



## **GROUP GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME 2008-2011**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Group Gender Equality Scheme is to describe how we ensure that people of every gender are treated fairly.
- 1.2 The scheme sits within the group's equality and diversity policies, which aim to ensure fairness and accessibility in every aspect of our work and the services we provide.
- 1.3 The scheme sets out how we will promote positive attitudes to gender equality. It sets out the actions we will take as a service provider to ensure the services we provide take account of the needs of people of all genders.
- 1.4 The scheme also considers arrangements for our staff, in line with our commitment to *Investors in People*. These include recruiting, developing and retaining employees and ensuring there is open access to the full range of employment opportunities to every gender.
- 1.5 We will seek to identify our performance on gender equality across all relevant aspects of our work and use a range of ways to collect information and feedback.
- 1.6 The group boards and group management team are committed to overseeing the implementation of the scheme through the group equality and diversity executive group (EDEG), ensuring that our core value of 'promoting equality and fairness' remains at the heart of who we are and what we do.

### **2. Our approach to the scheme**

- 2.1 This is our first gender equality scheme and action plan and it is intended to be a live document that co-ordinates the work of all the organisations in the group in ensuring gender equality.
- 2.2 EDEG members have undertaken a series of equality impact assessments across the group, which help identify points for consideration in the accompanying action plan.
- 2.3 We have consulted on the scheme with staff representative bodies, and the boards of all the associations in the group before final approval by the board of Devon and Cornwall Housing Trust

- 2.4 The scheme will be published as a summary in newsletters, with copies on the website.
- 2.5 Critical to the success of the scheme is our commitment to a regular review of progress against the action plan through EDEG, and for further improvements to be developed.
- 2.6 In addition the scheme will be reviewed annually by the boards from October 2009, and a summary of the review will be published to stakeholders and customers.

### 3. **The context**

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and places a general duty on all public authorities when carrying out their functions. This duty came into effect in April 2007 for most statutory bodies and is a regulatory requirement for RSLs from 1 April 2008.
- 3.2 Housing associations are not covered by a specific public sector duty, but they are regulated by the Housing Corporation, which is named in regulations under the Act, and are required by the Housing Corporation to produce a scheme in order to deliver their duty.
- 3.3 In achieving a gender equality scheme the group will have regard to:
- the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, and
  - the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.
- 3.4 In addition, and in support of the general duty placed on public authorities, housing associations will have a regulatory requirement to:
- publish a gender equality scheme
  - develop rewards systems which prevent, detect and rectify instances in which pay for work of equal value is not equal between men, women and transgender people
  - develop and maintain systems that collect information on how policies and practice affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services
  - consult with stakeholders and work with them to identify gender equality objectives
  - assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality
  - implement the outcomes to the gender equality action plan
  - report annually to the board commencing October 2009 on the progress made on the scheme and review it every three years.

## 4. **Group priorities**

### 4.1 As an employer:

- ensure gender equality in employment practices
- ensure gender equality in corporate governance
- maintain a recruitment procedure that adheres to equality best practice
- ensure we have a corporate culture where sexual harassment is not tolerated.

### 4.2 As a housing provider:

- ensure gender equality in access to affordable housing
- promote the inclusion of equality issues in all policies and procedures
- maintain a victim oriented approach to harassment and anti-social behaviour based on gender
- promote best practice in provision of housing for victims of domestic violence
- examine the relationship between gender and other equality strands in housing outcomes.

## 5. **Information gathering, reviewing and performance monitoring**

5.1 The group will continue to develop appropriate mechanisms that collect diversity intelligence. Moreover the group will underpin its work on equality and diversity through engagement with staff through representative bodies and the Human Resources Executive Group (HREG) and residents through the Regional Committees, Peninsular Tenants Committee, the ACT network, Tor Homes Involvement Web and the Resident Involvement Executive group.

5.2 We consider the key issues for gender in housing to be monitored and reviewed to be:

- employment practices -recruitment, training and pay equality
- domestic violence
- harassment and anti-social behaviour
- access to affordable housing including shared ownership
- resident involvement.

## 6. **Employment practices**

6.1 In 2006 the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) reported that on average women in full time work earned 17% less per hour than men. The Equal Pay Act (EPA) prohibits unlawful discrimination in regard to pay and associated benefits. Part of the scheme's aim will be to ensure that the group maintains an equal pay policy across the board. The EPA considers any pay variation of 3% or more between men and women in "like work" to be significant.

## **GENDER EQUALITY SCHEME DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

The Equality & Diversity Executive Group (EDEG) is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this plan.

### **1. Employment and corporate governance**

- monitor and review recruitment policies and procedures with regard to gender equality
- promote gender equality in employment throughout the group
- deliver gender equality with regard to pay and benefits
- ensure that the working environment is free from sexual harassment and discrimination
- further develop key performance indicators and targets which are gender specific across the group
- further promote the inclusion of equality issues, including gender into all group strategies, policies and procedures
- further promote the inclusion of equality issues including gender into board and committee member recruitment processes.

### **2. Access to affordable housing**

- review outcomes and evidence within resident profiling to look closely at who we have housed
- influence issues of factors of equality included within choice based letting schemes
- promote and develop guidance for addressing a victim-orientated approach to harassment and anti-social behaviour
- publish a good practice note that promotes gender equality within the group
- develop a link between the group's gender equality scheme, supported housing schemes and Supporting People strategies.

### **3. Resident consultation and access to services**

- examine the relationship between gender and other equality strands in regard to service outcomes
- review strategies in respect of resident involvement to ensure gender equality
- develop a gender equality consultation toolkit in conjunction with those used throughout equality and diversity
- conduct gender equality impact assessments in all significant policy areas
- explore the opportunity to share good practice with similar organisations that have particular expertise in the provision of gender specific housing and support services.