

## **Disability Equality Scheme**

Arcon's Disability Equality Scheme sets out how Arcon will take a proactive approach to ensure that disabled people are treated fairly. We will take positive action towards disabled people, and take steps to ensure wherever possible that we meet the needs of disabled people.

Arcon has adopted the definition of disability, which was outlined in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, which is as follows:

“a person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.”

Our Disability Equality Scheme (DES) will compliment our existing Equality and Diversity Strategy and our policy on Equal Opportunities in employment. There are already many good practices in place, and the DES will add to these. We will also implement our action plan, which will introduce changes that will improve our service to disabled people. We will monitor progress of the action plan to ensure that there is continuous improvement in our Policies and Procedures to help promote Disability Equality.

Arcon is committed to treating everyone fairly, and the introduction of a Disability Equality Scheme reflects the values of the Association.

## ***Involving Disabled People***

Arcon felt it was crucial that our existing tenants who have some form of disability should be consulted about the service we provide, and how this service could be improved in the future. We conducted face-to-face interviews with a wide variety of our tenants that have a disability or who have had an adaptation to their property. These interviews formed the basis of our consultation process, and whilst being very informative, they also identified a need for Arcon to gather more information about our tenants requirements. Part of our action plan will be to improve the knowledge of the potential needs of our tenants and also applicants waiting for a property.

Whilst most of our tenants with an impairment felt that Arcon provided them with a good service, and staff were extremely helpful towards them, there were some areas where we can improve the service in the future and this will be included in our action plan. It was also clear that face to face interviews were the preferred method of communication compared to forums and focus groups. We will continue to consult with tenants in this way and our aim is to offer a face to face interview with any tenant that has indicated they have any form of disability.

From an employment perspective, we will carry out a Disability Equality Survey to gather information on our staff, and identify how Arcon can support staff in the work place.

## ***The Disabled Equality Scheme***

When developing a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) it has been recommended that Housing Associations should look at three main areas that would reflect priorities for achieving Disability Equality. The scope of the action identified will depend on the size and complexity of an Association and the response is likely to be proportionate to each Association depending on their ability to influence change beyond their organisation. The main areas which Arcon considered are:

### **Housing and Customer Service**

This will look at how Arcon identifies the needs and diversity of its customers, and what we can do to meet their requirements. By improving access to services for disabled people, this will also lead to improvements for all customers.

### **Asset Management**

Arcon's work is the management of the homes of our tenants, the communities we help to create and the properties we build. Our policies will help to take active steps to improve accessibility standards and aim to remove barriers for disabled people within their homes and also in their external environment.

## **Employment**

This will ensure that Arcon address disability in employment as part of its overall Equal Opportunities Policy. It will help to identify any assistance and support required to retain any existing staff with impairment, and remove all potential barriers for prospective staff.

### **1. Housing and Customer Services**

Arcon is committed to meeting the needs of its disabled tenants within our own stock and other customers who may require our services. We aim to be accessible to all customers, whether they contact us by telephone, visiting the office, via the internet, through a home visit, or by text message. We also have access to Language Line or other translation services. We can arrange for documents to be translated into braille. There is a minicom system available and a portable induction loop that can be used in meetings or home visits. Every effort is made to ensure that we can communicate efficiently with our customers, and the preferred method of communication of tenants is recorded.

Arcon is able to offer a Supported Tenancy Scheme through other specialist RSL's. This enables any tenant to receive extra support to maintain their tenancy successfully. We also provide five supported housing schemes for a wide variety of clients including adults with learning difficulties.

We will monitor satisfaction levels with Arcon's service by disability and also include this in our monitoring of complaints. We will also ensure that complaints of harassment made due to disability are dealt with promptly and sympathetically.

Any changes to our existing Policies and Procedures will be made through our action plan.

### **2. Asset Management**

Arcon's development of new homes has been on a relatively small scale in recent years, and our ability to influence the design and mix of the type of properties being built has been limited. Where we are building new homes each scheme will have an access statement which will ensure that any new development is accessible. Where Arcon can influence the design of new properties and the mix of homes, we will aim to comply with Housing Corporation scheme development standards. Where possible some homes will be designed to lifetime home standards and we will try to develop a number of homes to full wheelchair standards. Arcon's ability to achieve these aims depends on our success in attracting grant from the Housing Corporation to help fund future developments.

Through our partnership with the Northern Lights Group, we will use contractors that have satisfactory policies on Equality and Diversity.

Arcon has an existing Adaptation Policy and will assist tenants who need an adaptation to their property. We will work with other agencies to ensure that the current adaptation is completed within a reasonable timescale. We will monitor the time it takes for adaptations to be completed and also the satisfaction with our adaptation service.

When carrying out work to comply with Decent Homes Standards or Major Repairs to a property, we will also assess whether any other improvements are required to increase accessibility standards within the home or the communal areas.

Our day-to-day repairs service will ensure that we remove any potential barriers for disabled people to request repairs. We will record information about the requirements of tenants, so that we can deal with their requests for a repair in the most appropriate manner.

### **3. Employment**

Arcon is committed to best practice in equality of opportunity in all matters relating to recruitment and employment. We ensure that our employment practices are fair and transparent and that the work environment is accessible to all. We will complete a staff survey in relation to disabilities and carry out any reasonable requests for adaptations within the work place. We will monitor our performance relating to disability in recruitment and staff retention.

#### ***Disability Equality Action Plan***

The Action Plan states the activities that we will undertake during 2008 to ensure that our Disability Equality Statement is implemented successfully.