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blue triangle

Equal Opportunities Policy

18th July 2023

Our Mission Statement

“To empower people to thrive.”

Revision history

Rev No.	Rev. Date	Consultation Requirements	Lead Officer	Committee	Approved by COM	Review Due:
0	2010	Employees/Managers	FS	Management		
1	May 16	Committee of Management	FS	Management	26/05/16	
2	July 23	Reviewed and reformatted policy	LM	COM	17 Aug 2023	July 26

Chairperson

Signed: 

Dated: 17th August 2023

Chief Executive Officer

Signed: 

Dated: 17th August 2023

This policy should be read alongside our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which relates to employment within Blue Triangle.

Equality policy principles apply to all organisational policies and practices. The equality policy principles that are incorporated within this document are integrated into practice through our regular training processes, our equality impact assessment process and other specific equality policies.

This policy sets out the framework that we apply to promote equality commitments throughout all organisational services. This includes employment and other services. This process is often referred to as “mainstreaming of equality” into services.

This policy is required to meet a diverse range of legal duties, regulatory standards and other guidance.

Our Equal Opportunities policy is critical from a business perspective as addressing the particular needs of employees and supported people enhances our reputation and position within the social rented housing sector.

Finally, this is the policy that we use to develop our organisational business culture, that is, the values that we promote as part of routine service delivery. For instance, we promote practices that ensure employees and supported people are treated with respect and dignity.

We have established an Equality Charter that sets out our equality commitments which is detailed in our organisational equality procedures.

The aims of the policy

This policy sets out the equality strategy that we have adopted to implement our key equality objectives. Our strategy is based on a holistic and robust framework that includes the following elements:

- ▲ Regular training on EO and actions to raise awareness and to ensure mainstreaming of EO in terms of best practice;
- ▲ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA); and
- ▲ Other Equality Policies and Procedures.

Equality Mainstreaming

We mainstream our equality policy commitments throughout the organisation. We do this by ensuring that all organisational policies, procedures and documentation are subjected to a rigorous equality impact assessment. We carry out regular training, performance monitoring, partnership working and promoting best practice in terms of equalities on a regular basis. We audit complaints which fall under EO categories and ensure that we use reflective learning approaches to continuously improve services, procedures and policies to achieve EO requirements. We occasionally undertake positive action programmes to address EO issues. As we work with vulnerable excluded supported people we endeavour to ensure that through engagement with our services they are integrated with wider community activities and gain skills to successfully move on to independent living and to fulfil active lives in their communities. We regularly review or Committee of Management composition to see whether we need to undertake any positive action to address EO requirements.

Equality Impact Assessment

We have established a system of assessment that is comprehensive in nature and promotes methods recommended by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The process is applied to all organisational policies and practices to promote our equality objectives.

Legal and Regulatory Standards

Law relating to equality matters is extremely diverse and complex. This section describes key equality law that we apply into practice. This is a plain language summary of key law and it not intended as a precise statement of law.

The standards which apply are outlined within [Appendix 1](#).

Other Equality Policies and Procedures

In order to realise equality policy objectives, we also recognise that a number of supporting equality policies and procedures are essential. These policies address issues relating to collecting equality data, harassment and language use that is appropriate. This policy should be read alongside our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Appendix 1: Legal and Regulatory Standards

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is the main Act that deals with equality issues, although other legislation is also relevant, for example, mental health legislation. This law is also taken into account when we deliver organisational services.

The Equality Act 2010 lists the “protected characteristics.” These are the grounds in respect of which discrimination, harassment or victimisation is unlawful. These characteristics are:

- ▲ age;
- ▲ disability;
- ▲ gender re-assignment;
- ▲ marriage and civil partnership;
- ▲ pregnancy and maternity;
- ▲ race;
- ▲ religion or belief;
- ▲ sex; and
- ▲ sexual orientation.

Note

In this policy, we also take account of discrimination that can arise in respect of other grounds such as social class and personal attributes.

The Equality Act 2010 also sets out the legal duty called the Public Sector Equality Duty and we take this duty into account when delivering public services.

This Duty covers three main elements, namely:

- ▲ eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- ▲ advancing equality of opportunity between people with a protected characteristic and those without such a characteristic; and
- ▲ fostering good relations between people with a protected characteristic and those without such a characteristic.

Importantly, this Duty requires us, not simply to address discrimination when it arises, but to take steps to promote equal opportunity objectives.

The Scotland Act 1998

The Scotland Act 1998 (Scotland Act 1998, Section 5, L2) defines equal opportunities as:

“Equal opportunities” means the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on the grounds of sex or marital status, or racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions”

This definition is significant as it covers grounds that are not part of the protected characteristics. For instance, the definition covers social origin (or class), as well as grounds like language and personal attributes.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires us to “act in a manner to encourage equal opportunities.” This requirement entails mainstreaming equality law throughout all organisational services.

2.2 Regulatory Standards: The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) (Governance and Financial Management)

Regulatory Standard 5: The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity Regulatory Standard 5.3

The RSL pays regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance arrangements

Significant performance failures

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a duty to consider issues raised with them about “significant performance failures”. A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that the landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. That is something that is a systemic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord’s tenants. Examples of a significant performance failure could be if social landlords are not:

- ▲ delivering the outcomes and standards in the Scottish Social Housing Charter over a period of time; or
- ▲ achieving the regulatory standards on governance or financial management

2.3 Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Customer/landlord relationship

1: Equalities

Social Landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- ▲ Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services. This outcome explains what we should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. **Note:** There is a diverse range of good practice guidance issued in addition to the law and regulatory framework. We take account of this guidance in developing organisational services.

2.4 Scottish Social Housing Charter Indicators

Indicator 2

Ethnic origins and disability details of supported people, staff and for RSLs only, governing body members

Indicator 4

Percentage of 1st and 2nd stage complaints responded to in full in the last year, within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) timescales (this is split into EO complaints and others)

2.5 Regulatory Standards: the Care Inspectorate

The principles that underpin the Care Inspectorate Standards include a commitment to promoting equality. This principle states that supported people have the right to:

- ▲ an independent life, rich in purpose, meaning and personal fulfilment;
- ▲ be valued for your ethnic background, language, culture, and faith
- ▲ be treated equally and to live in an environment which is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination; and
- ▲ be able to complain effectively without fear of victimisation.

Key Standards that we apply in support of this principle are noted below.

Note: The term “you” refers to supported people. Standards are summarized below to refer to relevant equality issues.

Standard 1: Informing and Deciding

You have an introductory pack which clearly explains how the service works. Everything is written in plain English (language) or in a language and format that is suitable for you

Standard 2: Legal Rights

You will receive a written agreement which clearly defines the service that will be provided to meet your needs. This will set out the terms and conditions for receiving the service, and arrangements for changing or ending the agreement.

You will have a copy of this written agreement in a format that you can understand.

Standard 4: Housing Support Planning

You will be fully involved in developing your personal plan and in any later reviews. You will receive copies of these that have been signed and dated by the housing support service provider. This plan will cover:

any special communication needs you may have; and what communication arrangements need to be put in place if your first language is not English.

Standard 5: Lifestyle: social, cultural and religious belief or faith

The standards in this section make it clear that you can continue to live your life in keeping with your own social, cultural or religious beliefs or faith when you are using housing support services. This includes people being treated as an individual with unique need

Standard 6: Choice and communication

People may use different languages or methods of communication for a variety of reasons. As a result they may have difficulty in making themselves understood. But being able to communicate is an essential part of taking part in daily life and you should be able to choose to get help to do so. You have the right to make decisions about your life, helped and supported by the housing support service.

Standard 7: Exercising your rights – expressing your views

The housing support service staff must always respect and promote your rights. They must make sure that you can express your views about the quality of the service and your experience of it, and take your comments, concerns and complaints seriously. They are your way of contributing to and influencing how the services are delivered.