

CHARNWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSING LTD

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY OCT 2008



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The strategy is structured as follows:

Section 1 – Introduction

Explains why this strategy was developed and what it covers. The strategy is a key document for delivering change and improving performance across the business.

The strategy will be the starting point of a consultation process which will develop an action and outcome plan for Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing (CNH).

Section 2 – Policy statement

Introduces the organisation's reviewed equality and diversity policy statement

Section 3 – National performance requirements

Highlights the equality and diversity external performance requirements and pressures

Section 4 – Principles, aims and objectives

Outlines the principles which will underpin the CNH's commitment to equality and diversity

Section 5 – Policy priorities and implementing

Provides a clear outline of the equality and diversity priority implementation areas

Section 6 – Monitoring of this strategy

Provides detail of the process of monitoring this strategy

Section 7 – Action plans

This strategy has a short term action plan attached. This plan has used the recommendations from a mock inspection by HQN in February 2008. A longer term action and outcome plan framed around the Audit Commission's Diversity Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) will be developed within 2008.

1 Introduction

This strategy has been developed alongside the organisation's new equality and diversity policy statement which is within the body of this strategy. The strategy has been developed in line with the requirements of the Audit Commission's Housing Inspectorate Diversity Key Lines of Enquiry and other internal and external performance requirements and pressures.

The framework for the long term action and outcome plan has used the KLOE diversity categories below as a starting point:

- Corporate culture and governance, including employment responsibilities
- Access to customer services
- Service user involvement
- Partnerships
- Harassment
- Legislation

1.1 Why have an equality and diversity strategy?

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing (CNH) recognises that embracing equality and diversity is good for business.

In a mock inspection of services by HQN Limited in February 2008 it was recognised that there is work being done on equality and diversity, however it is at a very early stage for CNH. The mock inspection highlighted that CNH has a great deal to do, including the development of leadership, awareness throughout the organisation and developing policies, procedures, monitoring arrangements and action plans.

CNH has achieved level two of the local authority equality standard and plans to reach level three. To help CNH achieve this level, this equality and diversity policy and strategy has been developed.

The mock inspection went on to highlight a number of areas which needed to be improved and these have helped to develop the action plan at the end of this strategy.

1.2 What does the strategy cover?

This strategy has been developed to provide a framework for actions needed in the short and long term to develop services and implement equality and diversity in a way which not only meets current needs, but will be appropriate in the future.

The strategy has focused on the specific performance requirements of the Audit Commission's diversity KLOE and the Local Authority Equality Standards.

1.3 Consultation and partnership

The strategy has been developed to form part of a process of consultation and will be used as a tool for discussion with current and potential customers, other service users and a range of stakeholders.

2 Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing values equality and diversity and will ensure that we treat all individuals fairly, reasonably and flexibly.

We recognise the rights of all employees and customers and will develop services with this in mind.

We are committed to promoting and mainstreaming equality and diversity in everything we do. **We will:**

- Understand, value and welcome equality and diversity
- Ensure that all policies, processes and procedures reflect these commitments
- Continually improve our service to our customers
- Deliver excellent employment opportunities to our staff
- Make our boards and their members reflect the diversity of local communities
- Measure, impact assess and develop plans and report on outcomes in respect of equality and diversity
- Develop all staff to enable them to make a full contribution to meeting these objectives.

To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that equality and diversity is a high priority and an integral part of strategic and operational decisions
- Consider and adhere to all areas of legislation and performance requirements from external bodies
- Raise standards of achievement and promote equality and diversity for all by impact assessing and monitoring our policies and processes
- Work in partnership with other agencies and consult with the communities we serve to combat disadvantage, discrimination and exclusion and to promote equality and diversity

- Ensure that there is zero tolerance in cases of harassment and violence
- Ensure that customer/residents groups are supported to adopt equality and diversity objectives as part of their terms of reference
- Ensure that organisations contracted to deliver our services incorporate equality and diversity in their work practices and in a manner consistent with our policies and procedures.

3 National performance requirements

Achieving equality and diversity remains a main priority for all public organisations from local authorities, ALMOs, housing associations and other social housing providers, so the level of performance pressure has never been higher. The main commissioning bodies of the sector legislative guidance and good practice requirements have been developed to guide and support organisations in their day to day activities. Even where guidance and performance requirements are not directly aimed at an organisation, all the commissioning and auditing authorities consider non performance of any legislative or other requirement or guidance, as evidence of poor performance.

This equality and diversity strategy has considered all of the legislative, guidance and performance requirements including the:

- Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relation (Amendment) Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and amendments 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Age Discrimination Act – October 2006
- Gender reassignment legislation
- Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Civil Partnerships status requirements
- All equality duties including the Race Equality Duty, Gender Equality Duty and Disability Equality Duty
- All other new areas of E&D legislation.

The Audit Commission's diversity Key Line of Enquiry - the organisation's long term action and outcome plan outlined in this strategy will use this KLOE as its objective framework.

The Local Authority Equality Standards - the organisation's long term action and outcome plan outlined in this strategy will use the equality standards as its monitoring tool to assess performance.

The Housing Corporation – performance requirements and good practice guidance notes

The Housing Corporation registers and regulates housing associations, legally known as registered social landlords, in England. It set out our expectations of housing associations in the regulatory code and guidance published in 2002. In addition, it produces good practice notes which expand upon the requirements and give advice to housing associations on how they can be met.

The regulatory code states that:

Housing associations must demonstrate, when carrying out all their functions, their commitment to equal opportunities. They must work towards the elimination of discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals.

They must promote good relations between people of different racial groups (2.7). The code also expects associations to provide good quality services 'by being responsive to the individual characteristics and circumstances of customers' (3.5.4)

Good practice note number 8 – November 2007

This good practice note is one in a series produced by the Housing Corporation. It has been produced to help housing associations to achieve and exceed the minimum standards set out in our regulatory code and

guidance and to work towards the elimination of discrimination, while promoting continuous improvement on equality and diversity.

The good practice note:

- Outlines the statutory obligations of the Corporation and the implications for housing associations
- Refers to the legislation from which the obligations arise
- Sets out how housing associations will benefit from adopting an equality and diversity policy
- Highlights some of the issues that need to be considered when developing a policy approach to equality and diversity

This good practice note consolidates and replaces the Corporation's previous GPN 4 – race equality and diversity (2002) and GPN 8 – equality and diversity (2004).

There is currently a supplement in the series, GPN8 applications by Registered Social Landlords, to change their governing instruments (2006).

4 Principles, aims and objectives

The following draws together the principles which will underpin the commitment to equality and diversity:

- Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing will promote equality and diversity in employment and access to services which provide people with the support they need
- We will actively engage and empower the full diverse range of customers to contribute to decisions about the delivery of services to ensure these meet their requirements
- We will support and enable all employees of CNH to achieve their full potential and fulfil their duties in a fair, reasonable and flexible manner.

Develop services which support the individual and create a fair and flexible service for all.

- We recognise the need to provide high quality services which meet individual and community needs
- We will ensure customers are offered services appropriate to their needs and will refer customers requiring specialist support to service providers with particular expertise in this area, where these exist
- We are committed to improving support services and becoming a leading performer in all areas of equality and diversity.

Policies and procedures – we are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity is a fundamental principle in all policies and procedures. We will ensure that all policies and procedures are equality impact assessed and effectively promoted.

Setting standards of behaviour for its board, staff, customers and visitors – we are committed to ensuring that board directors, staff, customers and visitors understand and follow the standards of behaviour that are necessary for the proper management of equality and diversity.

5 Policy priorities and implementation

5.1 Employment

We will assist staff in balancing the needs of home and work through the development of fair and flexible terms and conditions.

Wherever practical we will endeavour to meet the needs of those employees, who may have particular cultural/religious need. For example: to observe prayer times or during fasting.

Managers will give sympathetic consideration to employees requesting either the accumulation of annual leave or unpaid leave in order to visit relatives abroad or to go on a pilgrimage (subject to the delivery of the service).

Managers will not unreasonably refuse requests for annual leave that employees may require in order to observe their religious holidays or festivals.

5.2 Harassment, victimisation and discrimination

We are committed to ensuring that the workplace is free from harassment, victimisation and discrimination by ensuring that all staff are fully aware of their rights, responsibilities and expectations with regard to their conduct.

Harassment and bullying policy and procedure - complaints from employees will be processed through this policy and procedure.

It will be made clear to all staff that direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation and instances of harassment or abuse which are in contravention of policies and/or the law, will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

5.3 Recruitment and selection policy

We are committed to ensuring equality and diversity for all candidates and have a recruitment and selection policy which sets down the processes and standards required for all recruitment.

All applicants will be selected against objective, non-discriminatory criteria in the form of written person specifications, based on up to date job descriptions. The chair of every selection panel must have attended a recruitment and selection course.

5.4 Training and staff development

We will aim to ensure that all employees are supported in developing the skills and abilities they require to carry out their role in the organisation.

5.5 Equality and diversity awareness for staff

We will continue to promote and improve awareness of equality and diversity issues through a range of methods.

6 Service delivery

6.1 Access to services

We will continue to develop services that meet the needs and aspirations of local communities. We will use a consultation process to assess existing needs in emerging communities.

6.2 Customer involvement and consultation

We will ensure that the involvement process enables all customer/residents groups to be fairly represented in participation, communication and decision making.

We will also review and monitor the diversity of resident groups and where there is under-representation, undertake one off minority consultation meetings.

6.3 Translation and interpretation services

We will develop an equality and diversity communications process which sets out guidelines on the:

- Provision of translated material (e.g., audio tape/DVD, Braille and languages)
- Provision of information in alternative formats
- Diversity of image in all publications and communication.

6.4 Communication and access to information

We will recognise that access to information is essential in achieving equality and diversity. We will do everything in our power to make all communications fully accessible to all customers and communities we work with.

6.5 Partnership working

We expect all suppliers to work within a commitment to equality and diversity. We will have a supplier code of conduct which they are required to comply with. We are committed to supporting and promoting equality and diversity with all its suppliers, contractors and partners and will review this commitment annually.

7 Monitoring of this strategy

Implementation

All directors have the responsibility for this aspect of the equality and diversity work and will therefore be responsible by implementing the equality and diversity action and outcome plan.

The development of CNH equality and diversity steering group to drive this strategy should be one of the first priorities of the short term plan.

Skills and development

The senior management team will be responsible for ensuring that appropriately skilled staff are employed to enable the delivery of this strategy.

The Board

The Board must have the appropriate skills to fulfil their governance role in respect of this strategy - this will include appropriate equality and diversity governance training.

Monitoring

Annually, an update report on the delivery of the equality and diversity action and outcome plan will be reported to the board

Review

This strategy will be subject to a review every year.

8 Action and outcome plans

CNH has developed a short term action plan using the recommendations of the HQN mock inspection of February 2008. CNH will also develop a long term equality and diversity action and outcome plan for implementation within the 2008/11 operational years. The long term plan will be developed through a process of consultation and will be supported and monitored by an internal equality and diversity steering group.

April 2008	Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing (CNH) Short term – equality and diversity action plan		
Timeline	Recommendations from HQN mock inspection	Actions	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Draw up and adopt an E&D strategy and action plan 2 Set up an E&D steering group to drive the strategy and share good practice and to provide a clearer focus for E&D work 3 Carry out self assessment against CRE code of practice 4 Carry out proposed housing related E&D staff training 5 Develop and report on E&D PIs 6 Ensure all leaflets say what ‘other formats’ means, e.g., Braille large print 7 Issue guidance on how to take residents’ cultural diversity into account 8 Ensure website accessible in other languages or for people with sight impairments 9 Draw up and adopt vulnerable persons policy 10 Carry out and report on diversity monitoring of key services 11 Check that data being used to put together residents’ profile is accurate 12 Accompany applicants on general needs viewings 13 Ensure tenant sees the same person for sign up and for new tenancy visit 14 Draw up and adopt a resident involvement strategy 15 Monitor TRAs equality and diversity commitments 16 Widen scope of E&D KPIs to cover other diversity strands 17 Draw up and adopt a community cohesion strategy 18 Submit six monthly monitoring reports on harassment and domestic violence to board 19 Increase focus on preventative work for harassment and 		

April 2008	Charnwood Neighbourhood Housing (CNH) Short term – equality and diversity action plan	
Timeline	Recommendations from HQN mock inspection	Actions
	<p>domestic violence</p> <p>20 Draw up and adopt own recruitment policy and procedure and provide training for key staff when this has been done</p> <p>21 Collect and monitor E&D data for CNH's job applicants and staff in post. Use this data to set E&D workforce targets</p> <p>22 Provide six monthly reports to board on CNH's workforce composition and other E&D related issues, e.g., access to training</p> <p>23 Develop a process and toolkit for equality impact assessing (EIA) develop a priority list of policies to EIA</p> <p>24 Add EIA reporting to all board reports</p>	

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English

If you would like a copy of this document in another language, in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please phone us on 01509 634666.

Arabic

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Bengali

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Chinese

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Gujarati

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Hindi

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Punjabi

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