

THREE VALLEYS HOUSING

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

APPROVED:

22/10/01

LAST AMENDMENT APPROVED BY BOARD:

17/3/03

13/11/06

LAST AMENDED BY MANAGER AT ANNUAL REVIEW:

NEXT FORMAL POLICY REVIEW REQUIRED:

Nov 2009

NB: ALL POLICIES MUST BE REVIEWED BY RELEVANT MANAGER EACH YEAR

FREQUENCY OF FORMAL POLICY REVIEW:

3 Years

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NOTES:

Brief Policy Summary –

This document sets out our commitment to managing equality and diversity within Three Valleys Housing and for dealing with any form of discrimination and harassment of any individual or group because of their age, disability, ethnic or national origin, race or colour, gender, HIV status, marital status, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, trade union activities and unrelated spent criminal convictions.

Equality and Diversity Policy

Three Valleys Housing

1.0 Policy Statement

- 1.1 Three Valleys Housing is committed to ensuring that our policies, procedures and practices provide fair and equal treatment to all in the allocation of housing, provision of services, membership of the Board of Management and the employment of staff and contractors.
- 1.2 We recognise and celebrate the differences within the communities in which we work and will work to eliminate all forms of discrimination. It is against Three Valleys Housing policy for any employee to act in a discriminatory manner, either directly or indirectly, or to harass or intimidate any other employee or potential employee, or any Three Valleys Housing resident because of their age, disability, ethnic or national origin, race or colour, gender, HIV status, marital status, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, trade union activities or unrelated spent criminal convictions.
- 1.3 We recognise that the following groups may traditionally experience disadvantage, intolerance and discrimination. Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it forms the basis for our work.
 - Older people
 - Young people
 - Women
 - People with a disability
 - People from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, including people who describe themselves as White Irish
 - Gypsies and Irish Travellers
 - People with HIV or Aids
 - Asylum seekers and refugees
 - Lesbians, gay men, bi-sexual men and women
 - Trans-gender/trans-sexual people
 - People of a particular faith or with particular beliefs or non-beliefs
 - Ex-offenders
- 1.4 We will require those who work with us and from whom we purchase goods and services to share our vision and they will be required to demonstrate their commitment.
- 1.5 This policy sets out the principles we will adopt in managing equality and diversity within Three Valleys Housing, and for dealing with any form of discrimination and harassment of any individual or group.

2.0 Scope of the Policy

2.1 This policy applies to every job applicant, employee, resident or prospective resident, Board of Management member, and to those who provide Three Valleys Housing with goods and services. It applies to all of our activities, including:

- Provision of housing and services that meet the differing needs of people in a diverse community.
- Recruitment, training and development of our employees and employment practices.
- Recruitment, training and development of members of the Board of Management and the operation of our Board and Committees
- Appointment of contractors, consultants and suppliers.

2.3 It is the responsibility of every Board member, employee and representative of Three Valleys Housing to adopt the policies and procedures that tackle discrimination, to comply with the terms of all relevant legislation and promote best practice in all aspects of equality and diversity.

2.4 Reports of discrimination, harassment or intimidation, will be dealt with both seriously and sensitively and appropriate disciplinary action, including dismissal for serious offences, will be taken against any employee or board member who is found to be in breach of the terms of this policy.

3.0 Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

3.1 We will comply with the requirements of relevant legislation, regulatory guidance and good practice with respect to our residents, customers, employees and Board members and ensure that our policies and practices are reviewed in light of any changes to these.

4.0 Key Policy Areas

We have identified five key areas in which we will implement and monitor our work:

4.1 Governance, Leadership and Partnerships

4.1.1 We will work towards ensuring that Three Valleys Housings' Board of Management and senior management team reflects the community in which we work. Our Board members and senior managers will champion and promote our commitment to equality and diversity in the course of their duties.

4.1.2 We will proactively develop partnerships with key organisations we work with and support the diverse range of residents within the borough and develop joint working initiatives with such partners.

4.2 Access and Customer Service

- 4.2.1 We will promote equality and diversity by collecting and using the fullest possible information to establish the needs of our residents and use this information to tailor services, develop policies and procedures and ensure that services are accessible. We will provide facilities and methods of service delivery to ensure that our services are accessible to all.
- 4.2.2 We will communicate openly and honestly and produce information and materials in a wide range of accessible formats in line with our customer service policy and our communications policy. Examples may include large print, audio tape and alternative languages.
- 4.2.3 In consultation with individual residents, we will identify and provide, where possible, support to meet their needs in a respectful, sensitive and supportive way.
- 4.2.4 We will train and support staff to deliver the appropriate level of service, in line with our customer service policy.

4.3 Service Delivery and Standards

- 4.3.1 Three Valleys Housing is committed ensuring that all groups and individuals have equal access to our services, and that they are treated fairly both in the application process and when they become residents or customers of our Carelink service.
- 4.3.2 We will set appropriate and challenging service standards to ensure we are meeting our Equality and Diversity commitments in the areas of lettings, resident satisfaction, racial harassment, board membership, staffing, representation in resident involvement activities, and performance of consultants, contractors and suppliers.
- 4.3.3 We will undertake equal opportunity monitoring of housing applications and allocations to ensure, that people from all groups have equal access to housing and are treated fairly. We will take action where we find that the housing needs of any particular group are not being met, in line with our allocations policy. This is subject to such exclusions as contained in that policy, for example applicants who have been convicted of a serious criminal offence e.g. drug dealing or other drug related or racially aggravated offences. In respect of lettings to BME communities, we will ensure that lettings are proportionate to BME housing need in each area in which the Company operates.
- 4.3.4 We will adopt a zero tolerance approach to any form of domestic violence, harassment or hate crime. We will communicate this to our staff, residents, customers and partners. We will adopt clear procedures for dealing with such

instances, to include reporting, victim support and action against perpetrators.

- 4.3.5 We will meet the needs of residents and customers with a disability, in terms of both service delivery and housing design and adaptations.
- 4.3.6 In appointing consultants, contractors and suppliers, we will ensure that they are aware of our approach to equality and diversity issues and that they are expected to comply with and support our policies in this matter. We will supply a copy of this policy to all external contractors and suppliers working for Three Valleys Housing.
- 4.3.7 We are committed to taking action against contractors and consultants who discriminate against or harass any of our staff or residents. We will take seriously all allegations against external companies acting on our behalf and will investigate them. It will be a condition of any contract with Three Valleys Housing that any such company or organisation will be expected to take prompt and appropriate action against any member of their own staff found to be in breach of this policy, and are representative of the communities we work with.

4.4 Resident Involvement

- 4.4.1 We will introduce mechanisms to consult our staff and customers and seek their views on how we may achieve our objective to promote and manage equality and diversity within Three Valleys Housing. We will ensure that all our resident involvement activities are carried out in ways which ensure compliance with this policy.
- 4.4.2 In addition, we will work with the Equality and Diversity Forum to monitor and challenge existing services and develop new initiatives to promote equality and diversity within Three Valleys Housing and the wider community.

4.5 Recruitment, Employment and Training.

- 4.5.1 We will ensure that our employment practices meet with appropriate legislation and will monitor our staff profile to ensure progress towards a diverse workforce which reflects the community in which we work.
- 4.5.2 We will advertise vacancies simultaneously both internally and externally, via appropriate mediums and forums and include a short statement informing prospective applicants of our commitment to equality and diversity in all vacancy adverts. Where practicable, we will provide appropriate aids and adaptations for qualified people with disabilities to enable them to obtain and retain employment within the Company
- 4.5.3 We will ensure that our commitment to equality and diversity is evident in our employment practices, including internal pay and promotion decisions, access

to opportunities for learning and development, redundancy and the operation of disciplinary and grievance procedures, flexible working and leave arrangements, in line with our conditions of employment. We will monitor these areas to ensure compliance.

- 4.5.5 We will provide training in equality and diversity issues for all staff and Board members and inform them of their rights to protection from harassment, discrimination or victimisation.

5.0 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in line with our policy review cycle.
- 5.2 In addition, the Equality and Diversity Strategy and its associated action plans will be monitored by our Equality and Diversity Working Group, which comprises members of staff from across the organisation and is chaired by the Chief Executive. The Equality and Diversity Working Group will report on our performance to the Equality and Diversity Forum and the Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis and annually to the Board.
- 5.3 We will measure our performance against key performance indicators in key areas of service provision and the make-up of our workforce and take action to redress any areas of inequality.
- 5.4 We will train our employees, board members and resident representatives in equality and diversity and ensure that they understand the moral, business and legal role and implications of equality and diversity in our company.