



PORT OF LEITH
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT POLICY

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| Revision Date | November 2014 |
| Author | Glen White, Corporate Services Officer |
| Policy Owner | Mike Beniston, Corporate Services Manager. |
| Reason for Revision | To meet new legislative and best practice requirements. |
| Training and Awareness Methods | <p>Training sessions for all staff and Board Members will take place as required to raise awareness of equalities and diversity issues across the Association.</p> <p>Training sessions will take place as required for relevant staff and Board Members in conducting Equality Impact Assessments.</p> |
| Date Approved | 29 January 2015 |
| Approved By | Board of Management |
| Review Cycle | Every 5 years or as required by legislative changes |
| Next Review Date | November 2019 |
| The Equality and Diversity Policy has a direct link to the following PoLHA policies and procedures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations Policy • Association Rules and Membership Policy • Bullying and Harassment Policy • Code of Conduct for Staff and Board Members • Complaints Policy • Disciplinary Procedure • Flexible Working Policy • Grievance Procedure • Induction Policy and Procedures • Recruitment Policy and Procedures • Tenants Handbook • Customer Engagement Strategy • Training and Development Policy |
| This policy complies with the requirements of these legal and/or regulatory documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalities Act 2010 • The Housing Scotland Act 2010 • The Scottish Social Housing Charter |
| Equality Impact Assessment Status (EDI) | <p>This document was EI Assessed using the organisation's set procedure in August 2014 and is considered free of any unfair impact.</p> <p>EI Assessment records are held by the Chief Executive's Office and can be accessed on request to the Head of Corporate Services.</p> |

1. Useful Definitions

- 1.1 **Managing equality** is about treating everyone fairly and ensuring they are given fair access to opportunities. It is **not** about treating everyone in the same way, but recognising that inequalities exist and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all people, taking their needs into account.
- 1.2 **Diversity** is the term used to encompass the fact that people vary in many different ways. Even though people have many things in common with each other they are also different in all sorts of ways. Differences include visible and non-visible factors, for example, visible factors may refer to variables such as gender, skin tone, age and hair colour. Invisible factors refer to differences such as educational attainment, life experience, sexual orientation, religious or other beliefs, values, skills, social or geographical background.
- 1.3 **Managing Diversity** is about ensuring the organisation is aware of the composition of the society and communities it exists to provide goods and services to and working to understand how to, as far as is feasible, mirror that composition in the mix of people it contains to provide those goods and services. To manage diversity effectively the organisation will need to ensure it has appropriate human resource management practices that positively encourage and enable people from a wide range of backgrounds with differing needs to join and work within the organisation. It will also need to ensure it has appropriate service management and delivery practices which enable people with different needs to access the goods and services being supplied with the same level of ease.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1 Port of Leith Housing Association is fully committed to enacting its ethical, legal and regulatory responsibility to ensure that we promote equality and the effective management of diversity in all aspects of our work – as an employer, a landlord, a provider of services, a purchaser of goods and services and through our dealings with other organisations.
- 2.2 The Association will aim to reflect, in all aspects of its organisational structure, a similar diversity to that of the communities in which it operates.
- 2.3 Port of Leith Housing Association will seek to promote diversity in its organisation and embraces the position that business effectiveness can best be achieved by viewing as a positive benefit differences in the people who work in the organisation and promoting policies, procedures and working practices that support the diverse needs of staff and customers.
- 2.4 In all areas of our activity no-one will be treated less favourably on the basis of any unfair criteria, but specifically the protected characteristics of:
- age
 - being or becoming a transsexual person

- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or having a child
- disability
- race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- gender
- sexual orientation

These are the defined protected characteristics detailed in the Equality Act 2010 to give specific groups of people protection against being treated unfairly and we are committed to ensure that throughout our organisation there will be a consistent approach to promoting equality and diversity.

- 2.5 We will not tolerate any form of prejudice, direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- 2.6 We expect everyone who works for us or with us to share this value set and to support us in its application.

3. Responsibilities Under The Policy

3.1 **The Board of Management** will have ultimate responsibility for Equality and Diversity Management within Port of Leith Housing Association ensuring that statutory and regulatory obligations are met.

3.2 **The Chief Executive and other Senior Management Team members** will implement the Equality and Diversity Management Strategy and Action Plan whilst promoting a working culture that respects and values differences and promotes dignity and equality and diversity.

3.3 **Line Managers** will be responsible for ensuring all aspects of their area of service comply with this policy and that all actions assigned to them within the Action Plan are delivered.

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that the Association's values and Equality and Diversity Management Policy is communicated to new employees during induction training.

3.4 **All staff** have a personal responsibility for the implementation of this policy and to ensure they treat others with respect and dignity in both employment and service delivery. All employees have a responsibility to be alert and to challenge behaviours and practices which result in unfair discrimination when they occur. Where a member of staff believes such behaviour is occurring they must draw the matter to the attention of their Line Manager to ensure the matter is dealt with immediately.

4. The Application of Equality and Diversity Management across the Business

We aim to ensure that the effective management of equality and diversity will

be widely promoted and integrated into all of the Association's policies and procedures and included in the following areas of activity.

4.1 Human Resource Management and Employment

4.1.1 The Association demonstrates its commitment to effective equality and diversity management in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, training, performance and development management processes and contribution pay.

4.1.2 The Association operates a comprehensive Recruitment and Selection Policy to ensure that fair and just employment practices are in place and that people are recruited solely on the basis of their own merit, experience, ability and potential. All vacancies will be advertised in a way that does not discourage traditionally disadvantaged or under-represented groups from applying for posts. Specific qualifications or experience will only be asked for where essential to the post. All applicants with disabilities who meet the minimum requirements for a suitable job will be interviewed. The Association maintains the Job Centre Positive About Disability logo as part of an annual review.

4.2 Positive Action

4.2.1 The composition of applicants for roles in the organisation the Board of Management and the workforce will be monitored. Should data indicate a lack of equality and where appropriate and permissible under legislation, positive action will be taken to redress the imbalance by encouraging under-represented groups to apply for roles in the Association.

4.3 Terms and Conditions of Employment

4.3.1 All contracts of employment will be issued in accordance with the job roles and not the job holder. Terms and conditions will be standard across all employees and employees will not receive less favourable terms and conditions for any reason other than relating specifically to the job role and grade it attracts. The Association has a comprehensive Staff Handbook which is accessible to all employees which includes a copy of the Equality and Diversity Policy.

4.4 Disability Arising During Employment

4.4.1 The Association is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for those members of staff who are disabled or become disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 during their employment with the Association. If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that the Association may support you as appropriate. (Please refer to the Managing Sickness Absence Policy for further details).

4.5 Religious Observance Needs

4.5.1 Some employees and job applicants may have particular religious observance needs (eg the opportunity to observe prayer time or other

religious festivals or ceremonies). Whenever it is practicable to do so, the Association will endeavour to meet such needs. If it is not practicable to grant a request on any of these grounds (eg because of pressing work commitments) a reasoned explanation will be provided, in writing.

4.6 Support For Employees

4.6.1 As an employer committed to effective equality and diversity management the Association recognises the requirement of a working environment which supports the diverse needs of its staff with framework of policies and procedures to ensure appropriate assistance is available to staff who need it. The Association provides a confidential Employee Counselling Service to all its employees and information on this service is provided to all employees at induction.

4.7 Work/Life Balance

4.7.1 The Association is committed to help its employees fulfil their potential at work whilst finding the right work/life balance by offering: a Flexible Working Hours Scheme and opportunities to job share where appropriate, Right to Request Flexible Working, Special Leave to help with caring responsibilities and domestic emergencies and Sabbatical Leave.

4.7.2 The Association is committed to supporting employees with family commitments by offering a family-friendly initiative as a flexible way to meet childcare costs. The salary-sacrifice scheme allows parents to give up some of their salary in place of childcare vouchers to be used to pay for childcare.

4.8 Training and Development

4.8.1 It is crucial that all Board Members and employees are able to participate and benefit from any training opportunities or development activities without discrimination or fear of harassment. Equality of access will apply to all training activities with training and development opportunities available to all employees according to their job role.

4.9 Salaries and Benefits

4.9.1 The Association operates a contribution pay and benefits structure that is fair, transparent and affordable with no disparities in salary due to protected characteristics.

4.10 Performance Management

4.10.1 Every employee of the Association receives, regular 1:1s and annual performance reviews. Within these reviews employees are given the opportunity to receive coaching and support, discuss performance, good working practices and areas for improvement.

4.11 Redundancy Management

4.11.1 Redundancy selection will be made in line with the Association's Redundancy Policy. Criteria will be discussed with the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) and agreed criteria will be fair and consistent. This will ensure that employees selected for redundancy are selected according to the chosen selected criteria and not in any discriminatory way either directly or indirectly.

4.12 Association Membership

4.12.1 Port of Leith Housing Association will ensure that participation in the organisation is open to all irrespective of sex, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, race, religion/belief, disability, sexuality, age, marriage/civil partnership or pregnancy/maternity.

4.12.2 The Association aims to retain a broad membership base and all applications for individual membership will be treated equally and considered in line with the Association's Rules and Membership Policy.

4.13 Board Membership

4.13.1 The principles in this policy will be applied in the recruitment and development of Board Members. Board Members are required to be aware of the Association's commitment to effective equality and diversity management and must comply with this policy in carrying out their duties.

4.14 Governance Arrangements

4.14.1 Within our Board of Management and Management Teams we will ensure that we have a diverse range of people with the right knowledge and skills to lead the organisation.

4.15 Procurement of Goods and Services

4.15.1 The Association will ensure that there is no discrimination in terms of allocation of work to contractors and consultants or in purchasing from suppliers. The Association will ensure that our suppliers are aware of this policy and will encourage them to have similar objectives. The Association Procurement Policy and Procedures have built in checks and balances to ensure equality and diversity issues are addressed during procurement exercises. This position will be maintained.

4.16 Engagement of Contractors and Consultants

4.16.1 Where services are provided by external contractors and consultants they are expected to adhere to and work in accordance with this policy whilst providing services on behalf of the Association.

4.17 Policy Management

4.17.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on all PoLHA policies. The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process is a systematic review of the Association's Policies and Procedures which will ensure that equality and diversity management is built into everything we do as an organisation.

4.18 Access to Services and Service Provision

4.18.1 Being aware of, and proactive about, managing the diverse needs of customers will ensure that we are able to provide the right services and meet the right needs. We will, as far as practical, make sure that access to our premises, meetings and housing complies with the provision of the Disability Discrimination Act.

4.18.2 We aim to meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders by:

- creating a work culture which values diversity, inclusiveness and respect, and empowers our employees to reflect those values in their dealings with the people who use our service and all other stakeholders;
- ensuring that we provide an accessible service to all of our customers;
- providing clear, meaningful information about what we do and how we do it to our customers, potential customers and other stakeholders, in ways that best suit their individual needs;
- identifying as early as possible any individual requirements that may need to be met in order for a customer to fully access our service;
- being responsive to changing needs and requirements.

4.18.3 The Association provides services with regard to applicants for housing tenants and sharing owners. The Association is committed to ensuring good practice with regard to equalities across all services it provides. The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect on 1 April 2012 and its aim is to help to improve the quality and value of services that social landlords provide to tenants and customers. Social landlords are required to perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services. This outcome describes what social landlords, by complying with equalities legislation, should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

4.18.4 Port of Leith Housing Association are members of the Plain English Campaign. Through this campaign every document Port of Leith Housing Association writes will apply for a Crystal Mark accreditation which means they must be written in easy to understand jargon free English.

4.18.5 The content will be open and inclusive and will not discriminate against any group or individual. Our website will be easily accessible to all our service users and stakeholders.

4.18.6 Information can always be provided in various formats: Braille, CD, Large Font and different languages can be requested. We will communicate regularly to current service users, tenants, employees and stakeholders through newsletters and our Annual Report. We are members of Happy to Translate as a tool to overcome barriers to information and services by those who speak little or no English. We will use the “Happy to Translate” logo on all our publications.

4.19 Tenancy Allocations

4.19.1 The Association will ensure that anyone applying for housing is dealt with fairly and without discrimination. We will adhere to our Allocations policy and monitor it and continue to review and improve the service we give to our tenant and applicants. The Association is a member of EDINDEX who operate the common housing waiting list for Edinburgh. All members of EDINDEX and the organisation itself subscribe to the principles of this policy.

4.20 Customer Engagement

4.20.1 The Association recognises the value of customer engagement in shaping and delivering the services it provides and will seek to actively involve customers in the management of their homes and our services at a variety of levels.

4.21 Community Support Activities

4.21.1 The Association works in a variety of ways to promote and support activities from leading on local neighbourhood activities to working in partnership with others. We recognise that how we deliver services may need to be different to meet diverse needs but are committed to taking a proactive approach to work with local community organisations to enhance community cohesion and social inclusion. A positive approach to diversity will promote understanding and good relations between people who have different backgrounds and experiences, and this will enhance the quality of life in local areas.

4.22 New Build Programme Management

4.22.1 The Association is committed to building and delivering services, facilities and resources that are accessible, relevant and of use to the individuals and communities where we work.

5. Monitoring Diversity And Equality

5.1 The Association will collect and collate data relating to the diversity of the communities in which it operates and then compare this to internal data

relating to the diversity of its customers, staff and key stakeholders. This will be analysed to identify any anomalies in the distribution of diversity factors and these in turn will be investigated to ensure no unfair discrimination is taking place and positive action taken, where possible, to redress any imbalances.

5.2 The type of data which will be used will include information about:

- ethnicity
- age
- gender
- marital/civil partnership status
- disability
- beliefs
- sexual orientation

5.3 Data will be collected about key processes carried out by the Association where a risk of unfair discrimination exists specifically:

- Recruitment and selection processes
- Allocation processes
- Service complaint management processes
- Antisocial complaint management processes
- Disciplinary management processes
- Grievance management processes

5.4 *Tenants Diversity Management and Review*

5.4.1 We ask our customers to advise the Association of their needs and record where it is provided any relevant information to tailor services to their needs eg communication preferences, access requirements, visual/hearing aid requirements.

6. Managing Allegations and Complaints

6.1 Complaints about inappropriate (eg racist or sexist) behaviour by staff towards service users, colleagues or contractors will be dealt with under the Association's complaints process and if necessary the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. All complaints will be treated seriously and investigated with all possible speed, confidentiality and sensitivity. If a complaint about a member of staff is substantiated it will be dealt with as misconduct under those procedures.

6.2 Complaints about the Association as a body will be dealt with under the Association's Complaints Policy and Procedure.

7. Managing Breaches of the Policy

- 7.1 Breaches of this policy will be managed using the Association's Board Member's Code of Conduct in relation to Board Members and the PoLHA Disciplinary Policy and Procedure in relation to employees.
- 7.2 Serious acts of unfair discrimination or harassment of any kind may be treated as gross misconduct.