

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this document is to clearly outline Reidvale Housing Association's policy in relation to all aspects of equal opportunities.

1.2 Our policy has two main aims:

- To ensure that no person, group of persons or organisation who deals with the Association in any way or who requires a service, assistance or advice from the Association, or who is employed by (or serves) in any capacity by the Association, is treated less favourably than any other person, group of persons or organisations – put more simply, anyone who has any sort of contact with Reidvale Housing Association.
- To promote the policy so that anyone dealing with the Association in any capacity is made aware that the Association has a policy and that there is a zero tolerance of any act which contravenes the policy/policy principles in any way.

2. STATUTORY, REGULATORY AND GOOD PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS

2.1 This policy has been written using best practice guidance and aims to comply fully with these and the requirements of legislation.

2.2 The main legislation which the Association strives to fully comply with is the Equality Act 2010 which harmonised and consolidated much of the previous equalities – related legislation into one single Act. It, therefore, replaced, for example, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

2.3 The Equality Act 2010 seeks to promote to achieve equality of treatment and opportunity for all groups in society without discrimination or prejudice on any grounds. The Equality Act uses the term “protected characteristics” to describe groups against whom any sort of discrimination is unlawful. Section 4 of the Act sets out the nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Gender (referred to as “sex” in the Act)

- Gender Reassignment
 - Sexual Orientation
- 2.4 The Human Rights Act 1998 provides for the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions and protection of property, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of convention rights.
- 2.5 The Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2010 also place a legal obligation on housing associations to promote equal opportunities.
- 2.6 The Scottish Government published the Scottish Social Housing Charter in March 2012, effective from 1st April 2012, has Equalities as its first outcome and standard. This requires that, “Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:
- every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services”.
- 2.7 At the same time as the Charter, the Scottish Housing Regulator introduced the Regulatory Standards for Governance and Financial Management. Section 5 requires RSL’s to conduct their affairs with honesty and integrity and, within this, RS 5.3 requires RSL’s to pay “due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance management”.

3. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion in the Community

- 3.1.1 All of the Association’s key strategic documents and policies will take account of the principles of this policy and will contain an equal opportunities statement to reinforce this.
- 3.1.2 The Association will maintain existing and develop new policies and procedures which deal with specific issues that are key to the delivery of this policy, such as Racial Harassment Policy and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.
- 3.1.3 We will, where feasible, make information and official documents available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, audio tape or a different language.
- 3.1.4 We will ensure our employment practices, including recruitment and conditions of employment are fair and not discriminatory against any group or individual.

3.1.5 We will ensure staff and committee members receive training on equal opportunities which reflects the responsibilities of their position.

3.1.6 We will encourage those we work with, such as contractors and consultants to have appropriate equal opportunities policies.

3.2 The Delivery of Equality of Opportunity in all Areas of Our Service Provision

3.2.1 The Association will provide equal access to housing and the associated housing management and maintenance services. This will include working with partners to achieve this objective. For example, we will accept referrals from the Council's Homeless Casework Team and specialist agencies such as Key Housing Association.

3.2.2 We will gather equal opportunities statistics for applications for housing, our tenant members and applicants for employment and staff members to help us monitor this policy and any targets set within other policies. We will benchmark performance against comparable service providers where possible.

3.2.3 We will encourage and support active participation in our governing structure and focus groups which reflect the composition of our community.

3.2.4 We will consult with service users and the wider community where relevant in the review of policies.

4. RESPECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES WITH REGARD TO EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Staff Responsibilities

4.1.1 The Association has designated one member of staff (the Director) to have responsibility for the operation and monitoring of the equal opportunities policy.

4.1.2 All employees have a responsibility to apply this policy in their day to day work. All job descriptions have a statement which reinforces this requirement. Where posts have specific responsibilities these will also be clearly stated in the job description. In addition, all staff have a duty to bring any discriminatory behaviour or attitudes that they become aware of to the attention of their line manager.

4.2 Committee Responsibility

4.2.1 The Management Committee has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the Association's policy and practices are faithful to its equal opportunities commitment.

4.3 Training

The Association will ensure that all staff and committee receive any training required to enable them to understand their responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING

5.1 Reidvale Housing Association will, within reason, collect and monitor information that will allow the Association to ensure that no groups are discriminated against in relation to employment, membership or rehousing opportunities.

5.2 All information will be collected on a voluntary basis and kept in complete confidence. It will be used only for the purpose of equal opportunities monitoring in relation to the activities of the Association. The areas of activity that will be monitored include:

- applications for housing
- new tenancies
- Management Committee membership
- Association employment (including requests for application forms, job applications, shortlists and successful candidates)
- Contractors' policies and activities

5.3 The following information will be collected and monitored:

- gender
- ethnicity
- disability
- age

5.4 The Association will present information on the above to the relevant committees of the Association. We will also use the results to influence the Association's service planning process.

5.5 The Association will report our performance in respect of equality to tenants and other service users through the Association's Annual Report and Newsletter.

6. REVIEW OF POLICY

6.1 The Association will undertake a comprehensive review of all aspects of this policy at least every 5 years.

6.2 This review will take account of:

- changes to legislation, best practice, codes of guidance, etc
- the Association's activities and performance; and

➤ the views of all service users.

6.3 Any weaknesses or failings in the Association's practices will be addressed in the revised policy document.