standards
- Information can be obtained in audio, Braille or large text upon request.

Gathering Information – What we know about SLH tenants, residents and employees

There are a number of mechanisms by which SLH consult, involve and get feedback from tenants, residents and employees.

Tenants and Residents

SLH holds monthly Customer Focus Groups, has a Tenant Participation Working Group and a Tenant Auditor Group. SLH gives the options for people feed back through the 'Tell us about it' scheme and they can also be part of the 'SLH 100' Customer Panel. SLH also has a robust Complaints Procedure and a

Tenancy Health Check Programme. SLH also carry out independent bi-annual Customer Satisfaction Surveys, complimented by in-house service area satisfaction surveys.

Employees

SLH uses a number of initiatives and forums to achieve and promote equality for staff, namely:

- Annual staff surveys through 'Best Companies'
- Individually tailored training and development programmes
- Performance Management framework for appraisals and one-to-ones
- A Staff Care Group representing all teams
- An Equality and Diversity Implementation Team (EDIT) to promote diversity and manage improvements in diversity across SLH.

From the above SLH can retrieve an excellent profile of customers and staff and can draw from this information and statistics to assess performance on disability, equality, access to services and employment. This is also used to identify gaps or areas which SLH needs to improve and these form part of the Action Plan, appendix 1.

Customer Satisfaction Survey 2007

Below are some of the key outcomes from the most recent independent satisfaction survey (2007) . Analysis was made between disabled and non disabled households:

- 47% of SLH tenants have a long term illness or disability
- Taking everything into account, 74% of respondents with disability in the households were satisfied with the overall service provided by SLH (77% non disabled)
- 87% of those households with someone who has a disability in were satisfied with their accommodation compared to 85% of those household with non-disabled members

- 84% expressed that they were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live compared to 83% of those household with non-disabled members
- When asked about perception of safety; 93% felt safe alone at home in the day, falling to 89% at night time whereas for non-disabled households it was 96% in the day and 95% during the night time
- 84% of respondents felt that SLH were good at keeping them informed compared to 83% of households with non-disabled members

Most frequently mentioned priorities for household's containing someone with a disability were:

- Improve quality of repairs / better repairs (10%), this was also top for non-disabled respondents (11%)
- Reduce anti-social behaviour (7%), not in top 3 for non disabled respondents
- Provide more facilities for youngsters, number 2 priority for non disabled respondents
- Customer Services and contacting the office
- Management and decision making

SLH also gathers a range of information on disability through performance reporting regarding service take up, staffing and Governing Body membership. However reporting could be more robust and this has formed part of the Action Plan, appendix 1.

Taking all the above into account SLH is able to assess the scale of disability within the environment that it operates which again assists in determining priorities and focus in developing the Action Plan. An important point to remember is that this is only the beginning and SLH has to operate within its capabilities and develop Actions Plans that are SMART.

8. HOW DISABLED PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED

In developing the Scheme and Action Plan SLH has used a number of resources to ensure the barriers facing disabled persons and their priorities were reflected in the Action Plan, namely:

- Local groups
- EDIT
- Engaging people through the 'Tell us about it' roadshows
- The existing involvement framework
- Use of survey and tenancy health check data

SLH aimed to get people to put forward their ideas by getting them to think about their own experiences with SLH and then relay how they would like to be treated if their expectations were not met.

9. DEVELOPING THE DISABILITY EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN

SLH Group already has a comprehensive SMART Continuous Improvement Plan. Therefore the basis and layout of the Disability Equality Action Plan follows the corporate style and builds on existing diversity improvements from the 2007/08 plan.

The SLH Action Plan reflects a number of things;

- The strategic priorities of the organisation
- The priorities of disabled people
- Ownership of specific actions
- Identification of resources
- Measurable indicators of progress

The plan will be divided linked to achieving the outcomes of the DED, namely:

- Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- Eliminating disability discrimination
- Eliminating disability harassment

- Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encouraging participation by disabled persons in public life; and taking steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons

10. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF SLH ACTIVITIES AND POLICIES ON DISABILITY EQUALITY

Currently, SLH do carry out equality and standard impact assessments, disability equality impact assessments must be carried out on policies, procedures and processes to identify and eliminate any discrimination or disadvantage to anyone who wants to access services. The impact assessments also enable SLH to identify any opportunities that may have a more positive impact on customers' lives. SLH aims to involve the participation of disabled people in carrying out impact assessments.

11. MONITORING, REVIEWING AND ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE SCHEME AND ACTION PLAN

All staff will be responsible for the effective implementation of this scheme, however it will be led from the top and approved by SLH Group Board. Progress will be monitored by the Audit and Quality Committee and the Equality and Diversity Implementation Team.

Annually SLH will report on the effectiveness of improvements by examining current, and where applicable, new performance indicators. Ultimately the aim of the DES is to:

- Achieve the outcomes of the DED
- Mainstreaming services to disabled people
- Increased satisfaction for disabled people in all service areas
- Remove barriers to services
- Equality in opportunities between disabled and non-disabled people
- The promotion of positive attitudes

Impact assessments will also be carried out annually, this is key in order to continuously improve services to disabled people. Outcomes from these assessments will be fed into the on-going action planning process.

SLH Group
Disability Equality Duty Action Plan 2008-10

Action no.	Service Area	Key Theme Area	Source	Action	Tangible Outcome	Lead Officer	Date	Status	Progress to Date	Link to Business Plan	Resources Estimate (other than salary and staff time)	Performance Monitoring	VFM	Link to Disability Equality Outcomes	Original deadline
59	Diversity	Equality & Diversity	CP	Carry out equality impact assessments	To meet legal and regulatory requirements and deliver effective services	GH	Mar-08			E		Audit and Quality Committee	E3	D2	
114	Stock Investment & Asset Management	Equality & Diversity	SA	Upgrade UDC's on Orchard and produce procedure on how to add/delete UDC	Up to date housing management system	BL	Dec-07			E		SIT	E4	D5	
115	Diversity	Equality & Diversity	SA	Identify and implement actions to improve communication with people with literacy problems e.g. working in partnership with talking , Whitechapel, DVD's which provide information about the area	Tenants with literacy problems are not directly or indirectly discriminated against	HL	Mar-08			E		SIT	E4	D1	
201	Diversity	Customers	SA	Set up a register of staff skills for dealing with vulnerable tenants and record on the intranet	A record on the intranet of staff experience about successful approaches and ways of dealing with vulnerable residents	PC	Dec-08	Carried over from 06/07	Seeking info from staff	E		TIAA	E3	D5	
226	Diversity	Customers	RSA	Work with the CIH in developing a PATH type scheme for disabled people	Improved access to employment for young disabled people	JM	Mar-08			E		SIT	E4	D1, D4 & D5	
58	Diversity	Equality & Diversity	CP	Extend floating support service to promote independence and enable more people to remain in their homes or gain access to appropriate accommodation	Reduce disadvantage faced by many of our customers by tailoring our services to meet their needs	ED	Mar-08			C&E		Audit and Quality Committee	E4	D1	
DED1	Diversity	Tenancy & Estate Management	EDIT	Build into the viewing procedure demonstrations of any adaptations in properties when people with disabilities are going on the viewing	Enable disabled persons to assess suitability of adaptations	Neighbourhood Services	Mar-08			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D5	
DED2	Diversity	Tenancy & Estate Management	EDIT	Improve access to properties for viewings	Inclusive services and ease of access to properties	Neighbourhood Services	Jun-08			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D5	
DED3	Diversity	Tenancy & Estate Management	EDIT	Review Untidy Gardens Procedure and have alternative method of action if tenant is disabled	Not unduly discriminating, providing additional support	EDIT	Dec-08			A&E		Performance Reporting	E3	D1	

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DED4	Diversity	Community Safety	EDIT	Publicise Community Safety Team to disabled groups	Increased awareness and reduction in harassment of people with disabilities	Quality Manager	Mar-08			E		Publicity Material	E3	D3	
DED5	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	EDIT	Ensure contractors are aware of properties where disabled tenants live when carrying out work	Contractors able to make any adjustments in advance to ensure an appropriate level of service	Tenant Liason Officers	Mar-08			E		UDC Flags on Orchard	E3	D5	
DED6	Diversity	Repairs & Maintenance	EDIT	Extra checks by officers if programmed work being carried out in a disabled persons home	Works not having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of the person	Tenant Liason Officers	Ongoing			E		Review procedure	E3	D5	
DED7	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	EDIT	Contractors to undertake disability equality training as required	Ensuring contractors have a good awareness of the issues disabled people face	Quality manager	Ongoing			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D1	
DED8	Diversity	Tenancy & Estate Management	EDIT	Continue to gather detailed data of disabilities within SLH homes	Using data to help design tailored services to meet the needs of disabled customers	Head of Neighbourhood Services	Ongoing			E		Tenancy Health Checks	E3	D5	
DED9	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	EDIT	Look at feasibility of installing browse aloud or similar functions on SLH website	Ensuring all customers can access the information	Quality Manager	Dec-08			E		Website	E3	D1 & D5	
DED10	Diversity	People	EDIT & E&DS	Inductions - H&S work station assessments for newly appointed disabled staff	Providing suitable working environment and supporting additional needs	Head of Organisational Development	Mar-08			D		Review procedure	E3	D1	
DED11	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	GP	100% access audits carried out on flats and all SLH offices - not just DDA compliant should be carried out by disability group	Ensuring accessibility	Quality Manager	Mar-09			E	£500	Review procedure	E3	D2 & D5	

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DED12	Diversity	People	E&DS	Roll out further disability equality training	Ensure that staff at all levels are aware of SLH's commitment to eliminate discrimination and disadvantage to disabled people and are trained to deal sensitively and effectively with disabled customers	Quality Manager & HR	Mar-09			E	In training budgets	More knowledgeable staff	E3	D1	
DED13	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	GP	Produce Accessible Information Guide	All staff know how to provide information to tenants in a range of formats	Quality Manager	Jun-08			E		Review procedure	E3	D1 & D5	
DED14	Diversity	Governance	GP	Set up a consultation group of disabled people	People with disabilities are involved in decisions which affect them	Neighbourhood Regeneration Team	Dec-08			E		Meeting documentation	E3	D1 & D5	
DED15	Diversity	People	GP	Introduce more monitoring of disabled applicants for jobs e.g. were they heard about the job	Identifying any trends and building on positive trends	Head of Organisational Development	Apr-08			D		Performance Reporting	E3	D1	
DED16	Diversity	People	GP	Monitoring training opportunities by disability, gender and race	Ensuring equal opportunities	Head of Organisational Development	Jun-08			D		Performance Reporting	E3	D1	
DED17	Diversity	People	GP	Work with other organisations to set up a disability staff forum	Support networks in place so any issues can be raised and addressed	Quality Manager	Mar-09			D		Meeting documentation	E3	D1 & D3	
DED18	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	GP	Strengthen engagement mechanisms with disabled people and their organisations	Increased joint working and involvement of disabled people in decision making	Neighbourhood Regeneration Team	Jun-08			D&E		Referrals procedures	E3	D5	
DED19	Diversity	Governance		Annually report on progress against action plan	Ensuring actions are being met and impact assessed	Quality Manager	Annually			D		Performance Reporting	E3	All	
DED20	Diversity	Procurement	GP	Add sections/clauses regarding disability compliance into all tenders	Potential barriers removed	Quality Manager	Mar-08			D&E		Revised documentation	E3	D5	

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Action no.	Service Area	Key Theme Area	Source	Action	Tangible Outcome	Lead Officer	Date	Status	Progress to Date	Link to Business Plan	Resources Estimate (other than salary and staff time)	Performance Monitoring	VFM	Link to Disability Equality Outcomes	Original deadline
DED21	Diversity	Asset Management	GP	Ensure specifications for modernisation are in line with accessibility standards	Accessibility for all	Head of property Services	Dec-08			A		New specifications	E3	D5	

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DED22	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	GP	Use information from adaptations satisfaction survey and others to identify gaps and continuously improve the service	Performance reports produced, gaps identified and service continually improved	Supported Housing Manager	Dec-08			E		Survey data	E3	D1 & D5	
DED23	Diversity	Community Safety	GP	Include disability harassment as a category (as for racial harassment) onto the ASB database	Build up a picture of issues around discrimination due to disability and take action as appropriate	Community Safety Manager	Sep-08			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D1 & D3	
DED24	Diversity	Equality & Diversity	HC	Include diversity impact assessment with all new policies	Taking a strategic approach to ensuring no groups are inadvertently discriminated against	EDIT	Ongoing			E		Policy and procedure	E3	D1	
DED25	Diversity	Equality & Diversity	HC	Current policies to be Equality Impact assessed in a rolling programme	Taking a strategic approach to ensuring no groups are inadvertently discriminated against. Beginning with those directly affecting the lives of those with disabilities	EDIT	Mar-09			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D1	
DED26	Diversity	People	HC	Incorporate disability questions into staff surveys	Build up a picture of the concerns / issues of staff with disabilities and remove any barriers	Quality Manager	Sep-08			D		Survey data	E3	D1 & D4	
DED27	Diversity	People	HC	Include disability awareness into learning and development programmes	Embedding a culture of awareness into SLH so staff feel comfortable dealing with people with a variety of different impairments	Head of Organisational Development	Apr-08			E		Training programme	E3	D1 & D4	
DED28	Diversity	Communication	GP	Review image library	Improve image library to ensure there are positive images of disabled people	Marketing Officer	Sep-09			E		Publications	E3	D4	
DED29	Diversity	Equality & Diversity	GP	Equality and Diversity Audit	Review how equalities work is conducted within the organisation. Review current corporate and departmental processes. Key objective will be to ensure continuous improvement. This will be delivered by ensuring that equality issues are mainstreamed into all work areas	Head of Performance and Business Improvement	Mar-09			D&E	£3,000	Delivery of outcomes via revised Action Plan	E3	All	

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DED30	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	THC	Remove barriers to access identified in Tenancy Health Checks	Decrease in percentage of people who see their mobility as a barrier to accessing SLH Services promotion of the availability of home visits. Consistent and non threatening language used to tenants with a nervous disposition	Head of Neighborhood Services	Sep-09			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D1 & D5	
DED31	Diversity	Access & Customer Care	EDIT	Produce easy read formats and diagrams / flow charts where necessary for important procedures e.g. rent escalation, recharge policies	Tenants with learning disabilities can be offered additional supporting information in order they are able to maintain their tenancy	EDIT	Sep-08			E		Policy and procedure	E3	D1 & D5	
DED32	Diversity	Governance	GP	Produce a set of disability key performance indicators and build into all aspects of performance reporting	Performance can be tracked effectively and areas of weakness identified and addressed	Head of Performance and Business Improvement	Mar-09			E		Performance Reporting	E3	D1	

Summary of Terms

Source

AC	Audit Commission
CSS	Customer satisfaction survey
THC	Tenancy Health check
PD	Performance data
CF	Customer Feedback (Challenge Events/ Tell Us About It/ Service satisfaction Survey's)
BVR's	Best value Reviews
CP	Corporate Plan
C	Complaints
GP	Good practice
TSS	Tenant Satisfaction Survey
TIAA	Internal Audit
TE	Themed Event
RSA	Regulatory Self Assessment
SSS	Service Satisfaction Survey's
HCA	Housing Corporation self assessment
SA	KLOE Self Assessment
P	Policy review date
TA	Tenant Auditors
TAW	Team Away Day
E&DS	Equality and Diversity Strategy
EDIT	Equality and Diversity Implementation Team

Value for Money (VFM)

E1: Reducing inputs for the same outputs (people or money)

E2: Reducing prices (labour costs/procurement etc) for the same outputs

E3: Getting more outputs or better quality (productivity etc) for the same inputs

E4: Getting proportionally more outputs or better quality for an increase in resources

e.g.: 10% increase in costs for 15% increase in output

Link to Business Plan

A: Environment, Land and Development

B: Value for Money and Financial Planning

C: Growth and Future Direction

D: Effective Governance

E: Understanding our Customers

Link to DED Outcome

D1 Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons

D2 Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act

D3 Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities

D4 Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons

D5 Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and take steps to take account of disabled persons disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.