

**CIRCULAR**

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Housing association  
disability and gender  
action plans

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November 2007

**10/07**

### This Circular is for the attention of:

- all Registered Social Landlords

### Regulation and/or policy requirements:

- Housing Corporation Regulatory Code and Guidance
- Housing Corporation Disability Equality Scheme and action plan 2006-09 (December 2006)
- Housing Corporation Delivering Gender Equality (July 2007)

### This Circular replaces: N/A

Note: 'Housing association' is used as a generic term for registered social landlords. 'Corporation' means Housing Corporation.

## 1 Summary

This Circular sets out the regulatory requirements placed on housing associations arising from the Corporation's disability and gender equality schemes and action plans. It accompanies the Corporation's regulatory Good Practice Note 8: Equality and Diversity (revised November 2007).

## 2 Background

It is important and widely accepted that associations recognise the proven business case for monitoring and improving all aspects of their equalities performance, over and above any statutory requirements that apply to them directly. The Corporation's experience is that most associations already actively manage their equalities performance, responding proactively to our Regulatory Code requirement that explicitly covers all aspects of equalities including race, gender, disability, religion, age and sexual orientation.

Recent legislative changes (such as the Disability Equality Duty in 2006 and the Equality Act 2006) place direct requirements on the Housing Corporation as a public

body, and therefore we have also reviewed our approach for the sector as published in our disability and gender equality schemes. The requirements of this Circular reflect the commitments made in those schemes.

It is a well-established principle within our regulatory framework that regular review and outcome-focused action planning are key tools in assessing quality and maintaining improvement; this is as applicable to equalities performance as it is to other service commitments. Therefore, to provide assurance to themselves and the Corporation that associations have taken account of recent developments in disability and gender law, we expect associations will review their existing approaches and develop outcome-focused action plans.

Further guidance is available in Good Practice Note 8: Equality and Diversity which has been revised and republished to accompany this Circular, and in the Housing Association Guide to Disability Equality Schemes and Action Plans, published in October 2007 by Habinteg Disability Equality Centre supported by the Housing Corporation.

### 3 Corporation expectations

- Housing associations will develop disability equality action plans by December 2007;
- Housing associations will develop gender equality action plans by April 2008; and
- Recognising the diverse nature of the sector, smaller (under 1,000 units) and specialist associations are expected to take a proportionate and timely approach to action plans implementation.

### 4 Assessing compliance

- We will use a variety of ways of measuring housing association compliance with these requirements;
- We will expect larger housing associations (over 1,000 units) to certify they have met the requirements of this Circular, either via an annual self assessment compliance statement (initially in 2008) or by other means;

- Where our risk assessment indicates a housing association may not be complying or the impact of non-compliance is particularly high, we will undertake a more detailed review in accordance with our normal regulatory engagement; and
- We will take account of and include any relevant findings from inspection reports in undertaking a risk assessment and may instigate a more detailed review in accordance with our normal regulatory engagement.

### 5 Enquiries about this Circular

Associations should direct any enquiries about this Circular to their normal regulatory contact in the Corporation's field offices.

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