

News, views and good practice ideas from in and around the region brought to you by Chelmer Housing Partnership

# *New* **Disability Laws**

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005, passed in April 2005, amends and extends the rules in the DDA 1995.

The Act gives disabled people rights in 4 main areas:

- Employment
- Education
- Access to goods, facilities and services
- Buying and renting property

Landlords, private clubs, transport and qualification bodies all come under the scope of the DDA 2005. The timetable to complete these changes will come into effect in two stages in December 2005 and December 2006. The new rights which are most relevant to housing will:

#### December 2005

- Cover people with HIV infection, cancer or multiple sclerosis, from the point of diagnosis;
- End the requirement that a mental illness must be "clinically well-recognised" before it is regarded as an impairment;
- Make it unlawful for local authorities and the Greater London Authority to treat disabled members less favourably.

#### December 2006

- Ensure that discrimination law covers the public sector;
- Extend duties of reasonable adjustment to local authorities and the Greater London Authority for their disabled members;
- Extend the duty of reasonable adjustment to those who let or

- manage rented property and to commonhold property;
- Ensure landlords cannot unreasonably withhold consent for a disability-related improvement to certain rented houses;
- Impose the duty on public bodies to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people – similar to the existing race equality duty within the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the gender equality duty in the Equality Bill currently before Parliament.



#### The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005: new ASB sections

The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 includes five new sections, strengthening ASBO legislation. The changes make it easier for witnesses to give evidence in court during ASBO applications, and adjust ASBO procedures.

The five new sections are:

- 139 – makes five technical changes to the ASBO procedure
- 140 – amends who can vary and dismiss ASBOs made on conviction
- 141 – makes changes to reporting limits in youth court cases for breach of orders
- 142 – concerns the contracting out of local authority works on ASBOs
- 143 – provides special measures for vulnerable witnesses in ASBO proceedings, such as video links to courtrooms, and the use of intermediaries when communicating with the police.

Funding for Individual Support Orders (ISOs) will increase by £500,000. The ODPM also announced plans for consultation on enabling local authorities to contract ASBO works to bodies to which they delegate their housing management.

You can find further details on the Government's Together Campaign website [www.together.gov.uk](http://www.together.gov.uk).

# Partnership Practice

Some good practice ideas from Chelmer Housing Partnership.

## are you decent?

CHP's £58m modernisation programme to refurbish nearly 7000 homes to meet the decent homes standard has a stringent five-year timetable.

CHP's transfer came with the promise to refurbish homes with new bathrooms, central heating, external wall insulation, kitchens and windows.

To achieve the target, it was important to get this major project underway as quickly as possible. No preparatory work was allowed prior to transfer and it was recognised that it would not have been possible to deliver such a major reinvestment programme within the timescale unless an external project manager was appointed.

Customer satisfaction was vital to the success of the programme as was a high level of tenant participation. The solution that CHP adopted delivered high performance and improving levels of customer satisfaction.

CHP chose EC Harris to manage the reinvestment project. The main reason for this selection was their use of an on-line web-hosted management information system.

The Management Information System (MIS) records extensive information with reports updated online. Accurate information is directly available to all clients and contractors 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The system allows each property and its various moderniation elements to be tracked on line. All details including names, addresses, work packages, dates, resident choices, help-desk queries, and satisfaction ratings are provided. Client and project managers can see the progress on any work package at any time. The system ensures



reporting is accurate and up-to-date. The greatest advantage being that all stakeholders are working from the same information.

Three years on, the modernisation programme is currently well ahead of schedule and tenant satisfaction currently stands at 98%. Due to the energy saving measures carried out, CHP tenants have saved an average of £86 a year on their fuel bills. This amounts to 4000 tonnes of CO2 emissions and 63,000 of Gigajoules of energy per year per household.

At transfer in March 2002, 73% of CHP's homes did not meet the decency standards. Due to the works carried out since transfer that figure has increased to 97%. CHP is on target to have all its homes meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2007.

Constructing Excellence, a merger of the Housing Forums 'Rethinking Construction' and 'Construction Best Practice', awarded EC Harris and CHP the 'Innovation for Construction' award. They identified the partnership as an innovative method of project management. "We decided this project was particularly good as it has comprehensive, real-time information available all the time. We haven't come across anything as comprehensive as this before." *Constructing Excellence*



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