

EQUALITY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority Progress Report 2007 - 2008

Name of public authority

Oaklee Housing Association

Equality Officer name and contact details

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BACKGROUND

Oaklee Housing Association is a not for profit voluntary Housing Association established by merger in April 1994. It is registered and regulated by the Department for Social Development. Oaklee's Registered Homes are also accountable to Regulation and Quality Improvement Authorities.

Oaklee Housing Association has always ensured that fairness and equality have been essential elements of service delivery, and reflected in the Core Values of the Association. In recent years, in order to implement our Section 75 duties, the Association has incorporated equality measures into its Corporate, Business and Departmental plans.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate plan is a framework document setting out our Mission core values and strategic objectives over a three year period. We recognise that Oaklee Housing Association works in a complex and challenging environment and the aim of the plan is to act as a 'road map' to guide all the activities of the organisation over the next 3 years.

Our mission is:

“to be a leading provider of customer focused housing and support services.”

This statement reflects our aspiration for Oaklee to play a significant role in the provision of social housing and to put our tenants at the 'heart' of all of our actions.

Core Values

Our core values are the mainstay of the business, guide our thinking and underpin the actions of our Board of Management and staff and help shape the identity and culture of the organisation, they include:

- Customer focus.... 'putting the customer at the centre of all our actions and activities.'
- Partnership.... 'valuing the contribution made by our stakeholders.'
- Professionalism.... 'committed to equipping our Board and staff with the skills to deliver an excellent service.'
- Respect and Equality.... 'treating people fairly and with dignity, embracing diversity and working to challenge disadvantage.'
- Accountability acting at all times with probity
- in an open and honest manner.

Corporate Planning Context

There are many factors and variables, which influence the way we plan, manage and deliver our business to our customers. One of the “key drivers” that we have identified that will have a significant impact on the delivery of the corporate plan is mainstream equality.

The Association recognises that it has a statutory duty to “mainstream” equality considerations in our policy making, policy implementation and policy review.

Corporate Strategic Objectives

Oaklee has five interconnected strategic objectives

1. To deliver excellent cost effective customer focused housing and support services.
2. To procure a range of housing and support services through acquisition development and partnerships.
3. To manage the Association’s affairs in an open and accountable manner and ensure long term financial viability.
4. To make the best of our human resources.
5. To comply with the requirements of statutory Authorities.

A number of equality objectives were included in the business planning process for 2006/2007 including:

- Implement an Equality Scheme as approved by the Equality Commission.
- Carry out an equality screening exercise in accordance with the Equality Scheme.
- Commence Equality Impact Assessment Process.
- Consult with relevant parties on the policy screening process.

The Corporate Business Plan from 2007/2008 is set out below:

Appendix A

OAKLEE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN

2007/08

Strategic Objective 1

“To deliver excellent cost effective customer focused housing and support services”

No.	<u>Key Tasks</u>	Target Completion Date	<u>Task Owner/s</u>
1.1	Complete the organisational Structural Review and implement the management arrangements, including specialist teams to create efficiencies and improve customer service	June 2007	CX/PTM
1.2	Implement Year 1 of the Oaklee Services Centre (OSC) Strategic Plan including both a qualitative and quantitative assessment of service	Jan 2008	CSM
1.3	Deliver Year 2 of ICT Strategic Plan	March 2008	PTM
1.4	Achieve ECO Homes Standard of at least a 'very good' rating on all capital projects 2007/8	March 2008	OPERATIONS
1.5	Implement the outcomes from the business review of The Heathers and Oriel Lodge, implement action plan for suitable relief staff to maintain service provision	March 2008	PTM
1.6	Implement the Tenant Involvement strategy for general needs	Sep 2007	OPERATIONS
1.7	Complete the rent review under the DSD policy and implement changes	March 2008	FINANCE
1.8	Implement action plan year 2 of the Communications Strategy	March 2008	CORPORATE

1.9	Implement outcomes agreed from the Tenant Attitude Survey	March 2008	OPERATIONS
1.10	Consult and engage with Ministers, Committee Chairs, MLAs and political parties, including scheme visits	July 2007	CORPORATE
1.11	OSC to achieve 82% call resolution at first point of contact	March 2008	CORPORATE
1.12	Complete the approved annual planned maintenance programme on time and within budget	March 2008	OPERATIONS
1.13	Complete Response Maintenance Repairs in target timescales: Emergency = 100% Urgent= 85% Routine = 85% Overall = 92%	March 2008	OPERATIONS

Strategic Objective 2

“To procure a range of housing and support services through acquisition, development and partnerships”

No.	<u>Key Tasks</u>	Target Completion Date	<u>Task Owner/s</u>
2.1	Implement Corporate Procurement Strategy through working group established and report to the Board	October 2007	FINANCE
2.2	Implement and submit Year 2 action plan of Construction Clients' Charter for accreditation by the consultant	September 2007	OPERATIONS
2.3	Implement Year 1 action plan of the Supported Housing Re-provision Strategy	March 2008	CORPORATE
2.4	Implement joint procurement for (a) Financial and for (b) Development initiatives with BIH, Fold and Clanmil Housing Associations	July 2007	FINANCE OPERATIONS
2.5	Perform financial due diligence for any new group member	March 2008	FINANCE
2.6	Implement action plan from the South & East Belfast Trust Supporting People pilot and recommend models for service provision in sheltered housing schemes	October 2007 – March 2008	OPERATIONS
2.7	Implement year 1 action plan for Sustainable Development including a Land-banking Strategy	March 2008	OPERATIONS
2.8	Identify an Affordable Housing project in line with the challenges for Housing Associations highlighted in the Semple Report 'Review into Affordable Housing'	March 2008	OPERATIONS
2.9	Achieve target for DSD Capital Allocation 2007/8	March 2008	OPERATIONS
2.10	Capital new Build projects: Achieve 137 starts and 187 completions	March 2008	OPERATIONS
2.11	Arrange the annual Joint Management Partner conference to meet the needs of partners under the Agreements	March 2008	CORPORATE

Strategic Objective 3

“To manage the Association’s affairs in an open and accountable manner and ensure long term financial viability”

No.	<u>Key Tasks</u>	Target Completion Date	<u>Task Owner/s</u>
3.1	Develop an Asset Management Strategy including whole life costs from stock condition survey (link to financial plans)	Dec 2007	OPERATIONS
3.2	Implement 2 nd stage of the devolved budgets to Departments	March 2008	FINANCE
3.3	Achieve a financial surplus of £1.6m and ensure on-going financial viability	March 2008	FINANCE
3.4	Provide Management Accounts within 15 working days of each Month End	March 2008	FINANCE
3.5	Achieve turnover growth of 9%	March 2008	FINANCE
3.6	Restrict percentage increase in pay costs to 9%	March 2008	CORPORATE
3.7	Restrict percentage increase maintenance costs to 3%	March 2008	OPERATIONS
3.8	Restrict percentage increase in construction cost per unit to 5%	March 2008	OPERATIONS
3.9	Restrict percentage increase in development professional fees to 2%	March 2008	OPERATIONS
3.10	Achieve a reduction professional fees in general by at least 5%	March 2008	CORPORATE
3.11	Produce Annual Efficiency and Financial plans	May 2007	FINANCE
3.12	Evaluate the outcomes from the sample surveys of tenants and complete action plan	March 2008	OPERATIONS
3.13	Implement Supporting People requirements for Supported Housing	March 2008	CORPORATE

Strategic Objective 4

“To make the best use of our human resources”

No.	<u>Key Tasks</u>	Target Completion Date	<u>Task Owner/s</u>
4.1	Complete salary review of officers grades and commence review of scheme co-ordinators and admin staff grades	Nov 2007	CORPORATE
4.2	Implement agreed business recommendations from the IIP re-accreditation action plan	Dec 2007	CORPORATE
4.3	Action agreed outcomes from the staff attitude survey	October 2007	CORPORATE
4.4	Complete new Members Handbook and Staff Handbook	June 2007 – Dec 2007	CORPORATE
4.5	Introduce the Staff Welfare Service (for a one year pilot)	June 2007	CORPORATE
4.6	Prepare and implement a Board and Staff Development Plan to meet the Association's business needs	June 2007	CORPORATE
4.7	Prepare a Resource plan to deliver the Business Plan 2007/8	May 2007	CORPORATE
4.8	Produce a Corporate Performance Management Report quarterly to the Board	March 2008	CORPORATE
4.9	Produce Key performance indicators (revised) for the monthly Finance & General Purposes Meetings	March 2008	FINANCE
4.10	Meet 4.5% target (2.5% short-term) for sickness absence	March 2008	CORPORATE

Strategic Objective 5

“To comply with the requirements of Statutory Authorities”

No.	<u>Key Tasks</u>	Target Completion Date	<u>Task Owner/s</u>
5.1	Review the Association’s design Guide for Client Charter compliance	August 2007	OPERATIONS
5.2	Implement agreed Governance Review and Board review	October 2007	CORPORATE
5.3	Comply with Regulatory Inspection and action outcomes	July 2007	CORPORATE
5.4	Comply with smoking ban legislation and review the impact on supported housing schemes	July 2007	CORPORATE
5.5	Prepare a Disability Action Plan in accordance with the Equality Commission guidelines, including a Strategy for the employment of people with disabilities and review every six months	July 2007	CORPORATE
5.6	Implement Maintenance and Housing reviews to comply with the EQIA requirements under the Equality legislation	October 2007	OPERATIONS
5.7	Implement the Internal Audit Plan and all Priority actions	March 2008	CORPORATE
5.8	Review Association’s Design Guide for Client Charter compliance	August 2007	OPERATIONS
5.9	Achieve current tenant arrears target of 3%	March 2008	CORPORATE
5.10	Achieve past tenant arrears target of £80k	March 2008	CORPORATE
5.11	Achieve lettable voids target of 4% and long-term voids target of 8% for General/Sheltered/Supported Housing	March 2008	OPERATIONS
5.12	Achieve re-letting of voids in (a) 4 weeks (General Needs/Sheltered) and (b) 8 weeks (Supported Housing)	March 2008	OPERATIONS CORPORATE
5.13	Implement the revised Corporate Risk Policy	May 2007	OPERATIONS
5.14	Complete Service Reviews in accordance with Service Review Action Plan (Performance Plans and Reports)	March 2008	OPERATIONS
5.15	Publish the Business Plan 2007/.8 and the Annual Report 2007	Sep 2007	CORPORATE

Section 2: Screening and Equality Impact Awareness

2a) If a screening Report has not yet been submitted to the Commission please advise us on the current position with regard to producing this report and forwarding to the Commission.

Oaklee participated in a joint screening exercise coordinated by the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations. This process identified 16 main policy areas, and 10 were screened in for Equality Impact Assessment. A consultation document was released for public consideration between 22nd July and 30th September 2005.

2b) If a Screening Report and EQIA timetable has previously been submitted to the Commission please provide an update (using the matrices in Appendix A) of policies subject to EQIA during 2005-06. New/proposed or reviewed policies screened during 2005-06, ongoing monitoring activities and 2006-07 EQIA time table.

See Appendix A

Equality Impact Awareness

Maintenance

1.1 The purpose of conducting the Equality Impact Assessment is as follows:

- To identify adverse impacts and to consider mitigating factors which will eliminate adverse impact;
- To consider alternative policies which would better promote equality of opportunity

Assessment of Impact

People with physical or sensory disabilities are likely to have different needs or have more difficulty accessing information or services. This includes:

- Wheelchair users
- People with limited mobility
- Hearing impaired
- Visually impaired
- Amputees
- Those with a mental illness or learning disability
- People with dyslexia

Oaklee have a designated member of staff to process adaptation requests received from Occupational Therapists on behalf of tenants and have the ability, subject to terms and conditions, to provide some adaptations for tenants with disabilities without an Occupational Therapists request.

Oaklee have completed a full DDA audit of all properties and has taken action where necessary to ensure full access to goods and services.

Race

Information on tenant rights and responsibilities in relation to maintenance can be requested in other languages and they can avail of the use of our language line facility.

Dependents

People with dependents may be more likely to be affected by office opening hours. However there is no evidence to indicate any adverse impact in this area. Staff arrange visit after hours and family friendly facilities are provided at the main office, such as changing facilities, educational toys and children welcomed to tenant meetings, where appropriate.

Age

There may be some impact on the grounds of age as older people are more likely to have special requirements due to mobility problems, difficulty understanding information, sensory requirements. There is no evidence of adverse impact however Oaklee have completed a full DDA audit of all its properties and has taken action where necessary to ensure full access to goods and services.

Marital status

There may be some impact on the grounds of single working parents who are unable to provide access to contractors to carry out routine repairs / servicing work during normal working hours.

Sexual orientation

There is no evidence of any adverse impact.

Gender

There is no evidence of any adverse impact.

Religious belief

There is no evidence of any adverse impact.

Political opinion

There is no evidence of any adverse impact.

Housing

The purpose of conducting the Equality Impact Assessment is as follows:

- To identify adverse impacts and to consider mitigating factors which will eliminate adverse impact;
- To consider alternative policies which would better promote equality of opportunity

Assessment of Impact

Disability

People with physical or sensory disabilities are likely to have different needs or greater difficulty accessing services and/or information. This includes:

- Wheelchair users
- People with limited mobility
- Hearing impaired
- Visually impaired
- Amputees
- Those with a mental illness or learning disability
- People with Dyslexia

Oaklee completed a full DDA audit of its properties in 2002 and reviewed this in 2006. A programme is now underway to

implement work required including installation of automatic entrance doors to schemes. Home visits are available as necessary by staff.

Race

Ethnic minority groups are likely to be adversely affected as they are less likely to speak English as their first language and may be less able to read and interpret information in written form.

There is no evidence of adverse impact. The Association arranges a translation service where necessary in relation to tenancy and housing management issues and will provide tenancy documents and information in alternative formats as required.

Dependents

People with dependents are more likely to be affected by office opening hours and more restricted in terms of availability for tenant involvement. Staff can arrange visits outside normal working hours, family friendly facilities are provided at the Association's main office and tenants are encouraged and supported to become involved.

Age

There is no evidence of any adverse impact as information is provided in large print, home visits are available and scheme staff provides support to tenants.

Gender

There is no evidence of adverse impact.

Marital Status

There is no evidence of adverse impact.

Religious Belief

There is no evidence of adverse impact.

Sexual Orientation

Oaklee Housing Association does not currently collect data in relation to this socially defined group and there is no evidence to suggest adverse impact.

Political Opinion

Oaklee does not currently collect data in relation to this socially defined group and there is no evidence to suggest adverse impact.

Literacy

Although not directly related to any of the Section 75 socially defined groups those with low literacy levels are likely to have greater difficulty in accessing information as much of the Association's information is in the written word.

Action 3: Training

Induction

The induction programme has been amended to include the Association's Section 75 duties and responsibilities. All staff has received the shortened version of the Equality Scheme.

Specialist Training

The Staff Conference in 2006 included a talk by Alan Given, Chief Executive of the Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership on tackling anti-social behaviour. Another guest speaker was D H Nagaraga who talked about his conversion to Buddhism, Work-Life Balances and Stress. This event was attended by 180 staff.

A conference was held in September 2006 for Scheme Co-ordinators which was attended by 73 staff. The agenda included a presentation on Equality Matters.

An employment conference was held in February 2006 for the Association's Joint Managed Partners. The agenda included presentations on the Working Time Directive, Supporting People and Tenant Participation.

1 Board Member attended an EQIA Orientation – A Practical Workshop by NIFHA.

2 Board Members attended a seminar on Supporting Older People.

6 members attended a workshop on Talking Retirement

1 member of staff attended a training seminar on Lone Working.

2 members of staff completed the NEBOSH general certificate.

1 member of staff received training on housing sex offenders

6 staff attended a briefing on the DSD Audit and Inspection

29 staff attended training on Customer Care Skills facilitated by an external consultant

18 staff received training on Dignity At Work and Harassment In The Workplace delivered in-house by an external consultant.

40 front-line staff received training on dealing with violence and aggression in the workplace.

1 member of staff attended Mediation training.

13 staff members received training on Effect Working in the Field of Learning Disability which was facilitated by ICPD.

7 members of staff attended Management Skills training

3 staff members attended an EQIA Orientation Practical Workshop

Awareness Training

The Association has an ongoing commitment to awareness training.

The Board of the Association received disability awareness training in June 2007 and receive regular update reports.

1 staff member attended an Age Discrimination Awareness training session

1 staff member attended an information session facilitated by the Equality Commission on Monitoring Guidance for Section 75

Officers of the Tenant Forum have received an awareness briefing of Section 75.

- The Section 75 duties are now included in all induction plans for new starts.

Section 4: Communication

- Provide details of how the authority communicated progress on delivery of the statutory duties during 2005-06.
- Provide details of any review of communication activities during the year to ensure effective communication on progressing the statutory duties.

The organisation's commitment to equality has been communicated both internally and externally in a number of ways

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- Quarterly reports to the Oaklæ Board of Management on the implementation of Appendix 5 of the Equality Scheme.
- Abbreviated version of the Section 75 Equality Scheme
- Full published Equality Scheme and EQIA's on the Oaklee website and Intranet
- Consideration of equality issues at an internal Quality/Equality working group comprising staff, Board Members and Tenant representatives.

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

- A report on the implementation of the Statutory Duty is included in the Annual Report
- The Corporate Plan and Annual Business Plan are made publicly available.
- Inclusion of articles in the tenant magazine, Oakleaves which have informed tenants of progress.
- The current EQIA's on Housing Management and Maintenance
- The provision of language interpretation and translation services including the telephone based Language Line service,

and the development of a bank of translation services to assist with ad hoc requests.

- Inclusion of pictorial illustrations in a new maintenance handbook to assist people who may not have English as a first language.
- The development of an efficient and effective consultation network with tenants and residents, through our tenant forum and Tenant representation on the Board of Management.
- Joint working projects with both statutory and voluntary sector bodies.
- The ongoing work of Community Consultation and sharing information with community groups and political representatives in keeping with the Good Relations duty.

Types of Communications –

The most common ways in which Oaklee Housing communicates with internal and external customers are:

- By telephone via the Oaklee Services Centre
- By written correspondence
- By email / through the website
- In person
- Through tenant newsletters / Annual Report

The Oaklee Services Centre has recently introduced a Typetalk service. The Typetalk service enables people with communication difficulties to use the telephone. All Services Centre Staff have been trained in dealing with these types of calls and the service is actively being promoted to all tenants with communication difficulties by providing them with the appropriate equipment and setting up one on one help with an RNID Outreach Worker.

Examples of information commonly requested by customers are:

- Housing applications
- Allocations
- Rent enquiries
- Neighbourhood disputes
- Repair requests
- Employment applications
- Stock enquiries
- Complaints updates
- Details of support and care services

Offices

Head Office, Leslie Morrell House, 37-41 May Street, Belfast. BT1 4DN The opening hours are 9.00am – 5.00pm with a customer service centre open from 9.00am to 5.00pm There is also an out of hours service for emergency requests.

Telephone

Main Office – 08450730005

Website/E-mail

The website www.oaklee.org.uk – The website is being developed with Text Only and Browse Aloud to enable access for those with visual / hearing impairments

Written Correspondence

The communications policy states that business correspondence and promotional literature will be formatted in no less than font 12.

Personal Contact

There is a daily contact procedure for all tenants in sheltered housing when staff are on duty.

There is a sign up procedure for all tenants in new developments.

There is a policy for viewing days held at new development schemes for prospective tenants.

In sheltered schemes and supported housing projects there are staff employed, who provide personal contact for tenants on site.

There are assessment visits made to all tenants requesting transfers.

There are appointed duty officers on call in Head Office for personal tenant visits 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday.

Any tenant can request a home visit at any stage of their tenancy.

Meetings

Oaklee implements a tenant participation policy which includes monthly tenant forum meetings. There are also plans to have regional forum meetings. We have induction sessions for tenants moving into sheltered housing. It is normal practice to have regular management visits to sheltered housing schemes to provide information and support for tenants.

Consultation meetings are arranged to seek feedback from tenants on services affecting them for example changes to properties in relation to planned and cyclical maintenance, and proposed changes to the service such as the introduction of a non resident scheme co-ordinator.

Tenant Forum representatives invited to the AGM

Tenant representative nominated to the Oaklee Board of Management.

Regular on site meetings with scheme based staff meeting the needs of tenants.

One to one meetings for tenants who have personal difficulty accessing public meetings.

Community Consultation Policy.

Translators, Advocates and Signers

The association has signed up to the installation of language line to provide accessibility for customers from ethnic backgrounds. We also hold a bank of translation services which we will utilise on an ad hoc basis as and when required and we have a list of registered signers that would be used if needed. There were no requests for translations in 2006-2007.

Applications for housing include information on the forms for requesting alternative languages and formats.

Section 5: Data Collection & Analysis

- Describe any systems that were established during 2005-06 to supplement available statistical and qualitative research, including consideration given to using internal organisational data and external networks.
- Describe any systems established during the year to monitor the future adverse impact of policies that were subject to EQIA.
- Detail any research undertaken/commissioned during 2006-07 to obtain data/information relating to the nine equality categories.

Sources of information

- 4.1 The following were used in considering available data relevant to the impact of the Housing Management and Maintenance Policies.

- (a) Internal management information on the profile of tenants and service users
- (b) 1991 Northern Ireland Census Data
- (c) Office for National Statistics
- (d) Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency
- (e) DDA audits
- (f) NICORE – statistics of all lettings made by the Association
- (g) Housing Waiting list data
- (h) Qualitative Feedback from telephonists and reception staff
- (i) Tenant satisfaction surveys –

- (j) Completed Best Value Reviews

Complaints

Rent Arrears (current Tenants)
 Rent Arrears (past tenants)
 Review of the provision of financial information to internal users
 Voids and Allocations
 Equality Scheme
 Centre for Social Housing Studies

Design Brief
 Development Service

- (j) Complaints register
- (k) Statistics on use of language line, interpretation services and provision of alternative information formats
- (l) Response to Equality Scheme Consultation by Disability Action
- (m) Equality Commission Codes of Practice

The key issues highlighted by analysis of the above data sources are presented in this section.

Profile of Service Users

4.2 Total Self contained stock as at 31.03.07
= 3413

	Units	%
Stock for elderly (sheltered & Category 1)	1895	60.7
Wheelchair	164	5
Staff accommodation	31	1
General needs accommodation	1323	33.1
	<hr/>	
	3413	
Bedspaces for special needs	556	

The principal sources of equality information about tenants are tenant surveys and NICORE lettings statistics.

The Association does not house anyone under the age of 16 years due to the restrictions of the common selection scheme. Details below cover only the new lettings from 2005/2006 and have been taken from the NICORE report. We are currently upgrading our IT systems to enable us to provide accurate age profile reports for all tenants.

Total new lettings: 318

Age

Age 16-17	
Age 18-24	13%
Age 25-44	27%
Age 45-59	15%
Age 60+	45%

Marital Status

Married	11%
Unmarried	47%
Divorced/Separated	19%
Widowed	23%

Disability (Head of Household)

30% of new tenants have disability
3% of new tenants care for person with disability

Gender

Male	38%
Female	62%

Ethnic group

White	99.5%
Irish Traveller/Black Caribbean	0.5%

Religious Belief

Protestant	42%
Catholic	39.5%
No religious belief	18%
Other	0.5%

At present, Oaklee does not collect data on political opinion or sexual orientation. The 2004 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey indicated that 1% of respondents described themselves as gay or lesbian. A research report by Youthnet argues that analysis of the Census 2001 indicates that between 2 and 10% of the population may be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Section 6: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- Outline what action has been taken during 2005-06 to develop arrangements for the provision of information in accessible formats.

- Detail any initiatives/steps taken to improve access to services.

Oaklee provides information in alternative formats on request. An arrangement has been made with Language Line to provide this service. The Association has received no requests to date to provide information in alternative formats.

The Association has redesigned its repairs handbook using simple English and pictorial diagrams to help tenants understand and communicate technical repair problems.

The Association carried out a comprehensive Disability Access Audit of all its sites in 2003. The audit highlighted that some changes could be made to improve levels of access for all service users.

A number of projects have been incorporated into subsequent years planned maintenance projects. In the financial year from April 2006 these have included:

- Installation of powered entrance doors incorporating fob access control in 5 sheltered housing schemes.
- 3 lift upgrades incorporating Braille control buttons, speech indication, handrails and door closing sensors.
- Installation of 4 hearing indication loop systems in sheltered housing schemes.
- 4 large dwelling extension adaptations.
- 130 individual shower adaptations were completed during the year.
- Over 200 minor miscellaneous adaptations such as door intercom systems to individual properties.
- A provision of a variety of hand rails and access ramps to individual properties.
- Provision of fire alarm activation warnings, eg strobe lighting and vibrating pillows.

All new developments are constructed to lifetime homes standard, which includes level access and the provision of structural features which provides long term sustainability for people with disabilities.

The Association takes a positive and flexible approach to making any necessary changes to improve access to its services. In order to ensure that resources are directed to areas of priority need, the Association has appointed a member of the Property Services team as Adaptations Co-ordinator.

Any accessibility needs identified for service users are implemented directly by the Association under its responsibilities as landlord or through external grant funding from the Department for Social Development.

The Association has a portfolio of 27 Joint Management Partners. These partnerships provide an opportunity for people with a wide range of disabilities to access housing services.

In new developments for Supported Housing, buildings are designed around the specific needs of the end user. For example in the re-provision of a residential home in multiple occupation, two residents with learning difficulties and their advocate sit on the design project team for planning submission.

One Senior Manager has received Access Audit training.

Main Office Accessibility

- Oaklee's main office is wheel chair accessible. It has level access, meeting rooms and toilet facilities on the ground floor.

Oaklee Services Centre

The Association has introduced a tenant contact centre. The Services Centre is the first point of contact for all enquiries including the reporting of maintenance issues from 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday on a low cost telephone number.

Calls that cannot be resolved at the first point of enquiry, are escalated to officer grade staff to resolve within pre-agreed time scales.

Personal Contact

Visits are arranged inside and outside office hours to meet client need.

Section 7: Complaints

- Identify, during 2006-07, the number of Section 75 complaints:
 - received by the authority;
 - resolved by the authority;
 - which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant; and
 - which were referred to the Equality Commission.

Oaklee Housing Association Equality Scheme sets out the procedure for investigating any complaints regarding the Association's discharge of its Section 75 duties.

No complaints relating to the statutory duties have been received during this period.

Oaklee Housing also has a comprehensive complaints system, which has been subject to a recent review. Following the review and introduction of a revised procedure, all relevant staff were instructed in the proactive management of complaints.

Section 8: Scheme Timetable

- Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable (covering all the scheme commitments), identifying any changes since your previous report. Please detail any planned actions outstanding.

APPENDIX 5 – ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING EQUALITY SCHEME

Area of Implementation	Element	Performance Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility
Organisational Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of equality objectives into departmental business plans Integration of equality objectives into personal performance plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMT agrees equality objectives Equality objectives included in business plans for 2004-2005 Equality objectives reviewed annually in consultation with SMT and included in business plans in years 2004-2005 SMT agrees draft guidance for staff Objectives included in performance management systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> annually annually annually ongoing annually 	Senior Management Team and Personnel & Training Manager
Progress Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reports to the Board of Management Annual reports to Equality Commission Review of Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minuted reports at least quarterly Report sent after approval by Board of Management Summary of Annual Progress Report to Equality commission incorporated in Associations' Annual Report Review conducted, published and sent to Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing annually in July annually (by Sep) 2010 	Personnel & Training Manager

Area of Implementation	Element	Performance Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Consultation • Consultation on Equality Impact Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting takes place to consider joint approaches to consultation with other Registered Housing Associations Bodies • Consultation takes place for Screening of policies in line with the 2 stage approach (see p.12) • Report of consultation on screening exercise to be included as part of annual report to Equality Commission • Consultation takes place on each Equality Impact Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06/04 • 09/05 • Interim report 07/05 full version 07/06 • ongoing 	Personnel & Training Manager in coordination with other HA's in joint process
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programme • Top Level briefing on Equality Scheme • Awareness training • Specialised/focused training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programme agreed by Board and SMT • Briefing on Equality Scheme for Association members, Board of Management and Senior Managers takes place • All staff trained by end 2005 • All new staff to receive equality awareness training within 1 year of joining. • Specialised/focused training (see Section 8 of Scheme for types of training) for key staff (minimum of 1 in year 1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • 06/04 • 12/05 • ongoing • ongoing 	Personnel & Training Manager

- Provide details of the processes adopted to engage with representative groups during 2005-06.
- Outline measures taken to enhance the level of engagement that were successful and unsuccessful.

Tenant Forum

The Tenant Forum comprises of tenant representatives from a cross section of the Association's housing stock. At March 2007 the Forum had 58 members. There are 4 regional Forums and one central Forum.

The Forum meet on a monthly basis and the officers of the Forum also meet the Tenant Participation Officer once a month to look at various tenant issues.

Representatives from the Tenants Forum have also been nominated to participate in a range of other activities including the Efficiency Working Group/Stakeholder Group and Housing Management Committee.

One Tenant representative is nominated to the Board of Management for a 3 year period.

Other Tenant Forum members have been nominated to participate in a range of Service Review Working Groups. These working groups have encompassed reviews of key aspects of service including communications strategy, complaints procedure and a review of the Association's development service.

Engagement

The Tenant Participation Officer prepared an action plan to inform our tenants of the role of the Tenants' Forum and the benefits for tenants of actively participating in the group and influencing the future provision of services by the Association.

A dedicated tenant forum office has been provided for use by the Officers of the Tenant Forum and an increased budget allocated to support the activities of the Forum.

Consultation Methods

As stated above, Oaklee Housing Association has worked closely with an extensive number of other Associations under the coordination of the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA). As part of this process, NIFHA has coordinated key aspects of the consultation process on behalf of Associations.

NIFHA have placed public notices on behalf of Associations providing details of public consultation on Equality Impact Assessments.

Impact Assessments

Further consultation with the public will be arranged when planned Equality Impact Assessments have been completed.

Section 10: The Good Relations Duty

Provide details of steps taken to implement or progress the good relations duty during the year. Please indicate any findings or expected outcomes from this work.

1. As a major developing Association, Oaklee recognises the impact that new social housing schemes can have on local communities and is committed to the principle of Community Consultation and the exercise of its Good Relations Duty in relation to all new capital projects. This principle is embodied in the Association's Policy & Procedures on Community Consultation (appended hereto – Appendix A).

Also, Oaklee has now successfully achieved Client's Charter status. The Client's Charter is a programme of improvement and the Association will benchmark their performance against their Improvement Programme and against other clients. Under the Client Leadership section of the Charter, Oaklee has committed to a 5-year plan for developing and improving its performance in the field of Community Consultation and good relations. This plan includes:

- a commitment to engage with political representatives
- the development of the current Policies & Procedures into a Community Consultation Protocol
- surveys of community groups to gain feedback on the effectiveness of the Protocol
- active participation in Northern Ireland Housing Executive Sectoral Strategies (North Belfast and West Belfast)
- community involvement in the design process
- in year 5, a review of the Community Consultation Protocol involving community representatives and political representatives

The following are some examples of the Association's Good Relations Duty in practice :

- Oaklee is committed to meeting social housing need wherever it is greatest and in consequence has undertaken a number of schemes at community interface areas subject to sectarian conflict. Oaklee has been pro-active in addressing problems arising from such conflict in consultation with local communities. The Association has replaced standard glazing with impact-resistant windows where sporadic sectarian missile throwing is prone to occur.

- Oaklee has always championed the right of persons with disabilities of every kind to live as independently as possible in the community, and is the leading provider in Northern Ireland of Supported Housing. The provision of Supported Housing is a complex process involving consultations with Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Health Care Trusts, parent/carer groups, voluntary organisations and the Association's Joint Management Partners. Central to this process is also consultation with local communities in which it is proposed to locate Supported Housing projects. Proposals for some projects of this kind are in the first instance met with open hostility from elected representatives and neighbours and necessitate patient and painstaking interaction in order to allay fears and misconceptions. In one such project measures taken by the Association included :
 - face to face meetings with politicians
 - neighbourhood leaflet drops
 - public meetings

The construction of this project is now at completion stage and the Association has undertaken to maintain contact with community representatives in order to address any concerns arising from the occupation of the accommodation.

- As a contributor to Northern Ireland Housing Executive's North & West Belfast Strategies, Oaklee has undertaken major redevelopment and regeneration schemes in both these sectors. From the outset of these schemes, the Association has involved the local communities throughout the Design & Feasibility, planning, detailed design, construction and handover stages and has in many cases modified initial design and layout proposals to take account of community concerns and aspirations e.g. provision of semi-detached dwellings, reducing put-back housing density, maintaining traditional street patterns, provision of gated in-curtilage parking etc. The Association attends monthly meetings with community groups throughout, and after completion of these projects. The Association is also a member of the North Belfast Inter-Agency Working Group which has developed a protocol on Community Consultation.

APPENDIX A

OAKLEE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Community Consultation on Proposed New Developments

Policies & Procedures

A) Policy

1. Oaklee Housing Association accepts the principles and requirements relating to Community Consultation as required by the Department for Social Development. In particular :-
 - The Association will involve the local community in consultation at an appropriate stage in the development process
 - All consultation undertaken by the Association will relate to a decision which it is intending to make and which can be influenced by that consultation

 - The level of community consultation will be commensurate with the extent of the impact which the proposal is likely to make on the local community

B) **Procedures**

- a) No consultation in relation to a development proposal will be undertaken until the Association has identified specific land or property and has undertaken an initial assessment to ascertain that the proposed housing accommodation can be provided within the constraints imposed on the Association.
- b) For all schemes other than the purchase of single “existing satisfactory” dwellings the Association will carry out an impact appraisal to ascertain the extent of consultation which would be appropriate given the nature of the proposal. However, as a minimum, the Association will write to the elected representatives for the area i.e. Councillors, Member of the Local Assembly and Member of Parliament, giving brief details of the proposed development and inviting comment/further discussion. The Association will also notify the occupants of property immediately adjacent to the proposed development.
- c) Where a local Community Association is already in existence the Association will write to the appropriate representatives with an outline of the proposed development and will, if so requested, attend meetings of the local Association and/or public meetings convened by the local Association. Where more than one local Association claim to represent the local community Oaklee Housing Association will consult each local Association.
- d) Where Planning Permission will be required for a proposed development, Oaklee Housing Association will carry out consultations as in b) and c) prior to submission of a Planning Application.

- e) Once the Association has completed its consultation, it will communicate its decision on whether or not to proceed with the proposed development to each person and/or organisation consulted.
- f) Should the Association decide to proceed with the proposed development, it will, where appropriate, continue to consult with the local community on specific aspects of the proposal as it develops.

Section 11: Additional Comments on Mainstreaming

The main aim of the statutory duties is to mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations considerations into the functions of the authority, leading to better policies and service delivery.

Oaklee Services Centre

In July 2005, the Association implemented the Oaklee Services Centre, to make our services more accessible to its existing customers and to the general public. It was also intended to provide a more responsive and consistent service.

One of the stated aims of the Services Centre is to resolve 80% of all incoming calls about its core business activity. During the year to March 2007, this target was exceeded.

All calls within the Services Centre are recorded for training and quality assurance purposes.

Calls that cannot be resolved by the Services Centre are escalated to Officer grade staff to address within a defined time period.

The development of the Services Centre has allowed the Association to streamline its business processes. This has freed front line staff from some administrative duties and allowed them to focus more time on consumer needs.

The Services Centre can now identify trends and patterns in service demands. This will enable the Association to deploy resources where they are needed and also to be more flexible in relation to the nature of service provided.

The Association is planning to further develop systems and process to cater for customer demands. This will include a more proactive focus on surveying customers on the quality of our service.

Engagement

The Association has 760 tenancies in 52 schemes throughout Northern Ireland for people/adults with complex needs. Some of these schemes are provided under a joint management agreement by specialist voluntary organisations.

In all of these schemes, tenants are facilitated with a monthly tenants meeting where their views on the service are sought by the care and support providers.

In addition each tenant is provided with a key worker who has a special responsibility to ensure that their housing, care support and social needs are fully met within a personalized plan. Where communication is difficult tenants have the opportunity to avail of independent advocacy services.

Tenants Handbook (Housing Management

It is a legal responsibility to have a tenancy agreement between a landlord and its tenants. Where a tenant has complex needs, it is difficult to create an understanding between Landlord and Tenant of rights and responsibilities between each party, in relation to the agreement. During the year, Oaklee Housing Association reviewed the format for providing tenancy agreements for our complex needs tenants.

As a result of this review we have now produced the Tenancy Agreement in a number of ways including large print with plain English A5 format large print with plain English with graphics and a CD plain English audio version.

In addition, where there continues to be difficulties for people comprehending the nature of the Agreement, specialist advocacy services will be provided.

The Tenancy Agreement is presented in an A5 ring binder and it also includes the Support and Care Plan. This plan is person centred and has been agreed by the tenant and a multi-disciplinary team of professionals and others involved in the support of the individual.

Complex Needs Survey

Oaklee is the major provider of supported housing in Northern Ireland for adults with complex needs. The Association also covers the full spectrum of complex needs which includes mental ill health, learning disability, physical disability, young care leavers, recovering addicts, frail elderly, autistic spectrum disorder, homeless adults/homeless families.

During the year the Association completed a tenants satisfaction survey of our complex needs tenants. The aim of the survey was to measure the quality and effectiveness of the current level of service provision. The survey involved interviewing a randomly selected sample of 25% of the total tenant group which reflected the diversity of complex needs within the group.

The survey was completed and a report on the key findings was being prepared for consideration. The results of the survey will be used to enable us to develop, improve and expand our range of services to this group. We anticipate that there may be a number of areas where we can make further improvements to our service.

One particular aspect of this may be the need to consider the re-provision of some of our houses as multiple occupancy, particularly for adults with mental ill health.

Working In Partnership

Oaklee has a large number of management agreements with voluntary organizations to provide a range of services. The Association recognizes that their obligation under Section 75 extends to the provision of services with Joint Management Partners.

In March 2007, Oaklee organised a conference for all of its partners. The opportunity was taken at the conference to inform and advise delegates of the Association's Section 75 responsibilities. An external consultant was engaged to give delegates an overview of the responsibility to have due regard to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between the nine socially defined groups and regard to promote good relations between three of them.

Specific workshops addressed issues in relation to age and dignity at work.

Follow-up Session

In consultation with our Joint Management Partners, it was agreed that a further training session would be arranged to cover key aspects of Human Resource Management for voluntary organizations. This further work was planned with Joint Management Partners to ensure that they assist Oaklee to meet its statutory obligations.

Supported Employment

As part of Oaklee's commitment to the promotion of equality of opportunity to people with disabilities, the Association made provision for two work placements for individuals with physical or mental disabilities.

The Association will continue to recognize its corporate responsibility to provide such opportunities for people who may have difficulties competing in the labour market.

Employment

Principles of fairness and equality of opportunity are also central to the Association's employment practices and policies. The Association is committed to ensuring, that its employment practices meet legislative requirements and standards of best practice in relation to equal opportunities.

The Association has an equal opportunities policy and a range of additional policies in relation to flexible working arrangements and Dignity At Work.

In addition employment monitoring information is not only sent to the Commission on an annual basis, but reported through the management structure to the Board of Management. The Association has implemented Affirmative Action measures including amending welcome statements to attract more applicants from men and members of the Protestant community for certain posts.

Disability Action Plan

The Association is committed to implementing effectively the disability duties and the disability action plan. All necessary resources (in terms of people, time and money) will be allocated in order to implement this plan and where appropriate, build objectives and targets relating to the disability duties into corporate and annual business plans.

The Association will also put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure compliance with the disability duties and implement the disability action plan. The plan has been communicated to staff and all necessary training and guidance for staff on the disability duties and the implementation of the plan will be provided.

The Association will submit an annual progress report on the implementation of this plan to the Equality Commission and carry out a five year review of this plan.

The public will be made aware of the plan through joint working with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, who will advertise in relevant media. Oaklee will also communicate with key stakeholders on the content of the plan.

Section 12: Concluding Questions

12A) Does the authority believe its work on implementing the statutory duties during 2005-06 produced positive benefits for the organisation? **YES** ✓ if yes please complete the following

No

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
i) Increased awareness of equality issues in policy making	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect equal opportunities objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Increased awareness of good relations issues in policy making	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect good relations objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓
v) Increased awareness of equality issues in service delivery	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>
vi) Increased ability to ensure services are designed and targeted to reflect Section 75 requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	✓	<input type="checkbox"/>

12B) Does the authority believe its work on implementing the statutory duties during 2005-06 produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories?

YES if yes please complete the following

No

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Persons of different religious belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons of different political opinion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons of different racial groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons of different age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons with different marital status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons of different sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Men and women generally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons with and without a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Persons with and without dependents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please go to Question C over

Appendix A

Screening & EQIA Update

Please enter details relating to the authority's progress using the following matrices.

i) EQIA Timetable – 2006-07

Title of policy EQIA underway during April 2006- March 2007 October 2005 March 2006	Stage (as per Steps 1-7 of EQIA Process) As at end March 2007	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Outline any adjustments to policy intended to benefit individuals from the nine equality categories and outline the relevant categories affected.	Were adjustments to policy a result of <u>A</u> ssessment of adverse impact/ feedback from <u>C</u> onsultation, or <u>B</u> oth <i>Please enter A, C or Both</i>	If EQIA decision making stage completed, is amended policy being implemented? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o
1. Housing	4	N/A	Not Complete		
2. Maintenance	4	N/A	Not Complete		
3.					
4.					
<u>5.</u>					

ii) Ongoing Screening Activities 2006-07

Title of policy subject to screening during April 2006- March 2007	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Was initial screening decision changed following consultation? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o	If Screening completed is policy being subject to EQIA? <u>Y</u> es/ <u>N</u> o	If EQIA planned indicate year for assessment
1. Copy of joint screening exercise already				
2. sent to the Equality Commission				
3.				
4.				
<u>5.</u>				

iii) Ongoing EQIA Monitoring Activities 2006-07

Title of EQIA subject to Stage 7 monitoring during April 2005- March 2006	If joint policy please state partner authorities	Indicate if differential impacts previously identified have reduced or increased	Indicate if adverse impacts previously identified have reduced or increased
1. N/A			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

iv) 2007-08 EQIA Time-table

Title of EQIAs due to be commenced during April 2007 – March 2008	Existing or New policy? Please enter E or N below.	If joint-EQIA please state partner authorities	Please indicate expected date of completion of EQIA Stage 6 i.e. Decision making stage
1. Human Resources	E	N/A	July 2008
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			