

# **Disability Equality Scheme**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) is committed to promoting Equality and valuing Diversity. RBH aims to improve community wellbeing throughout the borough of Rochdale, deliver a value-for-money service and enable tenants views to be heard.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing recognises that people who provide and use its services come from many diverse backgrounds, with different experiences and needs. This policy aims to ensure that no-one receives less favourable treatment because of race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, cultural background, sex, sexuality, disability, domestic circumstances, illness, age, employment status, membership of trade unions or political beliefs. RBH also acknowledges that some people experience more than one form of discrimination.

At present disabled people do not have the same opportunities or choices as non-disabled people. Nor do they enjoy equal respect or full inclusion in society on an equal basis. The poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers.

RBH will remove barriers that obstruct disabled people and will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. RBH, like other public authorities, when carrying out our functions, will:

- 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 persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

In particular RBH will:

- Seek to meet the needs of disabled people
- Develop mechanisms to facilitate consultation with groups representing disabled people
- Provide resources for adaptations and publicise adaptations to council properties to reach all those entitled to assistance.
- Investigate and take appropriate action on all reported cases of harassment against disabled people.
- Wherever possible, alter offices to make them more accessible for disabled people.
- Provide regular training to all relevant staff on disability issues.
- Communicate with disadvantaged groups through appropriate means, e.g. translated material, audiotapes, videotapes, braille and computer disks.
- Set targets for staff recruitment of disabled people and provide adaptations to the workplace where necessary.
- We will challenge discrimination
- We will improve disabled access to communal areas on our estates
- We will ensure all residents of sheltered schemes can access communal areas

- We will make best use our computer systems and share information with other service providers in order to make our services more responsive for disabled persons

Equality for disabled people may mean treating them 'more favourably'. This underlines the fact that equality of opportunity cannot be achieved simply by treating disabled and non-disabled people alike.

### **Rochdale Council's Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan**

We will work closely with Rochdale Council to support its Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan

### **Disability Impact Assessments**

Our Equality Impact Assessments have incorporated disability issues since September 2005.

### **Disability Equality Action Plan**

The Disability Equality Action Plan is incorporated into our Equality Action Plan.

### **The Involvement of Disabled People in the Development of the Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan**

The scheme and the plan have been developed based on survey feedback from disabled persons.

We have worked with Rochdale and District Disability Action Group (RADDAG) to develop the scheme and plan. RBH's Tenants' Disability Working Group have also been consulted about the scheme.

### **Tenants', Employees' and Customers' Profiles**

#### **Census 2001**

30% of the population living in RBH managed properties had a limiting long term illness compared to only 17% of owner occupiers (and 18% of the national population).

#### **Tenant Satisfaction survey 2005**

In answer to the questions:

'Do you (or a household member) have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity?'

56% answered 'yes'.

'Does anyone in your household use a wheelchair? 7% answered 'yes'.

'If you have such an illness or disability, does this limit your activities in any way?' 47% answered 'yes'.

#### **RBH Employees 2006**

Currently 4.5% of RBH's employees have self declared disabled.

### **Adaptations for tenants of RBH managed properties**

Adaptations are managed on RBH's behalf by the Council's team, which deals with adaptations to non-council properties as well. The adaptations budget for 2006/7 is £900,000.

## Waiting times

Sometimes, customers may have to wait months for an assessment by an OT before the referral comes to RBH (sent directly to the Council).

The Council aims to visit within 4 weeks for the major adaptations and following that visit, we aim to have a technical officer or architect visit for the next stage within 4 weeks of the initial visit. We generally achieve 100% on the initial visit, unless the customer is in hospital, or we are unable to get in touch with them to arrange a visit.

The average timescale from the Council receiving a referral to the adaptation being completed is approx 6 months. This takes into account properties where only a stairlift is fitted, which can be turned around in the space of a couple of weeks, through to major extensions (especially for children), which can take 12 – 18 months.

## Satisfaction levels

On completed adaptations in 2005/06, the overall satisfaction level was that over 90% felt that their overall satisfaction with the adaptations process was Excellent or Good, with only 2% feeling that it was poor.

### Completed Adaptations 05/06

Minor adaptations (under £1,000)  
475

Major adapts (over £1,000)  
236

### Completed adapts Apr 06 – Nov 06

Minor adaptations (under £1,000)  
111

Major adapts (over £1,000)  
152

### Adapts outstanding as at 7 Dec 06

Minor adaptations (under £1,000)  
137

Major adapts (over £1,000)  
276

## Asset management

During the 3-year Raising the Standard programme whilst providing decent homes we carried out just over £1 million of adaptations. This minimised inconvenience to tenants requiring adaptations by removing the need for two sets of works. We will take this approach to any similar works.

## Annual Reporting

Each year we will publish a report on our progress against the action plan, our delivery against our commitments in the scheme. We will update the information about disability held by RBH.

## Revisions of the Disability Equality Scheme

During the next 12 months we expect to make improvements to the scheme as we share best practice with other ALMOs and other public bodies. The production of the annual report is also likely to lead to changes to the scheme.

## Publishing the Scheme

The scheme will be available from all RBH offices and on the website. The scheme and action plan will be made available in accessible formats.

### **Complaints or Comments**

Should you have a complaint about this policy or about a failure to implement this policy please do so at any housing office or write to:

Complaints Co-ordinator  
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing  
PO Box 69, The Old Post Office  
The Esplanade  
Rochdale OL16 1AE.

Should you wish to:

- comment on this policy
- suggest improvements
- join RBH's Disability Working Group

please contact  
Equality, Diversity & Support Manager  
PO Box 69, The Old Post Office  
The Esplanade  
Rochdale OL16 1AE.

E mail [rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk](mailto:rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk)  
Telephone 01706 273830