



How we will make sure we are fair to everyone



This is an Easy Read
version of Choice
Housing's Equality
Scheme



**Easy
Read**

Easy Read



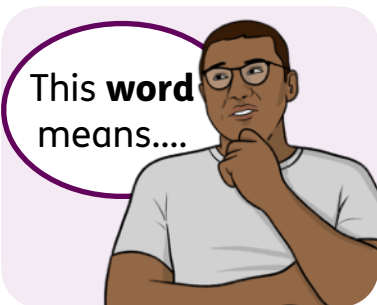
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



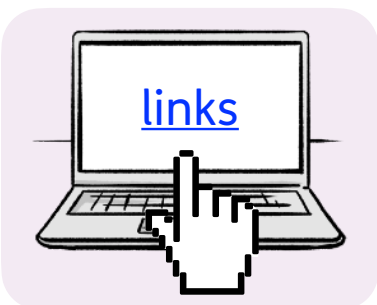
This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. You may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



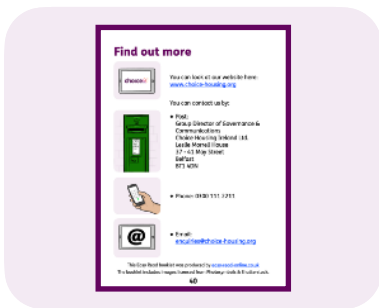
Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.



If it would be easier for you, you can ask for us to give you this information in a different booklet, using bigger words, or different coloured paper.



Just contact us to let us know if you would like us to do this.



You can find out how to contact us on page 40.

What is in this booklet

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About this booklet



Choice is one of the biggest **housing associations** in Northern Ireland.

Housing associations are organisations that help people live in good housing that they can afford.



The law says we must treat everyone fairly.



This booklet explains how we will follow the law and treat everyone fairly.

What we do



To support people, we:

- Provide homes, care and support services.



- Look after our housing, and make repairs.



- Build new homes.



- Work together, and find new people to work for us.



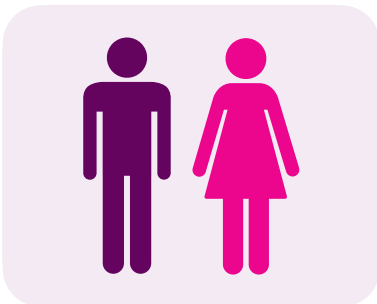
- Help people to feel part of a local community.

The law

The law says we must not treat different groups unfairly. These groups include:



- People of different religions, races or ages.



- Everyone.



- Disabled people.



- Parents and carers.



We will use the plans in this booklet to make sure we treat all different groups fairly.

What we want to achieve



We want to provide more great homes and services for local communities.



We work with the people who live in our housing, so that we understand their needs.



We want Choice to be an organisation that:

- People can trust.



- Always thinks about what the people who live in our housing need.



- Can quickly make changes so that we can meet people's needs.

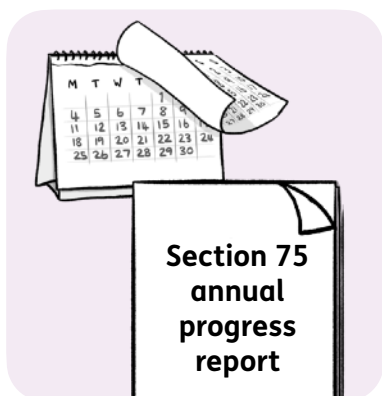
Checking we are being fair



We will make sure that we follow the law and are fair in all parts of our work.

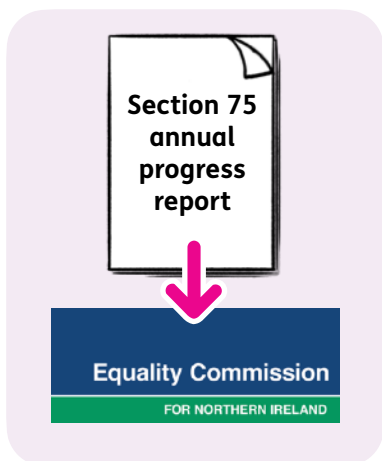


We will write plans to help us check that we are being fair.



Every year, we will write a report explaining what we have done to check we are being fair.

This is called our **Section 75 annual progress report**.



We will send this report to the **Equality Commission of Northern Ireland**.

The **Equality Commission of Northern Ireland** helps organisations like ours to check they are being fair.



We will also put this report on our website:

www.choice-housing.org

Our action plan



Our **action plan** explains what we are going to do to check we are being fair to everyone.



There are different parts of the action plan, for the different groups we need to make sure we are fair to:

People of different ages

To make sure we are fair to people of different ages, we will:

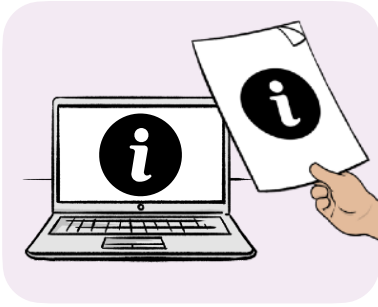


- Work with councils to try and get more play areas near new housing.



- Find out more information about the ages of people who live in our housing.

To make sure we are fair to people of different ages, we will also:



- Check whether people like to get information on paper, or online.



- Train older people to use computers and the internet.



- Think about how people in our housing use the internet.

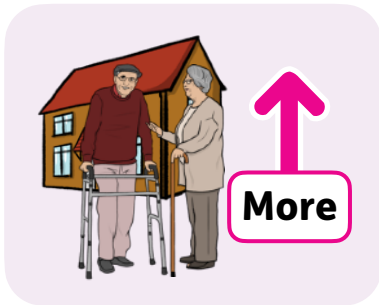


- Make sure that the online information we give out can be used by everyone.



- Check on how many older people need housing.

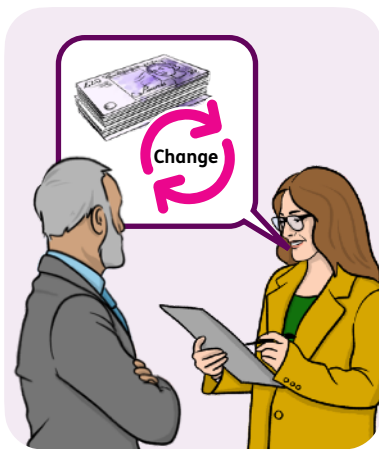
To make sure we are fair to people of different ages, we will also:



- Tell the Northern Ireland government that they should build more new housing for older people.



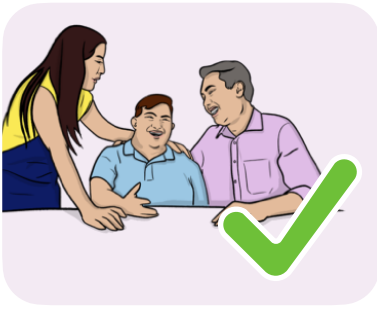
- Think about more activities to help older people to feel less lonely.



- Talk to the Government about the effects of **welfare reform**.

Welfare reform is changes to how much money the Government gives to some people to help them pay for housing.

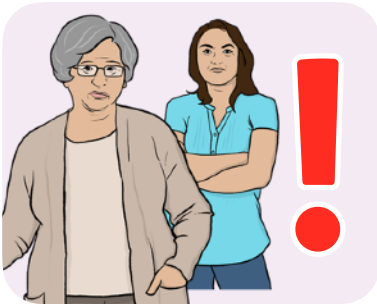
Parents and carers



Parents and carers will also be helped by our plans to speak up about welfare reform and play areas.



There are not enough homes with 2 bedrooms.



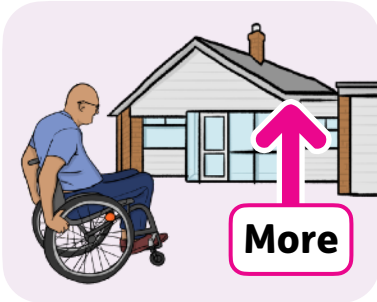
This could be bad for some parents, and older people who need carers.



We will tell the Northern Ireland Government about this problem.

Disabled people

To help make sure we are fair to disabled people we will:



- Make sure there is enough new housing that disabled people can move around in.



- Provide information in ways that people can understand, like Easy Read.



- Work with groups of disabled people to help find ways to make sure everyone can use our services.



Some disabled people live in hospitals because there are not enough homes that are right for them.



We will work to make sure that there are good homes that they can move into.

Men and women



Sometimes, activities only think about men, or only think about women.

We will find out more information about:



- The people who live in our homes.



- The activities they want to do.



We will look at ways to make sure we have about the same number of men and women in our staff.

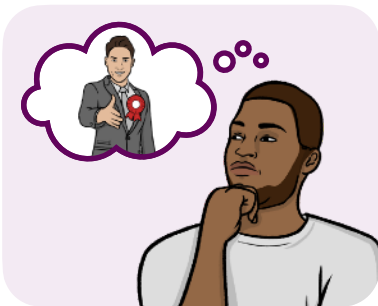


People who are married

Sometimes, married couples are not given housing together.

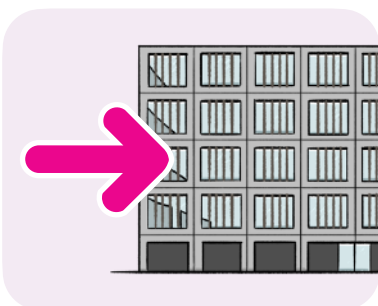


We will look at this, and find ways to stop it.



Political opinion

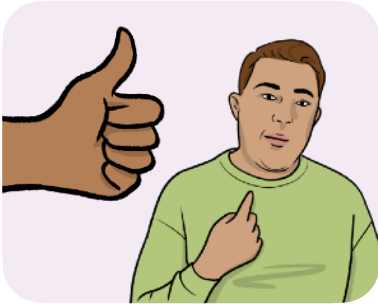
Political opinion means how you think the country should be run.



In the past, some people were put in prison for reasons to do with their political opinions.



This can make it harder for them to get a job.



We will work on ways to make sure we are fair to these people.

Race

To make sure we are fair to people of different races we will:



- Look at ways to give information to people who find it difficult to understand English.



- Provide housing that is right for Minority Groups.



To make sure we are fair to people of different races we will also:

- Find ways to work with Minority Groups.



- Work with groups of different races, who might be treated unfairly.

Religion

To make sure we are fair to people of different religions, we will:



- Work on projects to help people from different religions to get on well.



- Use good neighbour agreements - this is where people agree not to behave badly and upset their neighbours.



To make sure we are fair to people of different religions, we will also use **TBUC schemes**.

TBUC stands for Together: Building a United Community. These are projects to help communities to come together.

Sexual orientation



Sexual orientation means who you are attracted to, like men, women or both.



We will work more with groups of people with different sexual orientations.



We will work with staff to find ways that people of different sexual orientations might not be treated fairly.

Everyone



We will look at information about the people who live in our housing.



This will help us to understand if any of our services are leaving people out unfairly.

Asking people what they think



It is important to ask people what they think of our plans for being fair to everyone.



This can help us to make sure we are not leaving anyone out.



When we build homes or make changes to them, we will ask the people who will be affected what they think of our plans.



We will also ask organisations like the Equality Commission and local groups.



People will be able to speak up in lots of different ways, like:

- In groups or meetings.



- Over the phone, by email or by post.



- Filling in surveys.



We will give people information in ways that they can understand.



When we want to know what people think, we will give them at least 12 weeks to speak up.



Some people may find it difficult to speak up.



We will make changes so that it is easier for them, like making sure we have meetings in places where disabled people can get around.

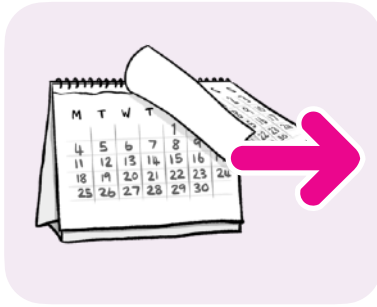


When people have told us what they think, we will use what they say to write a report.



This report will explain:

- What people have told us.



- What we are going to do next.



We will give people this report. We will provide the report to people in ways that they can understand, like Easy Read.

Checking how what we do affects people



Sometimes, we write plans for how to work. These plans are called **policies**.



When we write policies, we must check if they are fair to everyone.

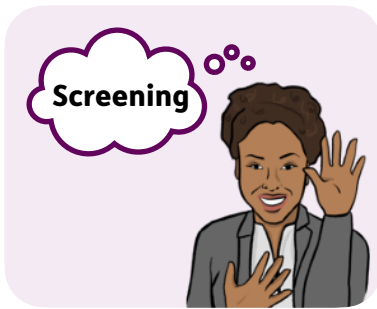


We have 2 ways of doing this:

- **Screening** - this means thinking about how policies will affect different groups.
- **Equality Impact Assessment** - this means writing a report about how policies affect different groups.



Screening



We will start screening policies when we first think of them.

We will ask:



- Will this policy affect people's chances to have a good home?



- Are there ways that we could change the policy so it is more fair?



- Will this policy change how well different groups get on with each other?



- Are there ways that we could change the policy to help different groups get on with each other?



We will look at lots of information to help us answer these questions.

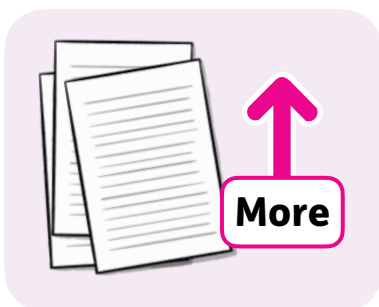


If we think the policy is not fair enough, we might decide to change it or not use it at all.

Equality impact assessment



An **equality impact assessment** is a report where we think about how policies affect different groups.



It is longer than a screening report, and includes more detail.



This includes talking to groups who might be affected by a policy.

How you can read these reports



We will put these reports on our website:
www.choice-housing.org



We will let people know when we put this information on our website.



We can also send them to you. Please contact us if you would like us to send reports or other information to you.

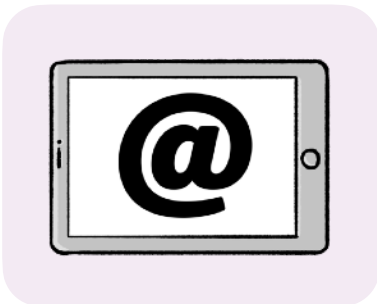
You can contact us by:



- Post:
Group Director of Governance & Communications
Choice Housing Ireland Ltd.
Leslie Morrell House
37 - 41 May Street
Belfast
BT1 4DN



- Phone: 0300 111 2211



- Email:
enquiries@choice-housing.org



We can provide this information in ways that you can understand, like Easy Read.

After we have started using a policy



We check if policies are fair before we start using them.

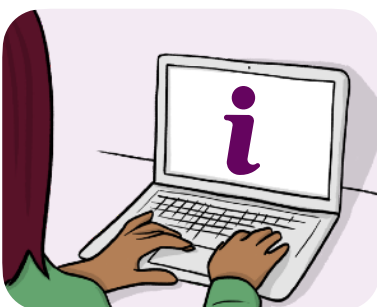
But we also keep checking they are fair after we have started using them.



We do this for 2 years.



If we find that a policy is affecting people in ways that are not fair, we will change it.



We will put information about checking policies are fair on our website.

Training our staff



It is important that our staff get training, to make sure that they are fair to everyone.

We will train staff about:



- How some groups are not always treated fairly.



- What the law says about being fair to everyone.



- How to check if policies are fair to everyone.



- How to help people who complain that we have not been fair.

We will also train staff about:



- How to ask different groups whether our policies are fair.



- How to check if we are following what we have written in our plan.



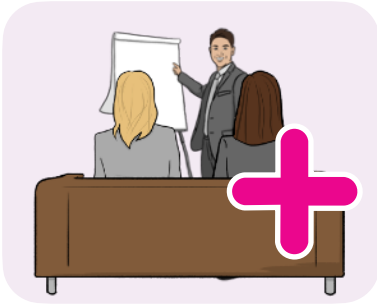
We will let all staff know about our rules for being fair.



We will train all new staff on our rules for being fair.



We will let staff know if our rules change, so that they are up to date.



We will give extra training to staff who have to make choices that affect people from different groups.

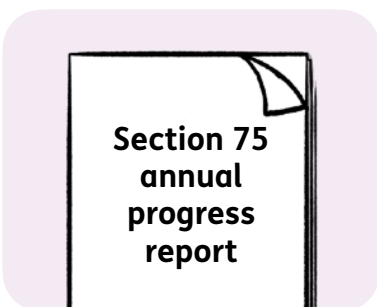


We will work with people from different groups to help us give this training.

Checking our training



We will check our training is working by looking at what people have learned afterwards.



We will include information about this in the **Section 75 annual progress report**.

Getting information and services



We will make sure that everyone can:

- Understand information that we give out.



- Use our services.

Information



Some people might find it harder than others to understand information.



We will give people information in different ways, like Easy Read, if they need it.



If people ask for information in a different way, we will provide it as quickly as we can.
It will usually take about 10 days.



Services

Each year, we will check that people are able to use our services.



We will send people who live in our housing a survey, where they can tell us if they think they are being treated fairly.

If you want to complain

If you want to complain, you can contact us by:



- Post:
Customer Services Office
Leslie Morrell House
37 - 41 May Street
Belfast
BT1 4DN



- Phone: 0300 111 2211



- Email:
enquiries@choice-housing.org



You can also find out more about complaining on our website:
www.choice-housing.org



We will look at your complaint and get back to you.



If something serious has happened, the Equality Commission might need to look at your complaint.



If they do, we will give them all the information they need, and make any changes they say we need to make.

Checking this plan



We will check this plan within five years of sending it to the Equality Commission.



We will check if it is helping us to follow the law and be fair to everyone.

Find out more



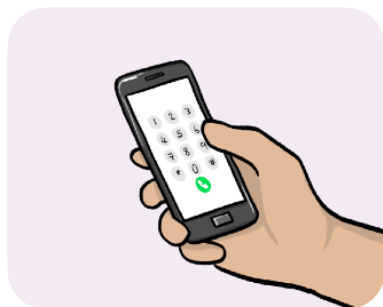
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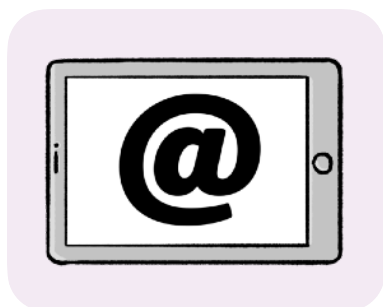
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