

Equality for Disabled People

Trans-Pennine Housing Disability Equality Scheme Summary Version

This document is available on our websites
www.ph2k.org.uk or www.greenvalehomes.co.uk

Also available:

- **Summary Version**

- **Easy Read booklet**

If you need a copy of this document translating or in larger print, Braille, audio tape or by email, please contact any Pennine Housing or Green Vale Homes office.

If you would like to make any comments about our Disability Equality Scheme or would like to be invited to any future Involvement Events, then please contact either:

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1. Introduction

Trans-Pennine Housing works hard to make sure that our homes and services are right for our disabled customers. However, we aren't perfect! So we want to continue improving our services for disabled people. We therefore need to come up with an action plan which spells out:

- What we need to improve
- How we are going to do it
- What checks need to be put into place to make sure the changes happen

BUT.....before being able to decide what improvements need to be made to our homes and services, it is really important that we know what **disabled people** think needs changing. Then we can make sure that the things that matter to disabled people are included into our plans of action.

“Do nothing for us without us”

That's what disabled people tell Organisations like Trans-Pennine Housing.

Disabled people also say that we need to change the way we think about disabilities. Traditionally, we think about disabilities as a “*medical problem*” to be

cured or dealt with. We think about disabled people as having “*special needs*” who need “*special housing*”. In actual fact, disabled people are ordinary people, with individual needs. It is society that disables them by putting up barriers. For example:

- buildings that are difficult to get in and out of
- homes that are difficult to manage in
- inflexible policies
- discriminatory attitudes

So, by changing the way we think about disabled people, this will help us improve what we do for disabled people.

Getting it right for disabled customers will also help us get it right for all our other customers too.

We also need to make sure that Trans-Pennine’s Disability Action Plan reflects the local situation. So any issues that are specific to disabled customers in Calderdale, Sheffield or Rossendale, will be reflected in the Trans-Pennine Action plan.

2. The Law

For quite a few years, the Government has been trying to make sure that disabled people are not

discriminated against. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was brought into place to help tackle discrimination in 1995.

However, the Government realises that disabled people still don't always have an equal chance. They say that more needs to be done to give disabled people that ***equality of opportunity***.

So, in December 2005, the Government amended the Disability Discrimination Act. This placed a new duty on *public sector organisations* called the **Disability Equality Duty**. It expects public sector organisations like schools, Councils and Health Trusts to promote equality and, if necessary, treat disabled people more favourably.

Although Trans-Pennine Housing is not classed as a public sector organisation, we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people. The Housing Corporation, who regulates us, also expects us to do this.

There are 2 main parts to the **Disability Equality Duty**:

1st Part - General Duty

This says that organisations need to:

1. promote equality for disabled people
2. promote positive attitudes about disabilities
3. Eliminate harassment
4. Eliminate discrimination
5. Take steps to meet a disabled person's needs, even if it means favourable treatment
6. Encourage disabled people to get involved

2nd Part - Specific Duty

To achieve these 6 aims, organisations are expected to:

- Produce a **Disability Equality Scheme (DES)**
- Involve disabled people in deciding what improvements need to be made
- Produce a **Disability Action Plan** to set out how the improvements are going to be made and by when
- Involve disabled people in checking that the improvements have actually happened/
The overall aim is to make a difference.

3. Our Disability Equality Scheme

Our starting point in deciding what we need to improve was to ask our disabled customers. We therefore held **Involvement Events** in:

- Calderdale and Sheffield (for Pennine tenants)
- Rossendale (for Green Vale Homes tenants).

The events focused on three main questions:

1. What do we do well just now?
2. What do we need to improve
3. Of these, what are the most important?

We also then held similar events for staff, our Board members and Organisations who work with disabled people.

Although the main purpose of the events was to find out what people think needs to be improved, the events also helped to raise awareness about disability issues.

4. What Next?

Now that we know what our disabled customers think, we have been able to draw up this document (**our Disability Equality Scheme**) and our **Disability Action Plan**. This plan sets out what we need to do, how we will do it and by when.

Once our Boards have approved these documents, we will then publish them on our website. We will also tell our tenants in the New Year edition of our tenants' magazines.

5. Checking Progress

The Trans-Pennine Housing **Equality and Diversity Steering Group** will check the progress we are making on our Disability Action Plan when it meets every quarter.

More importantly, we will hold Involvement Events for disabled customers again in 12 month's time. This is to find out what customers think about the improvements we have made and if these have made a difference.

We will also invite representatives from other Organisations who work with disabled people to the annual events so they can tell us what they think too.

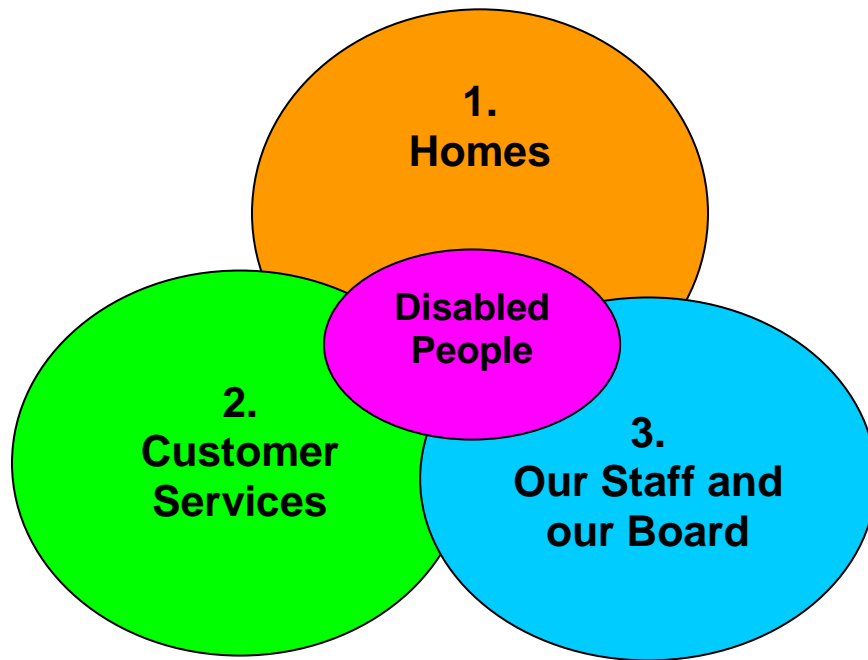
At these events, we will also ask what further improvements need to be made for the forthcoming year.

A summary of these events will then be presented to our Boards so they can check if we are making a difference to the lives of our disabled customers.

6. Our Aims

We want our Disability Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan to make a real difference. So we are concentrating on the things that will have the biggest impact.

The diagram below sets out the three main areas that we will concentrate on:



7. Our Disability Action Plan

We know that there are many things we need to improve. The action plan covers three years as we won't be able to do everything straight away. The most important things will be done in the first year (January 2008 – December 2008).

The action plan is based upon what our disabled customers have told us is most important to them. The Year One priorities are shown in red in the action plan.

The list below is a summary of the Action Plan.

1. Homes

- Improve design on refurbishments
- Improve design on new build homes
- Repairs service that takes into account disabled tenant's needs
- Provide adaptations quickly and to a good quality

2. Customer Services

- Information – that is clear and easy to follow
- Communication – make sure that information is provided in the way that each person needs it
- Training – for staff so they have a better understanding of disability
- Knowing who our disabled customers are so we can do things for them 'upfront'
- Antisocial behaviour – make sure we support disabled victims who are being harassed and give the right help those who are causing ASB because of their disability
- Lettings – make sure that disabled people can apply for a home easily and are given any support they need to do so.

3. Our Staff and Our Board

Making sure we encourage and help disabled people to:

- work for us
- to get involved through our Board
- and through Tenant Groups and meetings

and

- our staff receive regular training on disability issues

8. Summary

- Do nothing for us without us.
- Break down the barriers that disable us
- Make disability a part of everything that you do
- Be proactive
- Getting it right for us will get it right for many other customers too
- Make a real difference to our lives

These are the key things that disabled people have told us. This is what Trans-Pennine Housing's Disability Equality Scheme aims to do.

Acknowledgements

We could not have drawn up our Disability Equality Scheme and Disability Action plan without the help of disabled people, our staff and those from other Organisations. We would therefore like to thank all those who have given their time to help us. And for their ongoing involvement in helping us make sure we do improve the lives of disabled people.