



# Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

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Berwickshire Housing Association is a Registered Society. Registration No.: SP2482RS  
Scottish Charity No: SC042342 Registered Office: 55 Newtown Street, Duns, TD11 3AU

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

## 1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT

The Association wishes to be known as an equal opportunities association, to which end:

- 1.1 In the provision of housing services and employment of staff to provide these services, the Association will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons. No persons will be disadvantaged by any conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.
- 1.2 A person or group of persons applying for housing, or for employment, or for contracts with the association, will be treated neither more nor less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, responsibilities for dependants including maternity and pregnancy, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, class, disability or unrelated criminal convictions.
- 1.3 The Association will actively assist disadvantaged minority groups within its catchment area to benefit from its housing services, and will investigate those needs by establishing close links with those groups or representatives thereof.
- 1.4 The Association will request, and where given, maintain records of ethnic/racial origin for all those applying to it for housing and all those seeking employment from the Association, such records to be monitored and reviewed at regular intervals.
- 1.5 The Association will be mindful of its commitment to equality of opportunity in the recruitment of new members and in the composition, training and operation of its Board of Trustees.
- 1.6 The Association will be mindful of its commitment to equality of opportunity in the determination, review and implementation of its policies.
- 1.7 The Association will require all Trustees, staff, contractors, consultants and agencies wishing to work with the Association to be committed to and work in accordance with the principles of equal opportunities and diversity.
- 1.8 The Association will seek to ensure that details of its services, including availability of its stock, are widely publicised in appropriate formats, to existing and prospective tenants.



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The Association will implement consultation procedures which encourages the participation of existing and prospective tenants.

## **2. DIVERSITY**

The Association values difference and respect human dignity, believing that choice should be available in all areas of people's lives, that services should meet people's differing requirements and that all people should be treated fairly. We recognise that people with different backgrounds such as, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, responsibilities for dependants including maternity and pregnancy, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, class, disability or unrelated criminal convictions bring fresh ideas and perceptions, whether as customers, employees or board members. We seek to ensure our work is relevant to the differing and changing needs and aspirations of all our tenants and others who use our services by drawing on the widest possible range of views and experiences, by involving them in all we do and by seeking innovative responses to challenges.

## **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

The Association's policy on equal opportunities can be subdivided into two categories:

Employment; and

Provision of Housing and Related Services

Additionally the policy will provide for the use of contract services and for the monitoring and review of the policy.

## **4. EMPLOYMENT**

### **4.1 General**

The Association is committed to ensuring that it provides equality of opportunity in employment by ensuring that no job applicant or employee be directly or indirectly discriminated against on grounds of any of the protected characteristics including, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, responsibilities for dependants, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, class, disability or unrelated criminal convictions.

As an employer, the Association believes that its workforce should reflect the community that it serves and that all groups should be properly represented at all levels within the organisation. The Association accepts that it should take action to eliminate discrimination.

### **4.2 Recruitment**

Recruitment advertising will be undertaken in such a manner as to avoid discriminatory effects. Experience necessary to perform duties will be the main determinant of candidate suitability whilst academic qualifications will be quoted where applicable at a reasonable and realistic level required for the position.

Training will be given to all staff involved in recruitment to ensure they understand and apply the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

All applicants with disabilities who meet the essential requirements for a suitable job will be invited to interview.

Staff involved in recruitment will be required to follow the Association's Selection and Recruitment Practice Guidelines. This document will be a full procedure guidance note.

#### 4.3 Training

All employees will receive training to ensure they understand and implement all aspects of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. As part of the BHA Induction Programme, it is the responsibility of the line manager to ensure the new member of staff is fully aware of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy. All Trustees and members of staff will receive regular refresher training at least once every 3 years or more frequently should legislation change or at the request of the Chief Executive.

#### 4.4 Working Environment

Wherever possible, proper access for employees with disabilities will be provided throughout all work places, along with a programme of improvements to ensure existing arrangements are improved.

Where possible, specific needs of employees with disabilities will be met including providing adapted equipment and changes of working methods to help meet their needs. This will include making provisions for existing members of staff who may develop specific needs during the period of their employment.

Working arrangements will have regard to an employee's responsibility for dependants and/or personal circumstances, however it is essential that the Association continues to provide high quality services at all times.

#### 4.5 Harassment

The Association will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of employees by other members of staff, Volunteers, tenants, contractors or members of the public in any circumstances and will take appropriate action against the perpetrators. The Association's Harassment Policy can be found in the Staff Handbook.

#### 4.6 Conditions of Employment

It is a condition of employment that all employees adhere to the Association's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and failure to do so shall be cause for disciplinary procedures to be instituted which may result in dismissal.

All job applicants will be made aware of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy.

As part of the induction programme for new employees and Volunteers, the Association's Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy will be clearly explained.



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## 5. PROVISION OF HOUSING AND RELATED SERVICES

### 5.1 General

The Association is committed to equal access to housing and services for all existing and prospective tenants.

As a provider of social housing, the Association believes its tenants should reflect the community it serves and that all groups should be represented. The Association accepts that it should take action to eliminate discrimination.

In delivering services it is important to ensure that the needs of the community those services are aimed at are met. Therefore, as a minimum, the suitability of the Association's offices will be reviewed along with every review of this policy to ensure that access to services is not compromised by office design or layout.

### 5.2 Access to Information

The Association is committed to ensuring that access to information on housing and related services will be available to existing and prospective tenants. The Association will take such measures as are reasonably practical to ensure that its services are publicised in such a way as to be accessible to all identified sections of the community, including the supply of information to organisations working on behalf of minority groups.

### 5.3 Allocations

The Association will ensure that there is fair and equal treatment to all groups in terms of access to housing and quality of housing allocated.

The Association will participate in the SFHA's (Scottish Federation of Housing Associations) SCORE (Scottish Continuous Recording of Lettings) scheme and use the SCORE classifications while this scheme continues to operate. Regular assessments will be made of the needs of all the groups in the catchment area of the Association.

### 5.4 Estate Management

The Association will ensure that all tenants receive the same quality of maintenance and repairs service, although the Association considers that certain groups, e.g. older people, may be more vulnerable and consequently may be given additional assistance with certain repairs.

### 5.5 Cash Collection/Arrears

All rent arrears will be dealt with sensitively and fairly. The Association will have policies and procedures highlighting the importance of arrears prevention and action for control and recovery.

### 5.6 Design Brief and Standards

The Association will seek to ensure that all developments are built to comply with the standards laid down in the publication 'Housing for Varying Needs' and to agreed minimum standards to allow tenants to reduce their dependence on others and maximise choice in their daily life. Wherever possible the Association will attempt to involve tenants and prospective tenants in the design process.

### 5.7 Racial Harassment

The Association is committed to the elimination of racial harassment in its areas of influence and a clause is specifically included in the tenancy agreement which confirms this commitment.

## 6. PROPERTY SERVICES

A statement will be sent to all contractors and consultants in:

- answers to enquiries to go on BHAs tender lists;
- a letter to all consultants; and
- all approved consultants' documentation.

stating that:

"The Association expects all contractors and consultants to provide a fair equal service to all its tenants. It is committed to taking action against contractors and consultants who discriminate against or harass any of its tenants or staff. The Association also requires that contractors and consultants have and operate an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy covering employment practices"

## 7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 7.1 In order to assess the success of the Equal Opportunities Policy, monitoring systems are essential. Within the terms of the GDPR regulations the Association will gather information on ethnic origin, sex, age and disability from all members, the Board of Trustees, existing staff and all applicants applying for accommodation and employment. These data will be reviewed by the Board of Trustees at least annually and included in regulatory returns as required.
- 7.2 The Association will regularly review its practice and procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly. Changes will be made where it is found that the Association is or may be contravening current legislation.
- 7.3 Where appropriate within the GDPR regulations reports will be made to the Board of Trustees containing analyses of record kept and reflecting progress made in, and the value of, policies and procedures. The records will be used to help fulfil the Association's commitments and aspects of the service delivery will be reviewed as appropriate in the light of results.
- 7.4 As a minimum, the Association will review the suitability of offices from which services to the public are delivered as part of future reviews of this policy and more frequently when required.



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