Equality & diversity

This booklet explains how our approach to equality and diversity ensures that we are fair to everyone who has contact with us.

RICHMOND HOUSING Partnership

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Purpose

Richmond Housing Partnership is legally bound to promote equality and to eradicate discrimination – but for us, this is more than a duty. We want to make sure that we are fair to everyone who has contact with us and this leaflet outlines our approach to equality and diversity across all of our services.

Who is this leaflet aimed at?

This leaflet is aimed at all RHP customers (tenants and leaseholders), as well as organisations that we partner or contract with.

Introduction

At Richmond Housing Partnership we recognise that no two people are the same. Our approach to providing excellent services is to recognise that your personal circumstances and background will influence your needs. We aim to ensure that our services are accessible and culturally relevant for all by working in partnership with you and your wider community.

What is equality and diversity in housing?

The Equality and Human Rights Commission, the body set up to support people who face disadvantage and discrimination in the UK, states that there are 7 key personal characteristics which may result in a greater risk of facing direct or indirect discrimination and disadvantage. They are:

- Race - especially coming from an ethnic minority.
- Gender - especially, although not exclusively, being female
- Age - especially being young or being older.
- Disability.
- Sexual orientation - especially being gay, lesbian or bisexual.
- Having religious or philosophical beliefs - particularly people with minority beliefs such as Muslims, Hindus and Humanists.
- Having caring responsibilities - for children, older people or disabled people.

Research has shown that people who experience discrimination or disadvantage are often in more than one of these groups and are also much more likely to experience poverty which may mean they find it harder to buy their own home or afford private sector rents.

Our approach to supporting equality and diversity

As a social housing provider, one of our core aims is to support equality of access to housing for those in the greatest housing need, ensuring that your home improves your quality of life. However, we recognise that sometimes it is difficult for individuals to communicate their needs or to get effective support - especially if they have experienced discrimination in the past.

With this in mind, we take a proactive approach to ensuring that all our services are responsive to the needs of key groups and individuals. We do this by developing a three-yearly Single Equality Scheme in partnership with residents, which outlines our approach to service improvement for all people at risk of discrimination and disadvantage. The Single Equality Plan is revised on an annual basis (in support of the Scheme) and can be downloaded from our website or posted to you in a variety of formats on request.

The single equality scheme is based on a number of key principles:

(1) We know our communities

In order to address the needs of key groups and individuals we need to know the make-up of our local communities and how they are changing over time. We continually seek to map out our communities' needs by:

- Collecting information on the needs, preferences and personal circumstances of our residents
- Listening to what our residents tell us through our complaint procedure
- Learning from the experiences of other organisations

(2) We challenge ourselves

We recognise that sometimes the way that services are designed may have unintentional negative impacts on particular individuals or groups. We therefore undertake an internal Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of every service and policy that we develop. An EIA is a process where services are rigourously assessed by an equality and diversity expert to ensure that all potential negative impacts are removed at the outset.

(3) We involve residents in the design of our services

We know that you know best, so we work in a wide variety of ways to enable customers to influence the design and management of our services. Activities range from simply speaking to your Customer Liaison Officer right up to becoming a paid member of our board. We are particularly keen to work with disabled residents to ensure that we deliver services and develop housing which meets your needs. To find out more about how you can get involved contact Carl Byrne, Community Development Manager at carl.byrne@rhp.org.uk. You can pick up a copy of our resident involvement leaflet at an RHP office or request a copy via our Freephone number 0800 0322 433. You can also download it form our website.

(4) We measure the experiences of different groups who use our services

To ensure that our services are meeting the needs of all key groups we undertake quarterly satisfaction surveys with both tenants and leaseholders. We use this information to see if there are any trends to suggest that we need to improve how we deliver a service to a particular group of people.

(5) We communicate in lots of different ways

We know that poor communication is one of the key barriers to getting the most out of a service. To support the communication needs of all our residents we use a wide range of methods including audio tapes, Braille, large print text and home visits. We also have an external translation service for people for whom English is not a first language and have 39 staff able to provide ad hoc interpreting services in a wide range of languages. We also seek to ensure that wherever we meet residents face to face we use disability friendly venues.

If you would like to know more about the different ways that you can receive information from RHP please contact Eddie Kelly, Communications Manager, on 020 8404 5414 or at eddie.kelly@rhp.org.uk

(6) We make sure our staff have the right training

Our staff are our biggest asset and the main point of contact for all our services. We therefore seek to support you by ensuring that all our staff, no matter where they work in RHP, are aware of the key issues faced by people at risk of discrimination and disadvantage.

- All staff joining RHP attend equality and diversity induction training.
- We run annual refresher training in the principles of equality and diversity
- All our managers attend equality impact assessment training.
- Key staff undergo specialist training in areas such as welfare, benefits, and the Disability Discrimination and Race Relations Acts.
- We offer training to our key partners – particularly those involved in repairs, maintenance or grounds maintenance

(7) We set targets for improvement

We want to ensure that all groups are accessing our services equally, so we set service targets to promote better equality of access. Our targets are based on the objective of achieving proportional access for all the groups that live in our communities.

(8) We walk the talk

In addition to being an equality aware housing provider we also want to be an equality aware employer. We believe that a diverse workforce is more able to understand and support the needs of our customers. In a recent survey we found that many of our staff are from an ethnic minority, have some form of disability or have dependent care responsibilities. In order to support all our staff to maximise their potential whilst achieving good work-life balance we:

- Regularly survey staff to find out their needs
- Proactively support disabled people working, or wanting to work, for us
- Consult staff over changes to working practices through our Joint Consultative Committee
- Offer flexible approaches to work including the options of part-time and home working wherever possible
- Have family-friendly policies to help staff manage their dependent care responsibilities
- Are working towards becoming a London Living Wage employer, ensuring that all our staff receive rates of pay that reflect the higher costs of living in Richmond

(9) We pass it on

We recognise that we have a responsibility to encourage all of our partners and contractors to support the same aims and objectives for promoting equality and diversity. We expect our subcontractors to meet the same standards that we require of our own staff and services. We ensure that this happens by building in contractual obligations which require them to undertake equality training, assess their service design processes, and treat their staff fairly. Our decisions to contract with particular providers are also influenced by their track records and proactivity in promoting equality and diversity.

Promoting equality and diversity

Over the years we have developed a number of services directly targeted at supporting specific groups of people that we know face exclusion and discrimination. These activities seek to create equality of opportunity and to directly address the consequences of discrimination, including poverty, loneliness and ill health.

Urban Academy – Urban Academy is a programme aimed at supporting young people living in RHP properties to access free sport and creative activities. The programme currently works with 300 young people across Richmond and Hounslow, enabling many of them to gain new skills and move into work.

Urban Plus – Urban Plus is a new programme to extend access to sport and recreational activities to the over 24s. It actively encourages intergenerational activities to break down stereotypes of young people and older people. Urban Plus seeks to help people build friendships within their communities, stimulating better physical and mental health.

To find out more about Urban Academy or Urban Plus please contact:

Bertie Morse,
Urban Academy Project Manager
bertie.morse@rhp.org.uk
Freephone 0800 0322 433

Community Development Workers - RHP currently employs four community development workers who are based in Butts Farm, Heathfield, Ham and Hampton. We also work in partnership with community development workers in Mortlake and Castelnau.

The community development workers partner with local residents to find solutions to the needs of the local area. Many estates have developed drop-in and support meetings for parents, providing valuable support to people who are often isolated or coping with the challenge of raising children alone.

Our community development workers provide a vital service, offering information to all residents to access wider support including: benefit and money advice, access to training and employment and social activities.

To find out more about our community development workers please contact:

Caroline Hand
Community Development Manager
caroline.hand@rhp.org.uk
Freephone 0800 0322 433

Aids and adaptations

We work in partnership with Richmond and Hounslow Borough councils to support residents who may need adaptations made to their home in order to live more independently. This can range from something as small as a hand rail up to installing an adapted kitchen or stair lift. If you need an adaptation to your home, financial support may well be available even if you are a leaseholder.
To find out more take a look at our aids and adaptations leaflet, contact your customer liaison officer or call your local authority:

Richmond upon Thames Borough Council
Disabled Facilities Grant
020 8891 7436

Hounslow Borough Council
Disabled Facilities Grant
020 8583 3303

Accessibility

At RHP we are committed to a policy of equal access to all of our information. If you would like this booklet supplied in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, on audio tape or in another language, please contact us on **0800 0322 433**, send an email to **communications@rhp.org.uk** or write to us at the address below.

Albanian	Sipas kërkesës, ky dokument gjithashtu gjendet edhe në gjuhë të tjera, me shkrim të madh dhe në formë dëgjimore.
Arabic	هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.
Bengali	এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধে পাওয়া যায়।
Farsi	این مدرک همچنین بنا به درخواست به زبانهای دیگر، در چاپ درشت و در فرمت صوتی موجود است.
Gujarati	આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.
Hindi	अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है
Polish	Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formacie audio.
Punjabi	ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਰਾਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
Somali	Waxaa kale oo lagu heli karaa dokumentigaan luqado kale, daabacaad ballaaran, iyo cajal duuban haddii la soo waydiisto.
Urdu	درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

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