

Equal Opportunities Policy

We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non written format.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

Cube Housing Association Limited is striving to ensure equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination.

The Association is committed to the provisions of:

- The Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 & 1986
- The Race Relations Act 1976 & 2000
- Equal Pay Act 1983
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- CRE's Code of Practice in Rented Housing
- Raising Standards in Housing; Equal Opportunities
- Putting the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 into practice
- Putting the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 into practice

This Policy applies to: membership, landlord activities, employer and contracting roles and all other areas of operation.

The Association is *committed* to equality of opportunity for all people irrespective of their gender, marital status, family circumstances, disability, race, ethnic or national origins, age, religion, political or sexual orientation.

The Association will ensure that its policies, procedures and practices do not result in any individual or group receiving less favourable treatment.

The Association will not set any conditions or requirements, which exclude certain groups of people and result in indirect discriminatory practice.

Harassment will be dealt with sensitively, speedily and firmly and may require to be solved through appropriate management initiatives including legal action.

The Association will seek to redress previous discrimination where this is found to have occurred and take appropriate measures to ensure equal access for all groups.

As an organisation which is committed to equal opportunities, the Association aims to tackle social exclusion and encourage participation and involvement by:

- responding to the different needs of certain groups or individuals
- recognising the barriers which prevent many people from reaching their full potential
- and taking steps to overcome them

As an employer, this will require the adoption of appropriate Personnel policies and procedures.

As a provider of public services, this will require commitment to a range of Wider Role, Customer Participation and Supporting People initiatives.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

The Association's Management Committee fully accepts responsibility for the implementation of this policy, with day-to-day responsibility delegated to the Director.

It is the responsibility of every employee and Committee member to ensure that they abide by the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy and failure to do so may be cause for disciplinary procedures to be instituted.

An Equality Action plan will be produced annually which will include:

- a strategy for implementation
- which aspects of Employment & Service delivery are priority areas
- action to be taken with appropriate timescales
- identified staff time to work on initiatives

Specific tasks will be incorporated into the Association's Performance Plan.

New initiatives and proposals will be subject to 'equality proofing' to assess their impact on this policy.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY & MANAGING DIVERSITY

The Association aims to be accountable to the communities it serves and will seek to ensure that the composition of its membership, Area and Management Committees is as representative as is possible of all sections of the communities in its areas of operation.

The Association believes that its workforce should reflect the community that it serves and that its staff composition should be balanced properly within the organisation.

The Association recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and perceptions which can make the way the work is done more efficient and services more effective.

The Association will endeavour to ensure a supportive working environment is created for all staff so as to prevent the occurrence of any direct or indirect discriminatory working practices.

In ensuring that opportunities exist in employment and career progression for all employees, working arrangements will be as flexible as possible to take account of people's responsibilities for dependants and /or their personal circumstances.

4. CONSULTATION

The Association will consult with its members, tenants and prospective tenants to provide appropriate housing and suitable environments. In undertaking consultation, the Association will be sensitive to:

- Religious and cultural requirements
- The needs of those with young children
- The needs of people with disabilities
- The needs of people who care for a dependant relative
- The use of other Languages – both written & oral
- Literacy levels
- Safety and Freedom from Intimidation rights

The Association will consult relevant agencies working with specific client groups to seek advice on meeting the needs of these groups.

There will be a regular review of consultation procedures and policies to ensure we continue to be responsive to our members', tenants' and prospective tenants' needs.

5. ACCESS

The Association will seek to ensure that all people can benefit from its services.

The Association will respect community diversity and will seek to ensure that its services will be relevant and accessible to all sectors of the community.

i) Information

The Association will take positive measures to ensure that all members of the community are aware of the services it provides.

The Association will seek to provide its users with full, clear and accurate information regarding the services it provides.

The Association will be transparent in its operations and ensure that policies are widely available.

The Association will aim to provide its information materials in suitable formats e.g. computer disc, tape, Braille and community languages when required.

Relevant documents will carry a statement in appropriate languages offering translations which will be made available from the Association's offices.

The Association will aim to publish all application forms and materials in a user-friendly format and aim to use plain language where appropriate. Assistance will be given to fill out relevant forms.

ii) Housing

The Association will keep its waiting list open and encourage applications to be submitted and assessed throughout the year to ensure open access is available to all.

Tenancy Agreements will not contain any unduly restrictive or unnecessary conditions.

The Association will provide all tenants with full, clear and accurate information about their particular tenancy in compliance with the law and good practice guidelines. An oral explanation will be given at the beginning of a tenancy.

6. HARASSMENT

Actions will be taken to eliminate racial and other forms of harassment, including guidance within the grievance and disciplinary procedures dealing with harassment and providing staff and managers with appropriate resources to deal with cases of harassment.

Harassment will be dealt with sensitively, speedily and firmly and will be resolved with reference to the Association's Disciplinary procedure, Dignity at Work Policy or Harassment Procedures as detailed with appendix three of the Estate Management Procedure Document.

The Association will seek to ensure that no form of racist, or otherwise discriminatory language is included in Housing Association literature.

The Association will seek to ensure that no form of racist, or otherwise discriminatory literature is allowed in the workplace.

The Association will seek to ensure that harassment on any grounds be viewed as a priority housing need or transfer request.

Any racist graffiti on Housing Association property will be removed as a matter of urgency.

People will not be treated less favourably as a result of them having brought proceedings, given evidence at proceedings or made allegations regarding discrimination.

7. RECRUITMENT, PERSONNEL & TRAINING

Recruitment procedures will be adopted which ensure that qualifications and previous experience are called for only where they are relevant to the post being recruited.

Short-listing for all vacancies will be made against agreed criteria in prepared person

specifications.

All posts shall be advertised and as permitted under the relevant legislation, in ways which actively encourage recruitment from minority groups.

Only in accordance with the relevant legislation will any post be exempted for people of a specific sex or ethnic origin.

Appropriate equal opportunities training will be made available for all members of staff and Committee members.

All staff and Committee members involved in appointing staff, will undertake appropriate Recruitment & Selection training.

All staff and managers will be trained to be able to identify and deal appropriately with all forms of harassment within their department.

Additional relevant training will be provided as needs arise.

8. DESIGN STANDARDS

The Association will seek to ensure that all developments are built to a barrier-free standard and to agreed minimum standards to allow tenants to reduce their dependence on others and maximise choice in their daily life. The Association will consult with local communities, tenants and potential tenants wherever possible in the development of design proposals for housing.

9. MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

As maintenance is one of the most important services provided to tenants, the Association will seek to ensure that all tenants receive the same quality of service. The Association, will however, be mindful that certain groups, such as older people, may be more vulnerable and consequently they will be treated sensitively.

Where cause for complaint arises, attention will be paid to ensure that tenants are able to communicate their complaints effectively.

10. NOMINATIONS AND REFERRALS

Referral arrangements will be established with appropriate agencies. When considering an application from such an agency the Association will seek to ensure that the agency's Equal Opportunities Policy is consistent with the Association's.

11. MANAGEMENT SERVICES & CONTRACTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Association will seek to ensure that all consultants/contractors/agents take steps to comply with relevant health & safety, employment and equal opportunities legislation.

In hiring consultants/contractors/agents the Association will encourage such consultants/contractors/agents to adopt and implement an equal opportunities policy or abide by the Association's Equal Opportunities Code of Practice.

Management Services provided by other organisations will be compatible with this policy.

The Association will take steps to ensure equality of access within the Association's procurement procedure for all consultants/contractors/agents.

Any incidences of known harassment or discrimination by consultants/contractors/ agents will lead to investigation. Persistent misdemeanour or breaches of policy will lead to a consultant/contractors/agent's removal from the approved list(s).

12. MONITORING

The Association will put in place relevant monitoring and reviewing mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of its Equal Opportunities Policy. Specifically:

- applicants for housing, employment and membership will be monitored in terms of ethnic origin, gender, age and disability. Within these groups further breakdowns will be made in terms of successful applicants and the quality of housing allocated
- all services the Association receives from other agencies will be monitored to ensure that no discrimination takes place including referrals for housing from Local Authorities
- a regular review of consultation procedures and policies will ensure relevance to members', tenants' and prospective tenants' needs
- response time to repair requests will be monitored

In order to assess whether different groups are being treated fairly, relevant demographic information will be gathered about the areas served and Community Profiles will be prepared.

Confidential information such as personal details, tenancy history, personnel information etc will be respected and maintained as such.

13. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The Association's Management Committee will review the Equal Opportunities Policy every 3 years, but reserve the right to make any additions or alterations considered necessary in the interim.