

Blochairn Housing Association

Equality & Diversity Policy

Introduction

Blochairn Housing Association is committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all.

Management Committee Members and employees must abide by this policy. It also covers discrimination by and towards members of the public, Management Committee Members, contractors and staff from other agencies. We oppose all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to employment.

Background

Tackling inequality is not something new. UK Governments have been addressing equality and diversity issues for many years. Although progress has been made, inequalities still exist. As the Government continues to tackle discrimination, promote equality, address inequalities and inconsistencies that were present in the previous discrimination legislation, the Equality Act 2010 was introduced. The Act saw previous discrimination legislation abolished and replaced with one single piece of legislation. This policy will be compliant with the current legislation and promote a culture of dignity and respect for all.

Lack of equal opportunities is not only a serious moral issue but also has a significant impact on business performance. Studies have shown that high levels of motivation are achieved in an environment of respect and fairness. We ensure that Management Committee Members and employees are treated with fairness and respect and not be discriminated on the grounds of marriage & civil partnership, sex, race, disability, age, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy & maternity and sexual orientation, or disadvantaged by any conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance. We will therefore ensure all employees are provided with equality of opportunity in the course of their employment starting from recruitment.

Legal Framework: Equality Act 2010 - Definitions

- **'Diversity'** is about valuing individual differences. We are committed to valuing and managing people's differences to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential. We recognise that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences can bring fresh ideas and perceptions that will benefit us and our customers.
- **'Equality'** is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. ***Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but recognises that their needs are met in different ways.*** Equality focuses on those areas covered by the law, and described as the nine Protected Characteristics of race, sex, disability, age, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, religion or belief and sexual orientation
- The nine **'Protected Characteristics'**, the grounds on which discrimination claims can be made, are Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil

Partnership, Pregnancy & Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, and Sexual Orientation.

- **'Direct Discrimination'** is treating someone less favourably than others based on a protected characteristic.
- **'Indirect Discrimination'** is a policy, practice, procedure, provision or criteria that applies to everyone in the same way but might disadvantage a particular protected group, and which cannot be objectively justified in relation to the job.
- **'Harassment'** is conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. The intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant; it is the impact on the individual which determines whether harassment has taken place.
- **'Victimisation'** is treating someone less favourably and discriminating against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination, complained about the behaviour of someone harassing them or given evidence in someone else's discrimination complaint.
- **'Positive Action'** addresses imbalances in the workforce, by encouraging members of under-represented groups to apply for jobs. Positive action may be applicable in setting equality targets. No quotas will be set by us but equality targets may be set to encourage people from a particular group or groups to apply for a vacancy.
- **'Failure to make Reasonable Adjustments'** is about failing to make reasonable adjustments to overcome disadvantage where existing arrangements create disadvantage because of a disability.
- **'Associated Discrimination'** is discrimination against a person because they have an association with someone with a particular protected characteristic. E.g. a non-disabled person is discriminated against because of the action they need to take care of disabled dependent.
- **'Perceptive Discrimination'** is discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks the person possesses that characteristic, e.g. a person is not shortlisted because the recruiter assumes the applicant does not have the correct VISA to work in the UK as they have a foreign looking name on their application form.
- **'Employees'** are permanent, temporary or fixed term staff, including all managers, Director/Chief Executive, and agency workers
- **'Stakeholders'** are contractors, consultants, tenants, customers, service users and other outside agency workers

Policy Principles

This Equality and Diversity policy aims to:

- Ensure integration with equality and diversity practices into everything we do and ensure that employees are treated with fairness and respect from each other and from members of the public, committee members, and contractors.
- Require us to implement fair and just employment practices ensuring that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on any grounds.
- Ensure people are recruited and employees promoted solely on the basis of their own merit, experience, ability and potential. This applies throughout the entire duration of employment as all decisions will be based on only relevant merits.

- Provide an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life, and offer a culture that respects and values each other's differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.

Implementation of Policy

- The Director is responsible for the policy's day to day implementation.
- We will ensure that all new employees and Management Committee Members receive induction on this policy. The policy will be widely promoted and integrated into all policies and procedures. Copies will be freely available and displayed in our offices.
- Appropriate training and guidance will be available to promote equality and diversity among staff.
- This policy applies to everyone and everyone has a responsibility to be alert to discriminatory behaviours and practices. Unacceptable behaviour and practices will be dealt with immediately. Breaches of the policy will be regarded as misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

Recruitment & Selection

- All recruitment decisions will be based completely on the merits and abilities of candidates alone and no other criteria will be used. In order to achieve this, equality and diversity practices will be integrated into every stage of the recruitment and selection process.
- A fair recruitment process will remove barriers to the employment of people of different backgrounds. This will enable us to recruit from the widest pool of talent, potentially raising standards and increasing the opportunity of a more diverse workforce which reflects the community we serve.
- To highlight our commitment to promoting equality and diversity from the beginning of the employment relationship, all vacancies will be aimed at as wide a group as possible and any advertisement for a vacancy will state that an equality and diversity policy is in place. Information will be clear and accurate to attract the most appropriate candidates from all groups across society, to allow them to decide their own suitability for the vacancy and whether they wish to apply. We will ensure that applications have clear instructions and forms will be free from personal questions that are not relevant to the vacancy and that may lead to discrimination.
- We will ensure staff involved at any stage in the recruitment and selection process will receive equality and diversity awareness training. This will ensure that those involved in the recruitment process will not discriminate either knowingly or unknowingly by asking any questions which may lead to discrimination.

Terms & Conditions of Employment

Contracts of employment and employee's terms and conditions will be standard across all employees regardless of any of the protected characteristics. Employees will not receive less favourable terms and conditions for any reason other than relating specifically to the job role and the grade it attracts.

Training and Development

Equality and diversity will apply throughout all training activities and resources. Training and development opportunities will be given to all employees according to their job role. Employees are able to participate and enjoy any training opportunities or activities without discrimination or fear of harassment. Every attempt will be made to ensure learning materials will provide a positive image of people reinforcing an image and of equality of opportunity.

Redundancy Selection

Redundancy selection will be made according to the statutory requirements and in line with our Conditions of Service. Criteria will set out, objectively fair and consistent and will be discussed with the Trade Union and or nominated representatives. Employees selected for redundancy will be chosen according to the set criteria and not in any discriminatory way either indirectly or directly.

Complaints: Employees and Management Committee Members

This procedure is complemented by our Dignity at Work policy. For further details please refer to the policy. Where an employee or Management Committee Member feels they have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed by another employee or by a Management Committee Member the aim should be to deal with it informally in the first instance.

- **Informal Stage.** The aim is to resolve the matter informally as it may be that the discriminatory action is unconscious and easily resolved once the situation is highlighted. This is often the most efficient way with dealing with such circumstances and helps maintain good working relations. The issue should be raised informally with the Director. If the complaint is against the Director then the issue should be raised with the Chairperson who will seek advice from Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH). The Director, or EVH, will speak to the person that the complaint is against. If it is found that the behaviour was in breach of this policy, an appropriate level of sanction will be decided in line with our Disciplinary Policy and Codes of Conduct. In addition, a file note of the incident will be kept, including a statement that the note will only be taken into account if there are any further incidents. Dealing with the matter informally does not remove the complainant's right to have the matter dealt with formally.
- **Formal Stage.** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, or the complaint is very serious, they should raise the matter in writing, detailing the complaint to the Director or to the Chairperson. The complaint should then be dealt with under our Grievance Policy and/or Codes of Conduct. An investigation will be carried out. Employees who feel they are being subjected to harassment should raise the issue in line with our Dignity at Work Policy. If the outcome of the investigation is that a formal disciplinary hearing should take place this will be conducted in line with our Disciplinary Procedures. In the case of Management Committee Members, failure to comply with the expected standards of behaviour may result in removal from the Committee.

Complaints: Stakeholders

The right to be treated equally with dignity and respect extends to outside contractors, partners, service users, customers and any other agencies that are associated with us. Therefore, stakeholders also have a right to have any issues addressed under this policy. Complaints will be investigated by us and appropriate action will be taken. If a

stakeholder feels that they are being discriminated against in the course of their working day with us the following procedure should be followed.

- **Informal Stage.** Where possible, incidents should be dealt with informally. The stakeholder should report the matter to the Director as soon as possible. It may be that the discriminatory action is unconscious and easily resolved once the situation is highlighted. The Director will discuss the situation with the individual whom the complaint is against and explain the expected standards of behaviour and the consequences of failing to comply with these. It will be made clear that continuation of such conduct may result in being refused access to our premises or services.
- **Formal Stage.** Where informal action is not appropriate or the matter is of a serious nature the complaint will be dealt with using the formal procedure. A thorough investigation will take place in the first instance. Where it is found that the individual has acted in an inappropriate manner, they will be written to officially by the Director informing them that their comments, actions, behaviours are not acceptable and potentially discriminatory. The letter will state that further incidents will not be tolerated and that they may result in being refused access to our premises, or contact with our customers, employees and Management Committee Members. In cases of physical violence or serious threats the Director will notify the police.
- **Complaints made by stakeholders.** Where stakeholders are in receipt of inappropriate behaviour from an employee or Management Committee Member or another stakeholder in connection with our business, the stakeholder should raise the issue with the Director. The Director will investigate the complaint and deal with it in accordance with the appropriate procedure.

General Data Protection Regulations

We treat personal data in line with our obligations under the data protection regulations. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in our Privacy Notice.

Monitoring the Policy

Responsibility for monitoring this policy rests with the Director. The policy will be reviewed annually with the amendments being made as appropriate and communicated to all staff and relevant stakeholders.

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