



Equality and Diversity Policy

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Changes made	Sections	Date	By	Date approved by board
To reflect changes made following equality and diversity CIH charter for housing compliance audit	Throughout	18/09/2018	LB	17 th October 2018

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish, define and promote Highstone Housing Association's (HHA) approach to Equality and Diversity.

2. Scope

All staff, Board and Committee members have a responsibility to comply with the policy and to assist in the implementation of the policy. All stakeholders are expected to comply with the ethos of the policy.

3. References

Commission for Equality and Human Rights (www.cehr.co.uk); Equality and diversity CIH Charter for Housing; Equality Act 2010

4. Key Objectives

Communicate good and legal practice in relation to equality and diversity in accordance with the specific acts relating to discrimination law in operation to date.

5. Introduction

HHA is committed to promoting equality, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination. We value the diversity of our tenants, service users, staff, board members and partners. We aim to ensure our services are accessible to all members of the community. All employees are required to abide by this policy which also covers discrimination by and towards members of the public, the board, contractors and staff from other agencies. Highstone Housing Association opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to employment.

6. Values

Our organisational values are the basis for everything we do from providing housing and support to tenants and service users, to ensuring equality across the association:

- **Make a positive difference** (*in social housing for those with low level and complex disability needs*)
- **Work in partnership** (*with stakeholders to provide quality homes and services*)
- **Be innovative and responsive**

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to lead a happy, healthy and safe life. By Making a Positive Difference we will value:

- The worth of each person
- Trusting relationships
- Understanding difference
- Challenging oppression
- Personal and organisational accountability
- Caring for our physical environment
- Enjoyment

All HHA policies and procedures are underpinned by our organisational values and we will ensure that we promote an environment of respect and understanding in and with our values.

7. Our Policy Statement

- 7.1 In all our activities we will strive towards ensuring equality of opportunity and treatment of everyone. HHA values the differences between people within the organisation and amongst our tenants and stakeholders.
- 7.2 HHA board endorses a strategic commitment to equality and diversity across all nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation; and to supporting an understanding of the role of human rights in housing.
- 7.3 We will promote equality and diversity in the provision of all our services and employment including recruitment and engagement of contractors, consultants, suppliers and others. We will NOT tolerate discrimination.
- 7.4 HHA will provide training, produce action plans and monitor activity to ensure our commitment to equality and diversity is put into practice. We will ensure all employees understand their role and responsibilities with regard to equality in service provision and in the work place, in order to discharge their own responsibility whilst reducing disadvantage.
- 7.5 Within an agreed framework, HHA will work closely with local authorities and other strategic partners to address the differing housing and related needs of the local community, paying particular attention to the needs of minority communities and other groups facing discrimination in the allocation of housing and provision of housing services. This applies to new housing, community development and regeneration opportunities where regard should be given to location, design, facilities and mix of development projects.
- 7.6 HHA provides housing in communities where directed by Local Authority partners. The process for selecting and placing tenants is the responsibility of Local Authority partners.
- 7.7 Whether in the provision of housing management, maintenance and related services or staff supervision, HHA will act to eliminate all forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination, and offer support and advice to victims or witnesses to incidents.

8. Recruitment and Employment

- 8.1 We are an equal opportunities employer. We will not discriminate or allow discrimination against any individual employed by, or seeking employment with the Association. No employee or applicant for employment will receive less favourable treatment than any other person. We believe that every individual will be able to positively contribute to our work. We are committed to valuing diversity in our workforce and to developing and training all employees to ensure that their talents are fully utilised. All contracts of employment will be issued in accordance with the job role and not the job holder.
- 8.2 Basic forms of discrimination are explained in Appendix 1 of this document.

9. Redundancy and selection

Redundancy and selection will be made in accordance with statutory requirements. The criteria used will be objective, fair, and consistent in line with this policy, and not in any way discriminatory either indirectly or directly.

10. Responsibility of All Employees

Employees must:

- 10.1 Co-operate with this Policy and initiatives related to it to ensure equality of opportunity and avoidance of unfair/unlawful discrimination.
- 10.2 Avoid unfair/unlawful discrimination in service provision.
- 10.3 Bring suspected acts/omissions of a discriminatory nature to attention of line managers.
- 10.4 Not bully, harass or intimidate any other employee or service user.
- 10.5 Not victimise any person who has complained of discriminatory practice or provided management with information covering the same.

11. Service Delivery

- 11.1 HHA is committed to providing a customer orientated service to all our tenants and other stakeholder groups. We recognise that everyone has a right to their distinctive and diverse identities and understand how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better service.
- 11.2 Our tenants will be provided with full, clear and accurate information about their tenancy in compliance with the law and good practice guidelines.
- 11.3 All tenants will receive the same quality of service but HHA will be mindful of more vulnerable groups who may be given priority.
- 11.4 We work closely with our Local Authority partners at all stages from property development to service delivery to ensure the specific individual needs of all our tenants are met.

12. Monitor and Review

- 12.1 Responsibility for monitoring the application of this policy rests with Board of HHA.
- 12.2 This policy will be reviewed regularly, with amendments being made as appropriate. Best practice suggests covering the following areas: Policy and Planning, Recruitment and Selection, Retaining and Developing Staff, Tenant Support services. Key stakeholders (staff, tenants, tenant groups, the Board and other relevant agencies) shall be an integral part of the review process.

Discrimination

Basic forms of Discrimination are listed under headings below. These terms have been provided for guidance only.

1.1 Direct Discrimination

Occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another for an inadmissible reason. For example direct racial discrimination occurs when someone has been treated less favourably than another in the same or similar circumstances on the grounds of their race e.g. not offering a person a job because they are of a particular race.

Similarly direct sex discrimination occurs when someone of a particular sex is treated less favourably in the same or similar circumstances than a person of the opposite sex e.g. offering less favourable terms of employment because the candidate is male/female.

Under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of age. Direct discrimination would occur for example when a person is refused promotion on the grounds of their age (unless this can objectively be justified).

One of the differences in the age regulations as opposed to other anti-discrimination legislation is that direct discrimination may be permitted under certain limited circumstances.

1.2 Indirect Discrimination

Occurs when a provision, criteria or practice applies to everyone, but a significantly smaller number of one group is unable to meet the condition or requirement.

An example of indirect sex discrimination would be requiring job applicants to be a minimum or maximum height, which would indirectly discriminate against men or women respectively.

Indirect age discrimination would occur when stating in an advert that candidates should have 10 years' previous experience, if this cannot objectively be justified, as the condition would indirectly discriminate against candidates under the age of 26

Indirect discrimination, unlike direct discrimination may be justifiable in some circumstances. However the employer must be able to show that the application of a particular criterion, provision or practice was a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

1.3 Harassment

Harassment occurs where, on one of the inadmissible grounds, a person engages in unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. Examples of harassment can include racist/sexist jokes, innuendos or banter, sexually implicit messages/racially offensive material sent by email, suggestive remarks, teasing or taunting linked to religion or belief/age.

It is important to note that behaviour related to one of the inadmissible grounds which has no malicious intent or is unintentional may be upsetting to individuals and perceived as harassment.

Harassment under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 will also be unlawful for example ageist banter or jokes relating to a person's age, or dismissive treatment of a younger person on the grounds of their age.

1.4 Victimisation

This occurs when a person is subject to a detriment on the grounds that they made a complaint, raised a grievance, made or proposed to make a claim to an employment tribunal or assisted another employee in any of these situations regarding discriminatory treatment. For example labelling someone a trouble maker or being denied promotion on the above grounds would amount to victimisation.

2. Genuine Occupational Qualifications

In certain tightly defined exceptional cases fair discrimination may apply to appoint someone of a particular age, race or sex to a position providing it is a genuine and necessary requirement for the job e.g. producing a play which has parts for older or younger characters.