

 Northwards Housing North Manchester's Council Homes		Report to: HR & Equality Sub-Committee 30 th October 2007		Item No: <h1>14e</h1>	
Title:		Equality Standard Level 3			
Date:		22 nd August 2007			
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Confidential:		No			
For: (Please tick action required)		NOTING	DISCUSSION	APPROVAL ✓	
PURPOSE OF REPORT					
To inform the HR & Equality Sub-Committee of the requirements set to attain Equality Standard Level 3.					
RECOMMENDATION					
It is recommended that the Sub-Committee note the actions Northwards would need to complete before evaluation at Equality Standard Level 3.					
IMPLICATIONS					
Equality & Diversity:		The Equality Standard is a mechanism to ensure that equality is mainstreamed into all areas of Northwards service.			
Financial:		None			
Staffing:		None			
Decency Target:		None			
Governance:		Taking into account the various needs of all our customers is vital to the successful governance of the organisation.			
Risk Assessment:		By ensuring that all service areas take into account all aspects of equality the organisation will ensure that it is upholding its legal obligations in this area.			

Equality & Diversity Implications (Please tick where relevant):

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| BME | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Gender | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Single Parents | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Age | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Domestic Violence | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Disability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Alcohol / Drug Mis-users | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Equality Standard Level 3

1. Background

- 1.1 The Equality Standard for Local Government is a tool to combat the institutional processes that lead to discrimination as part of the culture, administration and governance of a public organisation.
- 1.2 There are five levels to the Equality Standard: Northwards Housing achieved Level 2 on 30th May 2007.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the recommendations made by the independent assessor to Northwards following the evaluation for Level 2 and to assess what actions still need to be carried out before an evaluation at Level 3.
- 2.2 Equality Standard Level 2 focused on assessment and community engagement. The focus of Level 3 will be towards the setting of equality objectives and targets.
- 2.3 Northwards has carried out a benchmarking exercise with other ALMOs who have already achieved Level 3, including Bolton at Home and Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, to assess what actions are needed in order to meet the requirements of a Level 3 assessment. A meeting was also held with Manchester City Council to discuss what measures Northwards should implement before going for evaluation.

3. Feedback from Equality Standard Level 2 Evaluation

- 3.1 Anne McMaster from Leeds City Council carried out the Northwards Housing evaluation for Level 2 of the Equality Standard. The following recommendations were made after the assessment:
 - Northwards should ensure that CIVICA captures information on all the equality strands and that data can be stored in a confidential manner.
 - Northwards should increase publicity of hate incident reporting beyond race hate.
 - While the Corporate Equality Action Plan has been discussed at appropriate forums some possible suggestions made to take this forward included an overview of current engagement activities which have influenced the final document.
 - Northwards should gather information on the people involved in the consultation process (Area Panels, Task Groups etc).
 - While there is evidence of widespread consultation on impact and needs requirements, it was highlighted that more direct involvement should be considered where appropriate.
 - Northwards is presently conducting job evaluation, but needs to consider the adoption of a fair employment and equal pay policy. This was the only area

where Northwards failed the criteria, but it was recognised that action was being taken in regards to an equal pay review.

- The Managing Attendance framework currently conforms to legislation but it was advised that it would benefit from a more proactive stance regarding disability.

4. Recommended Actions

- 4.1 Following discussion with other ALMOs and housing organisations, including Bolton at Home and Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, and taking into account the feedback from Level 2 evaluation, the following recommendations can be made to ensure that Northwards Housing meets the requirements of Equality Standard Level 3.
- 4.2 Northwards will need to show that targets have been set and that there is clear action plan to achieve these. The new Performance Management Framework would therefore need to be established and well embedded.
- 4.3 The Equality Impact Assessment process needs to be thoroughly embedded and further Equality Impact Assessments need to be carried out. There will need to be a clear link between Impact Assessments and Action Plans, and evidence of published results will also be required.
- 4.4 Monitoring needs to be carried out of Northwards Board Members, Area Panel Members and Task Groups, Tenant Inspectors, Mystery Shoppers etc. Sexuality monitoring of employees also needs to be completed.
- 4.5 Employment targets for recruitment, staff retention and workforce profiles should be set for race, disability and gender – targets should also be set in work force profile for sexual orientation, religion/belief and age according to available data. There should be a clear evidence of the rationale used to set employment targets.
- 4.6 An authority is required to have completed an equal pay review and planned for equal pay adjustment. It has been advised by MCC that Job Evaluation and workforce development targets (%BME, % women, % Disabled staff etc) should cover the Equal Pay Element (see MCC Gender Equality Scheme, p14). Northwards need to ensure that reference to equal pay is made in job evaluation process.
- 4.7 There is a requirement to have an element of external scrutiny/stakeholder involvement. Northwards could benefit from some best practice examples on how people do this.
- 4.8 A system of guidance and training needs on relevant equality issues needs to be established for short-listing panels and interviewers.
- 4.9 Northwards must ensure that mechanisms are in place to ensure that equality targets are delivered by contractors.
- 4.10 A work plan should be drawn up for the Equality & Diversity Working Group and Task Groups.
- 4.11 An external assessor is required for evaluation at Level 3 and Level 5 of the Equality Standard. Northwards would therefore need to make arrangements to appoint an independent assessor.

5. Timetable for Assessment

5.1 The following timetable sets out when actions are to be completed in order to meet the requirements of Equality Standard Level 3.

Date	Action
October 2007	E&D Working group – work plan
November 2007	EIA – Recruitment & Selection Process
November 2007	Monitoring of Board, Area Panels and Task Groups
December 2007	Survey for staff on employee groups
February 2008	Job Evaluation Completed
February 2008	Staff employee groups established
March 2008	Tenant Profile Completed
April 2008	Results of tenant profile to feed into new organisational health targets
April 2008	EIAs complete for 2007/08. Outcomes linked to TIPs and organisational action plans.
May 2008	Access Review completed
June 2008	Performance Management Framework embedded and at least three quarterly reports produced.
July 2008	Collate evidence with clear actions implemented
August 2008	Equality Standard Level 3 Evaluation

6. Recommendations

6.1 It is recommended that the HR & Equality Sub-Committee note the actions required to reach Equality Standard Level 3 and the timetable set to meet these requirements.

6.2 It is recommended that the Sub-Committee approve an application for assessment at Level 3 in August 2008.