

HEXAGON HOUSING ASSOCIATION

PROMOTING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Hexagon Housing Association is committed to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices. Hexagon serves diverse communities in South East London and the surrounding areas. We value diversity, and recognise the benefits of employing a diverse workforce in relation to our customer service and growth as an Organisation. Through our work in providing affordable housing and care services, and as an employer, we will help ensure fair treatment for all members of the community, regardless of race, ethnic origin or nationality; gender; disability, whether mental or physical; religion/belief; marital or family status; sexuality or sexual orientation; HIV status; age, physical appearance; pregnancy/maternity or gender reassignment. We recognise that because some groups or people experience prejudice and discrimination, to make opportunities really available, we have to make an extra effort. We will strive to ensure that no-one receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by any conditions, requirements, provisions criteria, procedures or practices that cannot be justified, or victimised for taking action against discrimination or harassment. We will ensure that our policies and practices are in keeping with the Equality Act 2010.

2. MEETING HOUSING NEEDS

- 2.1 We will liaise with statutory agencies to share their assessment of the housing needs of local communities, especially those groups facing discrimination so that these are recognised and prioritised.
- 2.2 We will regularly review how we can contribute to meeting these needs by using our existing stock or developing new housing.
- 2.3 We will consider working in partnership with specialist agencies where we feel they are better equipped than ourselves to meet the needs.
- 2.4 In developing new homes, we will ensure that the design of homes meets the cultural and other (security) needs of the households (where these are known) we are going to be rehousing.
- 2.5 In developing new homes, we will ensure that we follow guidance for people with disabilities (e.g. RNIB guidance for people with visual impairments), that all ground floor accommodation is accessible to people in wheelchairs, and is developed to lifetime home standards.

3. ACCESS TO HOUSING

We will promote fair access to housing by

- 3.1 Monitoring the allocation of our homes, including the quality of accommodation, to ensure that discrimination does not occur.
- 3.2 Ensuring that our priority system for assessing the rehousing needs of our own residents reflects equality principles.

<i>Version</i>	
<i>Prepared by</i>	<i>Tracy Inniss</i>
<i>Approved by</i>	<i>Directors Group</i>
<i>Approved date</i>	<i>August 2021</i>
<i>Date of last review</i>	<i>August 2021</i>
<i>Document Owner</i>	<i>Tracy Inniss</i>
<i>Date of Next Review</i>	<i>August 2023</i>

- 3.3 Working with our local authority partners to eliminate any discrimination in the nominations of households for rehousing.

4. THE HOUSING AND CARE SERVICE

- 4.1 We will ensure that we consult all residents effectively (especially those facing discrimination), individually through surveys and through mechanisms such as residents' groups to ensure that the housing service meets their needs.
- 4.2 We will ensure that resident involvement and participation activities promote the full and active involvement of all groups of residents in residents' groups and participatory forums and we will challenge residents voicing discriminatory views.
- 4.3 We will ensure that our complaints procedure is accessible to all, and feedback about the service given proper consideration.
- 4.4 We will not tolerate harassment of residents and will take the strongest possible action against perpetrators. We will be proactive in co-operating with other agencies in dealing with all forms of harassment.
- 4.5 We will provide appropriate means of communication such as the provision of an interpreting service and key information on audio tape as required.
- 4.6 We will try to ensure that the housing service responds sensitively to the needs of vulnerable residents. Where financially possible, extra services will be provided in response to the needs of vulnerable residents.
- 4.7 We will provide care for those in our care and residential homes appropriate to their social and cultural and religious needs.
- 4.8 We will maintain up to date information on the translation or other communication needs of all residents.

5. EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

- 5.1 Hexagon will actively seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all current and potential employees.
- 5.2 We will conduct and monitor our recruitment in an open and accountable way and according to equal opportunities practices, and will regularly review the results of the monitoring to ensure fairness is evident at all stages.
- 5.3 We will seek to deal with any under representation of particular groups among employees, including under representation at Manager and Director level, and make full use of positive action provisions permissible within legislation.
- 5.4 We will strive to prevent harassment of staff by other staff or residents and if and when it occurs take swift action to stop it.
- 5.5 We will seek to ensure that within our overall aim of gearing our training effort to meet the business needs of the organisation, we will regularly review the distribution of training opportunities to ensure that all staff are being treated fairly.
- 5.6 We will ensure that selection for employment, career development opportunities, access to benefits, facilities and services are fair and equitable and based solely on merit.

- 5.7 We will make reasonable adjustments to enable employees with disabilities to perform their jobs in a way that minimises the impact of their disability.
- 5.8 We will ensure fair and equitable pay by implementing our job evaluation, pay structure and Remuneration Policy.
- 5.9 We will train staff to ensure everyone has a basic awareness of equalities and diversity issues, as well as training to meet the specific needs of their post.

6. USE OF CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS AND PARTNER AGENCIES

- 6.1 We will only use contractors and consultants and agents who have an equality and diversity policy, which is broadly consistent with our own aims.
- 6.2 We will hold anybody representing Hexagon to account and ensure they adhere to our policy.
- 6.3 We will only use contractors in occupied dwellings who are prepared to sign up to our 'Customer Care' guidelines and will not give them any more work if there is a substantial and unresolved breach of the guidelines.
- 6.4 We will ensure that our selection of consultants and contractors is fair and non-discriminatory.
- 6.5 We will expect our contractors, consultants and partner agencies to pay their employees fairly.
- 6.6 We will provide training to ensure that our partners understand our equality and diversity expectations.

7. HEXAGON'S BOARD

- 7.1 Hexagon will try to ensure that our Board is fully representative of the local community by having an open and accountable recruitment process and by the use of positive action to recruit members from under represented groups.
- 7.2 Board members will be regularly briefed on equalities issues and will receive regular monitoring reports on key areas of activity, both on service delivery and employment.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 All Staff

All staff have responsibility for ensuring that this Policy is put into practice. We expect a personal commitment from all employees in making it effective, and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow.

Additional and specific responsibilities apply to those who manage staff and to those who are involved in recruitment, training and development.

All members of staff have a contractual responsibility to:

- Ensure that they understand the values and benefits of equality and diversity;

- Familiarise themselves with this Policy, follow it, and ensure that any staff for whom they are responsible do so as well;
- Draw to the attention of their line manager any instances of apparent discrimination or harassment, or any perceived problem in relation to employment or to the provision of services.

8.2 The Board and Directors Group

The Board have corporate responsibility for ensuring that this Policy underpins all aspects of Hexagon's work.

Departmental Annual Reviews will include an up date on equality and diversity issues, including relevant performance information.

The Chief Executive has responsibility for developing the organisational culture in which this Policy can operate effectively, and for ensuring that it is implemented.

Directors are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the Policy is implemented in their particular area(s) of responsibility.

The Human Resources Manager is responsible for the operation, monitoring and review of this Policy in relation to employment and training.

9. COMMUNICATION

A copy of this Policy will be provided to all job applicants and new residents, and will be available on Hexagon's website. The Policy will also be available to staff through the intranet.

The Policy will also be included with tender information and contracts for work undertaken for us by external organisations and individuals.

Training in the importance and use of this Policy will be part of an individual's induction to the organisation and regular refreshers will be available to all staff.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Diversity Working Group, comprising staff from across the Association, will meet on a regular basis to monitor the implementation of the Policy (including progress against targets) and develop related action plans and strategies.

Requirements, conditions, provisions, criteria and practices will be reviewed regularly in the light of the monitoring results, and revised, if they are found to actually or potentially discriminate against any particular groups.

A report on progress will be produced each year and published via the intranet.

This Policy is designed to encourage practical changes, and we expect to update it in the light of experience from applying it in practice and as a result of changes in legislation or our own internal procedures. As a minimum the Policy will be reviewed every two years.