

HORIZON HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED	CORPORATE POLICY
TITLE	EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY
DATE OF APPROVAL	AUGUST 2006
DATE OF REVIEW	AUGUST 2009

INTRODUCTION

Horizon Housing Association is a values driven organisation which has agreed that the following 4 core Values should be at the heart of all our business activities.

2.0 CORE VALUES

- Everybody is equal
- People are disabled by Society and the Environment, not by their impairment;
- Everyone is different and diverse each with their own individual qualities
- The organisation will aim to give choice in the housing that we produce and the services we deliver .

2.1 These core values underpin all the Association's work and whether in relation to our role as an employer, landlord, service provider or business partner, are relevant to our tenants and other customers, our staff and our members.

3.0 WHAT DO WE MEAN BY EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

3.1 There are many meanings and definitions of diversity. Diversity as a concept goes beyond equality of opportunity. Equal Opportunities is about removing bias, prejudice and stereotyping, so that difference does not impede any individual and the only form of acceptable discrimination is on the basis of ability. It is not just about language or political correctness. It should be seen as integral to achieving the business objectives of the organisation. It is about much more than social, economic and demographic profiles.

3.2 Diversity in the workplace is about having a workforce that is motivated by being valued and treated with respect by its employer.

3.3 Diversity is about valuing the differences between people and working creatively with those differences to stimulate fresh ideas, broaden and enrich perceptions to the benefit of the business and what we are trying to achieve. Embracing the concept of diversity is about making an effort to recognise that people in the workplace and in our communities come from different cultural, ethnic, religious and sexual backgrounds. For Horizon, managing diversity is about creating a working environment which enables employees to work in different ways. It is also about creating

living spaces and communities which welcome and accommodate people with diverse needs and from diverse backgrounds.

3.4 Diversity is not a replacement for equal opportunities. It is complementary. As an organisation, we must ensure through our policies and practices that we treat all employees, tenants and other customers equally in terms of status, rights and opportunities. We must monitor our activities to ensure that we provide equality of opportunity.

4.0 WHY IS DIVERSITY IMPORTANT?

4.1 There is a compelling business case for having a diverse work force. By tapping into the talent and skills available in all groups and communities, we are making use of the full potential of our workforce, which means that we work more effectively and efficiently.

4.2 There is also a very strong legal case. The UK and other states of the European Union have established a common framework to tackle unfair discrimination on six grounds: sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion and age.

5.0 AIMS

5.1 The aims of our Equality and Diversity Strategy are to:

- Complement all Horizon's policies including our Equal Opportunities Policy
- Pro-actively promote equality and diversity to the benefit of the Association
- Help to change attitudes in the wider community.

5.2 There are three strands to this strategy:

1. Horizon as an employer,
2. Horizon as a landlord, and a service provider
3. Horizon as a purchaser of services

6.0 HORIZON AS AN EMPLOYER

6.1 In our role as an employer, the Association will:

- Ensure that we adhere to the principles of our Equal Opportunities and Recruitment Policies.
- Ensure that employees receive equal pay for equal work, that part time employees are treated in the same way as full time employees and will seek to have family friendly policies which aim to achieve home/work balance.
- Provide equal training opportunities and personal development opportunities for all employees.
- Implement the EVH terms and conditions to ensure that all employees are treated equally

7.0 HORIZON AS A LANDLORD AND A SERVICE PROVIDER

7.1 In our role as a landlord and service provider, the Association will seek to ensure that we provide:

- Equal access to our houses via our Allocations Policy;
- Levels of service which reflect the varying needs of tenants or other customers, such that, irrespective of who they are or their type of needs, they receive equal access, opportunity and quality of service.

8.0 HORIZON AS A PURCHASER OF SERVICES

8.1 In our role as a purchaser of services, the Association will:

- Require all contractors to have an equal opportunities policy or to accept the principles within the Association's policy and expect the delivery of non-discriminatory services to Horizon tenants and other customers.
- Where feasible, influence contractors' practices in their recruitment procedures.

9.0 WHAT WE ARE ALREADY DOING?

9.1 The Association is already doing much to promote equality and diversity such as:

- Promoting equality of opportunity through our mission statement
- Continually promoting integrated housing for disabled people within the community
- Providing equal access to our housing stock through our Allocations Policy
- Accommodating tenants' and prospective tenants' particular needs – tapes, Braille translation of documents etc.
- Providing all tenants with similar Tenancy Agreements, whereby they all have similar rights and responsibilities.
- Promoting good practice in facilitating the inclusion of disabled people.
- Requiring all tenants, through their Tenancy Agreement, to respect others and not undertake any discriminatory practices.
- Putting Policies and procedures in place to deal with racial harassment should it occur.

10.0 WHAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO DEVELOP

10.1 Although work has started, much more can be done. The following are a few of the areas where the Association can develop its approach to equality and diversity:

- Network with other agencies, particularly disability and black and minority ethnic organisations similarly promoting equality and diversity.

- Develop partnerships with other statutory agencies e.g. NHS, local authorities etc
- Wider marketing – use voluntary sector magazines circulating among specialist agencies and groups.
- Extend Committee membership to balance gender and include representation from other groups, including disabled people.
- Provide training for staff and committee members on equal opportunities, particularly disability awareness
- Induction of new staff to ensure that they are equipped with the appropriate skills and sensitivity to respond to the differing needs of the Association’s tenants
- Consult with relevant groups to identify needs for the housing and services that we provide.
- Build upon our good practice on the integration of disabled people to encourage the inclusion of people from Black Minority and Ethnic (BME) communities.

11.0 ACTION PLAN

11.1 The following Action Plan sets out how the Association will aim to achieve the objectives of its Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Action	Timescale	Action By/Progress
Review of Equal Opportunities Policy and other relevant policies such as Recruitment and Allocations, to ensure that they promote equality and diversity.	Completed	Chief Exec Policies have been reviewed to ensure that they reflect the Equality and Diversity Strategy.
Audit all policies and procedures in terms of Equality and Diversity to ensure that they run through every strand of the association’s business activities.	Continuous	Chief Exec Relevant policies audited
Extend Committee membership to co-opt someone who has expertise in race equality issues	Continuous	Chief Exec/Chair Two people from BME communities have been elected to fill casual vacancies on the Management Committee.
Network with other agencies and local Housing Providers Fora to establish outreach work for communities with particular needs	May 2007	Director of Housing Services With assistance from our new committee members, we will aim to extend our outreach work. An approach has been made to Communities Scotland seeking funding to

		develop this.
<p>Establish a protocol for people who have particular needs, e.g. interpreting services for different languages, sign interpreters, tapes, large prints etc.</p>	<p>August 2007</p>	<p>Director of Housing Services /Director of Corporate Services Interpreting services have been used as necessary.</p>

Action	Timescale	Action By/Progress
Wider Marketing of the work of Horizon	Continuous	Management Team Following committee approval of the association's new Business Plan, we will seek opportunities to market the Horizon brand.
Develop a continuous training programme for all staff and committee members on Equality and Diversity issues.	Continuous	Management Team Equality and Diversity training is an important part of annual Training Plan.
Develop Equality and Diversity Policy and Procedures, to set out resources required and target setting for monitoring purposes	May 2007	Chief Executive Implications of the new duty to introduce a Disability Equality Scheme will be assessed following the receipt of guidance from the Disability Rights Commission.

12.0 REVIEW OF THE STRATEGY

12.1 The Strategy will be reviewed in three years. Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. .