

HORIZON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED	<b>CORPORATE POLICY</b>
TITLE	<b>EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES</b>
DATE OF APPROVAL	<b>AUGUST 2006</b>
DATE OF REVIEW	<b>AUGUST 2009 (deferred until August 2010)</b>

## **HORIZON HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

#### **1. STATEMENT OF POLICY**

**1.1** The Association is committed to providing equality of opportunity to all persons in every aspect of its activities and opposes all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, marital status, family circumstances, political or sexual orientation or social background.

**1.2** It will aim to ensure that:

- [1]** No housing or job applicant, tenant, other customer, employee, contractor or supplier will receive less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, age, gender, marital status, family circumstances, political or sexual orientation or social background.
- [2]** The requirements of all relevant legislation and codes of practice are met.
- [3]** Effective measures are implemented to combat all forms of harassment.
- [4]** Appropriate training opportunities are identified to keep Committee Members and staff abreast of relevant aspects of equal opportunities.
- [5]** All contractors and consultants employed by the Association and suppliers to the Association have in place appropriate Equal Opportunities Policies or agree to abide by the Association's Policy when under contract to Horizon.
- [6]** The effects of the Association's actions are monitored and assessed by the Management Committee.
- [7]** The implications of the Association's commitment to equality and diversity will be considered as an integral part of all business decisions.

#### **2. GOVERNING BODY**

**2.1** The Association will also be mindful of its commitment to Equal Opportunities in the composition and operation of its Management Committee and positive steps will be taken to redress any imbalances within the Committee.

### **3. THE ASSOCIATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN EMPLOYER**

- 3.1** The overall responsibility for ensuring that the Association fully implements its Equal Opportunities Policy rests with the Management Committee.
- 3.2** The **Chief Executive**, as senior member of staff, will have specific responsibility for ensuring that all Association staff and applicants for employment with the Association are made aware of the provisions of the policy. In addition, the Chief Executive shall:
- (1)** Ensure that committee members and staff receive appropriate training and guidance in order that the policy and the legal requirements are fully understood.
  - (2)** Monitor the implementation of the policy to assess effectiveness and to identify any areas of concern.
- 3.3** The Association will make reasonable changes to our premises or employment arrangements if required by an existing, or prospective employee, with a disability, or other requirements, e.g. child care arrangements.
- 3.4** We will seek to ensure that we recruit appropriately skilled and experienced staff to enable us to provide quality services. We are also committed, wherever possible, to facilitate career development of existing staff. All posts will be advertised externally and will emphasise the Association's non-discriminatory recruitment practices. The only exception will be where potential redundancies may take place, or where a staff member has concluded a traineeship and is able to take on the promoted post. In such circumstances, internal candidates will be considered prior to the post being advertised externally.
- 3.5** All job applications will require to be made on the Association's application form in order that standard information will be used in the assessment process. All applicants will be assessed fairly against a pre-determined job description and person specification. All stages of the recruitment process will be monitored and the reasons for all decisions recorded.
- 3.6** The selection process will be as objective as possible, and at no stage will a single person be responsible for any decision. All short listed candidates will be asked the same core questions to provide a basis for comparison and candidates will not be asked any questions about personal circumstances unrelated to the vacancy.
- 3.7** The Association will make reasonable changes to its selection process to accommodate the needs of applicants with disabilities.
- 3.8** On an annual basis, the Director of Corporate Services will furnish the Corporate Services Sub Committee with an analysis of all applicants for vacancies filled during the year based on:

- a. Gender
- b. Ethnic origin
- c. Disability

#### **4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1** The Association is committed to ensuring that our employees are trained and developed to achieve their maximum potential and that all employees are given equal access to training opportunities. Attendance at training events will be regularly monitored to ensure that training resources are distributed according to the training needs identified through the staff appraisal and performance review process.

#### **5. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 5.1** The Association expects all staff employed by the organisation to recognise their individual responsibilities in ensuring that the principle of equal opportunities is adhered to. To this end, individual employees will:

- (a)** Not discriminate against other Horizon staff, contractors, job applicants, clients or customers in the course of their duties.
- (b)** Draw to the attention of the Chief Executive any apparent instances of discrimination, be they matters relating to recruitment and selection, training, promotion, the application of conditions of service or the application of the policies of the Association.

- 5.2** The Management Committee views acts of harassment as a very serious matter. Any alleged incidents will be dealt with promptly and in a sensitive manner. Any employee found to have harassed another employee will be subject to the Association's disciplinary procedure, which may result in the offender's dismissal.

- 5.3** Any employee of the Association who considers that he/she has suffered discrimination or harassment should, in line with this policy, pursue the complaint through the appropriate grievance procedure.

#### **6. THE ASSOCIATION'S RESPONSIBILITY AS A LANDLORD**

- 6.1** The Association will seek to ensure that all applicants for housing, tenants and sharing owners and owners who receive management services, are treated fairly and equally in the provision of services. To help achieve this objective, the Association will ensure that its Allocation Policy assesses applicants solely on the basis of their housing need, and that it does not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour, culture, nationality, disability, sex, marital status, or sexual orientation. Monitoring on the basis of gender, ethnic origin and disability will take place at all stages of the process and the reasons for refusal will be recorded.

- 6.2** The Association will seek to ensure that all customers are treated with equal courtesy and respect and that all policies, procedures and practices are applied consistently, and fairly. Information on the Association's policies will be made available, on request, to speakers of a first language other than English in their first language, in large print, in Braille, on tape or computer disc.
- 6.3** The Association's procedure for dealing with allegations of harassment aims to ensure that such allegations are dealt with promptly and in a sensitive manner. The Association's Allocations Policy will ensure that sympathetic consideration is given to transfer requests and the points system will reflect the seriousness of harassment.
- 6.4** On an annual basis, the Director of Housing Services will provide the Housing Services Sub Committee with an analysis of all housing applicants on the basis of:
1. Gender
  2. Ethnic origin
  3. Disability
- 6.5** In monitoring the effectiveness of the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy, the Management Committee will seek to identify where there are blocks to equality and why these occur. Where inequalities are identified, through the analysis undertaken by the Management Committee and Sub Committees, the Association will produce a programme of action to overcome these.

## **7. CONTRACTORS, CONSULTANTS AND SUPPLIERS**

- 7.1** The Association will seek to ensure that all contractors or consultants wishing to work for the Association, as well as all suppliers of goods and services, are committed to the principles of Equal Opportunities. All such firms will be expected to either:
- (a)** Supply a copy of their own Equal Opportunities Policy and confirm that they are complying with its terms or
  - (b)** Agree to abide by the Association's Policy when under contract to the Association.
- 7.2** The Association will take seriously any allegation of discrimination or harassment and any company whom the Association considers to be in breach of its Equal Opportunities Policy, may be removed from the approved list.

## **8. THE DESIGN OF Our DWELLINGS**

- 8.1** The Association aims to provide equality of housing opportunity, irrespective of people's physical and/or support needs. We will strive to achieve this by

designing our dwellings barrier free and through the dispersal, rather than concentration of houses for people with physical and/or support needs throughout our developments. The views of the Association's tenants will be sought concerning the design of their homes and this information will be used to inform its Design Guide.

**9. PUBLICITY MATERIAL**

**9.1** The Association will seek to ensure that all language used in our publications is clear, easily understood and non-discriminatory. Where there is a demand, we will attempt to produce published material in other languages and formats.

**10. RIGHT OF APPEAL**

**10.1** Any person associated in any way with the Association will have the right to appeal in writing against any decision of the Association, which they feel to be unfair on the grounds of Equal Opportunities, by using the Association's published Complaints Procedure.

**10.2** Complainants will also be advised of their right to complain to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Communities Scotland and the Public Services Ombudsman, who have procedures to deal with complaints against registered Social Landlords.

**11. REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The Management Committee will review the policy every three years to monitor its effectiveness and to ensure that it keeps abreast of any changes in legislation, policy objectives, standards and peoples' expectations.