

SALVATION ARMY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan

April 2007 – March 2010

Gender and Social Housing

As a social housing landlord our residents are often from amongst the most vulnerable in society and can have a range of complex problems both physical and mental. In tackling homelessness we provide housing and support to such people including victims of sex trafficking, domestic violence and single parents. Whilst the majority of these people are women, we recognise that men and transsexual people can also be victims and that services and employment practices can, therefore, prevent all gender groups from participating fully and equally as part of the wider community.

Women headed households tend to be more reliant on local authority and housing association accommodation. The shortage of affordable housing options, therefore, presents particular difficulties for women. The problem is further highlighted with lone parent households, 60% of whom live in social housing compared to 23% of other households with dependent children.

Being deprived of the basic human right of a decent home leaves people dependent on others and creates pressures on various support services. As the most vulnerable people live in social housing then any other tenure it is extremely important that housing associations work to deliver an equal housing service for all gender groups.

The Rationale for a Gender Equality Duty

Despite the existence of various legal rights, including sex equality and pay equality, discrimination and gender inequality are still widespread. Women still on average earn less than men, are less likely to be employed in senior management positions and are more likely to have responsibility for caring for older relatives and children. Men can also be disadvantaged where family friendly policies are aimed just at women and assume that men have no parenting responsibilities.

We know that men and women are different, but should this difference influence how others behave towards us, what career paths we follow and how much time we spend with our families? When this happens gender stereotyping is at work and as well as impacting on peoples lives, services can inadvertently conform to these damaging stereotypes. This is why we have set out a Gender Equality Scheme which is intended to improve this situation for all genders by ensuring that gender equality is built into all our business processes resulting in real and positive changes to the life experiences of people of all genders.

This Gender Equality Scheme is similar to our schemes on race and disability equality. All three have the same spirit and intention behind them to take action to tackle discrimination, to prevent harassment and to ensure we promote equality of opportunity in policy, service provision and employment.

Our Vision for Equality and Diversity

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:

- People from different backgrounds and social groups have the same equal access to housing and employment opportunities
- Difference is positively valued and celebrated
- Communities are cohesive and inclusive where there is a sense of belonging for all people
- Barriers which exclude and limit equality of opportunity are understood and dismantled
- Unlawful discrimination and harassment does not exist

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

In Relation to Gender:

We are committed to achieving gender equality in service provision and employment, recognising that in order to achieve an equality of outcomes it may sometimes be necessary to provide single sex services where appropriate.

We will:

- Promote equality of opportunity and positive attitudes between people of all genders
- Ensure adequate provision is made for victims of domestic violence including advice and support that overcomes the particular barriers to communication that are sometimes experienced by such victims
- Create a working environment that is free from unlawful discrimination, sexual harassment, inappropriate language and behaviour and one where gender equality is promoted
- Strive to achieve equality in representation in the composition of our Board and at all levels within our workforce
- Provide support and counselling for female, transsexual and male employees as required

Equality and diversity is an important strategic priority for our business. We embrace diversity as it defines our view and belief that we are all different but equal. Our approach is to recognise and value such differences, ensuring that we positively respond to meet the needs of people of all genders as customers of our services and employees. In doing so, our aim is to address gender equality as a mainstream customer issue.

Gender Equality in Relation to Transsexual and Transgender People

Existing sex discrimination legislation protects transsexual people from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment in employment and vocational training. Gender reassignment is defined as:

“a process which is undertaken under medical supervision for the purpose of reassigning a person’s sex by changing physiological or other characteristics of sex, and includes any part of such a process.”

The term transsexual is used to describe a person who intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment (which may or may not involve hormone therapy or surgery).

Transsexual is used in this context instead of transgender, which has a wider definition and includes all other aspects of the trans community including transvestites and others who define as gender variant and are not covered under the Sex Discrimination Act.

Our Gender Equality Action Plan

Our Gender Equality Action Plan, set out with this Scheme, shows how we will achieve our vision for gender equality and sets out the actions we will undertake.

Monitoring and Review

The Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan will be performance managed and reviewed and monitored annually by the Association’s Monitoring Committee.

Gender Equality Action Plan

CUSTOMER SERVICE, EMPLOYMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Outcome	Action(s)	Performance Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
Provide relevant services by understanding the needs and aspirations of our female, transsexual and male residents.	<p>Establish a demographic profile of our residents through surveys and at the sign up stage.</p> <p>Consult residents of all gender groups to identify any special needs or service shortcomings</p> <p>Establish a Lettings Policy that provides for or signposts single sex services where appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demography of residents by gender - % satisfaction rates by gender - % female & transsexual residents involved in consultation 	Assistant Director of Supported Housing	<p>July 2008</p> <p>March 2009</p>
People fleeing from domestic violence and rape have maximum housing choice.	For the local authorities in which we operate, impact assess how accessible we are and how effectively we link with other community agencies to support and house people fleeing from domestic violence and rape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual lettings profile 	Assistant Director of Supported Housing	April 2009 & annually
Resident consultation methods are fully inclusive.	Ensure the Resident Involvement Framework employs a range of consultation techniques so that minority gender groups are not excluded from becoming involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of residents involved in consultation by gender group 	Principal Manager Compliance & Monitoring	May 2008 & ongoing
Knowledgeable staff who provide services that meet users needs.	Develop staff to have a practical understanding of gender equality and how to mainstream users' needs so that SAHA provides relevant customer services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % attendance at relevant gender equality related training 	HR Manager	September 2008 & ongoing
SAHA policies and procedures provide	Impact assess policies, procedures and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of policies and procedures 	Principal	September

Outcome	Action(s)	Performance Measures	Lead Responsibility	Timescale
for an equality of opportunity and do not discriminate against any gender group.	job descriptions to ensure people from different gender groups are not discriminated against.	impact assessed	Manager Compliance & Monitoring	2009
SAHA's Board and workforce at all levels are represented by the gender groups, wherever possible.	Implement initiatives so that employee and Board recruitment practices are targeted to attract people from minority gender groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Composition of employees by management level and gender - Composition of Board by gender 	Director of Corporate Services	July 2008
SAHA's pay, benefits and terms of condition of employment do not discriminate against minority gender groups.	Carry out an equal pay review and implement any changes required to ensure there is no discrimination in the pay structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workforce pay by gender 	HR Manager	March 2009