

# **Railway Housing Association**

## **Equality & Diversity Policy Summary**

### **1. Statement of Intent**

The Association recognises the importance of its role as employer, service provider and purchaser of goods and services in eliminating all forms of discrimination and harassment, and in promoting tolerance, fairness and equality. It also recognises that the aims of the Association's Business Plan – to ensure the viability of current stock and deliver services that are shaped around the needs of residents – will only be achieved by taking into account the diverse nature of our communities.

The Association will aim to ensure that no individual or group is treated less favourably on the grounds of race, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, age, disability, marital status or religion. We aim to recognise the needs of individuals and treat each person in employment or through service provision with dignity and respect.

The Association is committed to identifying and removing unnecessary bureaucratic barriers that may prevent equal access to employment and in the delivery of services. We will monitor employment, service delivery and other activities in relation to equality to identify whether our policies and procedures are improving access for communities and individuals who face discrimination and disadvantage.

The Association will prioritise its efforts according to the demographic context of the communities we serve whilst also fulfilling our obligations under the requirements of relevant statute and codes of practice designed to protect minority groups and promote equality of opportunity.

Challenging targets will be set and monitored by ethnicity, gender and disability in the following areas – lettings, tenant satisfaction, dealing with harassment, Board membership, employment, resident involvement, complaints and procurement.

This policy is supported by a Disability Equality Scheme, Gender Equality Scheme, Race Equality Scheme and an Equalities Action Plan.

### **2. Legislation**

As well as complying with the law, the Association will follow the guidance and good practice recommended by the Housing Corporation, National Housing Federation, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

### **3. Recruitment and Employment**

The Association's commitment to equal access for all is clearly stated in our Recruitment and Selection policy. We aim to have a workforce that is representative of all sections of society and that each employee feels respected and able to give their best.

The Association considers that, in principle, the staff profile at all levels should reflect the population of the areas we work in. A staff profile in respect of age, gender, ethnicity and disability is in place and will be used as a means of identifying under represented groups within the Association and devise strategies to overcome these gaps.

### **3. Recruitment and Employment**

The Association has adopted a range of flexible working and leave policies to assist staff in balancing the needs of work and home commitments.

The Association will value and respect the identities and cultures of all employees and where practical will endeavour to meet the needs of those employees who may have particular cultural and/or religious needs. This will include the provision of a prayer room, where possible.

The Association is committed to providing a workplace that is free from harassment, victimisation and discrimination by ensuring that all staff are fully aware of their rights, responsibilities and expectations with regard to their conduct and the principles of this policy. We aim to develop a workplace where harassment is known to be unacceptable and individuals can feel confident enough to bring complaints without fearing prejudice.

The Association will ensure that employees are not subject to less favourable treatment due to their sexual orientation. Employees in same sex relationships will be treated equally and offered the same family-friendly policies as heterosexual couples.

### **4. Access to Services**

The Association will ensure that in the provision of its services, no individual or group is disadvantaged in terms of selection for housing, quality of housing or the subsequent service they receive. The specific needs of older and vulnerable people, people with disabilities and from BME groups will be taken into account in a manner that promotes equality and inclusiveness.

The Association will ensure that the lettings policy and procedure will not discriminate directly or indirectly in relation to race, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability. All tenancies will be let in an open and accountable way that prevents discrimination and gives equal access to all groups of applicants. We will maintain effective monitoring and review systems to prevent discrimination.

### **5. Resident Involvement**

Through its Resident Involvement Policy the Association aims to offer a range of consultation and involvement techniques to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to participate. We currently consult and involve residents through newsletters, satisfaction surveys, residents meetings, questionnaires, focus groups, armchair monitors, editorial panel and Board membership.

Feedback from residents is used to improve and shape services. The information will be analysed by ethnicity, gender and disability to help ensure that services are being provided in appropriate ways and to the equal satisfaction of minority groups.

The effectiveness of each method used to consult and involve residents will be measured by impact assessments. The results of these will be reported to the Board and publicised to residents.

## **6. Harassment and Domestic Violence**

The Association's Harassment, Racial Harassment and Domestic Violence policies clearly state that we will not tolerate harassment based on race, gender, disability, religion, age or sexual orientation.

The Association will take swift action against the perpetrators of harassment and domestic violence; work with local authorities and other agencies to ensure support, advice and information is provided for victims; and do what we can to ensure that harassment does not take place in our communities and that residents feel comfortable reporting any incidents to us.

## **7. Resident Satisfaction Levels**

The Association aims to achieve comparable satisfaction levels for residents from all sections of our communities.

Information gathered during consultation and involvement will be used to ensure that services are being provided to the equal satisfaction of all minority groups.

## **8. Procurement of Services**

In the procurement of goods and services, the Association recognises its responsibility to ensure that there is no discrimination in the allocation of work and to promote equality issues.

Complaints about our contractors, consultants and suppliers will be closely monitored. The Association will expect such organisations to take prompt and appropriate action against any member of their own workforce found to be in breach of equality and diversity requirements.

## **9. Governance**

The Association's Board will aim to have a composition with a diverse range of backgrounds, skills and experience that is broadly reflective of the communities we serve. The Board will ensure that all working practices and business activities reflect the principles of equality and diversity, and consider regular monitoring reports on the performance of the Association in relation to equal opportunity matters.

## **10. Complaints**

The Association is committed to providing a quality service, which meets the needs of our customers. However, sometimes things go wrong and when this happens we need to know about it to help us to improve our service. We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and reasonably and aim to resolve complaints effectively and as quickly as possible.

The Association will ensure that our complaints procedure is accessible to all groups. Complaints will be monitored by ethnicity, gender and disability to ensure that minority groups are not being unfairly treated.

### **11. Asset Management**

The Association will be sensitive to the needs of all communities. It will work in liaison with local authorities to ensure that new developments promote balanced and sustainable communities and that the location and design of homes will not affect adversely or discriminate against, directly or indirectly, the needs of any particular community or group.

The Association's Disabled Adaptations policy aims to provide an individualised solution to the problems of a person experiencing a disabling environment, by providing adaptations that are delivered sensitively, fit for the purpose identified by the disabled person and within a specified time scale.

### **12. Training**

All employees, Board members and members of the Residents Focus Groups will receive training to ensure that they understand and implement all aspects of this policy. The training will ensure that they have an appropriate knowledge of equality and diversity that relates to their roles and responsibilities and help them to recognise the diverse needs of people and deliver high quality customer service.

### **13. Monitoring**

Progress will be monitored against the Equalities Action Plan and will be reported bi-annually to the Board. The results will be publicised in the resident's newsletter.

### **14. Responsibility**

The Chief Executive is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.

### **15. Review**

This policy, together with the accompanying schemes and action plan, will be reviewed annually in consultation with residents and staff.

**This policy applies to the beneficiaries of The Sir James Reckitt Village Haven and Joseph Hornby Stockdale Almshouses.**

**This policy can be made available on request in other languages, large type, Braille or in audio format.**

**March 2008**