

Tenants First Housing Co-operative

Equality and Diversity Policy

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1 Policy Aims

Tenants First Housing Co-operative is committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all. The aim is to provide an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life, and offer a culture that respects and values each others differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.

The Co-operative is committed as a landlord, purchaser and provider of services, and employer, to provide equality of opportunity so that no person is treated less favourably than any other person on the grounds of sex or marital status, on race grounds, or on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions. All employees are required to abide by this policy. Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and that each employee feels respected and able to give of their best.

The policy also covers discrimination by and towards members of the public, committee, members, contractors and staff from other agencies. The Co-operative opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to employment.

2 Objectives

The Co-operative wishes to ensure equality and diversity practices are integrated into everything it does. The Co-operative demonstrates its overall commitment in this area by setting the following as one of its five strategic objectives in its Internal Management Plan:

"To promote Social Inclusion and Equality of Opportunity for our members and their communities".

To develop this further the following principles are adopted in this policy.

- The promotion of equality and diversity and social inclusion in the communities we work in.

- The delivery of equality of opportunity in all areas of our service provision
- The provision of an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life, and a culture that respects and values each others' differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.

The Co-operative will set further operational targets in its Equality and Diversity Action Plan which will further support this policy.

3 Delivery

The promotion of equality and diversity and social inclusion in the communities we work in

- All of the Co-operative's key strategic documents will take account of the principles of this policy and each will contain an equality statement to reinforce this.
- The principles of this policy will run through all Co-operative policies and each will contain an equality statement to reinforce this. Policies will be regularly reviewed to reflect changes and to ensure they do not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any group or individual.
- We will maintain existing and develop new policies and procedures which deal with specific issues that are key to the delivery of this policy, for example Anti Social Behaviour and Harassment Policy, and Dignity at Work Policy.
- We will, where feasible, make information and official documents available in alternative formats, for example, large print, disk, community languages.
- We will encourage those we work with, such as contractors and consultants to have appropriate equality and diversity policies or to adopt the Co-operative policy.
- We will ensure our employment practices, including recruitment and conditions of employment are fair and not discriminatory against any group or individual. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged

to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Co-operative.

- We will ensure new staff and committee members receive induction and training on this policy, and appropriate training and guidance on promoting equality and diversity is given to existing staff.
- We will take part in relevant joint working and partnerships which promote the Co-operative's and/or the community's understanding of, and effectiveness in dealing with, equalities issues eg through partnership with Grampian Racial Equality Council, and membership of the Grampian Wide Equality Network.
- We will identify and share good practice in equalities issues.

The delivery of equality of opportunity in all areas of our service provision

- We will encourage and support active participation in our governing body structure, residents groups, focus groups and tenant panels which reflects the composition of the Co-operative membership
- We will consult with service users and the wider community where relevant in the review of policies.
- We will provide appropriate housing within a suitable environment, consulting with the community and other partners or agencies to achieve this.
- We will build new homes to an appropriate standard, for example the Housing for Varying Needs standard.
- We will provide equal access to housing and the associated housing management and maintenance services. This will include working with partners to achieve this objective. For example, we will have nomination agreements with local authorities and work with special needs support agencies to identify and implement appropriate care packages.
- We will, where feasible, make information and official documents available in alternative formats, for example, large print, disk, community languages.

- We will gather equal opportunities statistics relating to applications for housing, our members, applicants for employment and staff members to help us monitor this policy and any targets set within other policies. We will benchmark performance against comparable service providers where possible
- We will monitor performance against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan, benchmarking against comparable service providers where possible.
- As appropriate we will undertake equality impact assessments to ensure that our services are compliant with equality legislation and are meeting the needs of our diverse communities.

Committee and Staff Responsibilities

The Co-operative's Committee of Management fully accepts responsibility for the implementation of this policy, with operational responsibilities delegated to the Chief Executive.

All employees have a responsibility to apply this policy in their day to day work. All job descriptions have a statement which reinforces this requirement. Every staff member has a responsibility to be alert to discriminatory behaviours and practices when they occur, and a duty to bring these to the attention of their line manager immediately. Unacceptable behaviour and practices must not occur, however if or when a situation arises it will be dealt with immediately, as inaction is not an option. Breaches of the equality and diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct.

Member Responsibilities

The Tenancy Agreement details the rights, obligations and responsibilities in holding a Co-operative tenancy, with respect to areas relevant to equality and diversity such as anti social behaviour and harassment. The Tenant Handbook also offers guidance and information in these areas.

Equality and Diversity Action Plan

The Equality and Diversity Action Plan will support the delivery, operationally, of this policy. All areas of the business will be covered by this plan with regular reviews taking place so that effectiveness can be

measured and further improvements developed in all areas of our business.

4 Training

The Co-operative through its Internal Management Plan is committed to training and developing staff and committee members to their full potential in order to deliver a high quality of service in all areas of its business to members and the public.

The employee induction programme includes an overview of this policy, including responsibilities for the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities as relevant to their job descriptions. Committee members and staff will receive updates on these issues and specific training on any specialised areas of equalities issues as required. Training needs are identified on an ongoing basis by various means including through the regular staff supervision sessions.

5 Equal Opportunities

The Co-operative will ensure that in implementing this Policy it will not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of gender, gender identity or marital status, on race grounds, or on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

6 Monitoring and Reporting

The Committee will monitor this policy through reports which will include:

Equal Opportunities Statistical reports on applicants for housing and employment, members, and staff will be produced annually and presented to the Committee of Management.

The effectiveness of the Policy will also be measured against the Equality and Diversity Action Plan, and performance reported to the Committee of Management on an annual basis.

7 Review

This Policy will be approved by the Committee of Management and is reviewed in consultation, with staff, members and other relevant agencies. It will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, or monitoring and reporting or good practice reveals that a change in Policy is required sooner.

8 Legal Framework

The Co-operative aims to comply with the following legislation:

- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Equal Pay Act 1970, Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) Regs 2003
- Equality Act 2006
- Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regs 2003
- Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regs 2005
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regs 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regs 2006
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Race Relations Act 1976, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regs 2003
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Scotland Act 1998
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975, 1986 Amendment and Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regs 1995
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) and Gender Recognition Act 2004

9 References

Scottish Housing Regulator Performance Standards GS2.1: Equal Opportunities: *We embrace diversity, promote equal opportunities for all and eliminate unlawful discrimination in all areas of our work*

SFHA Code of Conduct: Equal Opportunities (2002)
Scottish Housing Regulator - Regulation and Inspection: Thematic regulation studies: Equalities in practice (2002)
EVH Model Equality and Diversity Policy

10 Related Policies/Documents

All Co-operative Policies and Procedures
Internal Management Plan (IMP)
Strategy and Development Funding Plan (SDFP)
Equality and Diversity Action Plan
Nomination Agreement

11 Useful Contacts

- Equality and Human Rights Commission Scotland
Scotland@equalityhumanrights.com
Helpline: 0845 604 5510
- Grampian Racial Equality Council
www.grec.co.uk
01224 595505
- ACAS
www.acas.co.uk
helpline: 08457 474747

Appendix 1

Glossary

- 1. Diversity.** Is about valuing individual differences. Tenants First is committed to valuing and managing peoples' difference to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential. Tenants First recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experience can bring fresh ideas and perceptions that will benefit Tenants First as well as respect for all clients.
- 2. Equality.** Making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. **Equality is not about treating everyone the same way, but recognises that their needs are met in different ways.** Equality focuses on those areas covered by the law, namely the key areas of race, gender, disability, nationality, religion, belief, sexual orientation and age.
- 3. Direct Discrimination.** Treating someone less favourably than others based on their belonging to one of the groups covered by discrimination law.
- 4. Indirect Discrimination.** A policy, practice, procedure, provision or criteria that applies to everyone in the same way but might disadvantage a particular group, and which cannot be objectively justified in relation to the job or circumstances.
- 5. Harassment.** Conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating, offensive or intimidating environment. The intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant; it is the impact on the individual which determines whether harassment has taken place.
- 6. Victimisation.** Treating someone less favourable 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.
- 7. Positive Discrimination.** Giving advantage to groups in society which are often underrepresented. Positive Discrimination is unlawful in the UK.
- 8. Positive Action.** Addressing imbalances by encouraging members of underrepresented groups (usually in relation to job applications). Positive action may be applicable in setting equality targets. No quotas will be set

by Tenants First but equality targets may be set to encourage people from a particular underrepresented group or groups to apply for vacancies.

- 9. Failure to make Reasonable Adjustments.** Where arrangements disadvantage because of a disability and reasonable adjustments are not made to overcome the disadvantage.