



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

APPROVED

SEPT 2008

LAST AMENDED

AUG 2008

NEXT FORMAL POLICY REVIEW REQUIRED

SEPT 2010

FORMAL REVIEW OF POLICY BY

BOARD

NB: ALL POLICIES MUST BE REVIEWED BY RELEVANT MANAGER EACH YEAR

FREQUENCY OF FORMAL POLICY REVIEW

2 Years

MAIN CONTACT

Janet Clarke

Tel: 862960

NOTES

Brief Policy Summary:

St. Leger Homes believes in positive action to ensure that customers and employees are treated fairly, in accordance with their needs and that they do not experience discrimination or disadvantage. This policy is not only a statement of intent, but also allocates responsibility to action the policy and advises that delivery will be through a strategy and action plan, which will be subject to monitoring and to revision.

1. Our Commitment

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all in our service delivery, employment and in the way we operate as an organisation. This commitment is expressed through the principle of 'mainstreaming', which aims to integrate equality as a core value into everything that we do.

We recognise that groups of people within the community could be disadvantaged, because of their age, gender, disability, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and faith, or for other reasons listed below.

We will monitor progress and review the policy and Action Plan annually.

2. Scope of the Policy

St. Leger Homes believe that all individuals have the right to be treated with dignity and respect whilst at work or using its services.

It recognises all forms of personal discrimination including harassment and bullying as a serious matter. All individuals have the right to have their business or concerns about St. Leger Homes' actions pursued with equal attention and vigour within the context of appropriate policy statements on priorities of need.

2.1 Definitions and descriptions of scope: for the purposes of this document the statements in this section shall apply.

The scope of this policy shall apply to discrimination against people on any unjustifiable grounds, including the following examples:

- A) Age
 - B) Alternative lifestyles
 - C) Class
 - D) Commitments as a carer
 - E) Disability
 - F) Employment status
 - G) Gender or marital status
 - H) Gender reassignment
 - I) HIV/AIDS or other medical issues that are not relevant
 - J) Literacy and learning difficulty
 - K) Nationality
 - L) Physical appearance/attributes
 - M) Prior offences – where the offences committed are irrelevant
 - N) Racial or ethnic grouping
 - O) Religion or spiritual beliefs
 - P) Responsibility for dependants
 - Q) Sexual orientation
 - R) Trade Union activities
- This list is not exhaustive.

2.2 “Direct discrimination” shall mean treating a person less favourably than others are treated or would be treated in the same circumstances.

2.3 “Indirect discrimination” shall mean applying in any circumstances a requirement or condition, which intentionally or not, has a disproportionate and unjustifiable adverse effect on a particular group or individual.

2.4 “Priority of need” shall mean that St. Leger Homes will make objective and transparent judgements upon the urgency of spending money on one particular need as against another need,
e.g. the work associated with danger to the public will be prioritised before routine maintenance within the same budget area.

2.5 “Customer” shall mean the individual user or their parent, guardian, carer or agent acting on their behalf, and shall also include user groups.

3. Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

3.1 St. Leger Homes is committed to a policy of equal opportunity and fair access in employment and service delivery regardless of any unjustifiable causes.

3.2 We will seek to ensure that no direct or indirect discrimination exists within our operation and will seek to promote equal opportunities and good relations between diverse groups/individuals.

3.3 We will take steps to ensure that all staff are aware of the policy and their personal responsibilities under it.

3.4 The policy will be available for inspection at all offices.

3.5 The aim of the policy is to ensure that no employee, potential employee or customer receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by any form of direct or indirect discrimination. This applies to all areas of service delivery, including: access to services; quality of services provided; and information provision. Equally it applies to all aspects of employment, including: conditions of service; recruitment; promotion and training.

3.6 St. Leger Homes recognises that unfair discrimination cannot be eradicated merely by seeking to observe the letter of the law, but only by the energetic, practical commitment of all concerned to promote equal opportunity.

3.7 All employees have a personal responsibility for the practical application of this policy in their day-to-day interactions with colleagues and members of the public. Board members, managers and others involved in determining service delivery and dealing with employment matters, have responsibility to ensure that this policy is both promoted and put into practice. It is recognised that training is an important ingredient in equipping all Board members and all employees for this responsibility.

3.8 In the operational field of service delivery all managers will endeavour to ensure that access to services, the quality of service provision and the quality of information provided to customers to enable them to use our services, does not lead to being disadvantaged for individuals or groups, which cannot be shown to be fair or justifiable.

3.9 In the employment field, selection criteria and procedures will be under constant assessment to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted, trained, and in all respects treated solely on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

3.10 St. Leger Homes values the role of the trade unions in assisting the promotion and application of an Equal Opportunities Policy through normal Trade Union activities and training schemes.

3.11 Grievance and Harassment Procedures are available to any employee who believes that he or she has suffered unfair discrimination. Allegations of discrimination, harassment and victimisation by employees against other employees on the grounds covered by this policy statement, will be investigated in keeping with the appropriate procedure, and if upheld, could result in disciplinary action.

3.12 St. Leger Homes also recognises that it has a significant role to play in promoting good practice in relation to equality issues and in promoting diversity. We will ensure that our written and pictorial communication is free from bias and actively reflects and promotes our diverse workforce and diverse customer base.

4. Delivery of the Policy

4.1 Responsibilities - St. Leger Homes employees have clearly defined responsibilities for equality and diversity over and above the responsibilities as employees of St. Leger Homes. These employees will work to increase participation opportunities for all customers and to increase the number of customers from diverse communities who engage in participation.

However, we also recognise that equality and diversity are vital integral aspects of everything we do – priority will be given to ensuring that services are delivered in ways that are appropriate to customer needs and that equality and diversity issues are considered as part of mainstream delivery. The officers will work alongside all service delivery areas to ensure that equality and diversity is embedded into both their consultation with customers and also into the delivery of their services.

4.2 Board – Board Members are responsible for ensuring that St. Leger Homes delivers this policy effectively.

4.3 Training - All St. Leger Homes employees and Board members will receive equality and diversity training. The training will be appropriate to their needs and to the roles they are undertaking. Thereafter, ongoing employee needs will be identified and met through the appraisal process.

Equality & Diversity training is available for all tenants and members of Tenants and Residents Associations and Focus Groups.

4.4 Access to Services - St. Leger Homes will ensure that its services are accessible. The accessibility of premises used will be kept under review. Services will be accessible through a variety of arrangements including:

- Different methods of accessing services e.g. office visit, telephone, text messaging, email, home visits.
- Additional technological assistance as appropriate e.g. hearing loops and Minicomms.
- Alternative forms of communication e.g. large print, talking tapes, sign language, alternative languages and formats.
- Use of accessible premises for meetings.

The above examples are illustrative and not exhaustive.

4.5 Service Monitoring - St. Leger Homes will collate and keep information on diversity – this will allow it to monitor the impact of the delivery of its services so that any imbalances may be addressed.

4.6 Access to Housing - We will administer and monitor the delivery of Doncaster Council's allocations policy, to ensure that it is delivered in a way which does not discriminate against, nor disadvantage customers. Should the

monitoring reveal that applicants are experiencing disadvantage or discrimination, we will take action.

4.7 Delivery of Services - St. Leger Homes will deliver its services in ways that do not disadvantage or discriminate. This will be achieved by:

- Equality Impact assessments to be undertaken on all policies, procedures and services. When new policies are introduced, Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) will also be undertaken upon those.
- Information to be collected on diversity e.g. race, disability, sexual orientation, faith, age and gender for monitoring.
- Analysis of service provision and outcomes will be undertaken and actions agreed in relation to any arising evidence of a service inequality impacting upon customers.
- Increased customer participation will also allow for services to be tailored to meet diverse needs.

4.8 Consultation - All Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs) and the Standing Joint Committee (SJC) of Tenants and Residents Associations, are required within their Constitutions to operate in an open, inclusive manner and to not act in a discriminatory way. In addition, St. Leger Homes will ensure that other consultation is undertaken to encourage and include those who do not generally participate in consultation.

4.9 Compliments, Comments and Complaints - St. Leger Homes operates a Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and procedure. Compliments, comments and complaints can be reported electronically, by personal visit, by telephone or to any visiting officer.

These are all recorded and included in our service standards within prescribed timescales for responding. In addition to responding on an individual basis, St. Leger Homes analyses its compliments, comments and complaints to drive and inform service improvements and to make sure that improvements made are in accordance with the needs of our customers.

4.10 Harassment and Hate Crime - St. Leger Homes views harassment and hate crime (i.e offences related to Disability, Gender, Faith & Religion, Sexual Orientation and Race) as an extremely serious matter. It is a breach of tenancy to engage in any form of harassment and to allow household members or visitors to do so.

St. Leger Homes will take prompt action to address instances of harassment by working alongside other relevant agencies to deal with perpetrators and to support victims.

4.11 Employment - St. Leger Homes values its employees. It recognises the benefits of a diverse workforce, which reflects the community it serves. We undertake workforce monitoring to allow us to measure the extent to which our workforce reflects the community and to also allow us to check that employees and potential employees do not experience discrimination or disadvantage. We believe that all staff are entitled to be treated with respect.

We have a Bullying and Harassment Policy & Procedure, which is designed to deter such behaviour by sending out a strong message that it will not be tolerated. The procedure is designed to deal effectively with bullying and harassment immediately it is recognised. It is separate from the disciplinary procedure, but it is clear within the policy that unacceptable behaviour that cannot be changed by this process, or is so serious that it could lead to disciplinary action, should also be dealt with under that procedure.

All our employment related policies are geared towards ensuring that equality and diversity issues are addressed.

Examples include: Recruitment and Selection, Employee Capability, Flexible Working Hours and Family Friendly Policies & procedures.

We will comply with all anti-discrimination legislation including:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Equality Act 2006
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006
- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulation 2005
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulation 1999
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation 2003
- All European regulations and directives

We will also comply with any forthcoming legislation, (New Equality Bill currently being passed through parliament).

4.12 Contractors/Partners

St. Leger Homes will only employ contractors once we are satisfied that they have appropriate equality and diversity policies and these policies align with those of St. Leger Homes.

We will include equality and diversity in the monitoring of contract compliance.

5. Monitoring and Review

Continually monitor its workforce profile against the community profile to work towards a workforce that is reflective of the community it serves.

Specifically monitor recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities and take up of training, pay, grievance, disciplinary and exit from employment.

Receive an annual report from the Head of Human Resources on progress against targets that have been set.

Continue to review its monitoring processes to comply with changes in legislation.

We will also measure our performance and progress against the following performance indicators:

Indicator Description	
2a	Adoption of the Equality Standard for Local Government and level reached.
2b	Race Relations Amendment Act 2000: General Duty to promote Race Equality
11a	% of the top 5% of earners who are women
11b	% of the top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities
11c	% of the top 5% of earners who are disabled
16a	% of employees meeting Disability Discrimination Act 1995 definition of disability
17a	% of employees from minority ethnic communities

6. Guidance to Managers Employment Issues

The Easy Guide to HR is available on the staff intranet. It contains information for employees and managers on the Human Resources policies and procedure.

http://www.stlegerhomes.co.uk/staff_intranet/human_resources.aspx