



# Equality and Diversity Policy

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## **Two Rivers Housing**

### **Equality and Diversity Policy**

#### **1. Statement of intent**

- 1.1 Two Rivers Housing (TRH) is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity in the delivery of its services and its employment practices. TRH aims to ensure that all of its customers and employees are dealt with fairly and equitably and that it takes into account the diverse nature of their cultures and backgrounds.
- 1.2 TRH will actively work towards promoting good relations, eliminating discrimination and addressing existing disadvantage in relation to different groups on the basis of race, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, gender, disability either mental or physical, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, HIV/Aids, responsibility for dependents, trade union activity and age.
- 1.3 TRH will operate in accordance with current legislation, guidance and good practice published by relevant organisations and will monitor the implementation of this Policy as a result. Existing legislation and codes of practice relevant to this policy will inform the implementation of this policy.
- 1.4 TRH recognises that the co-operation of every employee, customer, partner and Board member is essential to the success of this Policy. It will provide training for its employees, customers and Board members and will work towards promoting a culture that recognises and embraces diversity as a positive characteristic.
- 1.5 Two Rivers Housing:
  - values the diversity of individuals and communities and wants its services, facilities and resources to be accessible to everyone. TRH is a diverse organisation and it will use every opportunity to develop its role in the community and maximise its business and social potential
  - accepts that every individual has a right to their own distinctive and diverse identity
  - will consult with and involve customers and other stakeholders to ensure it understands the needs of the communities it services
  - will provide services which reflect the social, cultural and linguistic needs of the local community, delivered by a workforce that broadly reflects the community it serves

- will provide support to the victims of harassment and domestic violence and will work with the community and other agencies to tackle the perpetrators of harassment and domestic violence
- will provide a supportive and open work environment in which all employees have the opportunity to reach their full potential
- work with other local registered social landlords and statutory and non-statutory organisations to ensure that our equality and diversity strategies complement each other in an effective manner
- consider whether multi-agency strategies are appropriate
- fully involve all employees, stakeholders and local communities to ensure their ownership and support for the policy and to ensure it includes all the relevant issues
- develop capacity building and training programmes with local communities to enable their equal participation in service delivery and employment matters
- involve the same stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating this policy
- link into wider local authority policies on regeneration and social exclusion
- set out the roles of the landlord and partner organisations
- periodically review and, where necessary, improve the policy

1.6 TRH will set, monitor and periodically review equality objectives that relate to equality and diversity across its services.

## **2. Service delivery and employment strategies**

2.1 This policy will apply across all service and employment areas, including those listed in 2.2 to 2.5 below. Many of these are covered by specific policies and procedures that set out TRH's responsibilities in more detail.

2.2 Allocation of properties:

TRH will allocate its properties in a way that is fair and non-discriminatory. It will seek to ensure that any properties not allocated by TRH are allocated in a fair and equal basis. TRH will seek to avoid restrictions on access to housing, for example, which are irrelevant to housing and support needs. TRH will do this by keeping records of race, colour, ethnic and national origin, nationality, gender, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation, marital status, HIV/Aids, responsibility for dependents and age.

TRH will review and monitor nomination arrangements to ensure fairness and equality of access, although notes that 75% of TRH lettings are controlled by a nominations agreement with Forest of Dean District Council.

TRH will ensure that people in housing need are made aware of the housing and other services it offers, using a range of information methods.

TRH's policies and procedures will ensure fairness and accessibility to its housing. These will be periodically reviewed to ensure they are not discriminatory. Any new policy or model for allocating housing will be assessed thoroughly to prevent discrimination against the local community.

TRH will publicise its housing services to local groups as part of its wider public information strategy. Information will be made available, when required, in a variety of mediums and minority languages and in ways which will reach these groups. TRH will explore with local communities, models of communication that ensure inclusiveness and genuine commitment. Local communities will be consulted on the development of all relevant information.

TRH will encourage applicants to make informed choices and decisions about offers of accommodation. TRH's Allocations Policy and procedure will be sensitive to issues of discrimination or harassment and will maximise the potential for applicants to live in areas they are familiar with or that will minimise isolation. Eligibility requirements and processes which grade applicants for allocations will not directly or indirectly discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief. Applicants will not be penalised for refusing accommodation in areas with which they are not familiar and which they fear may leave them isolated or prey to harassment or discrimination.

TRH will work in partnership with relevant Council's and other relevant stakeholders to establish the profile and meet the housing needs of communities in the local area.

### 2.3 The delivery of housing services:

TRH will manage the delivery of its services in a way that is fair and non-discriminatory. It will seek to ensure that all of its tenants are dealt with in a fair and equal manner through the application of its procedures and appropriate training for service deliverers and service users.

TRH is fully committed to ensuring that its residents are able to live without fear of harassment, intimidation or attack. It will provide support to those who are subjected to harassment.

### 2.4 Tenant/resident involvement:

TRH will seek to secure the involvement of all relevant groups for consultation and participation in the planning and provision of its services. It will achieve this, for example, by liaising and consulting with representative organisations from the local community. TRH will also address barriers to participation in its tenants and residents groups.

TRH will take positive steps to include local communities in the development and review of its Tenant Participation so that it reflects the distinct experiences of residents.

TRH will establish which different groups are resident within its operating areas in order to develop its Tenant Involvement Strategy. The results of the 2001 census will assist with this process.

TRH will consider the extent to which its' tenants and residents groups are representative. It will work proactively with tenants' organisations to ensure that all tenants are encouraged to participate. TRH will also encourage tenants' organisations to undertake equality and diversity training.

#### 2.5 Improvement and regeneration programmes:

TRH will ensure that money for these activities is distributed fairly and that households are treated fairly if decanting is necessary, for example.

TRH will take account of the particular requirements of local communities in the planning and design of new and improved social housing. It will consider the significance for households of the size and type of accommodation planned or improved and the need to take account of any requirements and ways of making services more culturally sensitive.

### **3. Actions to promote equal opportunities in service delivery and employment**

3.1 TRH will ensure that the composition of its' workforce is broadly representative of the community it serves. TRH will employ measures to address any under-representation that is identified.

3.2 TRH will ensure that it has access to language facilities to assist written and oral communication to tenants and residents whose first language is not English. TRH will also ensure that alternative facilities are available to those people who have a communication difficulty due to a disability.

3.3 TRH will provide training for all of its employees, tenants and Board members where appropriate to ensure they understand and implement all aspects of this Policy.

3.4 TRH will aim to promote a positive culture of equality of opportunity and treatment of its employees. It will also actively promote this policy to all of its tenants, customers, consultants and contractors.

3.5 TRH will encourage the reporting of incidents of a discriminatory nature and will deal with any information it receives in a confidential manner. It will take reports seriously, investigate them thoroughly and take whatever actions, including disciplinary actions, are necessary to remedy the situation.

3.6 TRH will implement the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the elements of the Equality Schemes which apply to the organisation.

3.7 TRH will ensure a commitment to this policy when employing contractors or consultants. TRH will require details of their equality and diversity policies and procedures to ensure that these meet agreed standards.

- 3.8 TRH will require all contractors, consultants and suppliers to comply with basic equality standards in their employment practices and TRH will, where necessary, raise awareness of such issues with them. Contracting and appointment procedures will not directly or indirectly discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion and belief or sexual orientation.
- 3.8 Two Rivers Housing will promote community safety and work with enforcement agencies available in the Gloucestershire area.
- 3.9 Two Rivers Housing will ensure that equal access to training and education is given to all employees, Board Members and Tenants regardless of race, skin colour, religious or cultural beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or nationality.

#### **4. Implementation**

- 4.1 Members of TRH's Board and Executive Team are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adequately communicated and implemented.
- 4.2 The Board of TRH is responsible for ensuring that equality and diversity issues are considered and included in decisions made by TRH, also in its policies and procedures and in all of its activities. Also, the Board will ensure that sufficient resources are made available for implementing this policy.
- 4.3 TRH will designate a senior manager to champion equality and diversity issues within TRH.
- 4.4 It is the responsibility of all of TRH's employees to ensure that their work is carried out in line with this policy and any related procedures.
- 4.5 The Board of TRH is responsible for ensuring that all employees, customers and suppliers are aware of this policy, its implications and their responsibility for ensuring its success.
- 4.6 The Board is responsible for taking action where there is evidence of a breach of this Policy.

#### **5. Monitoring**

- 5.1 A framework for monitoring equality and diversity performance against this Policy and any relevant equality objectives will be established.
- 5.2 Information gathered through monitoring will be made widely available, subject to Data Protection legislation. TRH will use this information to revise its policies, procedures and practice as necessary.
- 5.3 The Board of TRH will be responsible for monitoring TRH's activities in relation to this policy.

#### **6. Review**

- 6.1 This Policy will be reviewed periodically. New legislation, policy or guidance relating to equality and diversity will trigger an automatic review.
- 6.2 The Board of TRH will be responsible for ensuring periodic reviews of this Policy are undertaken.