



High Peak Community Housing

Equality and Diversity Policy

Policy Statement:

High Peak Community Housing is committed to promoting equal opportunities and diversity in both the way we provide services and in the way we recruit and employ staff. We will endeavour to ensure that all employees, potential employees, clients and customers are treated fairly and consistently with respect to, and in accordance with, the principles of equal opportunities and human dignity. We are committed to valuing diversity in the workplace and in the community we serve, recognising our legal and moral responsibilities to be fair. We are also committed to ensuring all our information is available in a variety of formats to meet the needs of the diverse range of people we work with.

Furthermore because of our key role, within the communities whom we serve, we should take every opportunity to lead on the promotion of diversity and the equality of opportunity. In doing so we understand that we will help communities to become both cohesive and sustainable where everyone has the opportunity to be included.

Everyone should be treated fairly in accordance with their needs.

Commitment to:

We will ensure that the vision and values of the Company support and enforce our commitment to equal opportunity and diversity. High Peak Community Housing will also ensure that this Equality and Diversity policy is reflected in all our other policies, business plans, procedures and systems. We shall ensure that our policies and procedures demonstrate our commitment to not tolerating harassment of any kind and also provide a variety of methods for anyone wishing to complain so that they feel able and comfortable to do so, if necessary. We are also committed to ensuring training for staff and Board members to understand the need for fairness to all.

Responsibility for implementing the policy:

Overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy lies with the Head of Business Services but it is also the responsibility of each member of staff and Board to ensure that they treat anyone they deal with in an equal and fair way. This policy will be reviewed either within 3 years or following changes to any legislation, whichever is the sooner.

The Law:

We will ensure that, during their dealings with us, no one is treated less favourably because of the 9 protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

STATEMENT

1. The company is committed to reviewing and, where necessary, changing, how it does things to address disadvantage amongst both the people we serve and our current and future staff.
2. The company's policy is to provide services fairly to all sections of the community and to give equal treatment to services users, employees and job applicants regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation.
3. The Company will seek to eliminate discrimination in any form, promote equality in all dealings with people and comply with the Equality Act 2010. This includes dealing with all types of discrimination including direct discrimination, associative discrimination, discrimination by perception, indirect discrimination, harassment, harassment by a third party and victimisation.
4. We aim to create a working environment in which:
 - All people are able to give of their best
 - There is no bullying and harassment or discrimination
 - All decisions about individuals are based on merit
 - We have in place behavioural competencies detailing how we expect our staff to behave to everyone.
5. All Board Members, employees and those acting on behalf of the company are responsible for implementing the policy and have a continuing duty to challenge discrimination and promote equality. Any breaches of this policy by our staff or members of our Board will be dealt with through our stated disciplinary procedures.
6. To meet this responsibility the company will:
 - Provide training and advice to ensure Board members and employees and all representatives of High Peak Community Housing understand the policy and their responsibilities.

- Monitor service usage to identify groups within the community whose needs are less well met, or where our procedures or practices are inadvertently not fair or delivered in an unfair manner.
- Take action to ensure equality of access to all our services
- Take action to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunities
- Consult with both service users and people who do not currently use our services, in ways to ensure all service users are treated equally and fairly.
- Promote the company as an employer people are proud to work for and actively seek to achieve a balanced workforce which reflects the local labour market
- Take action to ensure an Equality Impact Assessment is conducted for each policy, and any recommendations will be implemented prior to publications of the policy.
- As an employer we recognise the value of a diverse workforce across all occupations and levels of responsibility.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Profiles of our local communities and the Company workforce will be maintained, providing information according to all protected characteristics as defined in the legislation.
2. The Company will ensure:
 - Regular and systematic consultation with both staff and service users
 - Self-assessment, scrutiny and audit of service delivery
 - Equality action planning takes place
3. A monitoring and evaluation report will be submitted annually to the Board.
4. From 2011, as a public body employing over 150 employees, we will report on equality issues in the workplace including gender, pay, ethnicity and disability minority employment rates.

PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

1. Age

- The Company is opposed to discrimination on the grounds of age. Age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

The Company will:

- Ensure all service users are treated equally regardless of age
- Ensure that age is not a barrier to recruitment, selection, promotion, training or personal development
- Ensure that age is not considered adversely where redundancy/early retirement may apply
- Age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

2. Disability

Under the Act, disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The Company will:

- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training
- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to disabled people's needs
- Ensure that information is available in accessible formats and ensure that disabled people are informed of services that may be relevant to them
- As an employer we will make reasonable adjustments for staff to help them overcome disadvantage resulting from an impairment
- Ensure that disability is not a barrier to recruitment, selection, promotion, training or personal development

3. Gender Reassignment

The Company is opposed to all forms of discrimination based on trans-sexual issues. A trans-sexual person is someone who proposes to, starts or has

completed a process to change his or her gender. There is no longer a necessity for a person to be under medical supervision for protection to arise under the Act.

The Company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Challenge negative attitudes and practices
- Ensure that selection criteria is free from bias
- Ensure that trans-sexual people are not treated less favourably for being absent from work because they propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone gender-reassignment.
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training.

4. Race

The company is opposed to any discrimination based on race issues. For the purposes of the Act 'race' includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

The company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Ensure that information about services is accessible and, where necessary, targeted at ethnic minority or other identified groups
- Challenge racist attitudes and practices
- Ensure that selection criteria are free from bias and that we positively encourage applications from ethnic minorities.
- Develop specific initiatives, where required, to ensure that the workforce broadly reflects the local population
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training

5. Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Act protects employees who are married or in a civil partnership against discrimination.

The company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Ensure that selection criteria are free from bias
- Challenge negative attitudes and practices
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training

6. Pregnancy and Maternity

The company is opposed to any form of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and maternity. A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during the period of her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave to which she is entitled. During this period, pregnancy and maternity discrimination cannot be treated as sex discrimination.

The company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Ensure that selection criteria are free from bias
- Challenge negative attitudes and practices
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training

7. Religion or belief

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their religion or belief (or lack of belief) , in employment, service provision and other areas. This means people are protected:

whatever your religion or belief
 whatever your employer's religion or belief
 whether you are already working for your employer
 whether you are applying for a job.

The Company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Ensure that selection criteria are free from bias
- Challenge negative attitudes and practices
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training

8. Sex

The company is opposed to any discrimination on the grounds of sex. In relation to the protected characteristic of sex under the Act, this is

- (a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman;
- (b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same sex.

The Company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Ensure that selection criteria are free from bias
- Challenge negative attitudes and practices
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training

9. Sexual Orientation

The Company is opposed to any discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The Act defines the protected characteristic of sexual orientation as being a person's sexual orientation towards:

- people of the same sex as him or her (in other words the person is a gay man or a lesbian)
- people of the opposite sex from him or her (the person is heterosexual)
- people of both sexes (the person is bisexual).

It also explains that references to people sharing a sexual orientation mean that they are of the same sexual orientation.

The Company will:

- Strive to make services flexible and responsive to the needs of service users
- Ensure that information about services is accessible and, where necessary, targeted at identified groups
- Challenge negative attitudes and practices
- Ensure that selection criteria are free from bias
- Seek to eliminate discrimination through education and training

Signed: *Mark Ford*
(Chief Executive)

Signed: *Agnes Bradley*
(Chair)

Date: August 2010

Date: