

Policy

Title: **Diversity Policy**

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A policy should be a short statement which describes in general terms or objectives what a service area's principles and key objectives are on a particular subject and should be no longer than a 2 pages in length. The aim of the policy is to give practical effect of the strategy it supports.

Translations available on request by phoning 0151 510 5000

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Introduction

Halton Housing Trust (the Trust) provides services to some of the most disadvantaged sections of the community. The Trust recognises that organisations that participate within the social housing sector have both a service led and a moral obligation to respond to the wider social diverse needs in today's society and to reflect this in our own organisational culture.

In response, the Trust has adopted a holistic organisational approach to diversity. This is reflected in a drive to ensure that diversity considerations are at the heart of everything the Trust does. This includes being integral within our corporate planning process, setting of policy objectives, service delivery and reviewing performance.

The Trust will continue to develop and deliver services that reflect the communities the Trust works within and in particular the locally relevant issues facing our customers and their diverse and differing needs.

Aims / Objectives

The Trust aims to ensure that no person receives less favourable treatment because of who they are or their individual personal circumstances.

The Trust acknowledges that diversity is wider than the areas currently covered by national legislation. The Trust is committed to achieving equality for all by taking positive action measures to address the effects of unfair treatment.

Policy Statement

The Trust is committed to providing fair and equal services and opportunities to all. It aims to eliminate disadvantage, discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in all aspects of its activities as an employer, service provider and business operation.

It recognises that people originate from diverse backgrounds and have a range of different experiences and needs.

The Trust provides structures, ways of working, communication and management, which are designed to enable the Trust's holistic approach to be embedded across the organisation.

The Trust will achieve this by:

- Meeting all the Trust's responsibilities for equal opportunities in relevant legislation, codes of practice and the former Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance. This will also include compliance with any future code of practice and guidance introduced by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).
- Ensuring that the Trust's work, i.e. strategies, policies, plans, practices and procedures reflect and incorporate the Trust's commitment.
- monitoring outcomes and assessing the effectiveness of this Policy

Performance Measures / Monitoring

The Board, Diversity Champions Group and Senior Management Team (SMT) each receive regular reports outlining progress against this Policy and the Trust's Diversity Strategy targets. This is underpinned by a comprehensive performance measurement system in place, which incorporates the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) and Company Score Indicator (CSI) framework.

Scope

The Diversity Policy applies across all areas of the Trust's work including as:

- a provider of housing and supporting housing services
- an employer
- a purchaser of goods and services

Compliance with the Policy is expected of all Board Members, customers and employees. The Trust also expects organisations who work with us including contractors, partners, consultants and other agencies to embrace both the spirit and requirements set out within this Policy.

Responsibility

The ultimate responsibility of this Policy rests with the Executive Management Team (EMT). This includes the Chief Executive, Director of Resources, and the Director of Customer Services, who ensure that there are systems in place to put this Policy into practice on a day-to-day basis.

The Director of Resources has the lead EMT responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the Policy and reporting updates to Board and other reporting frameworks as appropriate

Service Standards

Service standards have been developed for specific areas within the organisation. In addition, service standards will be developed with employees, customers, stakeholders and partners during the implementation of this Policy.

Implementation of this Policy will be reported to the Board and monitored by the Diversity Champions Group.

Consultation Arrangements

The Policy has been developed taking on board the comments and amendments of an external equalities consultant. The Policy will be made available for customer representatives through the Customer Forum. All employees will also have the opportunity to submit views throughout the life of the Policy and make any

amendments as appropriate. Stakeholders will be requested to comment during the first year of its implementation.

Implementation

The implementation of the objectives and actions arising from this policy will be included within the Trust's Diversity Strategy and Implementation plan. The Trust's Diversity Officer will ensure progress on each action is being delivered.

Benchmark Analysis

There is limited benchmarking data which is available nationally. The Trust is a member of the North West Equality and Diversity Practitioners Network. The Network is currently engaged in a process to establish some regional benchmarking criteria across the North West. It is envisaged that the Trust will join this benchmarking group when appropriate

Regulatory or Legal Compliance

Halton Housing Trust will implement this Diversity Policy in accordance with both current and any future amended legislation. Appendix A lists the main legislation affected by this Policy.

KLOE's affected

Diversity This Policy plays a vital role in ensuring that the Trust meets the expectations set out within this KLOE.

Access and customer care All customers are required to be involved across the organisation. This Policy will assist the Trust in ensuring that all customers are supported in planning, designing and accessing services.

Links to Strategies, Procedures and Associated Documents

Strategies which are directly linked to this Policy include:

- Diversity Strategy
- Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Organisational Development Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Customer Involvement Strategy

Other policies this Policy is linked to include:

- Customer Care Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Customer Involvement Policy
- Domestic Violence Policy
- Harassment and Hate Crime Policy
- Rent Arrears Recovery Policy
- Services for Elderly and Disabled Residents and those with Special Needs Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Learning and Development Policy
- Whistle-blowing Policy
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Managing Attendance Policy

Procedures, which relate to this Policy include:

- EIA Framework and Toolkit
- Translation Services – Briefing Note
- Anti-Social Behaviour Procedure
- Harassment and Hate Crime Procedure Guide (Version 2)
- Rent Arrears Procedures
- Aids and Adaptations Procedures.

Diversity Considerations

The Policy aims to ensure that the Trust is an inclusive organisation, which treats all with respect and dignity. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed in March 2009 on the two existing equality and diversity policies. Findings from the assessment have informed and influenced the consolidation of the two existing policies into this unified Policy.

Business Impact

The Policy impacts upon the Trust's business plan in terms of delivering one of the four Trust Themes (Inclusive and open) and its associated objectives.

Self Assessment Compliance Statement (SACS) Considerations

The Trust must adhere and demonstrate SACS 2.7. 'Housing Associations must demonstrate when carrying out all their functions, their commitment to equal opportunity. They must work towards the elimination and discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals. They must promote good relations between people of different racial groups'.

This will not have any affect on the SACS returns as it is a standard item that is reported within the statement annually.

Appendix A

Regulatory and Legal Compliance

Regulatory Compliance:

Good Practice Note 8 – helps housing associations to achieve and exceed the minimum standards set out in 2.7 Regulatory Code and guidance, and to work towards the elimination of discrimination while promoting continuous improvement on equality and diversity.

Please Note: The Trust is currently complying with the former Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code. Going forward the Trust will comply will comply with the new Tenant Services Authority requirements.

Legal Compliance:

Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended) – This gives an individual a right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where the man and the woman are doing: like work; work rated as equivalent under an analytical job evaluation study; or work that is proved to be of equal value.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 – The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex. Sex discrimination is unlawful in employment, education, advertising or when providing housing, goods, services or facilities. It is unlawful to discriminate because someone is married, in employment or advertisements for jobs.

Race Relations Act 1976 – The Act prohibits discrimination on racial grounds in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities, services and premises.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – Outlaws the discrimination of disabled people in employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the administration or management of premises.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 – Places a statutory duty on all public bodies to promote equal opportunity, eliminate racial discrimination and promote good relations between different racial groups.

Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 – Introduced new definitions of indirect discrimination and harassment, new burden of proof requirements, continuing protection after employment ceases, new exemption for a determinate job requirement and the removal of certain other exemptions.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 – This directive protects against discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief or no-belief in employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 – The directive protects against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment, vocational training, promotion, and working conditions

Civil Partnerships Act 2004 – Provides legal recognition and parity of treatment for same-sex couples and married couples, including employment benefits and pension rights.

Gender Recognition Act 2004 – The purpose of the Act is to provide transsexual people with legal recognition in their acquired gender. Legal recognition follows from the issue of a full gender recognition certificate by a gender recognition panel.

Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005 – Introduces a positive duty on public bodies to promote equality for disabled people.

The Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005 – Introduces new definitions of indirect discrimination and harassment, explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity leave, sets out the extent to which it is discriminatory to pay a woman less than she would otherwise have been paid due to pregnancy or maternity issues.

(CRE) Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing 2006 - RRA gives the CRE the power to issue codes of practice in housing, and to give such practical guidance as it sees fit to prevent unlawful racial discrimination and harassment.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 – Protects against discrimination on grounds of age in employment and vocational training. Prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation, harassment and instructions to discriminate.

Equality Act 2006 – Establishes a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights by 2007 that replaces the three existing commissions. Introduces a positive duty on public sector bodies to promote equality of opportunity between women and men and eliminate sex discrimination. Protects against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in terms of access to good facilities and services.

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 – The Act seeks to stop people from intentionally using threatening words or behaviour to stir up hatred against somebody because of what they believe.