



# Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan - December 2007-2010

*Registered Office:* 10 Coopers Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5TE  
Tel (01702) 462246, Fax (01702) 616716

*Chair:* Ken Johnson *Chief Executive:* Paul Durkin  
Housing Corporation Register No L3535, Registered under the  
Industrial & Provident Societies Act 1965 No 23240R

# CONTENTS

Foreword – Paul Durkin, Chief Executive	page 2
The Disability Equality Scheme	page 3
The Current Context	page 4
Legal and Regulatory Duties	page 5
Disability in the UK	page 5
Social Model of Disability	page 6
Involvement	page 7
Impact assessment of policy and procedure	page 8
The Disability Equality Action Plan	page 9
Outcome one	pages 10-11
Outcome two	page 12
Outcome three	page 13

### Outcome Area 3: That our construction, maintenance, and improvements programs are inclusive

Information and analysis requirement	Evidence available	Barriers	Key Tasks	Timing
New developments have an access statement and are reviewed to evaluate success.	Access strategy.	No current involvement structures.	Set standards and develop monitoring tool.	6mths
Major repairs and refurbishment programs have access statements and standards built into project criteria.	Access audit.	No current involvement structures.	Set standards and develop monitoring tool.	6mths
Ensure repair satisfaction is equal.	Satisfaction surveys.	Existing software does not allow for comparison.	Audit repair satisfaction.	6mths
Ensure access issues including colour (visual problems), lighting, door widths are addressed using best practice guidance and with tenant involvement.			Develop checklist for access issues.	6mths
Ensure aids and adaptations are timely and meet the person's needs.			Set standards and develop monitoring tool.	6mths
Ensure that partnership working with other agencies enabling aids and adaptations to be provided is satisfactory.	Revised policy and procedure with partners identified.		Undertake satisfaction audit.	6mths

### “Welcome to our first Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

Estuary Housing Association is committed to the provision of good quality housing care and support services to meet local needs and contribute to the development of sustainable communities. Therefore, we are pleased to take this opportunity to demonstrate how we will be working to improve our service delivery performance and promote disability equality.

We will be focussing on three key areas; customer services; employment, governance and our buildings.

We will ensure that when we deliver services we will always consider how we can meet the diverse needs of disabled people.

This is our first scheme and we hope that through further development of it we will be able to develop our understanding of people's needs and aspirations and challenge our own performance.

We look forward to committed involvement and the development of good practice.”

Paul Durkin  
Chief Executive



# Estuary Housing Association - Disability Equality Scheme

Estuary Housing Association is committed to the provision of good quality housing and care and support services to meet local needs and to contribute to the development of sustainable communities. This vision places the organisation firmly in the sector where there is a strong focus on accessible and relevant service delivery. A co-ordinated focus on ensuring that service delivery and improvement makes a positive difference to people with a disability will deliver outcomes that will help to improve the performance of the whole organisation.

The Housing Corporation requires Housing Associations to produce an action plan to address disability equality. Estuary Housing Association has undertaken to produce a Disability Equality Scheme alongside its action plan in order to provide a context to the action plan.

A Disability Equality Scheme is a plan that shows how an organisation will promote disability equality. Promoting disability equality means that the organisation looks at the services it provides to make sure that these meet the needs of disabled people better.

This is our first Disability Equality Scheme. It is intended to be a dynamic document that co ordinates the work of the organisation in relation to disability. Therefore, once a year, following consultation, progress against the actions, revised targets and plans for improvement will be published. The review will be undertaken in light of the evidence we have collected, our progress towards our targets and our developing experience and knowledge. It is hoped that this process of consultation and review will allow the scheme to develop further. Critical to the success of the scheme and its continued development will be the involvement of disabled people.

*The scheme will focus on improving our services in three key areas:*

- Customer services; all services provided to all our customers.

## Outcome Area 2: That our employment practices and governance are inclusive

	Information and analysis requirement	Evidence available	Barriers	Key Tasks	Timing
Ensure disabled employees and tenants are involved in participation structures.	Disabled tenants and employees involved in all forums.	Turnaround Team collated information.	Meeting venues, times etc. Lack of information on customers to identify gaps.	Revise meetings criteria and checklist. Review composition of all current groups tenant and employee. Identify barriers to participation and plan to address each one.	6mths
Ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for employees.	Number of requests, number of adjustments made, satisfaction with outcomes.	Information available on numbers of disabled employees. Case evidence of adjustments made.		Develop policy on the treatment of reasonable adjustment. Develop monitoring tool regarding reasonable adjustment.	6mths
Training is provided for employees and Board in disability awareness.	Training requirements. Training provided.	Customer care training including race and disability awareness training provided.		Impact assessment of training outcomes.	12mths

**Outcome Area 1: That all services provided to our customers meet their needs and are accessible**

Information and analysis requirement	Evidence available	Barriers	Key Tasks	Timing
Ensure that satisfaction levels are equal.	Satisfaction levels. Customer complaints.	Lack of recording of disability needs. Low return of customer satisfaction surveys.	Develop monitoring system to collate information.	6mths
Ensure equal access to information.	Requests for alternative communication.	Cost implications of alternative formats for information.	Review of literature against plain English standards. Review of website design / good practice – accessibility.	6mths
Ensure that harassment is dealt with effectively.	Case examples.	Lack of clear definitions in procedure leading to difficulties in extracting data required.	Review case outcomes. Review policy and practice.	6mths

- Employment and governance; our practices as an employer and how we include people in running the organisation.
- Buildings; construction, maintenance, improvements, access.

We aim, through developing the scheme and implementing the action plan, to take note of priorities, develop our understanding of people’s needs and aspirations and challenge our own performance.

**The Current Context**

*Estuary Housing Association is committed to a policy of equality, inclusion and accessibility in the delivery of its services and in the employment opportunities afforded to existing and future employees.*

An equal opportunities policy has been developed with disability forming a part of this policy. Partnership working with Linked Employment has been developed and currently four people have been employed. Reasonable adjustments in working conditions are considered and implemented.

*The Association fully recognises the diversity of cultural, religious and individual abilities of its tenants, service users and employees.*

Information is collected and collated about the diversity of staff and tenants. Tenants Associations are encouraged. The Board has two tenant representatives. A Turnaround Team made up of members of the organisation and tenants meets regularly to promote and provide opportunities for involvement in making service improvements. Staff training in customer care and in working with people that are diverse in cultural and religious beliefs and have different abilities is ongoing.

*The Association is active in ensuring that any potential sources of discrimination are addressed in both the physical attributes of the buildings it manages and in the management practices and procedures it adopts.*

Anti-social behaviour and harassment procedures based on good practice have been developed and implemented. An audit of buildings and facilities has been undertaken and work is ongoing to ensure access standards are developed and met.

*Estuary Housing Association is committed to ensuring that the facilities it*

provides, uses and manages afford its tenants, service users and employees the opportunity to maximise their individual abilities and enjoy safe and, wherever possible, independent participation.

The Association provides care and support services to over 200 people with learning disabilities and over 100 people living in sheltered housing places. Services users are consulted on their satisfaction with services and on actions being taken to improve services. The tenant involvement strategy is currently being revised to ensure that disabled people have more say in the development of services. Some service users have been trained in interviewing techniques and are involved in recruitment.

## Legal and Regulatory Duties

Estuary Housing Association has both a legal and regulatory duty to ensure that equality and diversity is central to all areas of our work.

The main statutory requirements can be found in:

- Equal pay act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976 and Amendment Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Race Relations 1976 (amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 4
- Equality Act 2006

## Disability in the UK

There are over 10 million disabled people in Britain of which, 4.6 million are over state pension age and 700,000 are children.

42% of social housing households contain a person with a disability or long term illness (MORI/Housing Corporation 2001).

### Outcome Area 1: That all services provided to our customers meet their needs and are accessible

	Information and analysis requirement	Evidence available	Barriers	Key Tasks	Timing
Assess all policies, practices, processes, procedures. Identify gaps in good practice and assess for accessibility.	Gap analysis and action/implementation plan.	Employment policy and procedure recently updated regarding good practice. Selection and allocations policy recently revised. Service guarantee's produced. Aids and adaptations' procedure revised.	Timescales- long process with need for time commitment from residents.	Application of HC impact assessment screening tool to all customer service areas.	18mths
Understand our customer's needs and aspirations.	Data base of communication requirements and disability needs.	Baseline communication requirements information obtained, survey information available, STATUS survey information available.	Lack of information on customer base within general needs. No current mechanism for recording and monitoring disability statistics.	Develop data base. Develop system to demonstrate the use of information to inform decision making.	12mths 6mths
Ensure offices are accessible and that landlord duties are met.	Accessibility audit. Complaints audit. Gap analysis - requests for aids and adaptations and spend.	Accessibility audit. Access statement.	Lack of clarity about allocation of budgets. IT system cannot flag and extract data.	Develop data base. Determine allocation of response maintenance and planned maintenance. Determine plan for future spend.	12mths

## The Disability Equality Action Plan

The Disability Equality Action Plan is focussed on the three key areas of: customer services; employment and governance and buildings. These are the areas that residents have told us they are interested in being more involved in.

The Action Plan outlines: what we want to achieve; what information we need; what information we already have available; what may stop us from achieving our aim; what are the key things we need to do and when we need to do them.

The Action Plan will be updated on a regular basis based on feedback from disabled people. The Action Plan will be updated on an annual basis based on our improved understanding of people's needs, increased involvement of disabled people and the success of our current action plan.

The level of disability increases with age: 13% of those aged 20-29 years have a current long-term disability or health problem compared with 31% of those aged 50-59 years (Labour Force Survey 2005).

26% of UK employees are over the age of 50 (Labour Force Survey 2005).

30% of disabled working-age adults live in poverty, twice the rate for their non –disabled counterparts (New Policy Institute 2005).

A quarter of disabled people say that they have experienced hate crime or harassment. This number rises to 47% of people with mental health conditions (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2005).

Nine out of ten families with disabled children have problems with their housing (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit 2005).

In 2004-05 18% of housing associations new tenancies in general needs housing was held by households where there was at least one member with a disability.

The 2003-04 English Housing Survey found that 23% of disabled adults are living in unsuitable housing.

Disabled people are less likely to own their own homes and are twice as likely to be social housing tenants (Disability Rights Commission - Changing Britain for Good).

## Social Model of Disability

Estuary Housing Association has adopted the social model of disability which has been developed by people with a disability.

The basis of the model is that people with impairments are disabled by physical and social barriers. This is in contrast with the medical model which says that disabled people are unable to participate in society as a result of their impairment.

The aim of applying such a model is to understand and dismantle the barriers which exclude and limit the life chances of disabled people.

In applying this model of disability it is important to note the following definitions:

### ***Disability***

A person is considered to be disabled if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

### ***Impairment***

Impairment covers physical or mental impairments and includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing.

### ***Mental impairment***

Mental impairment covers a wide range of impairments relating to mental functioning including those that are often known as learning disabilities

### ***Substantial adverse effect***

A substantial adverse effect is something which has more than a trivial effect. The requirement that an effect must be substantial reflects the general understanding of disability as a limitation going beyond the normal difference in ability that may exist between people.

### ***Long term***

Long term effect of impairment is one which: has lasted at least 12 months; where the total period for which it lasts is likely to be at least 12 months or is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

## **Involvement**

Estuary Housing Association believes that effective involvement leads to achieving positive outcomes for residents and the Association. The key outcomes we seek from resident involvement are:

- The enhancement of skills, confidence and quality of life of our residents
- Improved services for our residents
- Enhancement of our accountability to residents and local communities
- To strengthen the governance of the organisation.

Feedback obtained from residents via our satisfaction surveys have shown that people want to be involved in: estate management, dealing with anti-social behaviour, repairs and maintenance planning development and governance. We do not have information that specifically relates to the areas of involvement required by people with a disability.

A number of initiatives are in place and are being developed to ensure that representation by disabled people is proportionate and appropriate.

A number of groups have been formed to encourage people to be involved: a Turnaround Team who plan improvements to the service based on the results of surveys, impact assessments and customer feedback, Service Advisory Panels who are consulted about services, policies and procedures and Estate/Block /Street representatives who liaise with us about their areas and have the opportunity for involvement in estate inspections.

## **Impact assessment of policy and procedure**

Embedding disability equality into the culture and responses of an organisation is a difficult process to manage and evidence. However, one of the key recommendations by the Disability Rights Commission to assist in the embedding of disability equality into the policies, procedures and activities of an organisation is to systematically undertake disability impact assessments.

The aim of disability impact assessments is to ensure that any activity undertaken does not disadvantage in any way; either intentionally or not. Where an assessment does identify, a barrier or disadvantageous impact or missed opportunity to make things better then the organisation needs to identify the action to remedy the error and/or the action to make the most of the opportunity.

Estuary Housing Association will be undertaking an equality and diversity impact assessment that will ensure that all policies, procedures and activities are reviewed in a systematic way. Disabled people will be involved in the process and the results and actions will be consulted upon and the outcomes will be reported.