

# Accessible Services for All Workshop

## 1. Introduction

Twenty one people attended an 'Accessible Services for All' workshop at Springwell Gardens Community Centre on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2010. Roughly half of those attending were council tenants. The workshop was opened by Derek Corkell, the Vice Chair of the Rotherham Federation of Tenants and Residents. After an entertaining quiz, Gillian Damms, Equalities and Diversity Officer at 2010 Rotherham gave a presentation on 2010 Rotherham's Single Equalities Scheme. The short report enclosed is a record of feedback from the workshops that followed and the evaluation at the end of the morning.

## 2. Top Priorities

Attendees wrote on post-it notes their top three priorities for improving equality for 2010 Rotherham customers and then shared their findings in three facilitated groups.

### GROUP ONE

1. The importance of staff:
  - Being able to relate to staff who need to understand their local communities
  - People on the front line need to be sympathetic and open-minded
  - Possibly visiting the customer rather than them having to come to you
2. Promotions and Provision
  - Promote schemes being offered eg gardening scheme
  - Promote activities we know available
  - Provide more help for disabled people eg help with shopping



3. Use the Profiling Information 2010 Rotherham have in a better way.

Other comments included:

- Promote job opportunities to all communities including ethnic minority communities and those with disabilities to create a diverse workforce
- Provide more job search opportunities particularly for people with disabilities
- Provide support for people with dementia, such as those that live at home alone
- Communication, putting people in touch with each other when they might be isolated

## GROUP 2

1. Communication

- Continue to make people aware of 2010 services
- More information and better communication
- More direct links to other websites
- Creating a DVD in British Sign Language explaining the role of 2010 Rotherham
- The literature published should be in different community languages
- The use of one phone number is welcome



2. Going out into the communities

- Going out and meeting residents in their communities
- To house or rehouse people in an area that is suitable

3. Being Aware of 2010's Responsibilities

Customers remained unclear on who was responsible for what services and who to go to. Sometimes they get passed between RMBC and 2010 Rotherham regarding a number of services. Group two felt equalities issues impinged on a number of policy decisions, many of which 2010 may not be able to influence:

- To help people to stay in their families with assistants
- To see more council houses built
- To house or rehouse people to an area or estate that is suitable
- More bungalows for the elderly

## GROUP 3

1. Information

More information on what services are available

## 2. Access Issues

- Importance of access to buildings
- Improving mobility for disabled
- Links to other services
- Leaflets or any correspondence written in tenants preferred language

## 2. Awareness Issues

- Awareness of all ages to achieve quality of life
- Listening and understanding problems
- Awareness of disabilities
- More people to have the know how on what people are talking about eg disabilities, issues related to race
- Greater understanding of customer needs
- Need to listen more to customers

# 3. Communication and Access to Services Workshop

## GROUP 1

How do you access services:

- The telephones are always engaged and the repair number is always busy
- Home and council office, phone and face to face is easier
- Online is slow and information is not all there
- BME issues – language issues continue to be a problem. There should be an option of face to face interviews.
- Suggested to have a drop in sessions in BME community centres, a mobile office, possibly the 2010 Round Your Place van?
- Give out local maps of neighbourhood offices and services
- More effective language service is needed that language line
- Asian communities do not necessarily use websites – possibly offer training on IT and language. Non verbal communication is important for minority communities. Empathy, trust and understanding from 2010 staff is essential.
- Give a varied service to different communities depending on their particular needs, awareness and abilities.
- Go out to communities not expect them to come to you.
- Comments on Round Your Place included 'I like it' and 'tells people what services they can get'. Should be used to promote 2010 services more.



- There are some surgeries at the Unity Centre on Wednesday and Thursday that should be used more effectively
- Partnership working could be used to promote services and joint outreach working
- Developing volunteers, giving them opportunities to work with 2010.

## **GROUP 2**

Attendees were impressed with the golden number and believed this need to continue to be promoted and extended. The language line offered an excellent service that ought to be publicised more. One person suggested a mobile office to go into communities would be very useful.

A number of people were not impressed with the website. There is a contact form but there is little other interaction. It was suggested that training on using the website would be useful for customers. They do this in libraries or in community centres.

It was mentioned that community groups and TARAs are a way many residents access services. They would speak to their local tenant reps who would signpost them to the appropriate officer or service.

Text messaging was well supported, many believing that it is a myth that older people do no text message.

Round Your Place was seen an interesting and accessible magazine. More information on linking services together would be welcome. Information could also be presented in different formats.

## **GROUP 3**

Attendees supported more face to face contact but wanted less letters. They wanted more contacts in local communities and much more emphasis on text messaging. The web is OK but would like to see more for those with learning difficulties. Use of google translate would be very welcome. People wanted a website that is easy to use and supported training opportunities.

There was requests that Round your Place magazine is available for residents. It was confirmed that all tenants do get it. There was some feeling that there was some inconsistency in reporting when issues occur.



## The Key Priorities

At lunchtime, attendees were asked to tick on individual flipcharts which of the identified key priorities were ones they agreed with. The results of the feedback are here.

Priority	Number of People Supporting the Priority
Build on the organisation's knowledge of customers' needs and communication choices and updating customer profiles on a regular basis.	11
Involve customers in the shaping of services and monitor our performance against targets.	12
Adopt a case study approach to understand individual customer journeys, problems, barriers and frustrations.	9
Work in partnership to support customer need more holistically.	7
Develop best practice approaches in procurement with partners to share ideas, experience and research to improve service delivery.	8
Invest in employees through training and development and empowering employees to contribute to the development of the organisation.	8
Understand the diversity of our workforce, and make progress on a workforce that represents the communities we serve.	10
Keep the Equality Impact Assessment process under review.	8

## Evaluations

Evaluation forms completed by attendees were all very positive, the session was clearly presented, friendly and everyone had opportunities to put forward their views.

*"The quiz was great fun and a clever way of getting the equality and diversity message across without it appearing to be "the same old, same old.. here we go again". Today, everyone in the room enjoyed it, had a laugh but also picked up on the subtext of disabilities, belief, religion, sexuality and contributions to society. Great stuff!"*

One attendee did suggest that more time should be spent on 2010 Rotherham staff explaining how their services operate and another "the services need to be more promoted which are already in place". In all, everyone agreed, a positive workshop and an excellent example of partnership working.

Of those attending, 12 people completed diversity monitoring information of which 5 people were male and 7 people were female, 7 were of working age and 5 were 65 years old and over, 4 people considered themselves to be disabled and 8 people did not, 9 people described their ethnicity as White-British and 3 people identified they were from a BME background. 9 people stated they were tenants of 2010 Rotherham.