



Disability Equality Scheme

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Opening statement

This Disability Equality Scheme leaflet describes how we will be proactive in making sure disabled people are treated fairly. We all want to live in communities where we can participate fully and equally and are able to enjoy the use of services without being excluded. We know that for many disabled people this has not always happened.

Our Disability Equality Scheme sets out how we will promote positive attitudes to disabled people and the steps we will take to meet the needs of disabled people.

The scheme sets out the actions we will take to make sure the services we provide and other functions take into account the needs of disabled people. As an employer, the scheme describes our arrangements for recruiting, developing and keeping disabled employees making sure that there is open access to the full range of employment opportunities.

We are committed to making sure that we promote disability equality in all of our activities. We believe that the action we take to overcome discrimination and increase equality will deliver outcomes that will improve the performance of our organisation and benefit all of our residents.

We will be monitoring our performance and we will continue to involve disabled people in the development of the scheme.

Our board and senior management team are committed to overseeing the monitoring of the Disability Equality Scheme to make sure that we stick to our equality and diversity principles.



Tony Bramley
Chief Executive



Andrew Almond-Bell
Chair

Why introduce a Disability Equality Scheme?

The Disability Equality Scheme (DES) is a plan that shows how we will promote disability equality and make sure our activities meet the needs of disabled people. Our approach to disability equality is to work to remove the barriers and attitudes that disabled people face.

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, public authorities have a legal duty to promote disability equality. Although we are not a public authority, as a housing association we are serving a public interest and are therefore covered by the general duty of this Act. We are fully committed to:

1. promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
2. getting rid of unlawful discrimination under the Act
3. getting rid of harassment of disabled people related to their disabilities
4. promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people
5. encouraging participation by disabled people in public life
6. taking steps to take account of disabled peoples' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

We have produced a DES to demonstrate how we will deliver our legal obligations. The DES covers both the services that we provide to members of the community and the support we will give to our employees.

Our DES sets out how we will fulfil our legal obligations and outlines;

- how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme
- our action plan covering the priorities and major projects to be put into practice over the timescale of the DES
- how we will gather information about our performance
- how we are going to use the information gathered, particularly in reviewing the effectiveness of our action plan and in preparing future DES's
- our arrangements for assessing the impact of activities on disability equality.

Our DES covers the period from December 2007 to December 2010, although we will be required to produce further schemes after this date.

What do we mean by disability?

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disabled person as 'someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activity'. For the purpose of the Act:

- **Substantial** means neither minor nor trivial.
- **Long term** means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected
- **Normal day-to-day activities** include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping. The test under the Act is whether it affects one of the categories of capacity – mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects, speech, hearing or eyesight, memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand, or the perception of the risk of physical danger.

The context

Results from the 2001 census reveal that 19% of people in North East Lincolnshire classify themselves as having a limiting long-term illness. The figure is 17.9% for England and Wales.

At the time this DES was produced approximately 7.41% of our tenants and approximately 2.46% (Nov 2007) of our employees had declared themselves as having a disability.

Development and monitoring of the scheme

The involvement of disabled people

We take resident involvement very seriously. We are aware that together and individually, residents make a real difference, not only to their own communities, but to policy development, decision making and service delivery. In developing this DES we have involved disabled residents.

We held both a focus group and a consultation event to gain an understanding of the issues affecting disabled residents and to establish what our priorities should be. In addition, we circulated our draft action plan to over a quarter of our disabled residents inviting them to comment and state what our priorities should be before we published the scheme.

We contacted the disabled residents on our 'Community Voice' database, which lists all those residents who have volunteered to be actively consulted on a range of issues relating to service delivery either by reviewing documents, attending focus groups, taking part in mystery shopping exercises or service review panels. We will involve the members of this group further when putting the scheme into practice and monitoring of it.

We also consulted with the Borough-Wide Tenants' Assembly (BWTA), the umbrella organisation which represents tenants and residents and local support groups which assist people with disabilities.

From an employment perspective we invited all our employees who have declared that they have a disability to attend the focus group. We also invited organisations within the community who represent and work with disabled people in employment. This helped us to gain an understanding of the issues disabled employees face in employment and helped us to establish what our priorities in employment should be.

When we started our DES we did not have a recognised group representing disabled residents. As a result of our involvement we now have a number of people who want to get involved and form our first permanent residents group for people with disabilities. The group will drive our DES forward and monitor our commitment against the action plan.

We are committed to continuously involving disabled people in identifying areas for improvement and to help us take the necessary steps to address these. We want to develop the future involvement of disabled people in monitoring progress against the action plan. We recognise that we need to encourage the involvement of more of our disabled customers throughout the duration of this and future schemes. We will do this by promoting our disability focus group, investigating other ways for disabled people to get involved and by providing information on the scheme and the action plan in appropriate formats for disabled people.

The arrangements for gathering information about our performance

We recognise the need to collect information to make sure that we are not discriminatory and that disabled people have equal access to our services and employment opportunities. We will gather information and evidence to demonstrate our performance in relation to disability equality and we will monitor progress to help us identify any inequalities.

We will gather information from:

- tenants
- leaseholders
- housing applicants
- employees and job applicants
- The Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation and other specialist research bodies.

Our methods of data collection will include:

- consultation events and surveying
- existing performance management indicators
- complaints monitoring
- CORE information
- STATUS survey results
- employee questionnaires
- employment monitoring statistics

We will also look to collect more detailed information relating to individuals through profiling so that we can make sure our service meets the individual needs of our customers and that our disabled employees are treated fairly and have equal opportunities in the work place.

As yet we do not hold complete information on any special requirements for our disabled residents. We recognise that people with different impairments experience different barriers and attitudes. We will therefore collect information on this and review our working practices accordingly.

How we will use the information gathered in reviewing the effectiveness of the action plan and preparing for subsequent DES's

We will use the information we collect to develop our policies and strategies which support our customer focus objectives. Most importantly, we will make our resident and employee groups aware of the information and any concerns we have and use their knowledge and experience to develop suitable solutions.

We will hold regular meetings with our resident and employee groups to review the action plan and make sure we are meeting our responsibilities. We will change our action plan to reflect any new priorities which are identified over the course of the scheme.

The action plan and scheme will be monitored by our Equality and Diversity Group. The group is chaired by a member of the senior management team and is made up of officers from all areas of our organisation and a Shoreline Board member.

Arrangements for assessing the impact of activities on disability equality

One of the ways of embedding equality into the policies and activities of our organisation will be to systematically undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) on all new and existing policies.

The purpose of an EIA is to make sure that there is no negative impact on any of the equality groups and that no discrimination may occur as a result of our policies and practices. The process helps us to identify where there are barriers to accessing our services and where we can improve service delivery to make sure everyone has equality of opportunity.

Impact assessments also encourage our employees to think about the likely impact of their work on equality groups and to take action to improve services, strategies, policies and procedures. This process involves anticipating the consequences of policies and projects for equality groups and making sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences are removed and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised.

We have introduced another feature to our customer focus group which will look at what we are learning from our customers. Part of this group's responsibility will be to look in detail at the feedback we receive, for example through satisfaction surveys and complaints and use this to develop our services further. We will pay attention to feedback we receive from disabled residents and other minority groups, to make sure they are contributing and that their views are being recognised and used.

We have been accredited with the use of the disability 'two tick' symbol. This demonstrates that as an employer we are committed to monitoring disability in the workplace, getting rid of unfair practices and making sure that the needs of our disabled employees are regularly reviewed and employees are properly supported to do their jobs.

Disability Equality Scheme Action Plan

The following action plan sets out the range of activities that will take place until December 2010 to promote disability equality and make sure that we meet the needs of disabled people.

The plan includes actions across all functions of the organisation and is aimed at making improvements to equality for disabled people within each of the required areas as set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

How these actions will be achieved and measured is included in a more detailed action plan, which each service area is using to put the scheme into action. On a yearly basis the action plan will be updated and we will publish a statement detailing how we are meeting our commitment to the scheme. Under the Duty we must review and update the DES and Action Plan every three years.

Number	Action	Lead	Target completion
1. Promoting equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people			
1	Make sure the communication preferences of customers are recognised, checked and utilised effectively and that all Shoreline literature and the website is accessible to all	Equality and Diversity Group	Ongoing
2.	Make sure customer service employees are fully confident in dealing with disabled people and communication tools are available, for example portable induction loops	Head of Neighbourhood Services	December 2008
3.	Make sure new build programmes incorporate homes designed specifically for disabled people as well as to lifetime homes standards	Head of Regeneration	December 2008
4.	Introduce and support a 'Disability @ Work' employee support group to establish a support and signposting service	Head of Human Resources and Communication	April 2008
5.	Develop a career change scheme or support for employees wishing to change jobs as a result of ill health issues	Head of Human Resources and Communication	December 2009
6.	Continue to advertise all vacancies at the local job centre, Foresight and Hearing Concern and continue to liaise with disability employment advisors (at job centre) on individual specific issues	Head of Human Resources and Communication	Ongoing
7.	Develop detailed monitoring and performance indicators relating to recruitment, development and keeping of employees	Head of Human Resources and Communication	December 2010
8.	Raise awareness of the support element of declaring disability/ health issues at work through the data verification exercise	Head of Human Resources and Communication	December 2010
9.	Set up a disabled residents focus group and involve them in the updating and monitoring of the Disability Equality Scheme and action plan against targets on an annual basis	Equality and Diversity Group	April 2008
10.	All service areas to undertake an equalities impact assessment and prepare action plans to address any areas of negative or neutral impact against disabled people which are not objectively justified	Equality and Diversity Group	April 2008

Number	Action	Lead	Target completion
2. Getting rid of unlawful discrimination under the Act			
11.	Undertake regular tenant audits and mystery shopping programmes by disabled people to make sure Shoreline is accessible and non-discriminatory	Head of Regeneration	December 2010
12.	Monitor service usage by disabled customers and investigate any identified low usage (part of equality impact assessment process)	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2009
13.	Make sure all Customer Access Points are fully accessible and Disability Discrimination Act compliant	Head of Neighbourhood Services/ Head of Regeneration	February 2009
14.	Make sure all relevant sheltered housing schemes and communal areas within Shoreline properties are fully accessible and Disability Discrimination Act compliant	Head of Property Investment	December 2009
15.	Make sure our investment partners carry out full needs assessments before carrying out any Decent Homes work	Head of Property Investment	Ongoing
16.	Make sure all customer satisfaction surveys and other tenant surveys monitor disability and identified differences are investigated	Equality and Diversity Group	May 2008
17.	Make sure tenant profiles are completed and updated to make sure we are aware of the needs of individuals and our employees are aware of how to respond	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2008
18.	Provide Disability Awareness Training programmes for managers and employees including use of the two tick symbol and why we use it	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2008
19.	Provide supported placements for vulnerable people	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2009
20.	Keep up to date and put into practice any new legislation requirements	Head of Legal Services	Ongoing
21.	Monitor complaints by disability and make sure identified concerns are investigated	Head of Legal Services	May 2008

Number	Action	Lead	Target completion
3. Getting rid of harassment of disabled people related to their disabilities			
22.	Raise awareness of harassment and hate crime policy amongst tenants, in particular how to report disability harassment	Head of Neighbourhood Services	December 2008
23.	Consider easier methods of recording anti-social behaviour and reporting of disability harassment for disabled people, including working with local agencies to set up report networks similar to the True Vision centre approach	Head of Neighbourhood Services	December 2008
24.	Monitor anti-social behaviour warnings / measures / orders by disability in order to avoid any potential discrimination	Head of Neighbourhood Services	December 2009
25.	Promote 'dignity at work' policy as the mechanism through which to report disability related harassment at work	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2009
26.	Monitor employment practices e.g. sickness cases, recruitment and selection, disciplinary cases, grievances etc by disability to identify any potential discrimination, remove poor practice and publicise the actions taken	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2010
27.	Monitor systems for reporting and responding to harassment incidents by disability and publicise the actions taken	Head of Neighbourhood Services	December 2009
4. Promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people			
28.	Develop service standards with disabled customers so that they know what to expect from us	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2009
29.	Make sure all meetings are held in accessible venues, with the communication needs of individual participants being taken into account (letters of invitation must include statement asking participants to inform us of any individual needs)	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2009
30.	Monitor tenant and resident association membership by disability and encourage the involvement of disabled people in activities	Head of Regeneration	December 2009
31.	Make sure all new promotional material includes disabled people as far as possible and is offered in alternative formats	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2008
5. Encouraging participation by disabled people in public life			
32.	Continue to support all local disability groups as an external challenge to Shoreline on disability issues	Equality and Diversity Group	Ongoing

Number	Action	Lead	Target completion
33.	Extend existing 'extraneous leave' policy to include a provision for our employees to participate in public life e.g. two hours a month	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2009
34.	Set targets for the composition of the Shoreline Board	Head of Legal Services	December 2010
35.	Make sure that the views and experiences of disabled people (including members of new disability groups) are captured on all services and that these are used when developing new policies, procedures and practices	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2008
36.	Introduce incentives where appropriate to encourage disabled people to contribute their views and experiences e.g. prize draws, lifts to meetings etc	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2008
6. Taking steps to take account of disabled peoples' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons			
37.	Consider completing minor adaptations without the need of an Occupational Therapist referral	Head of Property Investment	December 2008
38.	Make sure that the repairs service understands and identifies where disabled people have special requirements and alters its repair priorities accordingly	Head of Customer Contact Centre	December 2009
39.	Introduce and monitor service standards for the adaptations service in consultation with disabled customers which will monitor the number and type of requests against the length of time people wait	Head of Property Investment	December 2009
40.	Create and maintain an adapted property register and make sure that when these properties become empty they are let to the most suitable applicant	Head of Neighbourhood Services	December 2009
41.	Maintain the Garden Assistance Scheme	Head of Property Investment	Ongoing
42.	Make sure all disabled applicants meeting short listing criteria are interviewed	Head of Human Resources and Communications	Ongoing
43.	Make sure employees have a discussion with their line manager on at least an annual basis to discuss their individual needs and whether these have changed	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2009
44.	Work in partnership with relevant organisations to make use of positive action schemes for employment within Shoreline	Head of Human Resources and Communications	December 2010
45.	Make sure any specialist equipment / reasonable adjustments needed due to disability are provided as quickly as possible	Equality and Diversity Group	December 2008

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