

SALVATION ARMY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Introduction

We are a Christian faith based organisation and our Christian distinctiveness includes valuing diversity by welcoming and involving those of other faiths and those of none. We believe in, and seek to work towards, developing an inclusive society where people of different backgrounds and beliefs live together in peace.

Our Vision

We believe it is positive that our society has become more diverse. This enriches both communities and peoples lives. We support the development of a diverse society where difference is positively valued and celebrated and communities are cohesive where everyone has a sense of belonging.

As a social housing landlord we want to provide accessible and fit for purpose housing and associated services that meet the needs of our current and future residents, regardless of their backgrounds. As an employer we want our employment practices to be fair and we strive for a workforce whose diversity reflects the communities we serve and which has the skills and understanding to provide services that meet the needs and aspirations of the people we serve.

We are committed to the principle of equality and diversity and in this, our Equality and Diversity Policy, we set out how we intend to make this commitment a reality.

We believe in ***making a difference by understanding our differences.***

Our Strategic Priorities

We want an environment where people are free from discrimination and harassment, where there is equality in service provision and employment and where we promote good relations between people of all backgrounds in our efforts to create and sustain cohesive communities. Our strategic priorities to help us to positively respond to meet the needs of people from minority groups are set out below:

- Support people from different backgrounds and social groups so that they have the same equal access to our services
- Understand and dismantle barriers which exclude and limit equality of opportunity
- Mainstream equality and diversity within the organisation
- Comply with anti discrimination legislation and regulation

Operations

Our policy has operational implications for four key stakeholder groups. These are set out below together with how we will apply this policy to them.

For our customers:

- Understand the needs and aspirations of all our residents, particularly those from minority groups
- Adapt our services to residents, wherever possible, so that they are accessible and appropriate in satisfying their needs
- Foster access to housing, health, education and employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups

For our employees:

- Adopt employment policies and practices that are non discriminatory, reinforce our vision and promote SAHA as an exemplar employer with an inclusive culture
- Recruit, train and develop employees on merit and through equality of opportunity
- Strive to have a workforce at all levels that reflects the communities in which we operate

For our business partners:

- To only do business with other organisations that have the same like minded approach to equality and diversity as our own
- Promote the rationale for equality and diversity as making good business sense

For the community:

- Lead in embracing changing social values for an increasingly diverse society
- Being in business to support people

Minority Groups

There are a range of minority groups that are traditionally marginalised in society. In relation to our business, we will focus our attention on prioritising the following six strands of diversity in seeking to realise our vision and implement our policy: (but not to the exclusion of others)

Gender

Race

Disability

Sexual orientation

Age

Religion and belief or lack of religion or belief

The table within this policy sets out our commitments in each of these six areas.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board

The Board is the driving force behind this Equality and Diversity policy. It provides leadership and support, with the assistance of a dedicated Diversity Champion, in setting the Association's vision and ensuring resources are available to carry out the work required to implement this policy. The Board also has a performance monitoring and oversight role in receiving reports on the implementation of this policy. It monitors the outcomes achieved through its Equality and Diversity Action Plan, measures of performance and makes use of performance data to inform business planning and continuous improvement.

Employees

Employees are the key resource that enable the Association to achieve its vision and strategic priorities for equality and diversity. All employees are responsible for upholding, respecting and acting in accordance with this Equality and Diversity Policy. Management will provide training and support to enable employees to understand their responsibilities and this policy in order to apply this in their working environment on a daily basis.

OUR COMMITMENT FOR EACH STRAND OF DIVERSITY

Gender	Race	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Age	Religion
Ensure our services, employment practices and opportunities are equally accessible to all members of all communities and are non discriminatory.					
Work with our partners and other organisations to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality and diversity.					
Regularly review our services and employment practices to ensure that, wherever possible, they meet the needs and aspirations of minority groups.					
Strive to achieve minority group representation on our Board and at all levels within our workforce, reflecting the communities in which we operate.					
Ensure adequate provision is made for the victims of domestic violence.	Listen to residents and agencies representing ethnic minorities and involve them in developing services that meet ethnic minorities' needs, respecting their cultural and social identities.	Adapt our housing, wherever possible, to accommodate disabled people.	Recognise the rights of same sex partner relationships in our Lettings Policy and Tenancy Agreement.	Ensure our employment practices do not include any age related criteria (subject to current retirement ages).	Develop a culture that is accepting of individuals rights to their beliefs; promoting an understanding and mutual respect between religious groups.
Strive to create an environment that is free from sexual harassment, inappropriate language and behaviour.	Strive to create an environment that is free from racial harassment and racist behaviour.	Continue employing, whenever possible, employees who become disabled during their employment and assist with any retraining.	Ensure that our employees do not refuse to work with, or provide services to, people with HIV or AIDS.		Make reasonable adjustments, wherever possible, to allow employees to pursue their religious requirements and beliefs and be flexible in the application of our dress code.
		Guarantee disabled people an interview for vacancies where they meet the minimum criteria on the person specification.			Consult religious groups as to how we can best meet the needs of people in relation to the services we provide and employment.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

Support people from different backgrounds and social groups so that they have the same equal access to our services			
Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
Provide relevant services by understanding the needs and aspirations of all our residents, particularly those from minority groups.	Establish a demographic profile of our residents through surveys and at the sign up stage.	Assistant Director of Supported Housing	July 2008
People from minority groups have an equality of opportunity to maximum housing choice.	For those local authorities where we operate a choice based letting, carry out an impact assessment of how accessible our advertising is and how effectively we link in to channels to identify the requirements of applicants from minority groups.	Assistant Director of Supported Housing	April 2009
Repairs which may have an adverse impact on some residents can be prioritised for a faster completion in order to deliver an equal service.	Impact assess SAHA's repairs priorities to ensure they do not disadvantage residents from minority groups, reprioritising where necessary.	Customer Services Manager	November 2008
SAHA's portfolio of stock, wherever possible, complies with the 'Lifetime Homes' standard and building regulations in relation to accessibility.	Incorporate appropriate elements of the Lifetime Homes standard in major repairs and refurbishment programmes where feasible.	Head of Asset Management	Ongoing

Understand and dismantle barriers which exclude and limit equality of opportunity			
Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
The Customer Service Centre is accessible to all residents.	Review the early morning, late night and weekend access needs of residents. Ensure SAHA has access to appropriate communications media.	Customer Services Manager	December 2008
Communication media and information are accessible to residents from minority groups.	Provide literature that is easy to read and accessible in different formats within an agreed budget	Assistant Director of Supported Housing	December 2008

Understand and dismantle barriers which exclude and limit equality of opportunity			
Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
	Ensure SAHA's web site and intranet conform to a recognised access standard.	Assistant Director of IT	April 2008
SAHA offices are physically accessible to disabled people and comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.	Conduct an assessment to ascertain whether SAHA's offices are physically accessible and the extent of their compliance with DDA.	Principal Manager Compliance & Monitoring	September 2008

Mainstream equality and diversity within the organisation			
Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
There is maximum housing choice through knowledge of adapted stock and associated cost.	Develop IT system to record expenditure on aids and adaptations and attributes of adapted properties Develop an Aids and Adaptations policy	Director of Finance Assistant Director of IT Assistant Director of Supported Housing	September 2008
SAHA has knowledgeable staff who understand equality and diversity and how to apply it in their area of work.	Introduce new methods of training that effectively give an in depth awareness of equality and diversity, how to mainstream it and apply it to individuals fields of work and responsibility.	Director of Corporate Services / Board Champion	July 2008 & ongoing thereafter
SAHA's Board and workforce at all levels, reflects the diversity of the communities it serves.	Implement initiatives so that employee and Board recruitment practices are targeted to attract people from minority and under represented groups. Carry out an equal pay review to ensure gender equality with regard to pay and benefits.	Director of Corporate Services	July 2008 March 2009
Consultation methods are fully inclusive.	Ensure the Resident Involvement Framework employs a range of consultation techniques so that minority groups are not excluded from becoming involved. Ensure the Customer Panel reflects SAHA's tenure types and represents minority groups.	Principal Manager Compliance & Monitoring	May 2008

Mainstream equality and diversity within the organisation			
Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
	Ensure translations and Braille / large print versions of key documents are readily available.		July 2008
SAHA is engaged with partners and other organisations that have the same like minded approach to equality and diversity.	Review SAHA's partners, suppliers and contractors to ensure they either sign up to the principles of our Equality and Diversity Policy or have a comparable one of their own.	Director of Corporate Services	May 2008

Comply with anti discrimination legislation and regulation			
Objective	Actions	Responsibility	Timescale
SAHA policies and procedures provide for an equality of opportunity and do not discriminate against any minority group.	Impact assess policies, procedures and job descriptions to ensure they comply with current legislation and regulation and that people from minority groups are not discriminated against or disadvantaged as a result of current practices, incorporating any cross diversity impact.	Principal Manager Compliance & Monitoring	September 2009