

Redbridge Homes Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and Equality Schemes (2008 – 2011)

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FOREWORD

Redbridge Homes is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and diversity for all our tenants, leaseholders, residents; and both current and future employees. We are working towards equal opportunities and diversity in both the way we provide services for our tenants and leaseholders and in the way we recruit and employ staff. Our overarching principles support our commitment to:

- Valuing diversity in the community we serve and in the workplace, recognising our legal and moral responsibilities to be fair.
- Treating all tenants, customers, clients, employees and potential employees fairly and consistently.
- Ensuring that no one is treated less favourably on the grounds of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, race, appearance, religious belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, responsibility for dependants, disability, HIV or AIDS status, trade union or political activity, or any other grounds (as outlined in the Human Rights Act 1998), which cannot be justified.

The Scheme includes the Equality Schemes for all six equality categories, including the Race Equality Scheme (RES), Gender Equality Scheme and the Disability Equality Scheme (DES). The Scheme sets out how we will meet our legal duties under a range of equalities legislation including the Human Rights Act 1998, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRA), Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005 (DDA), the Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006, and the recently revised CRE Race Relations Code of Practice (Housing) Order 2006.

This Equality and Diversity Policy also expands on our core values of being resident focused, accountable, accessible and effective and results oriented. A full account of our Mission Statement and Core Values is contained in Appendix 8.

Signed: Barry Preedy, Christine Lee

Redbridge Homes Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Introduction

Redbridge is one of the UK's most diverse, & multi-ethnic boroughs. Presently, it is estimated that over 40% of the local population comprise of black & minority ethnic communities, and over 120 different languages are spoken in Redbridge. As a result of this rich diversity, it is vital that community cohesion and combating social exclusion are placed at the heart of promoting diversity and equal opportunities in Redbridge.

A Profile of Redbridge

A major feature of Redbridge is its diversity, and for this reason borough level statistics can give a distorted picture. There can also be diversity within wards. With deprivation, for example, we can have a very deprived area within a relatively affluent ward. The Orchard Estate, which is a deprived area, is situated in the otherwise affluent Roding ward. With ethnicity the Loxford ward is, according to Simpson's Ethnic Diversity Index for England and Wales 2001, the fifth most diverse borough in England. Clementswood also features on the list at 11th. Ward-level analysis also shows wards in Hounslow and Redbridge to be very diverse with regards to religion. This diversity means that services need to be carefully designed to meet the needs of all the groups in the Borough, which again represents a significant challenge for the future. Redbridge Homes will be in a better position to tailor its services when we have completed our resident profile, but until then we will use census information and local knowledge to plan our services.

Ethnicity

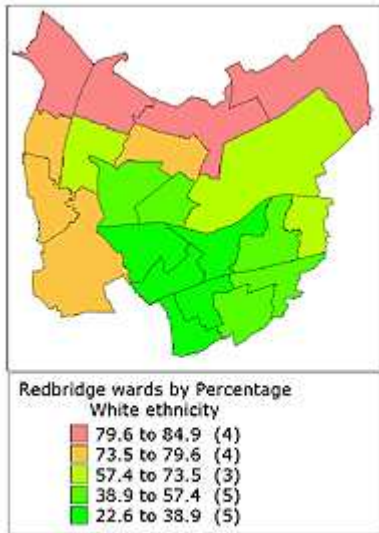
There are a variety of measures of the population of Redbridge, some more or less valid. Redbridge Homes is improving its collection of population, customer base, and service user profiles. These will be available later in the year 2008.

The GLA 2007 Round Ethnic Group Projections give us the following information. Redbridge has a diverse population of 252,004. The population of Redbridge has increased by about 2.6% from 2002 to 2007. The change varies between age groups, with the biggest increases expected in the 15-24 and 45-64 groups.

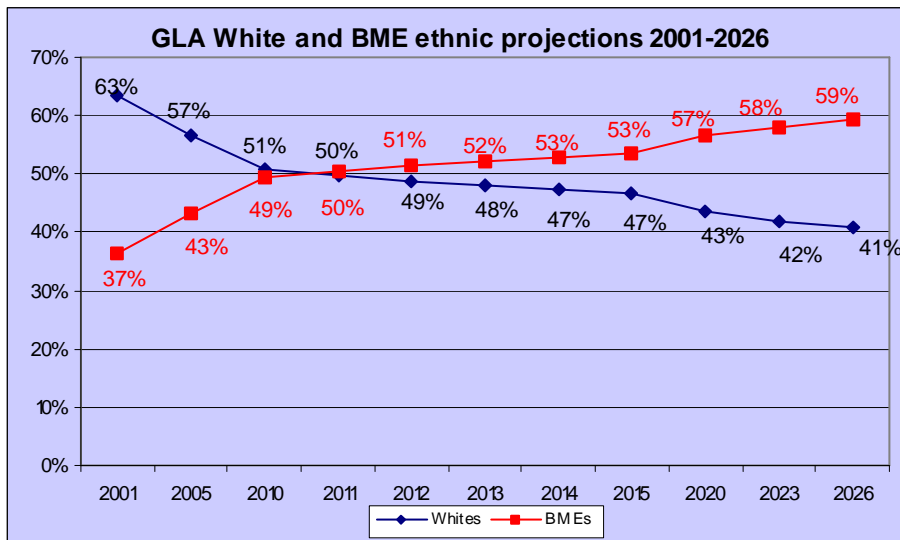
Ethnic Group	Numbers	%
White	133,098	53%
Black Caribbean	11,431	5%
Black African	11,575	5%
Black Other	4,696	2%
Indian	41,537	16%
Pakistani	21,681	9%
Bangladeshi	7,365	3%
Chinese	2,118	1%
Other Asian	12,347	5%
Other	4,172	2%
All Ethnicities	252,004	100%

The percentage of population from black or another ethnic minority is expected to increase by 6% from 2001–2011. The majority of residents from minority ethnic groups live in the south of the borough where in 8 wards they account for more than 20% of the population; the highest percentage being Loxford with over 50%. Hainault on the other hand, has a white population of over 88%, and Monkham's a white population of over 89%, the lowest percentage of ethnic minorities. Seven Kings has the highest percentage of Indian residents at 26%, while Clementswood has the lowest percentage of White residents at 29%. Clementswood also has the highest percentage of Black residents at 13%. It should be noted that these statistics are all derived from the 2001 Census. However the Redbridge Council commissioned a Redbridge Housing Needs and Requirements Study carried out by Opinion Research Services in 2006, suggests that Pakistani and Black African households were under enumerated (under counted) in the Census.

By 2010 it is predicted that nearly 50% of the young population will be from ethnic minorities. This changing demographic is key to future planning and development of services in the borough, particularly around issues such as English as a second language. To date, Redbridge has managed to avoid many of the problems faced by some multi-cultural areas, due to a determination on behalf of Redbridge Homes, the Council and its partners to make the most of the communities in the area. The Redbridge Housing Needs and Requirements Study established that a majority of households felt that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds could live together harmoniously. Non-White households and those aged over 55 years were most likely to feel part of the community



The Chart below, based on information provided by the GLA in 2006, shows how the population of Redbridge will change over the next 20 years. By 2011 the white and ethnic minority populations will be equally numerous, and by 2026 the white population will be 41%, and the black and minority ethnic population will be 59%.



Religion

Within Redbridge there is also a range of religions; mainly Christian 51%, Muslim 12%, Hindu 8%, Jewish 6%, Sikh 5.5%, Buddhist 0.5% and 0.5% other religions with 10% stating no religion and 7% declining to answer. Some wards will also show an overrepresentation of particular groups. The Barkingside and Clayhill wards contain particular clusters of Jewish people. Redbridge has the 3rd largest Sikh

population in London, and the 4th largest in the country. It has the 6th largest Muslim population in London and the 12th largest in the country.

Nearly 10% of Redbridge’s population explicitly stated that they had no religion, whilst over 7 % did not state any preference. It should be noted from the table below that the Redbridge Council Commissioned survey ‘Redbridge Housing Needs and Requirements’, which was produced in January 2006, suggests that the figures for religion, like those on ethnicity, are an underestimate.

Religion	Number of Households (Weighted and extrapolated)	Housing Needs & Requirements Study 2005 %	Census 2001 %
Christian	51,781	54.3	56.8
Buddhist	307	0.3	0.5
Hindu	7,159	7.5	5.9
Jewish	6,360	6.7	7.0
Muslim	10,376	10.9	8.0
Sikh	3,415	3.6	3.6
Other	1,198	1.3	0.5
No religion/none stated	14,722	15.4	17.8

Figure 7: Religion, by all households

Age and Disability

In addition there are age and disabilities demographic factors that will impinge on the equalities strategy. For a relatively large number of indicators, health is better in Redbridge than the average for both England and London. These include male and female life expectancy, mortality rate from circulatory diseases, mortality rate from lung cancer, teenage conception.

Infant mortality in Redbridge is higher than for both England and London.

There are several indicators where health is worse than the average for England, but not than the average for London. These include the Tuberculosis (TB) notification rate, HIV rate and oral health in children under five years old.

There are two indicators where health is worse than the average for London, but not worse than the average for England. Self-reported limiting long term illness (chronic illnesses that restricts individuals' ability to perform activities of daily living e.g. asthma or arthritis) is higher in Redbridge than London as a whole. Deaths from cancers for people under 75 are marginally higher than the rate for London as a whole.

In the 2001 Census, Redbridge residents classified their health as follows:

Health	Number of people	Redbridge %	England & Wales %
Good	166,466	69.8%	68.6%
Fairly good	52,152	21.9%	22.2%
Not good	20,017	8.4%	9.2%

Limiting long-term illness is used to describe a situation where illness, health problems or disability affect activities or the work a person can undertake. 16.3% of the population of Redbridge (38,906 people) indicated they had a limiting long-term illness. This figure is lower than the national average of 18.2%, but higher than the London average of 15.5%.

18,203 adults (12.2%) of working age in Redbridge have a limiting long-term illness. Again, this is lower than the England and Wales average of 13.6% and slightly higher than the London average of 11.9%. In Redbridge 30,415 households contain at least one person with a limiting long-term illness. This is 33.0% of the households in the borough, and we would expect Redbridge Homes tenants to be over-represented in this category.

The 'Redbridge Housing Needs and Requirements Study' does show big differences between white and black and minority ethnic households. 25% (15,269) of households with a White respondent contained someone suffering from a health problem compared with 19% (6,538) of households with a NonWhite respondent. This was particularly low for households with a Black respondent, where only 11% (877) contained someone suffering from a health problem. The main problems faced by some persons are walking and mobility problems and difficulties due to old age. The survey shows that both of these issues were much more likely to affect White British persons because of their greater average age.

Unemployment

The 2001 Census documented the rate of unemployment as 3.6 % in Redbridge (3.3% for England, and 4.4% for London). Church End ward had the lowest unemployment rate (2.4%) and the Loxford and Valentines wards had unemployment rates (5.6% and 5.5 % respectively).

Carers

Within Redbridge, 23,848 people (10% of the population) provide unpaid care for others because of illness or old age. Of those who provide unpaid care, 68.4%

(16,312 people) provide up to 19 hours of help per week, 11.9% (2,831 people) provide 20–49 hours of care per week and 19.7% (4,705 people) provide more than 50 hours per week. This is very similar to the national picture, although a slightly higher percentage (20.9%) provide 50 or more hours of care nationally.

Working with Partners

Redbridge Homes intends to support work undertaken by its partner organisations like Morrison, and the Council, to improve the quality of life for all tenants & leaseholders. The organisation endeavours to achieve this by providing good quality housing services, putting tenants and residents needs first and taking an active role in partnership with the community. Redbridge Homes strives to ensure that the diverse local needs are met and that services are delivered appropriately.

Redbridge Homes Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy reconfirms our commitment to the diverse households in Redbridge and to our staff. This policy also complies with the Management Agreement made between Redbridge Homes & Redbridge Council when becoming an ALMO, to operate equal opportunity policies and procedures in all aspects of our work and comply with all relevant legislation as well as statutory and other official guidance and codes of practice. With the agreement of the Council we have amended the delivery plan so that our policy concurs more closely with good practice in housing. The reasons we requested this are available in Appendix A. Until April 2007 we were covered by Redbridge Council's Race, Disability and Gender equality schemes. As an Arms Length Management Organisation we are required to develop our own policies and procedures, and this document is part of that process.

Equality of Opportunity and Diversity – What it means to us?

Equality of opportunity and promoting diversity in Redbridge is about making sure that everyone can fully join in the social, cultural, educational, political and economic life of the borough, whilst ensuring that community cohesion is achieved by tackling disaffection and without alienating or isolating communities.

Redbridge Homes will meet its legal obligations under the following legislation:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Data Protection Act 1998
- European Directives on Employment, Religion, Sexuality & Beliefs
- Local Government Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equality Act 2006
- CRE Revised Code of Practice for Race Equality in Housing

Redbridge Homes will also meet all its duties under emerging legislation which outlaws discrimination at work and in training on grounds of sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief and age. Hammersmith Homes have kindly allowed us to use their comprehensive account of the legal context – Appendix 9.

Policy Statement

Redbridge Homes is fully committed to equality of opportunity for all people, and fair treatment for all our communities regardless of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, race, appearance, religious belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, responsibility for dependants, disability, HIV or AIDS status, and any disadvantaged or hard to reach group in society. We are also committed to promoting diversity.

Promoting Community Leadership and Resident Involvement

Redbridge Homes will address and include promoting equality and diversity at every stage of policy, planning, service delivery and review. All our core activities will take equalities and diversity into account. In practice, this will mean:

- Building the competence of staff to achieve equality and diversity results
- Steering & supporting staff efforts with equality and diversity expertise
- Setting clear equalities and diversity indicators & targets in work activities, and monitoring and improving our performance using evidence from our Residents Profile and service user statistics.
- Creating clear accountability
- Appraising performance
- Recognising achievements
- Tackling under performance
- Challenging persistent failures

This policy recognises that Redbridge Homes has major functions as an employer, a provider & commissioner of services, a regulator and a facilitator & promoter of resident involvement & leadership . Redbridge Homes will continue to work closely with other direct service providers and partners, including the private sector, voluntary groups and other agencies, to promote equal opportunities and diversity policies and practices and promote cohesive communities.

Workforce

Redbridge Homes is also working to make sure that its management and staff reflects the diversity of its population. A key aim is to ensure that people from all sections of Redbridge's diverse communities have equality of opportunity to obtain work in all areas and at all levels & grades within Redbridge Homes.

Services

Redbridge Homes is committed to providing high quality services that are accessible to everyone. It continues to consult with our residents, through a variety of forums to ensure that its services meet the needs of individuals and communities. Services are developed so that they are responsive and appropriate to Redbridge's diverse communities.

Redbridge Homes makes sure that the way it operates does not discriminate unlawfully against staff or service users.

Improving Communications and Promoting Consultation & Involvement

To make sure there is full leaseholder and tenant involvement, even though proven results may be difficult to ascertain, Redbridge Homes will:

- Encourage, support and empower socially excluded, disadvantaged groups and individuals to overcome their difficulties and fully participate in community involvement teams, forums, groups and projects.
- Make sure that other organisations and companies (that work in partnership with Redbridge Homes or receive funding from Redbridge

Homes) have effective Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policies, including procurement contracts.

- Support the establishment of target interest groups such as the Unity Forum, which can ensure that the views of traditionally under represented groups can be made known to Redbridge Homes.
- Establish information systems, which include all aspects of equalities and diversity monitoring in accordance with our statutory obligations and best practice. We will ensure our monitoring systems adequately reflect where there is a non take up of services thus monitoring adverse impact and as a result initiate systems to ensure there is maximum take up of services by disadvantaged groups. These include:
 - Presenting key information & documents in alternative formats when requested, including community languages, Braille and large print, audiotape, email. We have also developed accessibility guidelines – Appendix C.
 - Continuing to provide interpretation & translation services through our contract with Newham Language Shop .
 - Reviewing assessment procedures for people eligible for our homes (This will involve working with our partners in the Council)
 - Monitoring the take up of services & devising specialist services, which ensure equitable take up
 - Operating Redbridge Homes Communications Strategy to ensure all tenants & residents have access to the information and services provided by Redbridge Homes
 - Meeting the legal responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, by identifying and if necessary and possible adapting all buildings owned by Redbridge Homes that the public access
 - Publication of core generic equality and diversity performance indicators – These will evidence Redbridge Homes performance against the Audit Commission’s Performance Indicators for Equality and Diversity – the Key Lines of Enquiry.

- Establish an Equality and Diversity Action Plan – This will outline individual targets for improving equality of opportunity and promoting diversity, and linking priority work to corporate frameworks such as the generic standards and the Audit Commission’s Equality and Diversity Performance Indicators.
- Meet our legal responsibilities to promote equal opportunities under equalities legislation including the Disabilities Discrimination Act 1995, Race Relations Act 1976 /2000 & Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the revised CRE Code of Practice in Rented Housing.
- Devise and implement procurement & commissioning (buying) policies which ensure, where possible, that other direct service providers, commissioned to provide services for Redbridge Homes, have similar policies on equal opportunities and diversity, and that they follow the CRE Race & Procurement guidelines.
- Ensure all information held by Redbridge Homes relating to tenants & residents, including service users & staff, are safeguarded under the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Promoting Equality and Diversity in Service Delivery

As a provider of housing services, we will:

- Mainstream the Equality and Diversity Action Plan within Redbridge Homes Service Plan
- Undertake equality impact assessments in all areas of service delivery
- Make services relevant and accessible to all service users and ensure levels of satisfaction are continuously monitored
- Target resources to groups and communities who are most socially excluded, whilst building cohesive communities
- Ensure quality, equity and consistency in working practices and service delivery
- Be accountable to the people and communities in Redbridge

- Adhere to the Customer Feedback Procedure when investigating customer complaints.
- Ensure that services are based on consultation with those who receive the service & positive steps are taken to include socially excluded groups in the decision-making process
- Ensure that services are flexible and responsive to the changing needs of our customers

Promoting Equality of Opportunity and Diversity in Employment & Training

As an equal opportunities employer, we will consult with staff and continue to develop our Policy for Equality of Opportunity and Diversity in Employment to include:

Developing a high-quality diverse workforce through our Training & Development Strategy.

Operating and monitoring a fair, open and non-discriminatory Recruitment, Selection & Retention Policy.

Introducing and operating appropriate Work/Life Balance Policies, including birth, maternity and special care leave arrangements for those caring for sick dependants, offer job-share arrangements, and continue flexitime arrangements.

Consulting with staff at all levels and recognised Trade Unions.

Undertaking Human Resources monitoring by continuing to update Redbridge Homes workforce profiles, monitoring applications for jobs, promotion & training; monitoring grievance, harassment & disciplinary action; performance appraisals & dismissals and by utilising staff exit questionnaires.

Collecting and publishing agreed Organisational Health Indicators. For example, performance indicators on targets for the employment of women, disabled people and black or minority ethnic people.

Implementing revised procedures to ensure the prompt and fair solution of grievance and harassment cases.

Protecting staff in line with national legislation including:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 & Code of Practice
- Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & Code of Practice
- Equal Pay Act 1970 & amended regulations in 1984
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- European Directives on Employment & Equal Treatment
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations
- CRE Statutory Code of Practice for Racial Equality in Housing.

Evaluating the Success of our Equality and Diversity Commitments

To monitor the achievements of our equality and diversity commitments, Redbridge Homes will be evaluated as part of Redbridge Council's general monitoring. In addition we will:

- Ensure that systems are developed to audit and monitor service delivery & customer satisfaction
- Collect & analyse data on the background of service users, victims and perpetrators of harassment
- Utilise further customer feedback, service delivery feedback, tenant & residents surveys etc to provide further monitoring information
- Demonstrate & evidence to Housing Inspectors from the Audit Commission our commitment to equalities & diversity
- Ensure that specific members from the Redbridge Homes Board and Senior Management Team, lead and monitor adherence to Redbridge Homes Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

- Conduct a Peer Review with one of our partner ALMOs
- Review & reassess this policy as & when new legislation requires it, or at least every 3 years.
- As with all data collection Redbridge Homes will ensure that all data collected meets the highest standards under the Data Protection Act.