

# Dartington Housing Association

## Equality and Diversity Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Dartington Housing Association believes that all people should be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. We are working towards the elimination of discrimination and aiming to demonstrate a fair and equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals, groups, communities and organisations. We promote equality of opportunity and respect for diversity, so that all people have equal access to our services, employment and tendering opportunities.
- 1.2. The Association is therefore committed to the equal treatment of all without discrimination or prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, creed, religion, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, nationality, class, cultural background, caring responsibilities, HIV status, appearance, political belief, trade union membership, or criminal convictions (where these have no relation to an individual's ability and potential to do the job), or any other condition not justified in law.
- 1.3. The Association recognises the diversity of the population in terms of needs, cultures, and backgrounds. This understanding enables the Association to make reasonable adjustments with the aim of ensuring that its commitment to equality of opportunity is a genuine standard that can be attained.
- 1.4. The Association aims to be proactive, welcoming the benefits of diversity. It recognises and values the diverse characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience in all parts of society. It believes that harnessing this will make it a better place to live, work and volunteer. Employing and serving people from diverse communities will benefit the Association and enable it to progress its' objectives.
- 1.5. The Association recognises the particular needs of individuals and groups and will aim to meet these wherever possible and viable, recognising that not all members of particular groups will share the same aspirations.
- 1.6. The Association believes that equality and diversity are key to delivering good performance. Achieving the highest standard is important because of our responsibility to work to and encourage a just and tolerant society, and the legal and regulatory framework in which we work.
- 1.7. The issues within this policy are integral elements of everything the Association does. Therefore it has adopted a strategy of "mainstreaming" equality and diversity, addressing it within the corporate planning process, setting of policy objectives, service delivery and performance review. It feeds into all aspects of continuous improvement, and therefore applies to all the Association's activities and all aspects of the Association's work.

## 2. Policy Detail

### 2.1. Regulation and Application

2.1.2. The Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code (2.7) states that:

*"Housing associations must demonstrate when carrying out all their functions, their commitment to equal opportunities. They must work towards the elimination of discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals. They must promote good relations between people of different racial groups."*

2.1.3. This Code also expects associations to provide good quality services *"by being responsive to the individual characteristics and circumstances of residents"* (3.5.4)

2.1.4. In respect of this the Association will fulfil its statutory and regulatory duties and comply with all relevant laws. It will comply with codes of practice and codes of guidance on equality and diversity issued by the government, its regulators and other relevant agencies.

2.1.5. Liability for prosecution under equal opportunities and discrimination legislation can lie with the Association as an employer, the Board of Management and individual employees. The Association must therefore be able to demonstrate that its policies and procedures are applied fairly and effectively throughout the Association.

2.1.6. The Association will, taking into consideration its size and community demographics, develop, review and monitor practices, based on:

- Protecting the rights of individual in respect to discrimination and harassment.
- Paying regard to merits and abilities in selection and development
- Targeting recruitment to under-represented groups where lawful
- Addressing the diverse needs of our community
- Promoting diversity to sustain improved performance
- Commissioning appropriate, focussed and continuous staff training.

2.1.7. The Association's policy applies equally to:

- The provision, allocation and management of housing and related services;
- Tenant participation and satisfaction;
- Access to information and advice;
- Dealing with incidents;
- Procurement;
- Recruitment, employment and training of staff and volunteers;
- Decisions about engaging with partners;
- Housing development, contractors, and suppliers of services;
- Shareholders and Board Members.

## 2.2. Definitions

2.2.2. Equality of opportunity means providing opportunity or recognising individual needs. Equality is about understanding that:

- Certain groups within society experience discrimination;
- There is a duty to help change that situation as an employer, landlord, service provider, partner, and through contractors and procurement;
- Service delivery and employment practices should be systematically monitored to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate discriminatory behaviours, policies and practices.

2.2.3. Diversity means respecting and responding to the diverse requirements and needs of different individuals. Diversity emphasises the value to business in:

- Respecting and understanding individual differences and individuality.
- Maximising the unique contributions to the Association's activities.

## 2.3. Discrimination

2.3.2. The UK has some of the strongest equality legislation in the world. This includes formal definitions of the forms of discrimination which can take place:

- Direct discrimination: treating one person less favourably than another.
- Indirect discrimination: creating a condition, term of employment, or requirement of service delivery, which cannot be shown to be justifiable, and which in practice precludes people from certain groups from employment or receiving a service.
- Institutional discrimination: the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service or employment condition to people from certain groups.
- Harassment: individuals or groups are harassed or abused because they are from certain groups.
- Victimisation: where a person is treated less favourably because they have, or it is suspected that they will, pursue their rights to equality via the grievance procedure and / or legal proceedings, or they are a witness in a discrimination case.

2.3.3. All people have a right to be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment or discrimination of any unjustifiable kind is not tolerated by the Association. Any allegations of discrimination made against our tenants, service users, employees, Board members, suppliers or service providers will be taken seriously and investigated urgently in accordance with harassment, discrimination, complaints, grievances and disciplinary policies and procedures.

## 2.4. Customers

- 2.4.2. The Association understands that recognising the diversity of customers and their needs is at the heart of any effective system of delivering high quality services. Individuals and tenants expect and should be confident that the service delivered to them to be on the basis of equality and equity.
- 2.4.3. People should be equally satisfied with the quality of service they receive and the choices available to them. The Association is therefore committed to ensuring that the quality of services provided to all customers is equally good for all residents and tenants.
- 2.4.4. It is also recognised that equality and diversity are integral to the asset management strategy, taking into account of housing design, size and adaptations to ensure that the Association's stock is suitable for current needs and can respond to changes in people's physical and personal circumstances in the longer term.
- 2.4.5. We respect every residents' right to live in peace and safety. The Association will endeavour to protect tenants' rights in relation to racial and other forms of discrimination and harassment.
- 2.4.6. The Association will ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that our services are easily accessible to all and are responsive to the individual characteristics and circumstances of customers.
- 2.4.7. The Association accepts that it needs to ensure that it continues to be responsive to the needs of the communities in which it works. Existing products and services must be kept relevant to these needs. Taking account of the diversity of customers and the aspirations of these communities is crucial to developing the right products and services. The appeal of these products and services will be kept as broad as possible to help sustain long-term demand.
- 2.4.8. The Association will ensure that it involves and consults with vulnerable and marginalised customers, service users and communities when embarking on tenant consultation and participation.
- 2.4.9. The Association recognises that in certain circumstances it cannot act alone. Therefore we will endeavour to work with other relevant agencies in the community to enable tenants and other customers to receive proper and appropriate community-wide support.
- 2.4.10. It is not the Association's policy to house people inappropriately; in particular where the location of the property may leave individuals or families vulnerable to abuse or attack, nor in properties unsuitable for a particular individual's needs.
- 2.4.11. Information gathered on the diversity of customers and the broader community will be used confidentially to develop and improve products and services.

- 2.4.12. The Association will take appropriate action against tenants or customers who harass and / or cause anti-social behaviour in line with our Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment Policies and tenancy agreements.

## 2.5. Recruitment, Employment & Volunteering

- 2.5.2. The Association understands that only by drawing the best talent from all sections of the community can we ensure that we have the best staff for the job. This can only be done by:

- having fair recruitment processes and a corporate commitment to the active encouragement of applications from a diverse range of people;
- ensuring, as far as is possible, that the workforce reflects the composition of the population it is responsible for;
- Making reasonable adjustments to the working environment and physical accessibility of the workplace;
- Enabling flexibility within the workplace in order to facilitate a diverse workforce (e.g. home-working, flexible hours).

- 2.5.3. All vacancies will be advertised in a way that does not discourage disadvantaged groups from applying for posts. The Association will endeavour at all times to employ the person most suitable for each job. Vacancies will be advertised in Job Centres, community networks and volunteer bureaux in order to reach all sections of the community.

- 2.5.4. When recruiting staff, specific qualifications or experience will be called for only where they are really necessary to the job. Requirements for posts will be neither onerous nor inappropriate and will not adversely discriminate against individuals or groups. However selection will be on the basis of suitability for the work alone.

- 2.5.5. Training will be given to all staff and Board Members involved in recruitment to ensure that they understand and apply the equality and diversity policy.

- 2.5.6. Adherence to and the promotion of the equality and diversity policy is a condition of service.

## 2.6. Working Environment

- 2.6.1. Wherever reasonably practicable, suitable access for staff with disability will be provided throughout the workplace, along with a programme of improvement to ensure that existing arrangements are improved where necessary.

- 2.6.2. Wherever reasonably practicable, special needs of staff with disabilities will be met, including the provision of adapted or special equipment and changes of working methods to help meet those needs.

- 2.6.3. Working arrangements will, as far as is reasonable, have regard to staff members' responsibility for dependents and / or their individual personal circumstances.

- 2.6.4. The Association will endeavour to ensure that a supportive working environment is created for all staff so as to prevent the occurrence of any direct or indirect discriminatory working practices. Where necessary, managers will receive training to enable them to meet these ends.

## 2.7. Training and Personal Development

- 2.7.1. The Association acknowledges that responsibility for the successful implementation of equality and diversity in employment and service delivery lies with Board members and employees. The Association will, therefore, promote enhanced awareness of discrimination or potentially discriminatory practice, attitudes and behaviour so that they can be identified and eliminated.
- 2.7.2. Guidance and training for staff, board members and volunteers will be provided on equality and diversity issues and to ensure that they understand and implement all aspects of the policy. Training may also be provided to contractors if requested. This will ensure that all relevant parties are aware of their obligations in respect of equality and diversity issues.
- 2.7.3. As permitted under the relevant legislation, training may be set up for staff from disadvantaged groups to enable them to acquire the skills necessary to compete for jobs at all levels.

## 2.8. Contractors and Consultants

- 2.8.1. The Association has an approved list of contractors. We are developing a supplier "Code of Conduct" with which they will be required to comply. Tendering processes and contractor policies will be reviewed periodically and include all relevant policies and procedures.
- 2.8.2. The Association will advise contractors, consultants and other agencies working with the Association of its commitment to equal opportunities and request details of their own equal opportunities policies and expect them to adhere to these. The Association wishes to provide access to contracting opportunities for small and / or local contractors, consultants, suppliers and agencies and in particular those whose workforce and senior management are represented by women, people with disabilities and / or people black or minority ethnic communities.
- 2.8.3. The Association will take appropriate action against any consultants, contractors, or other agencies working for the Association whose conduct or actions are inconsistent with the Association's commitment to equality of opportunity.

## 2.9. Development

- 2.9.1. The principal objective of development for the Association is to improve and develop homes that meet the current and anticipated needs and aspirations of the local communities which we serve.

2.9.2. The Association will work with local authorities to develop strategies which meet the housing needs of the communities in the areas of our operation.

2.9.3. The Association will take all reasonable steps to enable tenants' homes to be adapted to meet their changing needs.

2.9.4. The design brief for new build units promotes the use of Lifetimes Homes and mobility standards and addresses issues of security and anti-harassment features for particular client groups.

2.9.5. The design brief for improvements and redevelopments will promote the same standards and issues, wherever this is reasonably practicable and permissible.

## 2.10. Leadership

2.10.1. The Association understands that achieving the delivery of the best leadership is best done by ensuring that the senior staff and the Board of Management reflect the diversity of the communities in which we work.

2.10.2. The Board is ultimately responsible for the Association and needs to provide the leadership that will ensure that the equality and diversity policy is successful.

## 2.11. Monitoring

2.11.1. The Association will monitor its performance against the equality and diversity policy to assess its success, allowing for the resources available. This monitoring information will be reported to the Board of Management to ensure it:

- Identifies any problems;
- Assesses the effectiveness of the policy against targets and performance indicators;
- Makes the best possible use of resources;
- Identifies and removes any practice or procedure which would breach the policy or the law;
- Identifies areas of concern and takes remedial or positive action where necessary.

2.11.2. The composition of the workforce, job applicants, housing applicants and those housed by the Association will be monitored in terms of ethnicity, gender, age and disability.

2.11.3. The Association will also provide specific measurable targets on race equality, and report performance against these to the Board of Management.

2.11.4. The Housing Corporation expects associations to set their own equality and diversity targets, based on a needs analysis, and on the principle that all residents have the right to the same high standards of provision and services. The

Association will therefore set clear standards against which its performance can be measured in an open and accountable manner.