



# Westlea Housing Disability Equality Scheme 2008-2011



## Foreword

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54% of our residents consider themselves to have a disability. Meeting their needs is important to us. We fully welcome and support the Housing Corporation's guidance that we should have a disability equality scheme in place, not least because it gives us the chance to build on the work we have already done in this area.

Involving people with disabilities has been a vital part of putting this scheme together, and we would like to thank all those people who took the time to tell us what they think or give us their advice.

One of our strengths is that we have got a popular Disability Forum, where residents with disabilities can meet socially to tell us about issues which are important to their housing situation. We pay towards an occupational therapist and work closely with our residents to help them get the aids and adaptations that they need.

But we know we can always do better, and we are fully committed to listening to feedback from our disabled residents, and using it to shape our services. This scheme sets out how we are going to do this across the following four areas.

- Living in our homes
- Getting the right home and support
- Anti-social behaviour and harassment
- Customer care

We also have a role to play as an employer, and we want to support disabled people who work or want to work for us, and employees who become disabled during their employment. We have accreditation to show our commitment in this area, but again, we can do better.

In this scheme, we have included a three-year action plan to show how we are going to improve our services. Each year, we will report back to residents and staff on our progress, to show that we have listened to and acted on what they have told us.

Ann Cornelius  
Executive Director (Operations)

## Thanks

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We would like to thank everyone who gave their time to help us put this scheme together, but especially the following.

- Our resident working group – Rod Case, Susan Simmons, Penny Taylor, Bev Taylor, Lizzie Lewer, Sandie Hibbins and Paul Jones



- Our Disability Forum
- Working for Opportunities
- The Shaw Trust
- Jobcentre Plus
- Wiltshire and Swindon Users' network
- Our e-mail 'readers'

## Definition of disability

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We generally define disability in the same way as the Disability Discrimination Act (2005). In plain English, this definition is as follows.

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental condition which has a long-term (at least 12 months) negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

However, we ask our residents and employees to decide whether they feel that they have a disability.

**Normal day-to-day activities** are things that most people do fairly often.

They include being able to:

- move around;
- use your hands to do things;
- go to the toilet;
- lift and carry everyday objects;
- see, hear and speak;
- remember things;
- learn and understand;
- relate to and communicate with other people; or
- know when something is dangerous.

They don't include things like playing a musical instrument or playing professional sport, which not everyone can do.

### What is included?

The definition of disability includes the following.

- Physical conditions that mean you need to use a mobility aid (for example, a wheelchair or walking frame)
- Mental conditions such as depression or bipolar disorder
- Learning difficulties such as dyslexia
- Sensory problems such as being blind or deaf
- Long-term illnesses such as cancer, HIV or AIDS and multiple sclerosis

### What isn't included?

There are some conditions that, on their own, do not count as disabilities. These are as follows.

- Wearing glasses or contact lenses
- Genetic conditions where you carry the gene for a condition but are not suffering any ill effects (if the condition means that you cannot carry out normal day-to-day activities then it is included)
- Being addicted to alcohol, drugs or cigarettes
- Hay fever
- Having a tendency to commit criminal offences

## What do we know about our disabled residents?

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Our tenants' survey 2007 showed that 54% of our residents feel that they have a disability or long-term illness of some kind (this figure was the same in 2006). Of these people, 84% say that their disability limits the range of activities they can do, and 48% use a mobility aid (for example, a walking stick). We know that these figures are likely to increase as our residents get older.

In 2007, residents with disabilities were more satisfied with our service than other residents were (87% satisfaction compared to 84%). Also, 28% of residents with disabilities feel that our services have improved over the last year, compared to 25% of other residents. And 88% of all residents (whether they have a disability or not) are satisfied with their accommodation.

In terms of the information we hold about individual tenants on our housing management system, the percentages of tenancies where a specific disability is recorded against them are as follows.

- Partially sighted – 3%
- Blind – 0.2%
- Partially deaf – 5.2%
- Deaf – 1%
- Wheelchair user – 3.6%
- Uses a mobility aid – 7.3%
- Has a medical condition – 5.2%

We know that there are gaps in the information we hold about individual tenants, and we are trying to improve this. We carried out a survey of specific needs in 2006 so that we could put disability information on our system. It also allowed us to act on a range of requests for extra help.

It is part of our action plan to collect the information we do not have once we have our new ICT system in place.

### Satisfaction with adaptations

Of 47 satisfaction surveys we got back between May 2006 and May 2007:

- 96% said that they were happy with the equipment or adaptations we have provided;
- 100% said that the equipment or adaptation meets their needs;
- 89% thought that the contractors were good;
- 94% thought our staff were good;
- 94% thought the occupational therapist service was good;
- 83% thought North Wiltshire District Council were good;
- 86% thought that the quality and finish were good (the other 14% thought it was fair); and
- 21% of people think that they will definitely need more adaptation work in the future.

Of the people who said how long they had waited for their work, 77% had waited less than one year and 23% over one year. Government guidance says that we should provide adaptations in under one year, so there is some work to do to make sure that we provide all adaptations in this timescale.

## Complaints

The information we get back from residents who make a complaint shows that about 52% of the 21 people who returned forms had a disability, which is in line with the results of the tenants' survey. However, a higher percentage of people with disabilities are not satisfied with either the complaints process, or the outcome of their complaint.

<b>Satisfaction with the outcome of your complaint</b>	<b>Disabled residents</b>	<b>Other residents</b>
Very satisfied	18%	25%
Satisfied	9%	25%
Neither	36%	12.5%
Dissatisfied	0%	25%
Very dissatisfied	36%	12.5%

<b>Satisfaction with our complaints process</b>	<b>Disabled residents</b>	<b>Other residents</b>
Very satisfied	18%	37.5%
Satisfied	18%	37.5%
Neither	18%	12.5%
Dissatisfied	18%	0%
Very dissatisfied	27%	12.5%

People without disabilities tend to be more satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, and around three times more disabled people are very dissatisfied with the outcome. A similar pattern is found with satisfaction with our complaints process. We need to investigate this more closely to understand the reasons for this difference, including talking to the residents involved.

## **How we have involved people with disabilities**

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It was very important to us to make sure that when putting this scheme together we included people with disabilities. We wanted this to be real involvement – finding out what disabled people really wanted rather than writing something and then asking if they agree.

Our residents include tenants, leaseholders and shared owners. This scheme also covers our employees, those we work with and the general public.

### **Disability Forum**

We use our well-established and very popular Disability Forum to talk to disabled residents. This group meets three times a year and we planned our work to fit around these meetings so that we could involve this group as much as possible. We used the February meeting to introduce the idea of the scheme to the group and to check how people would like to be involved. We ran workshops at the June meeting to find out how we could improve our services to disabled residents. We then used the last meeting of the year, in October, to present the group with a first draft, leaving ourselves time to make any changes they suggested.

### **Disability equality steering group**

At the first Disability Forum meeting, we asked for volunteers to join a smaller group, the disability equality steering group, to help us look at the scheme in more detail and to make sure they thought that we were doing the right thing. It was a really useful way to get more ideas, and to make us think about different ways of doing things.

The group included people with a range of disabilities, including people with experience of and expertise in mental-health problems.

### **Other organisations and partners**

We also spoke to a range of voluntary organisations to ask for their advice and suggestions about improving services for residents and employees with disabilities. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to meet with us.

We pay towards the work of an occupational therapist, and this member of staff was very involved, giving us a lot of useful feedback from her work with residents.

A representative from North Wiltshire District Council also came to one of our workshops to give feedback on the process of getting aids and adaptations.

We sent draft copies of the scheme to all people involved to get their feedback before we published the scheme.

## **Staff**

We have involved staff by publicising what we were doing and asking for volunteers. We asked staff with disabilities and anyone with an interest in this area (including carers and other people with disabled friends or relatives) to come to a meeting. Thirteen people came along and gave us some useful feedback. More details of this are given in the employment section.

## **Others we wanted to involve**

We wanted to make sure that we also involved residents who:

- don't attend formal meetings;
- have mental-health problems or learning difficulties; or
- may not realise or want to admit that they have a disability.

We included information in HOME magazine and sent out surveys to residents we know are disabled. We also promoted our work in the North Wiltshire Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) e-mail bulletin, which goes to voluntary organisations across the area. From this, two residents who can't attend meetings contacted us to offer their services as 'readers'. We e-mailed them copies of the scheme to read and send us their suggestions.

However, we realised that we still weren't reaching many of our disabled residents, particularly those with mental-health problems and learning difficulties. We asked our own support workers to take questionnaires out with them when visiting clients, and to guide residents through them in an appropriate way, and to give us any feedback.

## Impact assessments

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We need to look at what we do to make sure it does not have a negative effect on disabled people and that we are not missing a chance to make a positive difference. This means that we need to carry out assessments (known as 'impact assessments') of our:

- plans, policies and procedures;
- projects;
- practices (the way we do things); and
- decisions

that have a major effect on disabled people. This will include our work to do with:

- major work and repairs;
- new housing developments;
- homelessness;
- harassment and antisocial behaviour;
- adaptations; and
- who we offer our homes to.

We have developed a way of carrying out impact assessments. It asks staff to think about the positive and negative effects of what they are doing. If there are negative effects, we must put an action plan in place to put them right. If we cannot do this, we must rethink what we are planning to do. We can also consult other organisations to find other ways to do things.

We will carry out impact assessments as part of our programme of reviewing policies, projects and services.

## Customer care

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Looking after our customers is our main priority. How we communicate with customers, and how we go about meeting their needs, is central to everything we do.

### What our residents' priorities are

At the June Disability Forum, residents told us that in terms of customer care, it would really make a difference if we:

- visited people at home;
- said whether or not we were going to do something, and when we will do it or why we won't do it;
- gave a straight answer and stuck to it;
- made it clear who they should contact and how; and
- communicated with people in the way they want us to (in writing, by phone, e-mail, text, face-to-face).

### What we do well

- 77% of you were satisfied with the outcome when you last contacted us.
- At the Disability Forum, 69% scored us 10 out of 10 for being easy to contact.

- Most of our staff have taken disability awareness training.
- We can produce all our documents in a range of formats such as on audio tape or on CD-ROM. We can also use a service called Typetalk to talk to people with hearing problems on the phone.
- We offer a 'floating support service' to offer people extra help and support in their own home.
- We work closely with residents through the Disability Forum.
- We have good relationships with disability organisations to help residents get extra help and advice.

In response to one of our residents pointing out that our standard statement offering translations and different formats was no use to people who couldn't read or understand English, we developed these logos to show people the options.



### **What we could do better**

- Improve the information that we hold about residents, to help us understand their needs.
- Communicate with residents in the way that they want us to (by phone, letter, e-mail, text or in person).
- Tell residents that they can have information in different formats.
- Make sure staff think about their work from the point of view of a disabled person.
- Hold meetings in accessible venues.
- Think and ask about what people need instead of waiting to be told.

### **How we are going to check that we are making it happen**

We will make sure that disabled residents are:

- as satisfied as other residents with all our services;
- not making more complaints than other residents (and if they are, find out why); and
- not waiting longer for any of our services than any other residents.

## Living in our homes

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We recognise that people's needs change throughout the time that they live in our homes. We need to address this in two ways – by building the right kind of homes in the first place, and by being able to change (adapt) the homes we already have to suit the people who live in them.

### What our residents' priorities are

At the June Disability Forum, our residents told us that their top priorities relating to living in their home were as follows.

- Better heating, especially in bathrooms
- Better bathrooms, providing level access showers, higher toilets and downstairs toilets
- Speeding up the aids and adaptations process
- Us keeping appointments
- More money for aids and adaptations
- More personal contact from our staff (possibly a single point of contact for disability issues)
- For us to work more closely with local councils and with customers
- For us to build the right kind of properties

### What we do well

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 88% of customers are satisfied or very satisfied with their home (according to the tenant survey 2007).</li><li>• 96% of customers are happy with the adaptations that we have provided for them.</li></ul> |
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We:

- build all our new homes to the **mobility standard** (see appendix 1 for an explanation);
- put extra money into aids and adaptations and pay towards the work of an occupational therapist;
- have dedicated staff who care about customers;
- consult residents, through a design panel, about the homes we build;
- prioritise repairs for elderly and disabled residents;
- have a low-cost 'Handy Help' service to help with small DIY jobs;
- have reviewed parking for disabled people;
- carry out small adaptations when carrying out repairs jobs (for example, fitting lever taps); and
- allow our repairs staff to make small extra adjustments to help people without having to ask us for permission.

**New homes** (see appendix 1 for a full explanation of these standards)

There are three main standards for housing for residents with disabilities.

- Mobility standard. All our new homes meet this standard, which allows most people with disabilities to live in the home.
- Lifetime Homes. This is similar to the mobility standard, with a few extra requirements. We plan to build 50% of the homes built from our next Housing Corporation funding to Lifetime Homes standard.
- Wheelchair housing. This is a specialist standard. We work with local authorities to build a few properties to this standard.

**What we could do better**

- Improve the adaptations service by making more money available for adaptations and providing a quicker service.
- Use the planned maintenance programme to make improvements such as widening pathways, providing level access to flats, and improving parking.
- Improve the way our Asset Management and Development departments work together.
- Employ a member of staff to help people through the process of applying for aids and adaptations.
- Encourage people to move into smaller homes if they live alone, to free up larger homes for families.
- Focus on ability as well as disability (what residents can do, not just what they can't do).
- Think about the whole picture for people living in our homes – not just the home, but how easy it is to park, get to public transport and use local services.

**How we will check that we are making it happen**

We will look at the following.

- The percentage of homes that we build which wheelchair users can get into and around.
- The percentage of homes that we build which are Lifetime Homes.
- The percentage of repairs that we do for residents with disabilities and how long they have to wait for them compared to other residents.
- How satisfied disabled residents are with their repairs.
- The number of requests we receive for adaptations.
- Which types of adaptation people ask for and how much they cost.
- The time we take to make adaptations.
- How satisfied residents are with the adaptations we make.

## **Getting the right home and support**

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For many people, being on our housing waiting list will be the first contact that they have with us. It is really important that we match the right person to the right home and make sure they have the support that they need.

### **What our residents' priorities are**

At the June Disability Forum, our residents told us that what they really want is:

- more time to make decisions;
- one-to-one support through the process of applying for a home and moving in (including practical help with moving);
- the right kind of home being available (for example, bungalows);
- for us to tell them what is happening at every stage of the process of providing a home and support; and
- for their home to be in good condition when they move in.

### **What we do well**

- Carry out small adaptations when we are getting a property ready for someone to move into.
- Have a good relationship with the district council, and work closely with them and other organisations such as the police, social services and other housing associations.
- Visit properties with applicants and occupational therapists to find out what the person moving in needs.
- Try very hard to match people to the right property.
- Offer a floating support service (members of staff who provide short-term help and support in residents' own homes).

### **What we could do better**

- To help us match people to the right property, make sure that we have information on which of our properties have which adaptations and are easy for wheelchair users to get into.
- Give applicants more information on the home that we are offering them and the local area.
- Offer practical help with moving house.
- Offer more help with decorating.
- Make sure that we are promoting shared ownership to disabled people.
- Focus more on what people can do than what they can't when we look at what they need.
- Offer an 'easy-read' guide to our tenancy agreement.

## **How we will check that we are making it happen**

We will look at:

- how long residents with disabilities have to wait for a home, and whether the home that they move into is suitable for their needs;
- how long residents with disabilities have to wait for adaptations or to move to a suitable home; and
- whether we are letting properties which are suitable for residents with disabilities to people who are not disabled.

## **Antisocial behaviour and harassment**

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We will not accept harassment or abuse of anybody for any reason. We are committed to tackling any incidents where people are harassed because of their disability. We also want to offer appropriate support to disabled people who are behaving, or who other people think are behaving, antisocially.

We have little feedback on this subject from our residents, but harassment can often be hidden, or people do not understand what is happening (particularly where people with learning difficulties or mental-health problems are involved). We want to use this scheme to make a public statement that this behaviour is unacceptable.

### **What we do well**

- Offer one-to-one support and personal contact.
- Put people in touch with other organisations that can give them support.
- Work well with others such as the police, social services and community mental-health teams.
- Promote independent representatives and mediation services.

### **What we could do better**

- Make a clear commitment to tackling harassment that is due to someone's disability (for example, in our harassment policy).
- Look at how we can encourage people to report harassment.
- Make sure we know when harassment is to do with disability issues.
- Make sure that victims of harassment and antisocial behaviour, and those who harass or act antisocially, are housed appropriately.
- Work with local organisations that might be able to offer support to the people involved.
- Make sure all staff know about 'No Secrets' (guidance on reporting abuse of vulnerable adults).

### **How we will check that we are making it happen**

We will look at:

- the number of people with disabilities we issue with antisocial behaviour warnings and measures;
- the number of these people that we refer to support services;
- the number of disabled people reporting antisocial behaviour and harassment;
- how satisfied disabled people are with how we handled their case; and
- whether we deal with all cases in the timescales that we say we will.

## Employment

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We have a positive attitude towards employing disabled people and want to do as much as we can to:

- attract more disabled applicants; and
- keep existing staff who become disabled while they are working for us.

We realise that not all employees find it easy to tell us that they have a disability, particularly a mental-health problem, as they are concerned that it will affect their employment. We want to make it clear that this is not the case.

We also want to encourage people with disabilities to join our Board of Management, particularly as we house a significant percentage of disabled residents.

### **Two ticks**

We have achieved the Positive About Disabled People 'two ticks' accreditation. This means that we will:

- interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a vacancy;
- hold a review each year with disabled staff to discuss their development and how we can best use their abilities;
- help disabled people stay in employment; and
- train our staff to be aware of the issues facing disabled people.

### **What we do well**

- Make adjustments for disabled employees so that they can do their jobs more easily (see below).
- Have a building that meets the needs of disabled people.
- Provide training to raise awareness of issues relevant to disabled people.
- Work with local disability organisations to publicise our job vacancies and get advice on what we can do better.
- Allow time off for treatment.
- Allow people to work part-time or flexibly.

### **Adjustments**

In November 2006, we won an award from the Swindon Employers' Forum on Disability for supporting the employment of disabled people. This was for setting up a mobile device that allows a member of our works team who is deaf to communicate with other members of staff by speech and text.

We've provided a number of adjustments to support a member of staff who is registered blind, including:

- magnifying equipment;

- a mobile phone and computer that can be used by speaking to them rather than using buttons or keys;
- an office phone with large buttons; and
- a part-time administrator to support the employee in their day-to-day work.

## **Training**

Staff are in the process of taking an on-line disability awareness course, covering information such as what a disability is, appropriate language to use, and reasonable adjustments that can be made. At the moment, approximately 80% of staff have taken the course. New starters are asked to finish the course within three to six months of starting to work for us. Staff who are not used to using computers were supported by having:

- time set aside for them in the IT training room; and
- sessions with help on hand.

The four District Forum officers have also taken the course, with the aim of making it available to their members. The board member with responsibility for equality issues is also due to take it shortly. This will increase their understanding and ability to carry out their role more effectively. The board have agreed to look at their training needs.

## **What we could do better**

- Offer more help and advice for managers who are supporting disabled employees at work.
- Offer more work experience and trainee posts.
- Check that our recruitment and interview processes do not disadvantage disabled people.
- Have staff and board members who promote disability issues.
- Have flexible job roles that focus on what a person can do and not what they can't, making sure that there is a good match between the needs of the job and the abilities of the disabled person.
- Make sure that employees feel able to tell us if they have a disability.

## **How we are going to check that we are making it happen**

- We will work towards our target of 12% of our staff and board members being disabled, at all levels of the company.
- We will monitor the number of reasonable adjustments that we make.
- We will check whether staff with disabilities are as satisfied with us as an employer as other staff are.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently 3.3% of staff and 8.3% of our board members are disabled.</li> <li>• In the year to September 2007, 1.9% of our job applications were from disabled applicants, and 3.1% of successful candidates were disabled.</li> <li>• Staff who consider themselves to have a disability have a satisfaction rate of 78% compared to 88% for staff who are not disabled.</li> </ul> |
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## **Action plan**

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**This plan sets out what residents with disabilities asked for, and what we will do.**

**For us to communicate with them in the way that they prefer, including more personal contact and home visits**

We will:

- during 2008, collect better information on how all residents want us to communicate with them;
- by the end of 2009, use our new computer system to make sure that we use the information we have collected to communicate better;
- by the end of 2009, make more home visits, where possible, to the people who say that they would like them;
- provide more training for staff on disability awareness, communications, hidden disabilities and sign language in the 2008/09 training plan;
- make sure our repairs staff can get disability information on their handheld computers from April 2008;
- produce an easy-read tenancy agreement by December 2008; and
- make sure meetings are held in venues that are suitable for people with disabilities (for example, venues that they can get around in and that have hearing loops).

**For us to give straight answers about what we are going to do and when**

We will:

- carry out a review of customer care by September 2008;
- by March 2008, review the reasons why disabled residents are less satisfied with how we handle complaints and make improvements; and
- have a regular slot at the Disability Forum in 2008 to let people know what is happening with planned maintenance and adaptations.

**For us to make it clear who to contact and how to do it**

We will:

- by September 2008, employ a member of staff to help people through all stages of the aids and adaptations process;
- look at how we publicise how to get in touch with us as part of our review of customer care during September 2008; and
- tell residents about other services and organisations that can provide help and support if we can't.

**For better heating**

We will:

- continue to improve heating through our Affordable Warmth Strategy, which states that we will do what we can, by 2010, to prevent our residents from not being able to afford to heat their homes properly; and

- review bathroom heating during 2008 and 2009.

### **For better bathrooms**

We will:

- review our bathroom improvement programme each year to check that it is meeting residents' needs; and
- make sure we use our planned maintenance programme to deliver the best results for people with disabilities by March 2009.

### **For a quicker aids and adaptations process**

We will:

- review our aids and adaptations service by September 2008;
- by September 2008, employ someone to help residents through every stage of the process;
- produce service standards by December 2008; and
- by December 2008, report on how long each stage of the process takes.

### **For more money for aids and adaptations**

We will:

- continue to make best use of our budget, and review how much we set aside for this area by September 2008;
- look at ways to provide more time from occupational therapists; and
- access more grant and charity funding.

### **For better liaison with the local council**

We will:

- look at this issue when reviewing the aids and adaptations process; and
- make the new member of staff employed to help with aids and adaptations responsible for working closely with the local council.

### **For us to build the right kind of properties**

We will:

- build 50% of the homes funded by the Housing Corporation to 'Lifetime Homes' standard;
- make a clear commitment to designing homes suitable for residents with disabilities;
- by March 2008, monitor the number of accessible homes that we build;
- start to hold disability reviews each year with the residents on our Design Panel by March 2008;
- use our programme of planned maintenance work to adapt existing properties to suit people with disabilities; and
- encourage people to move to smaller homes if this will free up larger homes that may be suitable for residents with disabilities.

### **For the right kind of properties to be available**

We will:

- by December 2009, improve the information that we hold on how suitable our properties are for residents with disabilities;
- start work on a Disability Housing Register in September 2008, so that we can match the right properties to the people who need them;
- promote shared ownership to disabled people, making sure that the costs involved are clear;
- look at parking and charging arrangements for mobility buggies at sheltered housing schemes, in line with our sheltered housing reviews; and
- if possible, provide level access to blocks of flats.

### **For more time to decide whether to accept a home**

We will:

- by July 2008, review how we can give people more time to make decisions while still keeping the time it takes to let a property low; and
- make it clear to people that they don't have to accept a property until they have seen it.

### **For one-to-one support through the process of applying for a home and moving in**

We will:

- by March 2008, look at how we assess the risks for disabled people moving into a property and try to make it a more positive assessment; and
- by September 2008, look at options for providing practical help with moving.

### **For homes to be in good condition when they move in**

We will:

- look at the possibility of doing more decorating work for disabled residents;
- promote the 'Handy Help' service when people move into their home; and
- when we review the service in April 2008, look at whether we can offer residents the choice of vouchers for the Handy Help service instead of decorating vouchers when they move in.

### **We want to stop people being harassed because of their disability, and help prevent antisocial behaviour that is caused by people's disabilities.**

We will:

- review our antisocial behaviour service by December 2007;
- by March 2008, look at how we can encourage people with disabilities to report harassment to us;
- by June 2008, promote the fact that we won't accept disability harassment, through HOME magazine and the Disability Forum;

- use what we know about people and the area so that we don't put people next door to each other if we know that there will be a problem; and
- by June 2009, improve how we monitor cases of harassment and antisocial behaviour.

**We want to be an employer that disabled people will want to work for.**

We will:

- by September 2008, develop an induction programme for managers who are supporting staff with disabilities;
- assess the opportunities for offering work placements to disabled people, and set a suitable annual target by September 2008;
- by April 2008, tell residents and employees who our disability champions (people who promote issues to do with disability) are; and
- check that our employment and interview processes are as open as possible for people with disabilities by April 2009.

## **Appendix 1: housing standards for disabled residents**

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There are three main standards for accessible housing – mobility standard, Lifetime Homes, and wheelchair designed.

### **1 Mobility standard**

We build all our new homes to this standard, which allows most disabled people to visit and use at least part of the home. It means that, for homes with ground-floor entrances or which are reached by a lift:

- the path to the building is flat or gently sloped, and you can get a standard wheelchair through the front door;
- doorways are wide enough for standard wheelchairs (900mm);
- there is a toilet and at least one room for living use on the same floor as the front door, with room to move a wheelchair around;
- staircases must be suitable to have a stairlift installed if one is needed; and
- switches and sockets are at an appropriate height from floor level (450mm to 1200mm).

We also have to follow the Housing Corporation's Scheme Development standards in any home that is built using money that they have given us. These standards go a little further than this.

### **2 Lifetime Homes**

This is the same as the mobility standard, except that:

- parking spaces must be wide enough for a wheelchair user to get in and out of the car;
- the downstairs toilet area should have the right drainage to allow a shower to be installed, if one is needed;
- a space must be identified for a lift to be installed, if one is needed; and
- the ceilings must be strengthened to support a hoist from the main bedroom to the bathroom.

### **3 Wheelchair designed**

This is specialist housing, where:

- wheelchair users can get into all main rooms;
- there is a downstairs bedroom and bathroom;
- the bathroom and toilet are big enough to fit a wheelchair in next to the bath and toilet; and
- the kitchen is laid out in the best way for a wheelchair user.

We build some units of wheelchair housing, with the local authority, if we know there is a need for them. However, it is important to remember that these houses are expensive to build (because they are bigger) and can only be let to people who use wheelchairs. This reduces the number of people that we can house, so we have to balance this with the needs of wheelchair users.

If you would like to have any part of this document explained or translated, or in a different format such as in larger print, in braille or on audio tape, please contact Westlea on 01249 465465 to discuss your needs.



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ISSUED: DEC 2007

