



## ***Foreword by Chair & Chief Executive***

Our Disability Equality Scheme recognises the challenge for Calico in changing and improving how we make our homes and services more inclusive to disabled people. It recognises explicitly that providing top quality housing for all groups in society is something that should drive our business forward into the future. Providing excellence and accessibility in housing and services for disabled people is a mainstream activity and not something that is a specialist service as it has so often been viewed in the past.

We hope our Disability Equality Scheme sets out our commitment clearly to improve the homes and services - and ultimately the lives - of disabled people.

**Michael Birkett**

*Chief Executive*

**Wynn McGeorge**

*Chair of Board*

# 1 Background

We are committed to equality and diversity through our approach to meeting individual needs and providing an environment that encourages people to reach their full potential.

Our Disability Equality Scheme is specifically aimed at ensuring that disabled people are not discriminated against and that our provision of housing and services is appropriate to meet the needs of disabled people. We will also ensure that our human resource policies are free from discrimination and continue to provide an employment environment which respects and responds to the needs of disabled employees.

## Definition of 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 activities'.

## Our Duty

As a housing association we have a duty under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 to promote disability equality. This scheme sets out how we will meet our duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination unlawful under the Act;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled people related to their disabilities
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other people

We have involved disabled people in developing this scheme and the action plan through our Disability Forum, Burnley's Disabled Peoples Network and a 'Breaking Down Barriers' questionnaire.

We are in the process of gathering information on the profile of our customers to help us set targets, develop our action plans, monitor and evidence progress against the plans.

We have also set out how we will assess the impact of our existing and proposed activities on disabled people through an Equality Impact Assessment Framework.

The Disability Equality Scheme (DES) includes a three year action plan and the scheme will be reviewed at the end of that period.

The Housing Corporation regulates housing associations and will monitor progress against the scheme. It expects Calico to clearly demonstrate how it is assessing and delivering services for disabled people as part of the regulatory framework.

## 2 Our Approach

Our first Disability Equality Scheme has been developed with the involvement of disabled customers, staff and Board members. We will continue to involve disabled people in the implementation of the scheme and action plans, and in future development.

### Key Principles

#### *Social Model of Disability*

We have adopted the social model of disability which takes the approach that; the poverty, disadvantage and social exclusion experienced by many disabled people is not the inevitable result of their impairment or medical conditions, but rather, stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. We will, therefore, work to identify and break down the barriers that disabled people face.

#### *Needs for Independent Living*

We are committed to the 10 Needs for Independent Living recognising that this will help remove barriers for disabled people.

#### *Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Accessible Homes*

We have made a commitment to adopt inclusive design principles throughout the asset management function and ensure appropriate wording in policies and procedures.

#### *Language and Culture*

We will develop the culture of the organisation through the use of appropriate language, training of staff and inclusion and involvement of disabled people in all aspects of the delivery and development of our homes and services.

## 3 Scope of the Disability Equality Scheme

The Disability Equality Scheme covers four function areas:

### *(i) Customer Services*

We want to improve the information we have about our disabled customers so that it helps us to understand and meet their needs.

The information we gather will be used to improve standards and services adjusted to meet disabled people's needs.

We want to remove any barriers to communication, respond to disabled people's preferred communication methods and provide information in a variety of formats.

Our front line staff need to understand the appropriate language to use through awareness raising sessions and training.

### *(ii) Asset Management*

Our Asset Management Strategy will deliver improvements in accessibility standards and remove barriers within homes and external environments.

These improvements will apply to both new developments and existing homes and establish targets in relation to Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Accessible Homes standards.

We will work with Partners and contractors to ensure they have an understanding of our requirements in relation to inclusive design.

Our Adaptations Policy will be monitored and developed further and will be linked to a new adapted properties register.

### *(iii) Employment & Governance*

Our positive approach to the employment of disabled people has resulted in a high number of employees within the workforce. We will build on this success and build good practice into all Human Resource policies and procedures.

We have a Board Member who is our Champion for Equality & Diversity issues and has specific experience in disability issues.

### *(iv) Enabling Role*

As a major employer within the local area, the largest housing association and a key player in regeneration activities we can have a major influence on other organisations and our partners. This Disability Equality Scheme demonstrates our commitment to disability issues, recognises their importance and will set standards that hopefully others will follow.

An action plan has been developed for each functional area as shown in Appendix 1.

## 3 Scope of the Disability Equality Scheme (cont.)

### Information Gathering and Communication

The census survey will provide baseline information about our customers and their needs. We will continue to gather information via the status survey, customer satisfaction and complaints monitoring, to update the census data and take account of changing needs. The baseline information we have available currently is shown in Appendix 2.

We currently collect information about our employees who self identify themselves as disabled and monitor the adaptations provided. We will continue to analyse employee information and address any issues identified.

We will publish the first Disability Equality Scheme on the web site, in the customer newsletter and make available in different formats, and provide annual updates on the progress we make against action plans.

### Impact Assessment

We will develop an Equality Impact Assessment Framework to carry out impact assessments on our current policies and procedures and in the development of new ones. The action plans will include targets which will specify intended outcomes so that the impact of the plans can be clearly measured and evidenced.

### Monitoring and Review

The action plans will be monitored on a regular basis by:

- **The Disability Forum** (6 monthly)
- **The Senior Management Team** (quarterly)
- **The Executive Team** (six monthly)
- **The Board of Management** (annually)

The Disability Equality Scheme (DES) includes a 3 year action plan which will be monitored and reviewed annually to assess progress and make any revisions that may be necessary. The DES will also be reviewed after 3 years.

### Resources

The Director of Customer Services is responsible for the Disability Equality Scheme at an Executive level within Calico to ensure that everyone is clear about the commitment the scheme carries.

The Board Champion for Equality & Diversity will also ensure that the Board provides direction and effectively monitors performance against the action plan at Board level.

A specific budget will be allocated for the promotion of the Disability Scheme and in connection with the Equality Impact Assessment.

As part of the Business Planning process we will determine the level of financial resources needed to ensure that our action plan can be completed and a programme is in place to consider options for redeveloping, remodelling and/or adapting stock as appropriate.

Appendix

# Disability Equality Scheme (DES) Action Plan

2007 - 2009

# 1 Asset Management

Board commitment to adopt design principles throughout the asset management function and ensure appropriate wording in policies and procedures including:

- Improvement Programme
- Planned maintenance
- Cyclical maintenance
- Adaptation policies and procedures
- Responsive repairs

Board to determine resource allocation to ensure future provision

## Construction Companies / Partners

Partners should be experienced and qualified in relation to the Disability Equality Duty.

Contractor/partner employees, to be trained on how to meet disabled people's needs.

## Procurement

Procurement processes and contracts should include specifications to deliver developments that meet inclusive design principles and ensure that those tendering and supplying can meet the requirements.

Work with GM Procure and Lancashire Housing Partnership to develop an approach which ensures that our Disability Equality Duty is met.

## Refurbishment

Continue to offer adaptations as standard as part of Investment Programme to improve accessibility of homes.

Monitor Investment Programme to ensure that improvements do not reduce accessibility and analyse success of schemes/adaptations.

Establish and monitor register of adapted properties.

Review communal schemes & consider options for improving accessibility, re-modelling, decommissioning etc to ensure they meet the requirements of Disability Discrimination Act and our DES.

Review Calico Headquarter facilities to examine whether any changes can be made to improve accessibility and ensure that the internal rooms have the right equipment. Consider the use of colours to help lessen the barriers to visual impairment.

## 2 Customer Services

### Training

Ensure all staff are trained to understand the DES and how they should respond to the needs of disabled people.

Ensure that internal communication between sections is effective and consistent to meet disabled people's needs.

### Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment

Review ASB and harassment policy to ensure specific mention of disability and cases related to disability support victims and are dealt with to the same degree/rigour as racial harassment.

Monitor and analyse harassment cases by disability and where any problems exist put action plans in place to address. Involve disabled people in this process.

### Lettings

As part of the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) review ensure that lettings are analysed by disability, disabled people are included in the review and that the process is accessible for disabled people.

Set targets in relation to lettings to disabled people.

Review the information provided via NROSH (National Register of Social Housing) to ensure it is accurate.

Identify properties which are most suitable for adaptation and link to disability housing register.

### Communication

Carry out an audit of current communications to ensure they meet the needs of disabled people and staff are trained in use of equipment.

- **Face to face**
- **Website**
- **Telephone**
- **Email**
- **Leaflets and publications**
- **Meeting rooms** (*hearing loops etc*)

Monitor satisfaction of disabled people via leaflets at contact points specifically measuring how disabled people have been dealt with.

Use census information provided to ensure people's preferred method of communication is flagged up. Review these needs on a regular basis.

Ensure that involvement mechanisms are inclusive, and that all ages of disabled people are able to be involved including children.

## 3 Governance & Employment

### Governance

Carry out an annual assessment of Board Members needs to ensure any changes are addressed and needs met.

Ensure that Board Members are aware of the duty in relation to DES and provide regular information to ensure they can lead/set direction.

### Employment

The current recruitment and selection process is viewed as successful as demonstrated by the % of staff classing themselves as disabled and by the Audit Commission Inspection 2004. By seeking the views and experiences of

disabled staff we can build on this success to develop/influence on other HR policies.

Review HR policies and procedures to ensure they are disability friendly and are free from barriers that are less obvious (e.g. dyslexia)

Develop a culture where mental health problems are not seen as a stigma and dialogue is encouraged – people are supported.

Continue to monitor and report on the number of people who class themselves as disabled and at what levels, and address any areas of concern.

Encourage employees to self identify at entry point and on an ongoing basis as circumstances change.

## 4 Strategies, Policies & Procedures

Carry out Disability Equality Impact Assessments on policies and procedures to ensure they comply and as a priority:

- VFM
- Rent Arrears
- ASB and Harassment
- Procurement
- Asset Management
- Lettings
- Right to Buy

Ensure that monitoring arrangements are in place to collect information relating to the above policies and disabled people, and put in

place action plans to address any issues (for example rent arrears analysed by disability).

Ensure disabled peoples' views are considered via the Disability Forum when policies are shaped and developed.

Ensure that the Policy Review Framework and Continual Improvement Framework have a mandatory element to ensure the impact on disabled people is considered.

Consider giving priority to disabled people as part of policy development/review (e.g. repairs, security, grass cutting), and link to the vulnerability policy.

## 5 The Enabling Role

Through partnership working create a relationship which means that Calico has influence and involvement in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of Burnley's housing strategy and regeneration activities.

Ensure involvement in regeneration activities is inclusive and that disabled people's needs are included as part of planning, design and the building process through effective involvement. Communications and publications (e.g. invites) are in different formats, and venues are appropriate / accessible.

As part of our role in delivering the floating support contract for Lancashire County Council, monitor the needs of disabled people, and ensure they are met in both current provision and development of the service for the future in Burnley and East Lancashire.

Consider how we can influence other agencies (e.g transport and highways) to improve the lives of disabled people in terms of their mobility/being able to get out of the house.

## 6 Monitoring & Review

We will ensure disability targets are set and monitored to measure the impact that the action plan and activities are having.

### The key actions agreed for 2007/2008

Area	Task	Completion Date
Asset Management	Board commitment to adopt inclusive design principles throughout the asset management function	December 07
	Board to determine resource allocation for future	Commitment Dec 07 Identify Budget 08/09
Procurement	Procurement processes and contracts should include specifications to deliver developments that meet inclusive design principles and ensure those tendering and supplying can meet those requirements	September 08
Governance	Assess Board Members needs to ensure any changes are addressed and needs met	March 08
	Ensure that Board Members are aware of their duty in relation to DES on an annual basis	December 07
General	Develop a framework to carry out Equality Impact Assessments	March 08
	Finalise the DES action plan to include completion dates, performance targets etc where possible	March 08

This action plan is in the early stages of development and a series of categories will be added as part of the target setting process i.e. *Completion Date, Barriers, and Performance Measures*. These will be in place by 31st March 2008.