



EQUAL OPPORTUNITES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

(Approved by Shadow Board – 19 June 2007)



SOUTHWAY HOUSING TRUST

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy is designed to demonstrate Southway Housing Trust's commitment and legal duty to provide an equitable service by promoting equality programmes, which will ensure all customers receive the services they require in a way that suits them and their particular circumstances.

Mainstreaming equality issues into service delivery entails organisational change. Southway is committed to providing equality of opportunity for its customers and staff and will work towards the elimination of barriers to discrimination. Southway Housing Trust will place prime emphasis on working collaboratively to achieve change – in this case, to achieve the incorporation of equality and diversity issues into all mainstream policies, procedures and practices.

Links to Housing Corporation Registration Criteria (2004) and Regulatory Code:

Properly Governed: Section 2.5, 2.5.3, 2.7, 2.7a, 2.7b, and 2.7c
Properly Managed: Section 3.5, 3.5.4, 3.5.5

2. Background

The services that Southway Housing Trust provides and the people who promote them, must reflect the different groups' requirements to ensure that we sustain a relevant, healthy and growing business. It is Southway's corporate, social and moral responsibility to provide an inclusive organisation and there are legislative requirements, which enable Southway Housing Trust to work towards this.

3. Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy Statement

The statement recognises that the implementation of equal opportunities and the diversity strategy throughout Southway depends on a number of key issues;

- A workforce informed and committed to the policy objectives of the Trust.
- A recognition of the unavoidable links between quality and equality.
- An organisational framework that ensures effective management and efficient implementation of policy.
- The involvement of service users in guiding provision and decision making.



- A responsive administration dealing with any concerns expressed by Southway residents.
- Promoting good relations between people of different racial groups within our communities.
- Ensuring the organisation reflects the communities that it serves.

Southway employs staff and recruits Board members and tenant representatives from diverse backgrounds in terms of their religion, ethnicity, cultural background, age, sexual orientation, marital status or ability. In addition, Southway is enriched by the different individual skills and qualities of the whole workforce.

4. Service Delivery Objectives

The overall objective is to effect changes in the way equality issues in service provision are dealt with throughout the Trust.

These changes should occur across all services and will involve all employees while reflecting the fact that resources available to the Trust are limited, and that the actual levels of service delivery will be determined at any particular time by the availability of human resources.

The policy objectives are;

- The eradication, throughout the Trust, of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination.
- To involve the usually excluded groups of people in decision-making and policy review and monitoring arrangements.
- To promote equality of opportunities through high quality services and staff well informed on equality and diversity issues.
- To fulfill the Trust's obligations under various national and international legislation, accord and agreements.

5. Legal Duties

The relevant national legislations and regulations are as follows;

Race Relations Act 1976

Southway has a responsibility under the Race Relations Act 1976 not to discriminate on racial grounds as a provider or manager of housing services. Staff of Southway have a personal responsibility not to discriminate either.



Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Southway has a duty to provide an appropriate and professional service to people irrespective of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. The Trust also has a legal duty to remove any barriers that have a disproportionately disadvantageous effect on people of a particular racial group, which cannot be justified on non-racial grounds.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Southway has a duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 not to treat one person less favourably than another on the grounds of their sex.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Southway has a duty under the Disability Discrimination Act not to discriminate in the provision of goods, facilities and services by treating a person less favourably than another on the grounds of their disability.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Southway has a duty to protect people from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment and training on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Southway has a duty to protect people from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment and training on the grounds of religion and belief.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006)

Southway has a duty to protect people from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation in employment and training on the grounds of age.

6. Consultation

Consultation is integral to achieving equality of opportunity in service provision and employment.

The Trust's decision-making has to take place in a manner which ensures that the needs and requirements of different disadvantaged groups are properly represented.



The Trust is committed to ongoing appropriate consultation across all equality issues.

There is need to ensure that equal opportunities and diversity considerations are integral to all Trust consultation mechanisms.

7. Responsibility for Policy

The Board and Management of Southway Housing Trust are responsible for policy development and implementation. Board members' commitment to maintaining equal opportunities in service delivery is essential. Without it competing demands on resources will result in marginalisation of equality issues. This will erode the equality achievements of the Trust.

The setting of the Trust's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy, strategy and core values, and ensuring that equalities considerations are firmly integrated into them, is clearly the role of the Board.

Senior Managers are responsible for their individual service areas and the exercise of their specific professional functions. In order to emphasise the importance of integrating equality issues into service plans Senior Managers will exercise direct personal responsibility for setting, reviewing and reporting on progress towards achieving equality objectives to the Board

8. Implementation Strategy

The appropriate management framework for securing change is one that will provide effective communication, guidance, advice, support and review systems.

The successful implementation of an equal opportunities policy on service delivery depends on a strategy, which provides;

- Clear objectives and targets
- Specific action needed to reach these targets
- Strict timescales to achieve them
- Regular review of progress

9. Implementation – Service Delivery

Southway will:

- Develop procedures to handle harassment and nuisance to ensure that prompt action is taken, and comply with the requirements of the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.



- Collect and monitor records of the ethnic origin, sex, disability and sexual orientation of everyone who applies for Southway housing.
- Advise contractors, consultants, temporary staff and other agencies working for Southway of our commitment to equal opportunities and request details of their own equal opportunities policy and practice.
- Break down and maintain information on residents and service users by age, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation and whether they are vulnerable.
- Monitor the needs of vulnerable service users, i.e. young and infirm people, and provide additional support where necessary (in partnership with other agencies).
- Set targets for lettings which reflect the ethnic make up of the community.
- Monitor service provision to eliminate inequalities and publish performance information.
- Take disciplinary action against any employee who has acted in a manner contrary to the Trust's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.
- Communicate with service users using a variety of methods, according to their needs (for example, using text phones, braille or hearing loops where appropriate, or using interpretation services or arranging for leaflets and documents to be translated into different languages).
- Take reasonable steps to eliminate physical barriers to Southway's communal areas and customer service points so that they are accessible to physically disabled people.
- Recognise and respond to the needs of customers with disabilities and other support needs as they arise.
- Take account of people with disabilities when planning the stock improvement programme.
- Actively seek the views of diverse groups amongst service users when developing services and updating policies.
- Ensure that all service users' views are fed back to the Board of Southway so that they inform the policy making process.



10. Implementation – Recruitment

Southway will:

- Ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all employees.
- Always endeavour to employ the person most suitable for each job.
- Take positive action to eliminate discrimination in order to ensure that the workforce at all levels, the Board and tenant groups reflect the community served by Southway.
- Advertise all vacancies in such a way that disadvantaged groups are not discouraged from applying.
- Only call for specific qualifications or experience where they are really necessary for the post.
- Consider for interview all applicants, irrespective of ethnicity or disabilities, who meet the minimum requirements for a post.
- Keep records of the ethnic and racial origin, and gender, of all those seeking employment, as well as monitoring disability.
- Ensure that staff understand the value of diversity.

11. Service Planning, Evaluation and Organisational Development

The goal of the policy is to achieve mainstreaming of equality issues in service delivery across all Trust services and, as a result, improve quality and equality in service provision. The Trust's service planning process should ensure that equality issues are addressed and included as part of improving quality of service and responsiveness to the needs of all sections of the community.

Service planning, evaluation and organisational development will ensure:

- That the strategy is service led (each service developing its own action plans).
- That Southway provides services appropriate to the diverse needs of different individuals in the community.
- Adoption of an integrated approach (equality seen as part of all service planning not an add-on).



- That Managers are enabled to take responsibility for equal opportunities. (Action planning will be in the hands of Senior Managers in the full knowledge of their service priorities and available resources).
- That Senior Managers are accountable for outcomes (with action plans containing measurable targets, with regular reports back to the Board or relevant committee when committee structure agreed).
- That an enabling role is provided by the Executive Management Team.
- That equality is integral to a quality service (equality is at the heart of quality service delivery).
- Compatibility (strategy compatible with other Southway strategies).

12. Training

Appropriate training for Board members, employees and others directly involved in the provision of Trust services is vital to the implementation of the Trust's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

Training on the skills and knowledge needed for the successful implementation of the Trust's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy will be provided.

Senior Managers will ensure that:

- They provide all staff with mandatory training on equality and diversity, either as part of their induction programme or on a rolling cycle.
- All training delivered by or on behalf of the Trust supports the aims of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy, and its equalities based both in terms of delivery and content.
- All Trust employees in direct contact with the public have training in the delivery of services that is equal opportunities based and complies with the Trust's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.
- All management development training embraces mainstream management of equal opportunities. (The core management competencies address this issue.)
- Training is developed for management regarding the addressing of equalities objectives through the service planning process.
- Training on specific equalities areas is provided as appropriate.

- Ensure that measures are implemented to analyse and evaluate all programmes delivered including the levels of opportunity provided across the organisation.
- Assist all our employees to realise their full potential by ensuring they receive fair consideration for training, career development and promotion opportunities.
- Selection procedures for training and courses leading to qualifications will ensure that all staff receive the same opportunities regardless of their working arrangements. Training and development opportunities will be identified through the appraisal system.

13. Monitoring

Board members' monitoring of equalities performance with respect to service delivery is crucial. Regular monitoring can, in particular, assist to keep equalities issues alive.

The Trust needs to ensure that its achievements in terms of equalities objectives are regularly monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis both at Board and Executive Management Team level.

The Trust will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by collating the following information and statistics which will be scrutinised by the Board at regular intervals;

- % tenants satisfied or fairly satisfied with overall service.
- % BME tenants satisfied or fairly satisfied with overall service.
- % tenants satisfied or fairly satisfied with opportunities for participation in decision making.
- % BME tenants satisfied or fairly satisfied with opportunities for participation in decision making.
- % of lettings to BME households.
- % of investigated racial harassment/harassment cases as a % of those reported.
- % of victims reporting an incident of racial harassment/other form of harassment who say they will report any future incidents.
- Satisfaction levels with the way racial harassment/harassment cases were dealt with.
- % of staff who consider themselves to have a disability.



14. Commitment

Achieving the mainstreaming of equalities through organisational development will require the full commitment of Board members and employees at all levels. It requires a determination to take equal opportunities from the margin to the mainstream of the organisation. It demands that equal opportunities become every employee's responsibility and, in particular, becomes an integral part of good management. This will form the basis for the further development of, and commitment to, the Trust's aim of equality of opportunity for every Southway customer, employee and Manchester residents.

15. Linkages with Other Southway Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policy/policies;

- Customer Care Policy and Standards
- Services for Older Persons, People with Support Needs and People with Disabilities

<u>POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW HISTORY</u>	
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