

Equality & Diversity Policy

1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Thames Valley Housing Group (described in this policy as Thames Valley Housing) is committed to promoting equality and celebrating diversity. It has adopted the strategy of a whole organisational approach to equality and diversity. This strategy is known as "mainstreaming" which means that equality and diversity issues will be addressed within our corporate planning processes, setting of policy objectives, service delivery and reviewing our performance.

Thames Valley Housing believes that no person should suffer disadvantage by reason of their race, colour, nationality ethnic or national origin, or because of their religion or faith, gender, sexuality, marital or civil partnership status, age, or disability

Thames Valley Housing

- has provided structures, ways of working, communication and management which are designed to ensure that no customer, employee or potential customer or employee experiences unfair discrimination or harassment.
- takes action to ensure equality of opportunity in the provision of its housing services, in the recruitment of Board Members , and in the employment of employees who provide these services.
- has set clear standards against which its performance can be measured in an open and accountable manner.

2. DEFINITIONS

Equality is about an understanding that:

- Certain groups within society experience common forms of discrimination.
- We have a duty to help change that situation as an employer, landlord, service provider, partner and through contractors and procurement.
- We need to systematically monitor our service delivery and employment practices to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate any discriminatory behaviours, policies and practices

Diversity is about the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organisations with which they interact and emphasises the value to business in:

- Respecting and understanding individual differences and individuality
- Maximising the unique contributions of individuals in Thames Valley Housing's activities

Mainstreaming is Thames Valley Housing's aim to ensure that equality objectives are incorporated and become an integral part of governance, management and duties of every board member and employee.

Discrimination can take many forms including

- Direct discrimination- treating one person less favourably than others.
- Indirect discrimination- creating a condition, term of employment, or requirement of service delivery, which cannot be justified, and which in practice prevents people from certain groups from receiving a service.
- Institutional Discrimination- the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service or employment condition to people from certain groups.
- Harassment- individuals or groups of individuals are harassed or abused because they are from certain groups.
- Victimisation- where a person is treated less favourably because they have or it is suspected that they will pursue their rights to equality in service or employment condition via the grievance/complaints procedure or legal proceedings; or they are a witness involved in a discrimination case and may also be victimised by others and treated less favourably

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Valuing and managing diversity

Thames Valley Housing recognises the need for diversity in its approach to employment. Employing individuals from a wide range of backgrounds should enable Thames Valley Housing to have a greater focus to meet customer needs over a broader area of issues and provide the range of skills necessary to meet changing needs and agendas.

We will ensure that we canvas as widely as possible for applications for Board members and jobs in order to establish a Board and workforce that is genuinely representative of the local communities its serves and its customer base. Where necessary positive action will be used to ensure this representation

Employee responsibilities

In order to fully implement the policy all employees need to be aware of their responsibility

to integrate equality and diversity in their day-to-day activities. Employees must be aware of and responsible for equality and diversity in their behaviour with colleagues, customers and stakeholders and in identifying equality objectives through the appraisal process, projects, plans and initiatives, and progressing those objectives in their day-to-day work.

EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

Thames Valley Housing has established an Equality Framework with the aim of achieving the highest standards of equality in the following areas:

- Corporate Culture
- Our customers
- Our employees
- The Board and Governance
- Contractor services
- New homes/development

The goals for each area of the Equality Framework are:-

Corporate Culture: To have a corporate Equality and Diversity framework and action plans that are understood by and fully engage staff.

Our Customers: To have an understanding of and ensure that services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of all communities in the areas in which we work *and* to ensure that members from all sections of the community are engaged in the various means of resident involvement.

Our employees: The profile of staff reflects the communities with whom we work. The culture of the organisation is such that all staff are treated fairly regardless of their individual status.

The Board and Governance: Membership of the Board and issues considered reflects and is influenced by the communities with whom we work.

Contractor Services: Ensure that the equality and diversity policy and any objectives are incorporated in partnership and contractual arrangements where enforceable.

New Homes/Development: New homes are developed in response to a local assessment of the housing requirements of all the residents we serve.

The Equality Framework appears as Appendix 1. To enable us to meet these goals and ensure continuous improvement, Thames Valley Housing will set annual action plans for each area of the scheme. The plans will be regularly monitored.

The Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate has produced a set of questions and statements around diversity known as Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs). The purpose of the diversity KLOE is to ensure that services address the different needs of customers. Thames Valley Housing is committed to being an organisation delivering an excellent service and continuous improvement and has incorporated the KLOEs into its Equality

Scheme and auditing process.

4. COMPLAINTS

An employee or customer who feels they have not been fairly treated within the scope of this policy should raise the matter through the Association's Grievance Procedure (for employees) and Complaints Procedure (for customers)

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees have a general responsibility to promote and comply with this policy. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all employees of Thames Valley Housing. Employees should also ensure non-discriminatory conduct at work and in their relations with Thames Valley Housing's customers.

Managers of Thames Valley Housing have additional responsibilities for communicating this policy to all employees and ensuring that all employees are fully aware of their individual responsibilities and legal responsibilities. In addition senior managers will ensure that adequate resources are provided for developing, promoting and monitoring this equality policy.

If an employee in undertaking duties and responsibilities on Thames Valley Housing's behalf witnesses a discriminatory incident, they have a duty of care to other employees and members of the public to challenge discriminatory behaviour and practice and in the case of racist and other discriminatory incidents a duty to report and record the incident to their line manager or the Human Resources Department.

6. CONSULTATION

Board members, employees and residents have been consulted before final approval of this policy and will be consulted and participate in all subsequent policy reviews.

7. REVIEW

Thames Valley Housing acknowledges that this policy is not a static document and that it will require ongoing review. Changes to the document may be required for a number of reasons including new legislation or through lessons learned as the policy becomes operational. A review of this policy will therefore be undertaken annually as part of the review of Standing Orders.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS/SOURCE LEGISLATION

The Equal Pay Act 1970, The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) regulations 2003, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005, The Employment Rights Act 1996, The Employment Relations Act 1999, Sex Discrimination Amendment Act 1999, The [Part-Time Workers \(Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment\) Regulations 2000](#), Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, Flexible working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2002, Flexible Working (Eligibility Complaints and Remedies) Regulations 2002, The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Employment Equality (Age)

Regulations 2006

APPENDICES

Equality Scheme Framework

DATE UPDATED/INTRODUCED

Agreed by the Union December 2002

Approved by the Board October 2002

Updated March 2003

Approved by the Board June 2006

Reviewed and updated April 2009