



Devon & Cornwall Housing group

Equality, diversity and inclusion policy

Introduction

We aim to achieve our vision of better homes, better places, better lives by:

- providing affordable high-quality services and homes, and involving our customers in shaping and scrutinising services
- developing affordable high-quality new homes that meet customer needs and aspirations
- supporting and developing our staff, and managing our resources effectively and responsibly
- being a leading regional housing group, working in partnership with stakeholders and local communities.

Policy statement

In line with our group strategy and our evolving core values, we have implemented the **Equality Framework for Social Housing, a framework for fairness – The journey to excellence** and will continue to maintain and continuously improve on our coordinated and structured approach to promoting equality of opportunity across all the **protected characteristics** e.g. race, sex, disability, age, gender identity/reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

This policy applies across Devon & Cornwall Housing group and its subsidiaries.

Our commitment

Through effective governance and operational management we are committed to:

- promoting equality, diversity and social inclusion amongst our stakeholders, residents, customers, clients, staff, board and committee members and all those we work with
- challenging and eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- treating everyone with dignity, fairness and respect at all times

- providing responsive and accessible services that meet individual needs
- demonstrating our understanding of the different needs of our tenants, including the relation to the protected characteristics and tenants with additional support needs
- working towards staff and governing body profiles which are representative of the diverse communities we work in
- reviewing and monitoring our equality, diversity and inclusion activities to ensure we do what we say we will do
- having due regard to:
 - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- ensuring this policy and associated arrangements shall operate in accordance with statutory requirements. Full account will be taken of any guidance or codes of practice issued by the equality and Human Rights Commission, any government departments and other statutory or regulatory bodies.

We take seriously our legal duty to provide our services and employment opportunities fairly and without unlawful discrimination, and we keep to all relevant codes of practice.

How do we meet these commitments

Our services

We meet these commitments by:

- promoting an environment that gives all residents an equal chance to live free of discrimination and prejudice
- removing any barriers that limit access to services and where possible tailor service delivery to meet individual needs
- providing accessible information and a variety of ways in which residents and other customers can have their say on all our services
- ensuring that organisations providing services on our behalf, work in line with this policy
- carrying out equality impact assessments of new and existing policies and practices to make sure that they are fully inclusive and consult, publish and monitor
- comparing and benchmarking our services against those provided by similar organisations and building on good practice.

Our governing body and staff

We meet these commitments by:

- being an inclusive employer – our staff and governing body reflecting the diversity of the local communities we serve
- maintaining an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff, board and committee members are recognised and valued
- developing and promoting recruitment policies and practices that give everyone equal access to employment opportunities
- challenging and eliminating all discrimination
- promoting dignity and respect to all. Exercising zero tolerance of intimidation, bullying or harassment, and ensuring that everyone knows about their rights of protection
- making sure that staff, board and committee know and understand the purpose of this policy
- setting performance targets to measure our progress in these areas
- ensuring training, development and progression opportunities are available to all staff.

Our procurement

We meet these commitments by:

- ensuring our procurement strategy and practices reflect our commitment to equality, diversity and social inclusion
- engaging with consultants, contractors and suppliers who share our values
- ensure that our consultants, contractors and suppliers regularly review and monitor that their respective services take account of equality issues.

Implementation and communication

Responsibilities of management:

Responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the policy and operation of the arrangements will rest with the Group Chief Executive. Operational Chief Executives / Directors / Managers will ensure that they and their staff operate within this policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination. Each manager will ensure that:

- all their staff are aware of the policy and the arrangements, and the reasons for the policy
- grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with properly, fairly and as quickly as possible

- appropriate records are maintained
- the policy and the arrangements are communicated to all respective partners, consultants, contractors and suppliers
- respective sections of the DCH group web site and staff intranet contain guidance and information on our approach and general information on equality, diversity and inclusion as appropriate.

Responsibilities of staff

Responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with all staff and the attitudes of staff are crucial to the successful delivery of our services and fair employment practices. In particular, all members of staff should:

- comply with the policy and arrangements
- not discriminate in their day to day activities or induce others to do so
- not victimise, harass or intimidate other staff, individuals or groups who have, or are perceived to have one of the protected characteristics
- ensure no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another individual who has a protected characteristic
- inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice.

Equality training

A series of regular briefing sessions will be held for staff, board and committee members on equality issues. These will be repeated as necessary. Equality information is also included in induction programmes.

Training will be provided for managers on this policy and the associated arrangements. All managers who have an involvement in the recruitment and selection process will receive specialist training.

Monitoring

DCH Group Management Team will be responsible for monitoring the operation of the policy and the arrangements, by reviewing equality and diversity goals embedded in respective action plans together with reviewing reports on periodic departmental audits, in respect of:

- employees – this will involve the routine collection and analysis of information on employees by race, sex, disability, age, gender identity/reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity, grade and length of service in current grade. Information regarding the number of staff who declare themselves as disabled will also be maintained

- job applicants – there will also be regular assessments to measure the extent to which recruitment to first appointment, internal promotion and access to training/development opportunities affect equal opportunities for all groups
- the information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose
- if monitoring shows that the DCH group, or areas within it, are not representative, or that sections of our workforce are not progressing properly within the organisation, then an action plan will be developed to address these issues. This will include a review of recruitment and selection procedures, policies and practices as well as consideration of taking legal Positive Action.
- our service standards and customer involvement
- customer profiling/segmentation, with reference to targeting key at-risk groups for service provision or debt management and to match service provision to customer needs, develop community facilities and cohesion
- procurement strategy and practices
- equality impact assessments, considering alternative ideas and reporting on results/lessons learnt
- harassment and bullying
- reviewing the performance and setting of equality objectives at least every four years together with equality information at least annually, to demonstrate our compliance with the equality duty enacted April 2011

Review

The effectiveness of this policy and associated arrangements will be reviewed every two years, or earlier in the event of significant social, demographic, legal or regulatory changes. The next full review will be July 2013.