

The Disability Equality Duty and Housing (*ref 47*)

1. From December 2006, there is a new statutory duty on the public sector to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people (the DED).
2. This duty applies across the full range of public sector activity. This includes service delivery, policy making, procurement and performance management. It requires public servants to consider the impact of their work on disabled people, and to take action to reduce inequality.
3. 'The public sector' includes organisations such as hospitals and NHS trusts, schools, colleges, central and local government and the police.
4. Public authorities must publish a 'Disability Equality Scheme' by 4/12/2006. These schemes have to include:
 - a statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme
 - an action plan for improvements
 - how the authority will show it is meeting its targets
5. Housing services by local government are covered by this new duty to promote equality of opportunity.
6. The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) suggests various adjustments for disabled people or policy requirements which will become necessary under this duty:
 - providing rent books and tenancy agreements in accessible formats
 - gathering evidence around disabled peoples' experience, e.g. How long do people have to wait for accommodation? How long is the wait for adaptations to be done? The DRC recommends Disability Housing Registers and mechanisms for providing support in making applications.
 - Housing strategies should be developed in consultation with disabled people. The needs of disabled people should be assessed on a cross-boundary basis to explore support schemes covering more than one area.
 - Homelessness applications and housing advice processes will have to be informed by evidence of the problems faced by people with disabilities. Information and homelessness services will have to be available in a range of formats, with accessible offices.
 - Disabled people should be prioritised where there is a poor take-up by disabled people, or where their experience of services is poor.
 - Disability equality training should be given to staff.
7. More information is available from The Disability Rights Commission (website: www.dotheduty.org).

If you require further information or have other queries contact Housing Options.

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Although we try to ensure that statements as to the law and other facts are accurate this report gives general guidance and does not aim to cater for individual cases. Housing Options and our sponsors cannot accept responsibility for any loss incurred as a result of relying on such statements, specific advice should always be obtained on individual cases.

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