



DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

To encourage the participation of disabled people in Public Life

January 2016 to March 2018

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DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Under Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) (as amended by Article 5 of the Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006), Connswater Homes Ltd is required, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people; and

Encourage participation by disabled people in public life ('the Disability Duties').

Under Section 49B of the DDA 1995, the Association is also required to submit to the Equality Commission a Plan showing how it proposes to fulfill these duties in relation to its functions.

1.1 COMMITMENTS

The Chair and Chief Executive are committed to effectively implementing the Disability Duties and this Plan.

Mainstreaming the Duties

Connswater Homes Ltd is committed to successfully mainstreaming the Disability Duties throughout the organisation.

Resources

In order to deliver the actions detailed in this Plan, the Association is aware that additional resources will have to be allocated. Connswater Homes Ltd is committed to allocating all reasonable, additional resources (in terms of people, time and money) required to implement this plan.

Internal Arrangements

Connswater Homes Ltd will put appropriate internal arrangements in place to ensure that the Disability Duties are complied with and the Plan is successfully implemented.

Catherine Waterworth will have operational responsibility for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the Plan. Regular and Annual Progress Reports will be provided through the normal reporting structures.

Communication to staff

Connswater Homes Ltd will ensure effective communication of the Plan to staff and will provide training and guidance. All staff will be provided with information on the Plan via staff meetings, staff newsletter, noticeboards and e-mail.

Training

Connswater Homes Ltd is committed to providing ongoing training for staff and office holders on the Disability Equality legislation and Disability Awareness.

Consultation

Connswater Homes Ltd is committed to carrying out consultation in the development of its disability duties. We are keen to seek the views of disabled people in relation to this plan. To do this, Connswater Homes will be engaged on a number of levels:

- We will seek to consult with our tenants who do have a disability on the services we provide;
- We will advertise to all our tenants through our tenants' newsletter on the development of this plan;
- We will inform all staff through the staff newsletter on the development of this plan; and
- We will be proactive in contacting representative organisations of disability groups for their feedback on this plan.

Reporting Arrangements

Connswater Homes Ltd confirms its commitment to submitting annual progress reports on the implementation of the Plan to the Equality Commission and carrying out a review of the plan in line with current review arrangements for Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

2 Functions

The Association was first registered in 1977. It exists to provide good quality homes at affordable rents in a secure and attractive environment. Where possible those involved strive to build homes that, so far as possible, sustain communities through innovative design and adaptability.

As an organisation we have a set of “**VALUES**” that underpin everything we do:

- V** We will be **VISIONARY**
- A** We will be **ACCOUNTABLE**
- L** We will always **LISTEN**
- U** We will ensure we **UNDERSTAND**
- E** We will strive to **EMPOWER & ENGAGE**
- S** We will deliver an excellent **SERVICE**

The four key objectives of the Association are:

THINK CUSTOMER

We want our customers to have a home that they can comfortably live in and enjoy. We want to deliver the best service and best customer experience that we possibly can in all aspects of our business.

THINK COMMUNITY

We want people to find a secure home in areas where they want to live, in neighbourhoods that are safe and have decent facilities. We want to build wherever possible in mixed communities and in

carefully considered environments that meet the expectations of those who will live there.

THINK PEOPLE

We want to support, develop and empower people to reach their full potential for the benefit of our customers and communities. We want to have motivated and respected staff and a board fit for purpose. We aim to be an exemplar of best practice and, within our capacity, offer opportunities and initiatives to others.

THINK SMART

We want to embrace new ways of doing things to include customers, communities and people. We want to be adaptable and prepared to reconfigure services, protect our income streams and sustain viability. We want to raise our profile and bring added value to our customers. We want to embrace the Internet of Things, using technology to enhance customer service, efficiency and accessibility.

The Board of the Association comprises the Chair and currently nine other members. Prospective shareholding members are sought via public advertisement or by invitation to ensure a balanced skills base that enables the formation and continuation of a competent board. Membership is open to all sections of the community as the Association seeks to ensure that the membership reflects the communities it serves. The Board ensures that a defined number of shares are available for tenants and those showing an interest at community level.

The functions of the Association for purposes of the Act include its powers and duties in connection with:

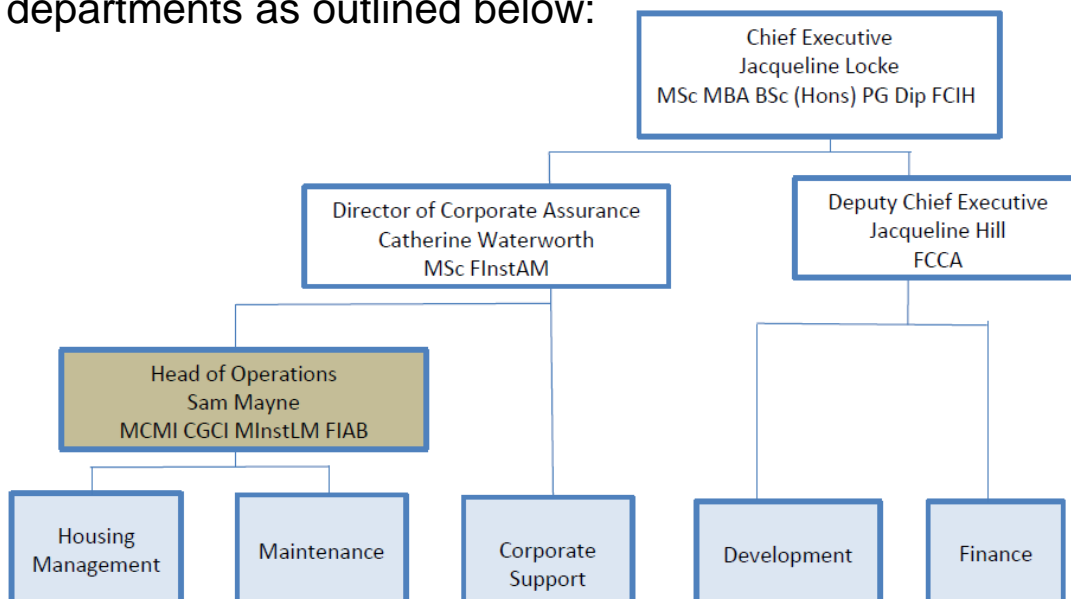
- Governance
- Corporate functions
- Finance & administration
- Housing development and new schemes
- Housing management
- IT
- Human resources

In implementing and supporting the above functions the Association has developed and adopted a wide range of policies.

2.1 Internal Arrangements and Effective Engagement

Connswater Homes is a charitable housing association registered with the Department for Social Development. It is a voluntary and non-profit making organisation.

Responsibility for strategic management of Connswater Homes lies with the voluntary board of management. Day-to-day management of Connswater Homes is delegated to the Chief Executive and the senior management team. The Association currently operates in five departments as outlined below:



The Housing Management department takes responsibility for all aspects of estate management including, void management, rent control, allocations, and tenancy matters for all of the Association's stock.

The Maintenance department has responsibility for all aspects of property maintenance, including responsive repairs alongside the planned and cyclical maintenance programmes of the Association.

The Development department has responsibility for the development of new housing schemes, locating sites and obtaining statutory approvals for same.

Finance has overall responsibility for accounting and financial budgeting/planning matters within the Association.

The corporate support department has responsibility for all human resource matters, equality and ICT within the Association and also all other aspects of support to the senior management team and the Board.

2.2 Public Life Positions

The range of public life positions over which Connswater Homes has responsibility for are:

- Board Members of Connswater Homes

3 Previous Measures

Outlined below are the key measures which Connswater Homes has already taken to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

- Provision of specially designed, complex needs housing for disabled people;
- Adaptations carried out to homes to facilitate tenants with a disability to be able to continue living in, and enjoying, their home;
- Disability awareness training delivered to all staff on induction and as refresher training as part of the corporate training plan;
- All the Association's policies are screened in line with Section 75 requirements;
- Reasonable adjustments made for staff & tenants as necessary;
- The Association's office building fully facilitates DDA compliance;
- All Association's new homes are built to lifetime homes standard where appropriate;
- Positive images of disabled people used in the Association's literature or promotional materials;
- Positive attitudes towards disabled people reflected in the Association's literature, correspondence and written materials;

- Text phone facility available for use by tenants, where necessary;
- Induction loop system in place in the Association’s office premises;
- Provision of signing services provided to tenants on request; and
- The Association’s website is enabled with Browsealoud software to enable those with a disability more ready access to information.

4 Action Measures

Outlined below are the measures which we propose to take over the period of this disability action plan.

Measures to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage the participation of disabled people in public life

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicators / Target
Ensure positive and proportionate imagery is used in corporate documentation	Ongoing	Positive and proportionate imagery in main corporate documents including Strategic Plan, tenant newsletter and any promotional material

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicators / Target
Policy screening process to assess disability issues in relation to Section 75 duties	Ongoing annually	All new policies screened for disability implications, included in annual progress report.
Include requests for statistical information in relation to stakeholders with disabilities in internal surveys	Ongoing	Disability information collated and included in the annual regulatory return
Complete NICORE information on new tenants	Annually	Report statistics to NIFHA
Maintain and annually update staff monitoring system	Annually	Completed by HR department and reported to ECNI in annual return
Integrate statutory disability duties into the annual business planning process	Ongoing	Report progress on Equality Scheme to Board and ECNI in annual progress report
Provide Disability Awareness Training to all staff on	Ongoing	Disability Awareness Training included in induction

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicators / Target
induction and then as refresher e-learning on a bi-annual basis		plans for all new staff and is a regular refresher e-learning course in the corporate training plan
Use the NIHE district housing plans to identify specific geographic areas where housing need has been identified including complex needs requirements	Annually ongoing	Include any opportunities for disabled accommodation within new build scheme proposals
All new homes are designed and built to lifetime homes standard	Ongoing	Annual development target set in business plan and reported to Board under KPI's
Consult with local communities and political representatives to promote positive attitudes regarding housing	Ongoing	Community consultation carried out for all new build schemes in the development programme and reported to Board

Measure	Timescale	Performance Indicators / Target
Carry out Occupational Therapist adaptation requests to enable tenants to remain in their homes	Ongoing	Adaptation works completed regularly within the required timescales and reported to Board
Provide transport for tenants with disabilities who wish to participate in tenant user groups	Ongoing	Transport provided to facilitate involvement

5 How the Plan will be published

When the Plan is submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland it will be placed on the Association's website, circulated to all staff and be the theme for a staff meeting. The plan will also be available from:

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The Plan will be produced in clear print and plain language and will be available in alternative formats, and languages, on request.