

Diversity Policy



It's not
just
the
bricks
about



Upon request this document is available in large print, on CD, in Braille, in picture format and in languages other than English

November 2014

DIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Broadacres Housing Association is committed to developing an organisational culture which values people from all sections of society and the contribution which each individual can make.

As such we understand that Diversity is essential for an effective and efficient organisation. In short we believe that:


- everyone should be treated in a fair, open and honest manner; and
- it is the right of all employees, service users and visitors to be treated with dignity and respect.

The aim of this policy is to support these commitments by providing a framework for continuous improvement. It covers the procedures and systems established to measure and monitor our performance, both in eliminating discrimination and in implementing good practice.

This policy focuses beyond the traditional concept of 'disadvantaged groups'. It recognises the need to value each individual, in their own right, regardless of whether or not they belong to a particular section of society. Its objectives are to ensure that all staff are able to participate fully in the work of Broadacres and that our services meet the needs and requirements of all our customers and employees.



.....
Colin Wilkie
Chairman of the Board



.....
Steve Towers
Chief Executive

POLICY STATEMENT

Broadacres Housing Association has a commitment to equality of opportunity and the management of Diversity. This means that:-

- In the provision of all its services and the employment of staff, Broadacres will seek to ensure equality and fair treatment for all persons.
- No person or group of persons applying for housing or housing related services, a job, or for contracts with Broadacres, will be treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, responsibilities for dependants, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion/belief or philosophical beliefs, age, class, disability or unrelated spent criminal convictions.
- In hiring contractors and other agencies to work for it, Broadacres will be mindful of its commitment to Diversity.
- In the composition and operation of its Board of Management, Broadacres will be mindful of its commitment to Diversity.
- Responsibility for formal monitoring and review of Broadacres' Diversity Policy and practice will be that of Broadacres' Diversity Development Team in conjunction with the Senior Management Team.
- The role of the Board of Management is to ensure that this policy underpins all aspects of Broadacres' work.
- We are committed to taking positive steps to ensure that equality of opportunity and management of diversity are integral features of all our activities.

Scope of Policy

This policy applies to the following areas of our business:-

- ~ the governance of Broadacres Housing Association;
- ~ the provision of housing and related services;
- ~ the provision of care / supported housing services;
- ~ the recruitment, employment and training of staff ;
- ~ our public relations activities;
- ~ our procurement and purchasing.

RESPONSIBILITIES / IMPLEMENTATION

All Staff

All staff have a responsibility to ensure 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, promotion, training and development.

All members of staff have a contractual responsibility to:

- understand the values and beliefs of equality and diversity;
- familiarise themselves with this policy, follow it and ensure that any staff members for whom they are responsible do so as well;
- draw to the attention of their line manager any instances of apparent discrimination or any perceived problems in relation to employment or in the provision of services.

The Board of Management and Senior Management Team

The Board of Management as part of its governance role has corporate responsibility for ensuring that this policy underpins all aspects of our work. The Chief Executive has a responsibility for developing the organisational culture in which this policy can operate effectively and for ensuring that it is implemented. The Board will receive annually a progress report on the effectiveness of Broadacres policies in relation to equality and diversity, as well as statistical information in relation to service delivery, lettings, access to information and advice, tenant participation, tenant satisfaction, dealing with incidents, procurement, governance, staffing and employment. In addition our Board Members and the Senior Management Team will receive information and training in equality and diversity issues.

The Diversity Development Team

The Diversity Development Team is made up of tenant representatives, a Board member and staff from all levels and departments of Broadacres. It is accountable directly to the Senior Management Team. The Diversity Development Team will meet every three months to monitor equality and diversity in Broadacres, including the development of policies and the effectiveness of procedures and systems. More specifically it will:

- review relevant information e.g. national monitoring statistics;
- review developments and initiatives;
- consider changes to legislation and best practice;
- consider new diversity matters and make policy recommendations;
- promote an understanding and culture of diversity throughout Broadacres.

The Team will also ensure that the principles of equality and diversity are applied to all our services by the provision of regular information, training and the review of services. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are undertaken on all our policies and procedures.

COMMUNICATION

A copy of the Diversity Policy Statement together with a summary of each individual's responsibility will be given to all job applicants and staff, to help ensure that our policy is put into practice.

We will adopt appropriate means of communication and receiving feedback, such as the use of Language Line/Type Talk, and upon request make our documents available in large print, on CD, in Braille, in picture format and in languages other than English also a translation and interpretation service will be made available where required.

Further copies of this policy are available from the Head of Human Resources.

No Broadacres' literature will include any sexist, racist or otherwise discriminatory language.

DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

This policy is designed to encourage practical changes. Broadacres therefore expects to update it in light of experience, from applying it in practice and as a result of changes in legislation or our own internal organisation and policies.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY IN RESPECT OF EMPLOYMENT

Broadacres will operate this policy and all other policies and practices relating to it in line with statutory requirements and government codes of practice.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 it is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment in relation to the 9 protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The present statutory framework/guidance and types of unlawful discrimination are shown in Appendix 1. This will be added to and revised in light of any future legislation.

We will ensure that in all of our employment policies and practices we comply with the principles set out in this policy.

We will also strive to ensure that the particular needs of each individual are recognised and respected, regardless of whether they belong to a particular group provided for by legislation.

Monitoring Our Effectiveness

To help us to assess the effectiveness of this Diversity Policy in relation to employment, we will regularly analyse staffing statistics, including workforce composition and recruitment. These will be compared with relevant external data such as ethnic profile of the local workforce. We will also benchmark our policies and practices against best practice and make any appropriate amendments.

Recruitment and Retention

Our 'Process for filling vacancies' contains specific guidance on ensuring equality of opportunity across all stages of the process – including job descriptions, person specifications, shortlisting and interview, selection tests and appointment arrangements. The context and effectiveness of our recruitment procedures will be continually reviewed and may be altered in light of experience, circumstances and legislative change.

In our recruitment advertisements and literature, we will make clear that we welcome applications from all sections of society. We will monitor applications, shortlisting and appointments in order to identify any areas of concern and to take remedial action where necessary.

In line with our policy statement, we are committed to encouraging and promoting the recruitment and retention of people from all sections of society. This commitment includes a specific policy for recruitment and retention of people with disabilities.

We will also maintain and develop a range of policies and procedures, which offer staff the means to combine work and family life. These include flexible working hours, time off for dependants, job share and part time working, maternity, paternity and adoption leave.

Induction, Training and Development

All new staff will be required to attend training on the implications of this policy for their work as part of their induction programme.

Existing staff will be required to attend core training on diversity and related training on vulnerability to bring them up to date with new policy and practice since their appointment. This will be on a three-year rolling programme.

Staff Appraisal

Broadacres will ensure that managers undertaking competency-based appraisals are properly aware of equality and diversity issues. Before each appraisal round, all line managers will be reminded of the need to ensure consistency and objectivity when undertaking performance assessments and the need to guard against less obvious forms of discrimination.

Conditions of Employment

Broadacres will keep its terms and conditions of employment under constant review to ensure that they comply with legislative changes and the principles laid down in this policy.

Working Environment

It is intended that proper access for people with disabilities be provided throughout all work places and a programme be set up for improvements where this is not already the case.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the special needs of people with disabilities are met including providing adapted equipment, changes of working methods to help meet their needs and any alterations to premises.

Working arrangements will be as flexible as possible to take account of people's responsibility for dependants and/or their personal circumstances.

A supportive working environment will be created for all staff so as to prevent the occurrence of any direct or indirect discriminatory working practices. Where necessary, managers should receive training to enable them to meet these ends.

PROVISION OF HOUSING AND RELATED SERVICES

We ask applicants for housing and our tenants to provide information about themselves so that we can ensure that we provide equality of access and do not discriminate in the delivery of our services. We also use this information to develop services to meet the specific needs of our customers.

We let most of our homes through a choice based lettings scheme where vacant properties are advertised through North Yorkshire Home Choice. As part of the North Yorkshire partnership we undertake detailed monitoring and review to ensure that the scheme is accessible to all applicants, particularly older and vulnerable people.

We have a separate antisocial behaviour policy which outlines our response to hate crime and other forms of harassment.

In addition, we ask recipients of our care and support services to provide information about themselves in a format prescribed by our commissioners. This is held by both ourselves and our commissioners to ensure that we provide equality of access and do not discriminate in the delivery of those services.

PROCUREMENT AND PURCHASING

We aim to ensure that those organisations from whom we purchase services and goods adopt the same principles as Broadacres in respect of diversity.

Where we enter into formal contracts, we require contractor/suppliers to have an appropriate Equal Opportunities/Diversity Policy or to sign up to Broadacres' policy. Where we enter into significant long term contracts such as for maintenance or development, the contractors'/suppliers' approach to diversity will be a factor to be taken into account in the selection process and will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE DIVERSITY POLICY

As indicated earlier, responsibility for monitoring and reviewing Broadacres' Diversity Policy will be that of the organisation's Diversity Development Team in conjunction with the Senior Management team.

The terms of reference of the Diversity Development Team are attached to this Policy at Appendix 2.

Membership of the above Group will be drawn from a cross section of the organisation and will include a Board member, a member of the Senior Management Team, the Head of Human Resources and tenant representatives.

An annual progress report will be presented to Broadacres' Board of Management. The report will provide an update on the performance of Broadacres in relation to Equal Opportunities and the management of Diversity against an agreed action plan.

In addition, the Diversity Development Team will undertake regular reviews in conjunction with Directors / Heads of Service of Broadacres' current practices, using Equality Impact Assessments, to identify gaps and areas for improvement in services.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The costs associated with implementing this policy have been included within operational budgets and have been incorporated into our business plan assumptions for the period of the plans. These costs are an investment in our staff to provide improved services to all our customers regardless of their background. In this respect, the policy represents value for money to the organisation.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This policy is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment, which identifies the potential impact that it will have on all strands of diversity, namely; race, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, age or other equality issues such as people with dependants. It has been judged to have a positive impact on these groups.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The diversity policy is a key process in supporting Broadacres' Corporate Plan and business strategy in the provision of a framework to ensure equality and fair treatment for all persons in the provision of our services, employment or for contracts with Broadacres. This strategy is categorised as a low risk to Broadacres. Existing management systems and procedures are assessed as being sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

Legal Obligations – The Statutory Framework

Broadacres will operate this policy and all other policies and practices relating to it in line with statutory requirements. The present statutory framework within which we apply this policy is shown below:

- Equality Act 2010 which simplifies and brings into one act existing discrimination law including:
 - the Equal Pay Act 1970;
 - the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986 (as amended);
 - the Race Relations Act 1976 and 2000 (as amended);
 - the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
 - the Equality Act 2006;
 - the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003;
 - the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003;
 - the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006; and
 - the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007).
- The Housing Act 1988 (in particular Section 56 which makes specific reference to Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976).
- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Employment Relations Act 1999.
- The Employment Act 2002.

In addition, we will apply this policy in line with:

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission: Code of Practice on Employment (2011).
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission: Code of Practice on Equal Pay (2011).
- The government Code of Practice 'Age Diversity in Employment'.
- Performance Standards for registered social landlords:
- Black and Ethnic Minority housing policy (1998).
- Older people's policy (1995).
- Overcoming disability discrimination: a guide for registered social landlords (2000).
- The Race and Housing Enquiry's Challenge Report 2001.
- The recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

Types of Unlawful Discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. An example of direct discrimination would be refusing to employ a woman because she is pregnant.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic (although it does not explicitly include pregnancy and maternity, which is covered by indirect sex discrimination) such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although it does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity), by third parties such as clients or customers. Third party harassment was rendered unlawful under s.40 Equality Act but this provision has been repealed with effect from 1 October 2013 so that the law on third party harassment now reverts to its pre-Equality Act position which is unfortunately unclear. It may be that such harassment might be unlawful as direct or indirect discrimination.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he or she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no longer a need for a complainant to compare his or her treatment with someone who has not made or supported a complaint under the Equality Act 2010. For example, if a blind employee raises a grievance that the employer is not complying with its duty to make reasonable adjustments, and is

then systematically excluded from all meetings', such behaviour could amount to victimisation.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Terms of reference – Diversity Development Team

The Diversity Development Team is made up of a cross section of staff and reports directly to the Senior Management Team.

The role of the group is:

- To continually review, manage and audit Broadacres' Diversity Policy.
- To analyse and implement necessary actions resulting from changes to Government and other relevant policies.
- To audit Broadacres' practices and procedures to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and relevant Codes of Practice and make recommendations for change ensuring at all times Broadacres adopts and implements best practice.
- To promote the concept of Diversity.
- To increase the awareness of the issues and to promote attendance of staff on Broadacres mandatory Diversity training programmes.
- To identify specific Equality and Diversity training requirements as it relates to their individual service area and to make recommendations for inclusions within Broadacres' Diversity training programmes e.g. Cultural Awareness Training.
- To receive information and monitor equality and diversity within the organisation.
- To report annually to Broadacres' Board of Management on the implementation of policy, analysing progress against agreed actions and making recommendations where appropriate.

The aim of the group is to create an environment within our area of influence where there is a recognition of individuals differences, needs and preferences. This will help maximise the potential of staff and enable us to deliver a more diverse and effective service.

In order to achieve this, the group will:

- ensure all staff and board members attend Broadacres' mandatory Diversity training courses;
- continually ensure that all staff and board members have a commitment, understanding and awareness of equality and diversity;
- introduce, maintain, implement and evaluate policies and procedures;
- be aware of and promote best practice;
- continually undertake impact assessments/reality checks on Broadacres' systems and practices when delivering its services.

Membership of the Group

Membership will comprise:

Relevant staff from each directorate
At least two tenant representatives
Elected board member diversity champion

The group is chaired by the Head of Human Resources. The Chair will also be responsible for producing the agenda and ensuring the minutes are uploaded to Broadnet.

Frequency of meetings

The group will meet on the last Tuesday of every 3 months (quarterly).