

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA):

**WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL
HOUSING DEPARTMENT:**

**Resident Participation
February 2011**

Section 1 - 'Scoping' the assessment

Service, policy or function being assessed. :

Housing Management Division of the Housing Department: Resident Participation

Officers responsible for conducting the EIA

Lead Officer: Ian Stewart (Head of Housing Management)

Officers:

Chris Jones (Head of Housing Strategy and Development)

Josephine Ross (Policy and Performance Manager)

Anna Williams (Policy and Performance Officer and departmental equalities lead)

Suzanne Hackett (Policy and Performance Officer)

Organisations who will have the opportunity to feed back on the EIA:

- Residents' Associations
- Resident Management Organisations
- Registered Social Landlords (also known as housing associations)
- Community groups on the Housing Department's database who have expressed an interest in one or more of the following: Democracy and participation
- Housing Department staff
- All other council departments (via their departmental equalities leads)

Key dates for the assessment:

Date for start of EIA: 16 July 2009

Completion date for draft EIA: 17 February 2011 – completion delayed to allow for inclusion of benchmarking against the TSA's (Tenant Services Authority's) regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010 and conclusion of the work undertaken by the Residents' Working Group which was established in June 2009 to consider further opportunities for enhancement of the participation structure.

Start and end date of consultation: Start date: 18 February 2011. **End date: 13 May 2011.**

Completion date for finalised EIA: 16 June 2011.

Section Two – Developing an initial view

What are the aims of the policy/service?

The Council recognises the importance of consulting with residents and one of the revised strategic housing objectives approved by the Council in November 2006¹ is 'to encourage resident and stakeholder involvement in and participation in the delivery of a quality housing service'. **The council aims to consult residents and others on both strategic and service issues relating to housing in the Borough and to encourage residents to participate in the Housing Department's decision-making process at the level of their choice.**

In Wandsworth, most council-owned properties are managed by the council but approximately one tenth of council owned properties are managed by the twelve Resident Management Organisations, which are all Cooperatives.

The council believes that the involvement of residents is central to the continued delivery of first class services to the homes it owns. It is vital to the continuous improvement of the housing service and essential to the development of strong and sustainable communities.

The formal resident participation structure was established in 1999 and was reviewed by residents in 2006 and 2009, when further methods of participation, outside of the formal structure, were adopted and procedural and constitutional amendments were approved to the structure².

The senior residents' group is the Borough Residents' Forum which receives information from the four Area Housing Panels, the Sheltered Housing Focus Group, the Co-op/TMO Forum and the Housing Link surveys.

The Area Housing Panels cover the areas of Battersea, Putney, Roehampton and Tooting. Each accredited Residents' Association can send two members to each meeting of the Area Housing Panel for their area.

Resident participation is supported by the four specialist Resident Participation Officers who are part of the Area Teams. Their role is to support accredited residents' associations and help set up and support the formation of new accredited residents' associations.

¹ [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000294/M00002133/AI00003950/\\$PaperNo06904.docA.ps.pdf](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000294/M00002133/AI00003950/$PaperNo06904.docA.ps.pdf)

² Paper No. 10-672: <http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=11838>

Residents who live in Council owned homes can get involved in many ways (set out in appendix 1 and on the website).

Opportunities for participation include:

- The formal resident participation structure (residents' associations, area housing panels, sheltered housing focus group, resident management organisations and Borough Residents' Forum) – To encourage and assist residents in participating in the provision of the housing service, there are four specialist Resident Participation Officers who are part of the Area Teams.
- Residents' Working Groups - The Council has periodically approved and supported the setting up of Residents' Working Groups. As part of the ongoing commitment to enable residents to participate at the level of their choice, a Residents' Working Group was established in June 2009 to consider further opportunities for enhancement of the participation structures. Specifically, the Residents' Working Group considered issues concerning support for residents' associations, communication with residents, training, performance monitoring and information technology. The work undertaken by the Residents' Working Group and the action plan produced are intended to further improve communication and participation arrangements (see pages 22 and 23).
- Local management agreements
- Surveys, including the Housing Link survey
- Readers' panel
- Mystery shopping
- Estate inspections
- Suggestions and complaints
- Getting involved with other local groups with which the Department engages (for example, local groups for older people and local groups for disabled people).

What evidence could you use to verify if the service/policy offers equality of access?

- STATUS survey results 2008
- Housing Link survey results
- Benchmarking of the service against good practice guidelines / requirements in the TSA's (Tenant Services Authority's) regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010, the Equality Framework for Local Government, the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry and CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) and DRC (Disability Rights Commission) publications.

Will further data or information be required for carrying out the assessment?

No.

What do you think are the main issues relating to equality within the service/policy area?

As stated in the Housing Department's Equalities Policy the Housing Department is fully committed to the active promotion of equal opportunities in the provision of all our services to the community, including resident participation. We believe that it is essential to the appropriate delivery of services that information on the services available, and how they are accessed and delivered, are made known to the community and we aim:

- To provide a high standard of service and ensure that this is provided equitably on the basis of need
- To ensure that no individual in the community is excluded on the grounds of race, colour, gender, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marital status, disability, or age.
- To provide services in line with current policy and according to our legal responsibilities.
- To enforce the relevant tenancy and lease conditions to ensure that the council's residents are protected from harassment
- To ensure that employees and service users treat each other with respect
- To reflect the community we serve and encourage applications from people from racial minorities, people with disabilities and women – where they are underrepresented in the workforce.

The Department's 'Consultation and Participation Policy Statement, Strategy and Action Plan'³ which was subject to an EIA and approved by the Council in November 2006⁴, includes an equalities statement which states that: 'The Housing Department will consult with all sections of the community in respect of the housing strategy, policy developments and service improvements. It will address any barriers which may prevent individuals playing a full part in any consultation or participation such as disability or where English is not the first language. When identifying locations for meetings etc. it will address access and facilities issues for those with a disability'.

In terms of the services covered by this Equality Impact Assessment, the main issues relating to equality are:

- The need to ensure that all residents who live in council-owned properties are provided with opportunities and encouraged to participate in the housing department's decision-making process at the level of their choice.
- The need to ensure that staff have received relevant training in order to deliver the service in line with the department's equalities policy

Are there any criteria/requirements or aspects that could contribute to inequality?

No.

³ [http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/\(X\(1\)S\(ixnaqq552srjra55d4jt0tqu\)\)/Published/C00000294/M00002133/AI00003951/PaperNo06905.pdf](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/(X(1)S(ixnaqq552srjra55d4jt0tqu))/Published/C00000294/M00002133/AI00003951/PaperNo06905.pdf)

⁴ www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.asp?CId=294&MIId=2133&Ver=4&J=5

Section Three – Assessment of Impact.

What does available data/results of consultation show for take up/usage and other outcomes?

What is the impact on different groups?

STATUS survey

Previously, the Government required local authorities that own 1,000 or more general needs properties to periodically carry out a survey (known as the STATUS survey) in accordance with published guidance to find out about how satisfied tenants are with services provided by their landlord. This is no longer required. The last survey was carried out in 2008.

Between October and December 2008, Ipsos Mori (an independent company appointed by the council to carry out the survey) sent out questionnaires to 3007 tenants. 997 tenants (33% of those surveyed) completed and returned the questionnaires. In line with the STATUS survey methodology which the Government required local authorities to use, tenants were asked to provide information about their gender, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, whether anyone in their household has any long-term illness, health problems or disability which limits their daily activities or the work they can do (including any problems due to old age) and whether anyone in their household uses a wheelchair. Tenants were also asked the question *'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your views are being taken into account by your landlord?'* 847 tenants answered this question (excluding those who answered 'no opinion').

Housing Link survey

Housing Link is the housing department's regular survey of a panel of approximately 1,200 residents which takes place three times a year on a range of subjects.

The panel is designed to be broadly representative of the resident population in the council's housing stock. A number of characteristics are used to determine this including tenure (i.e. tenant or leaseholder), gender, age, ethnicity, estate density, property size and length of residency. All residents (tenants and leaseholders) on the panel are asked to provide information about their ethnic origin, age, gender and disability. In March 2009, they were asked the following questions: *'How satisfied are you with the opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the housing department?'* (782 residents (409 tenants and 373 leaseholders) responded to this question) and *'How satisfied are you that your views are taken into account by the housing department?'* (781 residents (409 tenants and 373 leaseholders) responded to this question).

Detailed analysis of responses to these questions is presented in appendix 2 and summarised in section 5 (pages 24 to 27).

The following pages set out how the Housing Department is meeting good practice guidelines / requirements in the TSA's (Tenant Services Authority's) regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010, the Equality Framework for Local Government, the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry and CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) and DRC (Disability Rights Commission) publications in relation to the following areas:

- Ensuring that all residents who live in Council owned properties are encouraged to participate in the Housing Department's decision making process at the level of their choice
 - Strategies, policies and procedures for resident participation
 - Satisfaction with services and that views are taken into account
 - Representative participation, understanding needs and engaging with communities
 - Resident participation in reviewing, monitoring and improving services
 - Involving disabled people and learning from their experiences
- Ensuring that staff receive relevant training in order to deliver the service in line with the department's equalities policy

Ensuring that all residents who live in Council owned properties are provided with opportunities and encouraged to participate in the Housing Department's decision making process at the level of their choice

What should we be doing? - Strategies, policies and procedures for resident participation

The TSA's (Tenant Services Authority's) regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010 states that registered providers shall:

- Offer all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related policies and the delivery of housing-related services.

The CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing states that:

- Housing organisations should, and where required to, must, draw up a strategy for involving residents and tenants from all racial groups in their decision-making processes, over and above the duty that registered social landlords have to involve tenants. The strategy should include arrangements for providing information, consultation, feedback and participation.
- Housing organisations should make sure their policies and procedures take account of the cultural backgrounds of ethnic minority residents and tenants in any arrangements to involve or consult them.
- Housing organisations' strategies and policies should show an awareness of any barriers ethnic minority residents and tenants might face in getting involved in initiatives, and include ways of overcoming them.

Are we doing it?

As set out on pages 3 and 4 and on the council's website:

- The Council recognises the importance of consulting with residents and one of the revised strategic housing objectives approved by the Council in November 2006⁵ is 'to encourage resident and stakeholder involvement in and participation in the delivery of a quality housing service'.
- The council aims to consult residents and others on both strategic and service issues relating to housing in the Borough and to encourage residents to participate in the Housing Department's decision-making process at the level of their choice.
- The council believes that the involvement of residents is central to the continued delivery of first class services to the homes it owns. It is vital to the continuous improvement of the housing service and is essential to the development of strong and sustainable communities.
- Residents who live in Council owned homes can get involved in many ways (set out in appendix 1 and on the website). Opportunities for participation include:
 - The formal resident participation structure (residents' associations, area housing panels, sheltered housing focus group, resident management organisations and Borough Residents' Forum)
 - Residents' Working Groups
 - Local management agreements
 - Surveys, including the Housing Link survey
 - Readers' panel
 - Mystery shopping
 - Estate inspections
 - Suggestions and complaints
 - Getting involved with other local groups with which the Department engages (for example, local groups for older people and local groups for disabled people).

As set out on page 5, the Department's 'Consultation and Participation Policy Statement, Strategy and Action Plan' which was subject to an EIA and approved by the Council in November 2006 includes an equalities statement which states that: 'The Housing Department will consult with all sections of the community in respect of the housing strategy, policy developments and service improvements. It will address any barriers which may prevent individuals playing a full part in any consultation or participation such as disability or where English is not the first language. When identifying locations for meetings etc. it will address access and facilities issues for those with a disability'.

⁵ [www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000294/M00002133/AI00003950/\\$PaperNo06904.docA.ps.pdf](http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/Published/C00000294/M00002133/AI00003950/$PaperNo06904.docA.ps.pdf)

Residents are encouraged to participate in the Housing Department's decision making process at the level of their choice by staff, articles in Homelife (the council's newsletter for council residents), the 'Get involved' pages on the website (see www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housing), and the 'resident participation' section of the Tenants' Housing Guide DVD for new tenants (launched March 2010 with an article included in the February 2010 edition of Homelife to notify existing tenants of its availability).

What should we be doing? - Satisfaction with services and that views are taken into account

The Equality Framework for Local Government states that, in an excellent authority:

- All sections of the community are satisfied that the authority and its partners have taken their views into account.

The CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing states that:

- Housing organisations should conduct satisfaction surveys, among other methods, to learn what residents and others in the community, think of their policies and services, and use the responses to evaluate their strategy for promoting racial equality. If the results show that people from particular racial groups are less satisfied with their services, the organisations should explore the reasons and take appropriate action.
- Housing organisations should monitor involvement, by racial group, for example by conducting surveys, and deal with any significant disparities between racial groups.

Are we doing it?

Previously, the Government required local authorities that own 1,000 or more general needs properties to periodically carry out a survey (known as the STATUS survey) in accordance with published guidance to find out about how satisfied tenants are with services provided by their landlord. This is no longer required. The last survey was carried out in 2008 and included the following questions:

- 'Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by your landlord?'
- 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your views are being taken into account by your landlord?'

The housing department also has its own arrangements for resident satisfaction surveys. It carries out surveys of its Housing Link panel (approximately 1,200 residents) three times a year on a range of subjects and to find out about how satisfied residents are with the services it provides. Every time a Housing Link survey is carried out (most recently April 2010) residents are asked:

- 'Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with the overall services provided by the Housing Department?'

In March 2009, a Housing Link survey was undertaken which focused on resident participation and asked the following questions:

- 'How satisfied are you with the opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the housing department?'
- 'How satisfied are you that your views are taken into account by the housing department?'

Analysis of the responses to the question about satisfaction with services provided can be found in the Housing Department's Annual Equalities Report (which was presented to the Borough Residents' Forum) and also in the 'Services to tenants' EIA.

This Resident Participation EIA focuses on the responses given regarding residents' satisfaction that their views are being taken into account by the housing department as their landlord and opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the housing department. Detailed analysis of responses to these questions is presented in appendix 2 and summarised in section five (pages 24 to 27).

What should we be doing? - Representative Participation, Understanding Needs and Engaging with Communities

The TSA's (Tenant Services Authority's) regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010 states that registered providers shall:

- offer all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing and
- Provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.

The Audit Commission (in its 'Housing Diversity KLOE' document) states that in an excellent authority:

- Members of service user groups are representative.
- The authority explores with service users the best way to target their particular community.
- The authority sets diversity goals for all service user involvement and monitors and reports on the breakdown of service user involvement bodies, surveys, forums and focus groups by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, disability, faith, location and others as relevant, including gypsies and travellers and new groups such as refugees and migrant workers.
- The authority has evidence-based knowledge of the needs of the borough and a range of mechanisms for engaging with communities in order to maximise representation, can demonstrate action taken, understands the needs of all existing groups, and has taken steps to include marginalized or 'new' groups, such as migrant workers and refugees, and can demonstrate outcomes from this activity.
- Minority and marginalized groups are able to express their views and are influential in informing and monitoring service provision.

The Equality Framework for Local Government states that, in an excellent authority:

- There is an improvement in the participation rates of under-represented groups in civic and public life.
- The authority has a sophisticated and segmented understanding of its local communities which influences and informs policy developments.
- Effective forums are in place to enable all equality stakeholders / representatives of vulnerable and marginalized groups to challenge, scrutinise and evaluate priorities.
- Partners review priorities regularly in the light of changing and conflicting community needs and interests.

The CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing states that:

- Housing organisations should take steps to encourage people from ethnic minorities to get involved; for example, by making positive moves to identify them, by translating material, working with individual groups, and appointing specialist staff to work with them. They should be flexible and willing to explore non-traditional forms of involvement.
- Housing organisations should be able to show what they have done to encourage ethnic minority involvement, and to publicise and promote good practice.
- Housing organisations should include among the criteria for granting recognition to residents' and tenants' organisations a requirement that they are truly open to all racial groups.
- Housing organisations should provide training for residents' and tenants' representatives (and any staff working for them). The training should cover their legal responsibilities under the RRA, and racial equality matters more generally.

Are we doing it?

Offering all residents a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing

As set out in appendix 1 and on the website, and summarised on pages 8 and 9:

- Residents who live in Council owned homes can get involved in many ways.
- The Department's 'Consultation and Participation Policy Statement, Strategy and Action Plan' which was subject to an EIA and approved by the Council in November 2006 includes an equalities statement which states that: 'The Housing Department will consult with all sections of the community in respect of the housing strategy, policy developments and service improvements. It will address any barriers which may prevent individuals playing a full part in any consultation or participation such as disability or where English is not the first language. When identifying locations for meetings etc. it will address access and facilities issues for those with a disability'.
- Residents are encouraged to participate in the Housing Department's decision making process at the level of their choice by staff, articles in Homelife (the council's newsletter for council residents), the 'Get involved' pages on the website (see www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housing), and the 'resident participation' section of the Tenants' Housing Guide DVD for new tenants (launched March 2010 with an article included in the February 2010 edition of Homelife to notify existing tenants of its availability).

Assessing Representative Participation

In order to assess how representative residents' groups, forums, focus groups, and survey responses are (in terms of e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, disability, faith), we would need (in order to enable comparison) this information from

- a) All residents which the group / forum / focus group / survey is designed to represent and
- b) The residents who make up the group / forum / focus group / survey sample.

Details of the council's tenants and leaseholders are recorded on its Saffron database. However, not all information is held for all residents:

- In line with the council's approach, residents have not been asked for information about their sexual orientation or religion
- For tenants, some information (gender and date of birth which can be used to calculate age) is held for all tenants and some information (ethnic origin and disability) can be recorded for all tenants but has not been obtained for all tenants.
- For leaseholders, personal information such as gender, date of birth, ethnicity and, to a lesser extent, disability is generally only held where the leaseholder was previously a tenant who purchased the property under the Right to Buy Scheme and this data was held prior to the sale. Therefore, for most leaseholders, the department has no information about their gender, age, ethnicity or disability and in many cases the leaseholder is an absentee landlord (i.e. they rent the property out and live elsewhere) who, in some cases, is a company rather than an individual. There is no requirement in council leases for leaseholders to provide to the council any details other than their names.

However, work is already planned to address some of these issues:

- To better capture information about new tenants' ethnic origin, staff are required to ensure that housing applicants have completed the 'Ethnic Origin' section of the application form (to either give their ethnic origin or state that they are not willing to do so) and to ensure that their response is correctly recorded on Saffron.
- To better capture information about new tenants' disability, new housing application forms have been introduced and Saffron has been amended to facilitate the recording of the more detailed disability information.
- The Department is considering:
 - contacting existing tenants to seek information about disability, communication needs and ethnic origin for existing tenants and household members; and
 - contacting existing and new leaseholders to ask if they are willing to provide their date of birth and gender and information about their ethnic origin, disability and communication needs.

Representative Sampling: Surveys

The Housing Link panel (see page 6) is designed to be broadly representative of the resident population in the council's housing stock, although clearly the sampling process is to some degree limited by the lack of some information (as discussed above).

Representative Residents' Associations

All residents' associations which wish to become involved with the formal participation structure are asked to undergo an accreditation process each year to ensure that they are representative of their area and that they meet some basic governance requirements.

Representative Area Housing Panels and Borough Residents' Forum

The information available is insufficient to enable meaningful analysis and the Department is considering how best this can be addressed.

Providing support to residents to build their capacity to be more effectively involved

To encourage and assist residents in participating in the provision of the housing service, there are four specialist Resident Participation Officers who are part of the Area Teams. Their role is to support accredited residents' associations and help set up and support the formation of new accredited residents' associations. They also have a monitoring role for the services provided by the twelve Resident Management Organisations (RMOs) who manage housing stock on behalf of the council.

The Resident Participation Officers work closely with the residents' associations in the borough and, where required, assist them in producing newsletters and holding estate or block events. The Housing Department is currently redeveloping the training offered to resident representatives and will be offering a skills assessment during 2011 to committee members of accredited residents' associations. Where specific skills gaps are identified, locally run training session for residents will be offered where possible. Funding is also provided for resident representatives to attend external short courses run by other providers.

TMO Board / Committee members are being encouraged to access free training to help them run their organisations effectively through the In the Driving Seat programme.

In The Driving Seat is a partnership between four Local Authority Officers Group (LACOG) members, the Peabody Trust and the Confederation of Co-operative Housing that has developed an annual training programme for board members of live and developing Co-ops and resident management Organisations (RMOs). The four LACOG members are City West Homes, and the London Boroughs Wandsworth, Southwark and Lambeth.

Through the Resident Participation Officers, resident representatives are also invited to attend relevant events in recognition of the key role they can play in communicating with the other residents in their area. For example, a number of residents attended the launch of the Wandsworth Domestic Violence Strategy in 2010.

Other mechanisms for engaging with communities

As set out in appendix 1, staff from the Housing Department actively engage in a number of multi-agency forums and working groups / strategy groups, which include Wandsworth residents, to ensure appropriate service delivery for people from different local communities including people from ethnic minority communities, people who are disabled physically or have sensory impairments, learning disabilities or mental health difficulties, children and older people.

The Department is also willing to explore with residents the best ways to target their particular community. For example:

- In April 2007, the Director of Housing represented the Department at a conference arranged by Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network and funded by the police to foster dialogue with the Somali community.
- In February 2008, the Head of Housing Services attended, along with the Balham Town Centre Manager, an informal advice surgery for the Polish community at the White Eagle Club in Balham.

What should we be doing? - Resident Participation in reviewing, monitoring and improving services

The Audit Commission (in its 'Housing Diversity KLOE' document) states that in an excellent authority:

- Members of service user groups are actively engaged in reviewing and determining how services are prioritised and delivered.
- Resident representatives determine priorities in conjunction with officers and lead the process. Representatives suggest and promote appropriate training programmes.
- Surveys, and other forms of consultation, are constructed with relevant service users and the information from them regularly monitored in conjunction with users: this, in turn, is used to inform service provision, and there is clear evidence to show that services have been improved.
- The performance of contractors and consultants is monitored, in conjunction with service users, and the results used to improve services.

Are we doing it?

Service standards and monitoring performance

During 2010, the Housing Department worked with residents to review and update its services standards. Residents and residents' representatives were asked (through a range of meetings, focus groups, surveys and Homelife – the council's newsletter for council residents) what housing services they think are important and what level of service they feel the department should be offering.

In April 2010, a Housing Link survey about service standards was carried out with a sample of residents. Of those who replied, 89 per cent thought it was important that residents are involved in setting service standards and 62 per cent believed all residents should be involved in monitoring performance. These findings were reported to residents in the December 2010 edition of Homelife.

The survey found that the most popular ways residents want to be involved and updated is through Homelife, estate meetings and residents' associations. The main areas respondents wanted to see monitoring were repairs, antisocial behaviour, cleaning, major works, complaints and resident satisfaction with services.

Between March and September 2010 the department produced consultation documents on the draft revised housing service standards for the quarterly area housing panel meetings, which are attended by residents' representatives. The Sheltered Housing Focus Group and the Coop forum were also consulted.

In the July 2010 edition of Homelife, council residents were asked:

- What services do you think are most important?
- What services matter most to you?
- What level of service do you feel the housing department should offer?
- What information on performance would you like to see?

A focus group was set up in August 2010 and met with staff to review the standards and the style and content of performance information reports including the Annual Report. Following acceptance by the area housing panels, the Sheltered Housing Focus Group and the Coop forum in September / October 2010, and recommendation by the Borough Residents' Forum, the revised housing service standards were approved by the Council in November 2010.

Residents were advised in the December 2010 edition of Homelife that the revised standards would be published by the end of the year, regularly monitored and reported in the annual report (which is itself published in Homelife).

As reported to residents in the December 2010 edition of Homelife the housing department has, in order to assist residents to measure its performance against the standards and hold it to account if they are not met:

- In consultation with residents, updated and improved the style and content of reports that are presented to the area housing panels and the annual report that is published in Homelife.
- Undertaken to publish ongoing information on performance at www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housingperformance.

Borough Residents' Forum

All reports concerning prioritisation and delivery of services and / or feedback from other forms of consultation are presented to the Borough Residents' Forum (BRF) then to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). The views of the BRF are set out in a report that is presented to HOSC by the resident who is Vice-Chairman of the BRF. This is to ensure that members of the HOSC give attention to the views of BRF when considering relevant items on the agenda. In this way, members of BRF are actively engaged in reviewing and determining how services are prioritised and delivered.

Estate inspections

Estate inspections take place regularly on estates across the borough with elected members meeting with local residents to check on the condition of the estates. They are accompanied by the Area Housing Manager, Estate Manager and Resident Participation Officer and residents are invited to join them by means of letters sent out in advance to all residents in the area concerned. Any local concerns can be raised and issues are set out in an agreed action plan which is monitored by the Councillor attending.

The 'Estate inspections' procedure (published December 2009) requires staff to use headed paper which includes on the back of any letters being sent to all properties in a block or estate:

- Translation panels in 12 languages which advise the applicant that 'This letter is from the council's housing department and contains important information. If you have difficulty understanding it in English, please contact Wandsworth Interpreting Service (020) 8871 5751/52'. The 12 languages are English, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Gujarati, Polish, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish, Tamil and Urdu;
- An advice panel which reads 'This letter is available in large print. Please ring the telephone number provided on the front of this letter'.

It also requires that the Area Housing Manager or Deputy Area Housing Manager emails a list of the estate inspections to Wandsworth Access Association (info@wandsworthaccess.org.uk) in order to provide them with the opportunity to attend the inspection to help assess the accessibility of the Council's housing estates.

Area Housing Panels and the Small Improvement Scheme

The Area Housing Panels cover the areas of Battersea, Putney, Roehampton and Tooting. Each accredited Residents' Association can send two members to each meeting of the Area Housing Panel for their area.

In November 2000 control of the budget for Small Improvements (£300,000 in 2010/11) was passed to accredited residents' associations through the Area Housing Panel structure. The scheme was amended in 2006 to give accredited residents' associations priority access to the funds for the first six months of the financial year.

In order to qualify for funds any scheme must:

- Be under £20,000 in cost
- Be an improvement (not replacement) and therefore non-rechargeable to leaseholders
- Not be part of an existing programme of works (e.g. door entry systems)
- Not incur any ongoing maintenance costs

In order to submit a scheme for consideration by the Area Housing Panel, residents' associations must submit a request through their Estate Manager or Resident Participation Officer. The types of schemes funded so far include landscaping, railings / boundary walls, improved estate access, and play areas.

What should we be doing? - Involving disabled people and learning from their experiences

The 'Guide to the Disability Equality Duty and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the Social Housing Sector', published by the former Disability Rights Commission (DRC) in July 2006 states that:

- Authorities should ensure that general data collection captures information about disabled people allowing their specific experiences to be examined.
- There are a wide variety of ways of involving disabled people, for example through local organisations of disabled people, where they exist.
- Customer service communication systems should be regularly checked with disabled customers to ensure they offer appropriate and accessible ways of communication, including opportunities for disabled people to express their opinions and influence the work of the organisation.

Are we doing it?

Ensuring that general data collection captures information about disabled people

To better capture information about new tenants' disability, new housing application forms have been introduced and Saffron has been amended to facilitate the recording of the more detailed disability information.

The Department is currently considering:

- contacting existing tenants to seek information about disability and communication needs for existing tenants and household members; and
- contacting existing and new leaseholders to ask if they are willing to provide information about disability and communication needs.

Involving disabled people through surveys

Details of the council's tenants and leaseholders are recorded on its Saffron database and the Housing Link panel is designed to be broadly representative of the resident population in the council's housing stock, although clearly the sampling process is to some degree limited by the lack of information about various things including disability for some residents (as discussed on page 12). All residents (tenants and leaseholders) on the Housing Link panel are asked whether they have any longstanding illness, disability or infirmity and whether this limits their activities in any way.

Involving disabled people through local organisations

In addition, Housing Department staff actively engage in a number of multi-agency forums and working groups / strategy groups with disabled residents (see appendix 1) which allows their specific experiences to be examined and the success of the strategy in meeting the housing needs of disabled people to be evaluated.

Through these groups, additional work is often undertaken in response to requests from disabled residents. For example:

- For many years, the Department has had an agreement in place with Wandsworth Access Association (WAA) that Housing Department staff will accompany members of the association on estate visits as and when requested in order to address issues around accessibility on Council estates. Since 2007/08, the Department has undertaken a more proactive lead by inviting WAA to all programmed estate inspections. The 'Estate inspections' procedure (published December 2009) requires that the Area Housing Manager or Deputy Area Housing Manager emails a list of the estate inspections to Wandsworth Access Association (info@wandsworthaccess.org.uk) in order to provide them with the opportunity to attend the inspection to help assess the accessibility of the Council's housing estates.

- As a member of the Action for Ability Group (formerly known as the Wandsworth Strategy Group for People aged 18 to 60 with a Physical Disability, Chronic Illness or Sensory Impairment) the Department produced and consulted on a People with a Physical Disability, Chronic Illness or Sensory Impairment Housing Policy Statement, Strategy And Action Plan which was published during June 2007 and launched at the first 'action for ability day' which was held on 21st June 2007 at Wilditch Community Centre in Battersea SW11 (Latchmere).
- The day, themed 'living and working in Wandsworth', which was organised by disabled residents and staff from the Housing Department and Adult Social Services Department focused on three main topics chosen by service users: housing, employment and confidence building. In line with residents' wishes, the Housing Department arranged a 'Question Time' style panel discussion on housing which gave delegates the opportunity to question senior managers from the Housing Department, Adult Social Services Department (Occupational Therapy Service and Supporting People Team), Home Improvement Agency and Home Ownership Team. The Housing Department also facilitated the provision and staffing of stalls to provide information and answer questions about services provided by the Housing Department, Home Improvement Agency, Occupational Therapy Service, and Home Ownership Team. Delegates were also able to view, and provide feedback on, the housing web pages which had been developed to include a section containing information specifically for disabled people.
- A short article about the day was included in the November 2007 edition of Homelife (the Council's newsletter for Council tenants and leaseholders) and further information about the day and services provided was included in the winter 2007/08 edition of Fulfilling Lives (the Council's newsletter for Wandsworth residents with a physical disability, chronic illness or sensory impairment).
- Housing Department staff have, at the request of the Wandsworth Access Association and Wandsworth Care Alliance, attended meetings of those groups to get feedback about disabled people's experiences and provide information about services. This is in addition to the active involvement of Housing Department staff in a number of multi-agency forums and working groups / strategy groups with disabled residents (see appendix 1).
- In putting together the Housing Department's compulsory one-day equality and diversity training course (see below), staff consulted service users from Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) about what they thought the disability awareness section should include and a DVD produced by the service users to highlight some of the barriers they face was screened. All new staff have attended the course or will receive the training as part of their induction programme.

Ensuring that staff receive relevant training in order to deliver the service in line with the department's equalities policy

What should we be doing?

The Equality Framework for Local Government states that in an excellent authority:

- Services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff who are equipped to meet the diverse needs of local communities.

The Audit Commission (in its 'Housing Diversity KLOE' document) states that in an excellent authority:

- Training for all staff is inclusive and compulsory.
- All staff understand their responsibilities in relation to harassment and domestic violence.

The CRE Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing states that:

- Housing organisations should have formal induction procedures for all staff in decision making roles ... The procedures should cover their responsibilities under the Race Relations Act and racial equality more generally.
- All staff should be given training on racial equality so that they understand their responsibilities under the Race Relations Act, and how prejudice and stereotyping can lead to unlawful racial discrimination and harassment.

The 'Guide to the Disability Equality Duty and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the Social Housing Sector', published by the former Disability Rights Commission (DRC) in July 2006, states that housing organisations should ensure that all staff are aware of how to respond with confidence to enquiries from disabled customers.

Are we doing it?

Mandatory equalities training (that was developed by the department's equalities lead in partnership with colleagues and an external trainer) is in place for all staff to ensure that they are aware of their equalities responsibilities and to provide them with best practice equalities guidance on delivering services. All Housing Department staff attended the bespoke one-day compulsory equalities and diversity training course between June and December 2007.

The course included training on race equality, dealing with hate crime and harassment of residents due to their race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other reason, and interpreting services (including interpreting services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing). The section on interpreting services was developed in partnership with the manager of the Wandsworth Interpreting Service (WIS) who delivered that part of the training.

The training also covered gender equality, domestic violence, sexual harassment, disability awareness, services for disabled people and serving disabled customers. In putting together the training, staff from the Housing Department consulted service users from Wandsworth Care Alliance (WCA) about what the disability awareness section should include and a DVD produced by the service users was screened. This training has now been incorporated into the induction process so that all new staff are trained.

An article was included in the December 2010 edition of Housing Matters (the department's staff newsletter) about the Equality Act 2010, with links to further information on the intranet, including an updated copy of the Equality and Diversity Information Manual that was provided as part of the training. The article reminded staff of the need for them to ensure that they can do the following and links were provided to the relevant procedures on the intranet:

- Update personal details on Saffron (the Department's housing management system) including information about disability and communication needs
- Respond to adaptation requests
- Refer tenants to the Tenancy Support Service
- Advise people how to apply for housing and transfers
- Help people who need advice and assistance as a result of domestic violence (including by providing them with the domestic violence and abuse leaflet)

Various other non-compulsory equalities-related courses are available for all council staff.

Do the results show that there is an adverse impact?

No.

Section Four- Improving the service delivered.

If the EIA has shown that there is an Adverse Impact what changes or practical measures would reduce adverse impact on particular groups? N/A.

What can be done proactively to improve access to/take up of the service?

The Housing Department will continue working with residents through Residents' Working Groups and other means to improve opportunities for residents to participate and to encourage resident participation including by exploring options which might present themselves through the establishment of community champions and the Wandsworth Challenge.

The role of residents in helping to shape the housing services delivered by the Department is recognised as being of great importance. For this reason, the Council has periodically approved and supported the setting up of Residents' Working Groups.

As part of the ongoing commitment to enable residents to participate at the level of their choice, a Residents' Working Group was established in June 2009 to consider further opportunities for enhancement of the resident participation structure. Specifically, the Residents' Working Group considered issues concerning support for residents' associations, communication with residents, training, performance monitoring and information technology.

In October 2010⁶, the Council approved an action plan to address the recommendations of the Residents' Working Group. The action plan sets out initiatives to broaden the methods of communication used, increase awareness of resident participation opportunities and further enhance the role that residents play in improving the services provided by the Housing Department and Council. In particular, the Council approved recommendations that the Housing Department should:

- Look into options for assisting accredited residents' associations with developing newsletters to enable them to communicate with their members more effectively;
- Develop and define a process to encourage the formation of associate residents' associations, with less stringent recognition criteria, as a stepping stone to the development of fully accredited associations;
- Where there are key issues arising which affect residents ensure that opportunities continue to be provided for residents to continue to meet to discuss these issues;
- Raise awareness with residents of the role of the Resident Participation Officers to encourage the formation of more residents' associations – A 'Setting up a Residents' Association' leaflet was published in October 2010;
- Undertake a skills assessment of all current residents' association committee members to identify any skills gaps and to provide briefings and a training programme to meet such needs - The Housing Department is currently redeveloping the training offered to resident representatives and will be offering a skills assessment during 2011 to committee members of accredited residents' associations. Where specific skills gaps are identified, locally run training session for residents will be offered where possible. Funding is also provided for resident representatives to attend external short courses run by other providers.

⁶ Paper No. 10-672: <http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=11838>

- Undertake a review of the performance monitoring information currently provided to all Area Housing Panels to ensure that it better meets the requirements of residents' representatives - A focus group was set up in August 2010 and met with staff to review the standards and the style and content of performance information reports including the Annual Report. As reported to residents in the December 2010 edition of Homelife the housing department has, in order to assist residents to measure its performance against its service standards and hold it to account if they are not met:
 - In consultation with residents, updated and improved the style and content of reports that are presented to the area housing panels and the annual report that is published in Homelife.
 - Undertaken to publish ongoing information on performance at www.wandsworth.gov.uk/housingperformance.
- Look at the feasibility of developing a residents' association area of the Housing Department website;
- Establish a review group of residents' representatives to be consulted on the further development of the Department's website and to consider other methods of communication using the increasing developments in the internet;
- Review the Homelife magazine in terms of content and layout to identify what improvements can be made.

In addition, approval was given for the establishment of a Residents' Working Group to look at the feasibility of developing with residents a network of 'Community Champions' to work on the Council's housing estates.

The actions approved by the Council in October 2010 (as set out above) will improve how the Department informs and liaises with its diverse resident base and the way in which resident involvement is used to improve services.

What is the justification for taking these measures?

The council believes that the involvement of residents is central to the continued delivery of first class services to the homes it owns. It is vital to the continuous improvement of the housing service and is essential to the development of strong and sustainable communities.

What future monitoring and evaluation tools will be appropriate and effective?

Feedback from surveys and other forms of participation as outlined in this document.

Section Five – Summary

What are the key findings of this EIA?

Opportunities for residents to participate in the Housing Department's decision-making process at the level of their choice are provided in a manner which is consistent with the council's equalities policy and which promotes equality.

There is no evidence to suggest any significant difference in levels of residents' satisfaction that their views are being taken into account by their landlord (the council) on the basis of gender, disability, religion or sexual orientation, although there do seem to be some differences in levels of satisfaction between younger and older residents and the situation in relation to race is unclear.

There is no evidence to suggest any significant difference in levels of residents' satisfaction with the opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the Housing Department on the basis of gender, disability or race, although there do seem to be some differences in levels of satisfaction between residents of different ages. This is based on responses to the March 2009 Housing Link survey, which did not ask respondents for information about religion or sexual orientation.

As set out on page 6 residents were asked, through the 2008 STATUS survey and March 2009 Housing Link survey, questions about how satisfied they are that their views are being taken into account by the Housing Department and how satisfied they are with opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the housing department. Detailed analysis of the responses to these questions is presented in appendix 2 and summarised below. Caution must be taken in the interpretation of some of the data, particularly where sample sizes are very small.

Gender

Neither the 2008 STATUS survey (tenants only) or the March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found any significant difference between male and female respondents' levels of satisfaction that their views are being taken into account but both found that male respondents were slightly more likely to be satisfied than female respondents. The 2008 STATUS survey (tenants only) found that 58 per cent of male respondents were satisfied compared to 55 per cent of female respondents. Similarly, the March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found that 56 per cent of male respondents were satisfied compared to 52 per cent of female respondents.

The March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found no significant difference between male and female respondents' levels of satisfaction with opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the Housing Department, although it did find that male respondents were slightly more likely to be satisfied (59 per cent) than female respondents (55 per cent).

Age

Both the 2008 STATUS survey (tenants only) and the March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found that, in general, older respondents were more likely to be satisfied that their views are being taken into account, which is consistent with findings from other tenant satisfaction research. The 2008 STATUS survey (tenants only) found that levels of satisfaction ranged from 34 per cent for 25 to 34 year old respondents to 68 per cent for respondents aged 75 to 84 and 84 per cent for respondents aged 85 or over. Similarly, the March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found that levels of satisfaction ranged from 43 per cent for 16 to 44 year old respondents to 71 per cent for respondents aged 75 or over.

The March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found that levels of satisfaction with opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the Housing Department ranged from 44 per cent for 16 to 34 year old respondents to 73 per cent for those aged 75 or over, although the second highest level of satisfaction (69 per cent) was given by the 55 to 59 year old respondents.

Race

The 2008 STATUS survey (tenants only) found that white respondents were slightly more likely to be satisfied that their views are being taken into account than respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities, which is consistent with findings from other tenant satisfaction research: It found that 57 per cent of white respondents were satisfied that their views are being taken into account compared to 52 per cent of respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities.

In contrast, the March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found that respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities were slightly more likely to be satisfied that their views are being taken into account than white respondents: It found that 59 per cent of respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities were satisfied that their views are being taken into account compared to 51 per cent of white respondents. If leaseholders are excluded from the analysis (to enable comparison with the tenants-only results from the 2008 STATUS survey), 67 per cent of the respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities were satisfied that their views are being taken into account compared to 60 per cent of the white respondents.

The March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found no significant difference in levels of satisfaction with opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the Housing Department between white respondents and respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities, although it did find that white respondents were slightly more likely to be satisfied (57 per cent) than respondents from non-white ethnic minority communities (55 per cent).

The results quoted here distinguish between white and non-white Black and Minority ethnic (BME) residents. Whilst it is recognised that grouping BME residents in this way masks some markedly different ethnic backgrounds, it does enable a more accurate means of identifying significant differences. The data tables included in the appendix differentiate results by ethnic origin further.

Disability: There is no evidence to suggest any significant difference between disabled and non-disabled residents' levels of satisfaction that their views are being taken into account.

In the 2008 STATUS survey (tenants only):

- Of the 344 respondents who said they or someone in their household has a long-term limiting illness, health problem or disability that limits the work they can do, 56 per cent were satisfied that their views are being taken into account.
- Of the 371 respondents who said neither they or anyone in their household has a long-term limiting illness, health problem or disability that limits the work they can do, the same proportion (56 per cent) were satisfied that their views are being taken into account.
- 67 per cent of the 42 respondents who said they or someone in their household use a wheelchair said they were satisfied that their views are being taken into account compared to 56 per cent of the tenants who said nobody in their household uses a wheelchair.

Similarly, in the March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders), the level of satisfaction that their views are taken into account by the Housing Department was 55 per cent for respondents with a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity and 52 per cent for those without.

The March 2009 Housing Link survey (tenants and leaseholders) found no significant difference between levels of satisfaction with opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the Housing Department expressed by respondents with a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity (58 per cent) and those without (56 per cent).

Religion: Of the 847 tenants who responded to the 2008 Status survey question 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your views are being taken into account by your landlord?' (excluding those who answered 'no opinion'):

- 59 per cent classified themselves as Christian and 60 per cent of them were satisfied.
- 16 per cent stated that they have no religion and 49 per cent of them were satisfied.
- 14 per cent either didn't answer the question or indicated that they would prefer not to say and 48 per cent of them were satisfied.
- 7 per cent classified themselves as Muslim and 68 per cent of them were satisfied.
- 4 per cent classified their religion as other religions and 53 per cent of them were satisfied.

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|---|
| <p>Sexual orientation: Of the 847 tenants who responded to the 2008 Status survey question ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your views are being taken into account by your landlord?’ (excluding those who answered ‘no opinion’):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 61 per cent classified themselves as heterosexual and 53 per cent of them were satisfied. - 33 per cent either didn’t answer the question or indicated that they would prefer not to say and 62 per cent of them were satisfied. - One per cent (nine tenants) classified themselves as gay men and four of them were satisfied. - Less than one per cent (three tenants) classified themselves as gay women and all of them were satisfied. - Less than one per cent (three tenants) classified themselves as bisexual and two of them were satisfied. - Four per cent stated their sexual orientation as ‘other’ and 65 per cent of them were satisfied. |
| <p>Are the aims of the service/policy consistent with wider Council policies on Equality and Diversity? Yes.</p> |
| <p>What are the priority recommendations and actions?</p> <p>Continue the work already under way to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all residents who live in council-owned properties are encouraged to participate in the housing department’s decision-making process at the level of their choice. • ensure that staff have received relevant training in order to deliver the service in line with the department’s equalities policy |
| <p>How can these recommendations be built into wider planning and review processes?</p> <p>Continue to monitor satisfaction with opportunities for participation by ethnic origin, age, gender and disability through the Housing Link survey, and consider the implications of any change in the council’s approach to monitoring of sexual orientation and religion or belief.</p> |
| <p>What indicators of effectiveness or targets are recommended for future use? N/A</p> |
| <p>Which of the following does the service/policy relate to?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eliminating discrimination (Yes) 2. Promoting equal opportunities (Yes) 3. Promoting good relations (Yes) |
| <p>How would you rank the service/policy in relation to relevance to equality?): High Why did you allocate this ranking? It is essential that all residents who live in Council owned properties can participate in the Housing Department’s decision making process at the level of their choice.</p> |

Section Six – Action Plan.

The following actions will be added to the Corporate Equality Plan.

| Action | Who will be responsible? | Resources and training required | Targets and milestones (give three year target and milestones) |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| | | | |

The following actions are already included in the Corporate Equality Plan:

| Action | Who will be responsible? | Resources and training required | Targets and milestones (give three year target and milestones) |
|---|---|--|---|
| Consider contacting existing tenants to seek information about disability, ethnic origin and communication needs for existing tenants and household members. Consider how records can be kept up to date. | Housing Management and Strategy and Development | Within existing resources | 2010/11 |
| Consider contacting existing and new leaseholders to ask if they are willing to provide their date of birth and gender and information about their ethnic origin, disability and communication needs. | Housing Management and Strategy and Development | Within existing resources | 2010/11 |

Section Seven – Feedback on the findings of the EIA

What did external organisations say about your findings when you shared this EIA with them?

On 18 February 2011, the Housing Department sent out emails / letters to the organisations listed on page 2 inviting them to read the EIA and provide feedback by completing and returning a feedback form by 13 May 2011. Housing Department staff were invited to provide feedback by way of a news item that was published on the intranet on 17 March 2011.

In addition, at the request of the Wandsworth Access Association, Anna Williams (Policy and Performance Officer) attended their meeting on 9 May to give a presentation on the findings of the EIA.

Although no feedback forms were received, one short response was received from the Secretary of the Wandsworth Older People's Forum.

In her response she:

- Noted that the survey results suggest that older residents are generally more satisfied than younger residents with opportunities to participate in the management and decision making of the housing department, and also that their views are taken into account;
- Asked whether Estate Managers walk around the estate and engage with residents;
- Asked whether the Housing Department is ever asked for documents in other languages or in Braille or audio versions;
- Asked whether the Housing Department knows how many residents (tenants or leaseholders) have another language as their first and would not be able to read an English document or survey, or how many are blind or have poor vision.

Ian Stewart, Head of Housing Management, has written to her to thank her for and respond to her comments / questions, and invite her to contact him if she has any further questions about the Housing Department's work in relation to resident participation.