



CHESHIRE  
PEAKS & PLAINS  
HOUSING TRUST



# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Policy Name: Equality and Diversity	Policy No: 14
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Team: All	Revision No: 2
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Effective Date: October 2007
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Affected Teams: All
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Cheshire Peaks & Plains Housing Trust (the Trust) as a provider of housing services aims to ensure all its customers are dealt with fairly and equitably. Equality and diversity is integral to all of the Trust's activities, which means that our services need to be flexible and adaptable to all our customers (and employees) needs so that no-one is unfairly disadvantaged.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how the Trust will deal with equality and diversity issues in delivering its housing services. The Trust will look to develop a culture where people from all sections of society are valued and respected.

The Trust will oppose any form of discrimination in service delivery and actively promote opportunities for participation and involvement.

- 1.3 The Trust also recognises that equality and diversity issues are just as relevant to the staff it employs and the Trust aims to be an equal opportunity employer.
- 1.4 The Trust will seek to ensure that the principles of equality and diversity are applied to all its activities and in particular: -
- Company membership
  - Appointments to the Board
  - Meeting housing need
  - Access to housing
  - Providing housing and related services
  - Developing new homes
  - Appointing contractors, consultants and suppliers
  - Recruiting, employing and training staff
- 1.5 The aims of the Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy are to: -
- Identify and eliminate unlawful discrimination;
  - Promote equality of opportunity in all of the Trust's activities;
  - Provide practical and responsive services to victims of discrimination;
  - Manage diversity in people through recognising the differences between them;
  - Recognise that everyone is entitled to be treated fairly, with integrity and respect;
  - To achieve the highest standards of performance;
  - Ensure that records are kept to monitor the impact of this policy.
- 1.6 In implementing this policy, the Trust will comply with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance, in particular Section 2.7. This states that: -
- 'Housing Associations must demonstrate, when carrying out all their functions, their commitment to equal opportunity. They must work towards the elimination of discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals. They must promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.'*
- 1.7 The Code and Guidance also expects associations to have an equalities and diversity policy that covers all aspects of equalities and includes race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age. (Regulatory guidance 2.7b) Associations must also provide good quality services by "*by being responsive to the individual characteristics and circumstances of residents*". (Regulatory guidance 3.5.4)
- 1.8 The Trust will operate in accordance with Good Practice Note 4, Race equality and diversity, which sets out the Housing Corporation's

expectations on race equality and the targets which associations must set and meet in relation to these, within the specified timetable.

1.9 The Trust will use the following criteria to measure whether it can demonstrate that it is complying with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance: -

- The Board and workforce reflects the communities they serve and they have a broad range of skills, experience and up-to-date relevant knowledge;
- The Trust is fair in its dealings with people, communities and organisations with which it has relationships and takes account of the diverse nature of their culture and backgrounds;
- The Board has adopted an Equality and Diversity Policy which covers all aspects of equality and includes race, religion, gender, marital status, sexuality, gender identity, disability or age;
- The Trust's lettings policies are flexible, non-discriminatory and responsive to demand, while contributing to the need to be inclusive and the need to achieve sustainable communities;
- The Trust's Equality and Diversity Policy incorporates targets in various areas specifically in relation to black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. For example, appropriate targets set in key service areas such as lettings, transfers and customer satisfaction with the repairs service, as well as in those internal service areas whose delivery can affect race equality such as finance and human resources.

## **2. Policy Statement**

2.1 It is recognised that Housing Association households contain higher than average proportions of people who experience discrimination and other social disadvantage. The Trust will seek to achieve equality of treatment for all its customers without discrimination or prejudice on the grounds of a person's race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, cultural background, religion, gender, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS status, age or disability. The Trust will work to eliminate any form of discrimination and to promote good relations between people of different groups.

2.2 The Trust is committed to developing an organisational culture which values people from all sections of the community and the contribution each individual can make to the Trust's work.

2.3 The Trust recognises that discrimination can take a number of forms: -

- Direct – where a person is treated less favourably than others are or would be treated in the same circumstances;
- Indirect – where a requirement has been applied which, intentionally or not, has a disproportionately adverse affect on a particular group of people which cannot be justified;

- Harassment – where service users feel that there has been interference, either verbal or physical, with their comfort or safety;
  - Victimisation – where a person is treated less favourably because they have pursued or it is suspected that they will pursue their rights under this policy.
- 2.4 The Trust undertakes to deal firmly and promptly with any cases of discrimination or harassment that are brought to its attention.
- 2.5 The Trust will abide by all relevant legislation to ensure that opportunities for discrimination are eliminated. Such legislation includes: -
- The Race and Housing Enquiry: Challenge Report 2001
  - The Race Relations Act 1976 and associated Codes of Practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)
  - The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and associated Codes of Practice issued by the CRE
  - The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986 (as amended)
  - The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) (Religion or Belief) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
  - The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and associated Codes of Practice
  - The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
  - The Human Rights Act 1998
  - The Housing Act 1996
- 2.6 The Trust considers that diversity means understanding that each individual is unique and recognising our individual differences. These can be factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.
- The Trust will look to encourage and maintain diversity in its service delivery by recognising the diverse needs of its customers.
- 2.7 The Trust will also comply with good practice guidance from the Housing Corporation in particular Good Practice Notes 4 and 8 and and the Code of Practice arising out of the Race and Housing Inquiry Challenge Report.
- 2.8 The Trust will ensure that there is full commitment to the policy for all that are involved in the Trust's work. Guidance and training will be provided to both Board Members and staff so that they are fully aware of their responsibility for promoting equal opportunities, are equipped to take account of the different needs of groups and individuals and are able to make provision for these needs.

### **3. Implementation**

3.1 The Trust will pursue the following actions in implementing this policy: -

- The adoption of the provisions of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice for Rented Housing as far as practicable in delivering its housing service. This will include the training of staff working in allocations and housing management in the contents of the code and their responsibilities under it. The Code makes recommendations on the practical steps that housing organisations need to take to prevent unlawful racial discrimination or harassment, and to ensure equality of opportunity and good race relations in housing.

### 3.2 Staffing and Employment

- The Trust will recruit and aim to retain competent staff at all levels who uphold the Trust's vision, values and principles and who represent the communities that it serves.
- As part of the induction process, all new staff will be made aware of this policy and all staff will receive regular training on equality and diversity issues.
- The Trust will take appropriate disciplinary action against any employee whose conduct or actions are inconsistent with the Trust's commitment to equal opportunities.
- The Trust will maintain records in recruitment, training and employment and report and use this information as a means of identifying inequality.
- The Trust will develop and implement vigorous anti-bullying and harassment policies for the protection of staff.

### 3.3 Access to Housing

- The Trust will make its homes and services available to all in a fair and equitable way to people from all groups within its communities.
- The Trust will actively find out more about the neighbourhoods, stakeholders and communities it serves. The Trust will also identify groups who are not amongst our tenants and ascertain the reasons why and act upon them.

### 3.4 Lettings

- The Trust will carry out monitoring of performance against set targets for lettings which reflect the BME make-up of the community.
- The Trust will set targets for lettings and report performance against targets to Board..

### 3.5 Involvement and Consultation

- The Trust will aim to involve its customers in the local communities it serves using a range of involvement and consultation techniques and in the organisations work.
- The Trust will ensure that all groups, in particular vulnerable and marginalised groups and communities, are offered appropriate opportunities to take part in the Trust's activities.
- The Trust will ensure that groups are not excluded from any participation activity.
- The Trust will consult residents on how they wish to take part in its activities.
- The Trust will only support constituted Tenant and Residents groups that have an equality and diversity policy as part of their constitution.

### 3.6 Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Trust will collect and monitor records of the gender, sexuality, ethnic origin, religion, age, preferred language and disability of all new and existing customers of the Trust.
- The Trust will closely monitor the provision of services to ensure that no inequalities exist and the publishing of regular performance information in this area.
- The Trust will involve customers in setting standards of service delivery and explore ongoing involvement in monitoring performance.

### 3.7 Access to services and information

- The Trust will provide services which are fully appropriate to the diverse needs of different individuals in the communities which the Trust serves.
- The Trust will adhere to robust procedures for tackling and resolving harassment and nuisance, in accordance with the Trust's Anti Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Harassment Policies, which ensure that prompt action is taken and complies with the requirements of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.
- The Trust will make sure that all the Trust's tenants, Members and prospective tenants are aware of its Equality and Diversity Policy and will provide the document in a range of formats and languages as required.

- The Trust will make all key information available in a range of formats and languages following a thorough assessment of what is needed locally and by individual residents.

### 3.8 Customer Satisfaction

- The Trust will work to make sure that the satisfaction levels of minority groups are at least as high as non-minority groups.

### 3.9 Working with contractors and other partners

- As far as it is allowed to by the requirements of the EU Procurement Regulations, the Trust will actively encourage, and ensure fair consideration of applications for contracting opportunities from small and/or local contractors, consultants, suppliers and agencies, including those from under represented minority groups.
- The Trust will advise contractors, consultants and any other agency working for the Trust of its commitment to equal opportunities so that they will abide by it in all their working practices when engaged by the Trust. The Trust will request details of the contractors' etc own equal opportunities policies and practices and this will form part of any selection process for new contractors.
- The Trust will only work with partners who adopt good equality and diversity policies and who support the Trust's principles when they deliver services on the Trust's behalf.

## **4. Responsibility**

- 4.1 The Trust's Board will have ultimate responsibility to ensure that this policy underpins all aspects of the Trust's work and provide the leadership to ensure the policy is successful.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive of the Trust will be responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy.
- 4.3 It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and the Directors to ensure that: -
- All staff are aware of the Trust's Equality and Diversity policy;
  - All staff receive guidance and training on the policy and the CRE's Code of Practice to ensure they understand their position in law and the implications of the Trust's policy;
  - Monitoring records are collected in accordance with the Trust's policies and procedures;
  - Customers are aware of the Trust's Equality and Diversity policy
  - Disciplinary procedures are invoked against employees whose actions are inconsistent with the policy.

- 4.4 All Board Members, employees and contractors used by the Trust will have a responsibility to fully familiarise themselves with the policy. They will be expected to adhere to the principles laid down in the policy and have an individual and collective responsibility to ensure that the policy is applied in practice. They will also be expected to inform the Chief Executive and/or Directors where it is apparent that this policy is not being adhered to.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The Trust will consult with recognised Tenants and Residents groups, community groups and other agencies such as the Police and Macclesfield Borough Council on a regular basis to assess the effectiveness of this policy.
- 5.2 Views from tenants and residents from diverse communities will be used to inform service reviews from which appropriate targets will be set.
- 5.3 Any consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Trust's Resident Involvement Policy.

## **6. Review and Monitoring**

- 6.1 A range of performance indicators and other information on equality and diversity issues will be reported monthly to Board, customers and other stakeholders.
- 6.2 Targets will be set for ethnic monitoring data on lettings and other key areas of service delivery on an annual basis. Progress against these targets will be monitored on a regular basis and appropriate action will be taken to aim to achieve continuous improvement.
- 6.3 The Trust will provide information on the Trust's performance in this area in its Annual Report.
- 6.4 The policy will be reviewed regularly taking into account the information contained in the above reports, as well as any change in legislation or advice and guidance from the Housing Corporation or the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).

## **7. Associated Documents**

All of the Trust's Policies  
Code of Conduct  
Tenants' Handbook  
Staff Handbook  
Leaseholder Handbook  
Equality and Diversity Implementation Plan

## **8. Policy Information**

<i>Policy Name:</i>	<i>Equality &amp; Diversity Policy</i>
<i>Status:</i>	<i>As above</i>
<i>Approved by:</i>	<i>Board</i>
<i>Drafted By:</i>	<i>Head of Housing</i>
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