



**Habinteg** Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd

# MAINTENANCE

Equality Impact Assessment  
Consultation Document

July 2007

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In its Equality Scheme, the Association gave an undertaking to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on each policy, or group of related policies, where screening had indicated significant issues in relation to one or more of the nine equality dimensions.
- 1.2 As the representative body for housing associations, the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) has been assisting its members in the implementation of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 by co-ordinating a joint approach to the equality obligations. Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. is part of this joint exercise which is intended to maximise resources for equality work and to minimise the administrative impact on consultee and/or stakeholder organisations.
- 1.3 The Association screened all of its policies during 2004-05. The results of this exercise, including the proposed EQIA programme, were subject to a 12 week period of public consultation between July and September 2005.
- 1.4 The aim of the Maintenance policy is:

To ensure that the homes that our tenants live in are well maintained and that maintenance is carried out in an effective and timely manner and within available resources.

This report provides the following information:

- Background information on the equality duties and Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd.
- A description of the Association's current Maintenance policy
- Information on the scope of this review
- The sources of quantitative and qualitative data considered during the review
- Assessment of the impact of the policy on the nine equality dimensions. This includes potential differential impacts based on disability and race
- Proposed mitigating measures
- Details on the consultation process
- The next stages of the EQIA.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

### Statutory Equality Duties

2.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act requires Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- Persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Men and women generally;
- Persons with a disability and persons without;
- Persons with dependants and persons without.

2.2 The Association must also, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

2.3 In line with its equality scheme obligations, the Association screened all of its existing policies to assess whether they impacted on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the duty to promote good relations. The following questions were asked during the screening exercise:

- Is there any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups?
- Is there evidence that different groups have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular policy issue?
- Is there an opportunity to promote equality of opportunity between the relevant different groups, either by altering the policy, or by working with others in government or in the larger community, in the context of the policy?
- Have consultations with relevant groups, organisations or individuals indicated that policies of that type create problems specific to any relevant groups.

A report describing the results of the screening process is available from Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. (see contact details on page 2).

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2.4 Following this screening process and the associated consultation, the Association developed a 5 Year Equality Impact Assessment programme. The Maintenance policy was scheduled for assessment in year two of this programme.

2.5 This impact assessment has been carried out in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Equality guidance. The eight separate stages of the Equality Impact Assessment are:

1. Determining the aims of the policy
2. Collecting available data
3. Assessing the impact of the policy
4. Consideration of measures to mitigate any adverse impacts and/or alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
5. Formal Consultation
6. Analysis of responses and decision by Association
7. Publication of results of the Equality Impact Assessment
8. Ongoing monitoring of adverse impact.

2.6 The purpose of conducting the Equality Impact Assessment is as follows:

- To identify adverse impacts and to consider mitigating factors which will eliminate adverse impact
- To consider alternative policies which would better promote equality of opportunity.

2.7 This document is a draft for consultation and contains details of the first four elements of the Equality Impact Assessment. The remaining stages will be implemented following consideration of consultation responses.

## **2.8 About Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd.**

Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. is a registered housing association established in 1976 subject to the provisions of the housing Orders (NI) 1976, 1992 and 2003 and the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (NI) 1969 and 1976. In 1997 Habinteg was successfully assessed as an Investor in People organisation. In 2000, 2003 and 2005 we were successfully reassessed to the standard. In 2000 Habinteg was awarded a Charter Mark for excellence in customer services. We were successfully reassessed to Charter Mark status in 2003.

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### 3. THE POLICY

#### Description of Policy

The Maintenance policy describes the maintenance service the Association provides to its tenants or even the wider community.

#### Policy Aim

3.1 The aim of the Maintenance Policy is:

‘to ensure that the homes that housing association tenants live in are well maintained and that maintenance is carried out in an effective and timely manner and within available resources.’

The scope of the maintenance activities covered in the policy include:

**Adaptations to Dwellings** - This covers how we undertake adaptations necessary to make a dwelling more suitable for tenants with physical disabilities or sensory impairments.

**Cyclical / Planned Maintenance** - This covers the regular cycle of repairs, replacements and improvements we carry out to our stock to ensure it is kept in reasonable condition. Such work may include external redecoration, window, heating, kitchen and bathroom replacements.

**Response maintenance** - This means how we respond to the day to day repairs reported by tenants.

**VOIDS and relets** - This comprises essential work that is necessary to ensure that a property is suitable for letting.

Underpinning objectives include:

- Compliance with statutory, legal and contractual obligations as a landlord
- Consistency
- Continuous improvement
- Good management
- Providing satisfaction to service users

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## Scope of Review

3.2 The main stakeholders in relation to the policy include anyone seeking access to the Association's Maintenance service or any other stakeholder of the Association. This can be any of the following:

### External

- Applicants for housing;
- Building Control departments in local council offices;
- Current tenants;
- Contractors or consultants;
- Department for Social Development (DSD);
- Elected representatives;
- General public;
- Inspection and assessment bodies;
- Leaseholders;
- NIHE;
- Other Housing Associations;
- Other statutory agencies;
- Partners or providers of Housing Support Services;
- Past tenants;
- Planning Service;
- Recognised tenant organisations;
- Representatives of the local community;
- Residents of agency managed supported housing schemes;
- S75 representative groups;
- Suppliers.

### Internal

- Board members;
- Management;
- Staff.

### Department for Social Development

Housing Associations are subject to a high degree of regulation with the DSD having specific responsibility for monitoring their activities. The DSD is also responsible for determining the timescales within which housing associations must respond to differing categories of response maintenance. In addition, the DSD monitors associations' performance and routinely gathers information on a wide range of Association services including Maintenance.



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## Ombudsman

Anyone dissatisfied with the way in which the Association carries out its Maintenance service (after having exhausted the Association's Complaints Procedure) can make a complaint directly to the Ombudsman for an independent review.

## Other Third Parties

There may be occasions to deal with third parties when reviewing the Association's Maintenance policy.

Any organisation providing services on behalf of the Association would be expected to comply with the policies of the Association.

The above list is not exhaustive.

## **What this EQIA does not cover**

3.3 We anticipate that some aspects of Maintenance may be considered during other equality impact assessments. Whilst considered to be important by the Association, the following areas do not come under the scope of this equality impact assessment:

- **Accessing the Maintenance service** – This was covered by the Year 1 EQIA on Access & Communications
- **Complaints about performance in relation to the Maintenance Service** – This was covered by the Year 1 EQIA on Complaints

3.4 The Maintenance policy is intrinsically linked to many of the Association's key policies and processes, depending on the nature of the service. These include:

- Access and communications;
- Allocations;
- Care and Support;
- Complaints;
- Development;
- Finance;
- Governance;
- Housing Management;
- House Sales.

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## **Legislative and Regulatory Requirements**

3.5 The Association is required to comply with a range of legislative and regulatory requirements. Those listed below are relevant to Maintenance service provision:

- Housing (NI) Order 1992 (This introduced the Tenants Guarantee, the Right to Repair and committed to setting guidelines for standards of maintenance & repair and the means of achieving these standards);
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002;
- DSD's Regulatory Framework (2004);
- Housing Order (NI) 2003 (Clause 146 brought 'Complaints against registered housing associations') under the authority of the Commissioner for Complaints;
- Decent Homes Standard (2004);
- Building Control Regulations;
- Planning legislation (Planning Policy Statements);
- DSD's Housing Association Guide;
- Health & Safety Regulations;
- Construction, Design and Management Regulations (CDM) 1994 & 2007.

This list is not exhaustive.

3.6 In addition to Maintenance generally, Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. must also meet certain obligations, under its Equality Scheme, to ensure that complaints made about failure to meet its equality duties are dealt with effectively.

## **Reasons for Equality Impact Assessment**

3.7 The screening report gave the following reasons for carrying out an impact assessment on the policy:

- (a) Whilst there is a Maintenance policy in place, as part of our commitment to delivering an excellent customer service the Equality Impact Assessment presented an opportunity to improve the existing policy and set a more efficient standard throughout the Housing Association sector.

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- (b) Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. believes that its Maintenance policy merited an equality impact assessment to demonstrate its commitment to providing an efficient and effective service to all its tenants.
  - (c) Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. provides services to a diverse range of customers including many client groups with special needs.
  - (d) Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. also believes that its maintenance policies merit an equality impact assessment because of the high uptake of maintenance services by all tenants and wants to review its procedures to ensure there is no adverse impact for any group.
  - (e) Due to the absence of available data at the time of screening the policy, the decision was taken to assess actual adverse impacts during the conduct of the equality impact assessment.

### **Implementation of the policy**

The Maintenance Policies are operated from within the Housing Management Team which is lead by the Deputy Chief Executive. On a day to day basis, the Maintenance service is delivered by the Maintenance and Asset Team led by the Maintenance and Asset Manager. We have three Maintenance Officers (located in Holywood (2) and Londonderry (1)). Administration is undertaken by two clerical staff.

3.8 Maintenance policy has been defined by the Association's Senior Management Team. It is implemented by staff throughout the Association.

### Standards

3.9 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. provides accommodation for people with a variety of housing needs, specifically those requiring wheelchair accommodation which comprises 18% of our housing stock located on integrated schemes across Northern Ireland. All new build homes comply to Lifetime Homes and Secured by Design standards.

3.10 Maintenance Policy documents are agreed by Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd.'s Board of Management, Housing Management Committee and Senior Management Team in consultation with staff and the Habinteg Residents' Forum.

3.11 In addition, certain performance targets are determined by the DSD or established to comply with legal requirements. Where this is the

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case such targets or legal requirements will be detailed in the relevant section of this report.

### Adaptations to Dwellings

3.12 Adaptations are normally carried out to the dwellings of individuals who have a specific need or disability that means they require either aids or adjustments to enable that person to continue to live independently in their home. A request for adaptation work may be raised by Occupational Therapist.

### Cyclical / Planned Maintenance

3.13 Redecoration of all the Association's properties is usually carried out at five-yearly cyclical intervals, depending on the deterioration of the particular scheme. Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. generally schedules painting of all internal communal corridors and common rooms, external woodwork, cleaning and repairing gutters and down pipes, and completion of minor repairs to the outside of its properties every five years. The association endeavours (where feasible) to consult tenants on the choice of any new colours for the schemes and dwellings.

The Association will carry out annual servicing of any mechanical, electrical and specialist equipment which it has installed as required under statutory legislation. This includes gas /oil boilers, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire fighting equipment, electrical appliances, lifts etc. The Association will liaise with its tenants to arrange access when necessary to carry out the servicing of the equipment and any repairs arising thereafter.

The Association will carry out major planned maintenance/ improvement works to all its properties on 19-year cycles to ensure that all dwellings are improved and upgraded as required to enhance their life expectancy and to ensure that all properties remain in good order and provide safe accommodation for our tenants.

When Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. property reaches 15-20 years old a review is carried out, including a stock condition survey and DDA audit, taking into consideration the following:

- Any tenant requests for improvement
- The repair history to date
- A schedule of current problems

- A review of the waiting list for the property and current vacancies – to determine whether remodelling or extensive design changes are required
- Any changes arising from DDA, asbestos control or current legislative requirements

One to one consultation is undertaken with tenants to present information on the proposed works including:

- Details of work to be undertaken
- Dates for commencement/completion, duration of the project
- What disturbance residents could expect
- Whether tenants would have to move out during work
- Choice of colour scheme for repainting and flooring

### 3.13

#### Response maintenance

3.13 The standards listed in the following table are for response Maintenance and were determined by the Department for Social Development.

<b>Repair category</b>	<b>Timescale for repair</b>	<b>Repair types</b>	<b>Completion target (within timescale)</b>
Emergency	Within 24 hours	Includes the breakdown of non-essential lifts, damage to windows and doors, which may affect the security, cleaning blocked drains, heating failure and minor leaks.	95%
Urgent Repairs	4 working days	includes repairs that affect the comfort and convenience of tenants.	95%
Routine	20 working days	These repairs are faults, which do not cause damage to the fabric of the building or major inconvenience to tenants or staff.	95%

Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. works to these targets.

#### Voids and relets

3.14 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. has a voids strategy that is activated if a property becomes difficult to let or is a long term void as defined under the Housing Selection Scheme (i.e. empty over 4

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weeks). This strategy is adopted and focused solely on the property attributes.

The strategy may include the following maintenance measures:

- Remodelling of accommodation if this is feasible
- Redecoration if necessary
- Upgrading the heating systems from economy seven to gas/oil

On some occasions it may be necessary to undertake remedial or maintenance work to properties before they can be relet; again the focus of the decision-making process will be solely on physical aspects of the property.

The standards listed in the following table have been determined by Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. to deal with void repairs.

<b>Repair Category</b>	<b>Timescale for Repair</b>	<b>Repair Types</b>	<b>Completion target (within timescale)</b>
Void repairs	Within 15 working days	Essential repairs; renewals; reinstatement; replacement; internal redecoration; cleaning and clearing out ordered in accordance arising as a result of a change of tenancy and is suitable for letting.	95%

3.15 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. employs contractors to carry out all maintenance works on its behalf. Each contractor is assessed against predetermined selection criteria prior to appointment and work is procured in line with the contracting requirements of the DSD's Housing Association Guide. Each contractor is required to sign up to the Association standards / quality terms and code of practice for working in its tenants properties. Each contractor must provide the Association with its Equal Opportunity Policy.

Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd is in the process of putting in place a Measured Term Contract (MTC) with a number of Contractors in partnership with other housing associations.

Contractors' performance is regularly reviewed to ensure response targets and service quality are being met and that the Association is achieving value for money as well as providing a quality maintenance service for its tenants.

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## **4. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH**

### **Sources of information**

4.1 The following were used in considering available data relevant to the impact of the Maintenance policy:

- Pre-consultation research commissioned by NIFHA and undertaken by IMS Consultants during February – April 2007;
- The Association's internal management information on the profile of tenants and service users;
- 2001 Northern Ireland Census Data;
- Office for National Statistics;
- Northern Ireland Research and Statistics Agency data;
- [Externally commissioned] Stock conditions surveys;
- Internally instructed surveys completed by technically trained staff;
- Quantitative and qualitative feedback from Maintenance staff;
- Contractors' reports;
- Health and Safety Reports from Insurance Inspections;
- Reports from the RQIA;
- Feedback from internal or external audits;
- Data from NIFHA's Annual Benchmarking exercise;
- Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. Tenant Satisfaction Surveys;
- Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. Service Review Surveys;
- Complaints register;
- Equality Commission Codes of Practice.

The key issues highlighted by analysis of the above data sources are presented in this section.

### **IMS Pre-consultation Survey**

4.2 A Report from IMS Consultants, prepared for NIFHA, providing consultation feedback on the impact of Housing Management and Maintenance policies dated May 2007 highlighted various issues that

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may affect the groups within the Section 75 categories. The issues raised in relation to the respective S75 groups are detailed below.

## **Age**

The main issues affecting the elderly are:

- Barriers to consultation and involvement – travel, caring responsibilities;
- Community safety;
- Delays in OT assessments – need for support.

Reported issues affecting young people included:

- Stereotyping of children and young people in relation to definitions of anti-social behaviour;
- Lack of understanding of their needs and rights;
- Lack of provision of play areas;
- The need for greater levels of support to enable young people to sustain their tenancies.

## **Dependents**

The following are the main issues affecting people with dependents:

- Allocations policies – This is outside the scope of the Year 2 EQIA's;
- Lack of understanding of needs of carers;
- Lack of understanding of the rights of children.

## **Disability**

The main issues affecting disabled people in relation to Maintenance and maintenance are:

- Safety – harassment, prejudice, social concerns;
- Lack of understanding of needs;
- Access to information;
- Understanding of rights and responsibilities;
- Understanding of enforcement processes;
- Access time – carers;
- Tenant Participation barriers.

## **Gender**

The following issues were identified:



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- Safety – These concerns related to sex offenders and allocations, which are outside the scope of Year 2 EQIA's. Some comments relate to domestic violence and older women;
  - Barriers to involvement – childcare costs;
  - Understanding of rights and responsibilities – separated, young women;
  - Communications.

### **Marital Status**

The main issues reported were:

- Community safety, particularly in relation to young, single mothers;
- Allocation of sex offenders – This is outside the scope of the Year 2 EQIA's.

### **Race**

The main issues affecting people from ethnic minority backgrounds in relation to Housing Management and Maintenance policies are:

- Community Safety – harassment, prejudice (generally);
- Lack of understanding of needs;
- Access to information;
- Understanding of rights and responsibilities;
- Understanding of enforcement processes;
- Tenant Participation barriers.

### **Religious Belief / Political Opinion**

The main issues are:

- House prices;
- Housing need – Catholic areas;
- Mixed housing.

These issues are outside the scope of the Year 2 EQIAs, and in some cases the control of the associations e.g. Housing need is assessed by the NI Housing Executive.

### **Sexual Orientation**

The main issues affecting gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transsexuals in relation to Maintenance and maintenance policies are:

- Prejudice and fear of harassment or intimidation – this was general concern and not specifically related to the service provision
- Stereotyping – lack of understanding of needs

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## Profile of Service Users

4.3 Habinteg has 1392 dwellings in management (as at 9 April 2007), of which 922 (65%) are general family dwellings, 274 (20%) are wheelchair dwellings, 161 (12%) are mobility dwellings and 35 (3%) are sheltered dwellings. Habinteg's integrated housing schemes are located throughout Northern Ireland in:

- Bangor;
- Holywood;
- Poleglass;
- Belfast (North, East and West);
- Coleraine;
- Enniskillen;
- Londonderry;
- Strabane;
- Newry;
- Limavady;
- Armagh;
- Ballymena;
- Lisburn;
- Dungannon;
- Lisnaskea;
- Antrim;
- Ballycastle;
- Newtownabbey;
- Castlerock

4.4 The principal sources of equality information about tenants are tenant surveys and NICORE lettings statistics.

4.5 We collect and collate information relating to all new tenancies with the Association. Included in these criteria are the ages of tenants and a breakdown of the ages within the household. Latest figures of new lettings since September 2002 show that 18 new tenants are of pensionable age, with all other new households being made up of people between the ages of 16 and 59.

The Association does not provide a secure tenancy to anyone under the age of 16 years due to the restrictions of the statutory housing selection scheme.

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## 4.6 Section 75 Categories

**Dependents:** Of the 528 lettings made by the Association, 372 were made to households with dependents under the age of 16. There was a total of 467 dependents under the age of 16.

**Disability:** As stated at 4.3, the Association has 274 units of accommodation which are specifically designed to meet the needs of wheelchair users. Profiles of users are recorded and reported to the Board of Management and in the Business Plan. At 1 April 2007, the number of people with disabilities living in wheelchair accommodation was 311 (some households have more than one person with a disability). The number of people under the age of 18 with a disability was 61, between 18 and 60 there were 196, and over 60 there were 54. The type of disability is also monitored, as is the use of wheelchair accommodation.

During the period 1 April 2003 to 31 March 2007 the Association made lettings to 707 tenants of new or existing dwellings. Profiles of households are monitored internally and through the NICORE system. These households are broken down as follows:

**Gender:** 485 (69%) new tenants were females, while 222 (31%) were males.

**Marital Status:** Of the 528 new tenancies, 235 (33%) were to people who are single, 314 (44%) were married people, 126 (18%) were to people who are divorced or separated and 32 (5%) were to people who are widowed.

**Racial Group:** 698 (99%) of new tenants were of white ethnic origin and 9(1%) were to ethnic minority groups including Irish Traveller, Indian, Pakistan, Chinese (2) and Thai.

**Religion:** 503 (71%) households were catholic, 171 (24%) were protestant, 25 (4%) had no religion and 8 (1%) were of religion which is 'other'.

4.7 At present, Habinteg does not collect data on political opinion or sexual orientation. The 2004 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey indicates that 1% of respondents described themselves as gay or lesbian. A research report by Youthnet argues that analysis of the Census 2001 indicates that between 2 and 10% of the population may be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

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4.8 According to the 2004 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 39% considered themselves to be unionist, 23% stated that they were nationalists whilst 37% stated that they were neither.

### **Complaints**

4.9 As stated at 3.3 the overall handling of complaints was dealt with in a previous EQIA. However, since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 the Association has received 14 complaints about its Maintenance service but none suggest adverse impact arising from the policy itself.

### **Tenant Satisfaction Surveys**

4.10 Habinteg is currently implementing a new programme of customer service consultation. To date results of the early surveys have not been collated. Following a recent (March 2007) programme of major repairs at one scheme, 91% reported satisfaction levels to be 'good' or above.

### **Ombudsman Report**

4.11 There have been no complaints raised with the Ombudsman in relation to the Maintenance practices of this association.

### **General Feedback**

4.12 A Charter Mark Assessment Report dated December 2007 found that the Association's tenants describe the service provided as delivering exactly what is promised to a high standard with caring, helpful and professional staff.

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## **5. ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT**

- 5.1 This section outlines our assessment of the impact of the Association's Maintenance policy on the 9 Section 75 groups based on the evidence considered above.
- 5.2 It has become apparent, following the conduct of this EQIA, that there are very few adverse impacts that are directly related to the Maintenance policy.
- 5.3 Many of the issues raised during the IMS Pre-consultation survey highlighted issues of Access & Communications in relation to services rather than specifically to Maintenance. Access & Communications was addressed as part of the associations' Year 1 EQIAs. As a result the majority of the concerns mentioned by respondents were either covered by the Mitigating Measures proposed at that time or have been identified for action as part of that process.
- 5.4 Other issues reflect general concerns that are outside the scope of this particular EQIA or even the remit of the individual association e.g. healthcare or community safety, house prices. Where relevant associations will raise these matters with the appropriate authority. In addition, NIFHA and/or association representatives participate in a wide range of inter-agency groups aimed at addressing issues such as community safety, housing of sex offenders or the provision of care and support.
- 5.5 Where we indicate that there is no evidence of adverse impact, this does not mean that no action will be taken. The Association is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all and excellence in customer service, and will seek, where possible, to put measures in place to ensure that all sections of society have an equal opportunity to access appropriate redress when problems occur.
- 5.6 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. operates in an area with excellent community group networks and works closely with these groups to ascertain their views on a range of matters including Housing Management, Maintenance and Development of new properties. This ongoing interaction helps to ensure that any adverse impact can be identified and addressed at the policy development stage.

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## **6. CONSIDERATION OF MEASURES TO MITIGATE AGAINST ADVERSE IMPACT**

The following are options that could potentially mitigate adverse impact arising from the Maintenance policies:

- Continued implementation and monitoring the impact of mitigating measures introduced following the Access & Communications EQIA;
- Action findings of internal/external audits that are relevant to Maintenance;
- Continue to action findings of DDA audits as appropriate;
- Ongoing training and awareness for staff and the Board of Management on equality, diversity and social inclusion;
- Further promotion of after hours helpline services;
- Working with the NIFHA to promote the awareness of Housing Association movement as a major provider of social housing in Northern Ireland;
- Safety concerns may be addressed through implementation of Secured by Design principles in older stock. This will mainly be in relation to window and door security and lighting;
- Maintain and where possible improve upon the working relationships with the Occupational Therapy Service and Sensory Support Teams;
- Better publicise guidance on how tenants can avail of adaptations;
- Include question in next Tenant Survey on issue of Adaptations that tenants feel they may require to continue live in their home;
- Promote the work of Insert Name Housing Association within the local communities;
- Continue to monitor the Associations Maintenance procedures and Contractor performance;
- Provide information and/or training for contractors to ensure that they comply with the associations procedures in relation to equality of opportunity;
- Promote and support activities that encourage greater understanding, tolerance and respect for Section 75 groups.

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## 7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. has endeavoured to give careful consideration to the measures that might be taken to make the Maintenance policy most efficient, effective and equitable. The measures outlined in section 6 are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive. The Association is planning to formally consult on its findings over a 12 week period and would welcome feedback on these proposals and any other comments that would assist us to improve the policy.
- 7.2 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. will ensure that it consults effectively with those groups directly affected by its Maintenance policy, and their representatives.
- 7.3 Staff will be available to discuss these proposals in person, by telephone, or by e-mail, as requested. Meetings may also be arranged to discuss the way forward and the Equality Impacts of this document, if required.
- 7.4 The period of consultation will end on 2 November 2007.
- 7.5 Comments in relation to this report should be submitted in writing to:

Housing Quality Officer  
Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd.  
Alex Moira House  
22 Hibernia Street  
Holywood  
BT18 9JE

Telephone: 028 9042 7211  
Facsimile: 028 9042 8069

email: [equality@habinteg-ulster.co.uk](mailto:equality@habinteg-ulster.co.uk)

- 7.6 Comments in any other format will also be accepted.
- 7.7 If you require any further information, you may contact the Association using the contact details given in 7.5.

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7.8 If you require information about housing associations generally or about the Joint Equality Exercise co-ordinated by NIFHA please contact:

**The Northern Ireland Federation of housing Associations**

**38 Hill Street**

**Belfast**

**BT1 2LB**

**☎ 028 9023 0446**

**🌐 [www.nifha.org](http://www.nifha.org)**



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## **8. NEXT STEPS**

- 8.1 Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd. will seriously consider all comments received when making a final decision on the recommendations of this EQIA.
- 8.2 The results of the EQIA will be published in the final report, which will be made available to all consultees. Alternative formats will be available on request.
- 8.3 A system will be established to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the impact of the policy on relevant groups.