



St Vincent's Housing Association Equality Scheme 2008 – 2010

Removing Barriers and Promoting Access



This scheme covers the six strands of diversity:

- Race
- Disability
- Gender and Transgender
- Age
- Sexuality
- Religion & Belief

It considers each aspect of diversity in turn and aims to demonstrate what we do in each area and what we aim to do. The action plans cover three years and progress will be measured against these on a regular basis with reports to the Board of Management on at least an annual basis.

Whilst this scheme concentrates on the above six main strands of diversity it acknowledges that there are other minorities whose interests this scheme should seek to safeguard.

Various diverse groups of people have been involved in the production of this scheme. This process of consultation and involvement will continue during the period of the plan, and changes will be made as appropriate. The main purpose of the plan is to improve the quality of life for all people and to remove barriers for customers, potential customers, staff and Board members. Each section will ensure that an assessment of impact and influence has been carried out covering our services to customers, asset management, employment and governance.

The principles which support this scheme are also outlined in our 'Mission Statement', our 'Equality & Diversity Policy' and the strategic objectives from the Business Plan. Board and staff champions have well established roles in the organisation to promote and monitor Equality & Diversity. This scheme was considered and approved by the Board of Management in December 2007 and the Board will receive regular progress reports on an annual basis.

Race



We recognise that barriers and discrimination exists in our society and we aim to play our part in removing those barriers and combating and tackling discrimination. We shall be proactive, involve customers and take positive action.

What we do

- Provide regular monitoring reports to the Board of Management.
- Appointed staff and Board Champions for Equality & Diversity
- Maintain an Equality & Diversity staff group
- Member of HDN/COFEM
- Carry out annual staff survey to ensure information is up to date on race and request feedback on diversity issues
- Monitor recruitment of job applicants by ethnicity and encourage applicants from all members of the community
- Ensure all reports to Board considers Equality & Diversity implications
- Provide Equality & Diversity training for all staff and Board
- Provide cultural awareness training for all staff and Board
- Contribute to Local Authority BME Strategy (e.g. Rochdale)
- Provide a cultural diverse Sheltered Scheme in Rochdale
- Provide family houses in Bolton & Blackburn promoted to BME applicants
- Establish links with BME RSL's (e.g. Ashiana, Arawak Walton, Surma)
- Establish links with BME support groups
- Be part of BME Focus Group in Rochdale
- Develop housing projects and management agreements with BME RSL's
- Set up Urban Care Centre with various BME related projects
- Set up driving project for refugees as employment initiative in Bolton
- Work in partnership in Opening Doors Project for Refugee and Asylum Seekers and migrant workers
- Gateway Project involvement (support worker reappointed to support refugees in Bolton)
- Appointed Youth & Community Worker
- Provided support scheme for Asian Women in fear of domestic violence
- Recruited staff with community language skills
- Provide Language Line
- Use Ethnic Media Press
- Provide Translation Services and translate key documents

Race



What needs to be done (Action Plan)

	Target Date	Lead Person
Report to Board of Management on Equality Scheme	Dec 07 & Dec 08	J Taylor
Report to Board of Management on Key BME PI's	March 08	J Taylor
Report to Operations Committee on BME housing PI's (Allocations, repairs, tenant groups, complaints, ASB, Contractors etc	Quarterly	C Lynch/ A Iqbal
Maintain BME support work through Urban Care Centre subject to funding	Ongoing	P Brown/M Walsh
Progress Opening Doors Project in partnership with HACT	Ongoing	P Brown/J Glover
Carry out programme of impact assessments	Ongoing	Directors/J Taylor
Youth & Community Worker funding maintained via Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	Ongoing	P Brown
Maintain Gateway Project Involvement	2008	J Evans
Refresher Training for staff on Language Line	2008	T O'Brien
Translate key documents and offer translation for others	2008	C Lynch/ S Hodgkinson
Analyse and respond to BME satisfaction from 2007 Customer Survey	Q1 2008	C Lynch
Promote job vacancies particularly where under representation	2008	N Brandon
Continue to monitor staff awareness of Equality through appraisal	2008	Manager
Maintain programme of PATH Trainees	2008	N Brandon
Maintain membership and involvement of COFEM and Housing Diversity Network	2008	J Taylor

Race



Monitoring

Service Provision

- Allocations
- Satisfaction (Customer Survey)
- Antisocial Behaviour
- Racial Harassment
- Resident Involvement
- Complaints
- Contractors
- Repairs

All of the above is reported to the Operations Committee.

Employment

- Job Application/Interview/Offer – Monitored Annually
- Staff composition - Monitored Quarterly
- Staff by Organisational Level – Monitored Annually
- Staff by Area Office – Monitored Annually

All of the above is reported to the Business Support Committee.

Statistics

	Target 2006	Actual 2006	Target 2007	Actual 2007
Allocations (General Needs)	15%	16.1%	15%	
Allocations (Sheltered)	11%	9.1%	10%	
Allocations (M/C Foyer)			55%	53% (Jan-March)
Allocations (BWD Foyer)			7%	16% (Jan-March)
Tenant Satisfaction (Overall)	79%	74%	76%	75%
Tenant Satisfaction (Decision Making)	54%	52%	66%	66%
Racial Harassment (No of cases)	4	4		
	Target 2006	Actual 2006	Target 2007	Actual 2007

Staff	15.4%	15.5%	15.4%
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Disability



What we do

- Maintain Equality & Diversity Staff Group which promotes equality
- Maintain Positive About Disabled Standard
- Interview all disabled job applicants who meet essential criteria
- Provide reasonable adjustments to assist new and existing staff (training, minicom, equipment etc)
- Work with Jobcentre Plus (Access to work) to identify support needs
- Circulate annual questionnaire all staff regarding ongoing support requirements for staff with a disability
- Support staff to learn sign language
- Provide awareness training for all staff on disability
- Provide adaptation (lift) at head office
- Maintain adaptations procedure and budget
- Monitor recruitment by disability
- Carried out DDA audit at all offices and sheltered schemes
- Produce programme of works to ensure compliance with DDA
- Maintain a list of adapted properties for letting
- Offer publications in Braille or Audio
- Provide loop induction system available at all offices
- Work with Shawe Trust to support staff
- Provide monitoring information to Board of Management
- Produce Equality & Diversity Strategy (Includes Disability)
- Provision of adapted housing (e.g. bungalows in Salford)
- Provision of autism unit in Bolton

What needs to be done (Action Plan)

	Target/Date	Lead Person
Report to Board of Management on Equality Scheme	Dec 07	J Taylor
Provide refresher training on 'loop' system and minicom	2008	T O'Brien
Produce revised Equality monitoring form (housing services)	2008	A Iqbal
Improve computer database and improve usage	2008	A Iqbal
Promote provision of Lifetime Homes and Adapted properties	2008	P Brown
Maintain an updated list of adapted properties	2008	C Lynch
Set budget for adaptations and promote	2008	C Lynch
Complete work to adapted toilet facilities at Head Office	Q1 2008	P Gerrard

Disability



Monitoring

Service Provision	Number of adapted properties Number of Lifetime homes Amount of Budget Tenant Composition	Report to Operations Committee
Employment	Staff Composition Board Applicants	Report to Board of Management Report to Business Support Committee

Statistics

	2006	2007
Staff with Disability	6.6%	
Board with Disability	6.6%	

Gender & Transgender



What we do

- Monitor staff and Board by Gender
- Appoint and promote staff on basis of skills/ability
- Provide flexible working policies that support all staff in balancing work and family life
- Provide enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption provision
- Provide specialist housing needs accommodation
- Provide support for civil partnerships (e.g. pension)
- Provide training on equality which includes gender and transgender
- Work with specialist group to provide support
- Provide support scheme in Bolton for Asian women suffering from domestic violence
- Provide mother and baby support and housing at the Blackburn with Darwen Foyer
- Provide support for women in management training
- Maintain Equality & Diversity Staff Group which considers gender issues
- Pay system is graded to job roles (not gender)
- Ensure training does not indirectly discriminate against either gender who may be working part time

What needs to be done (Action Plan)

Promote gender balance in staffing and Board Membership	2008	N Brandon
Monitor recruitment by transgender	2008	N Brandon
Raise staff awareness of transgender issues and legislation through training	2008	N Brandon
Review, consider and address any causes of gender pay gap	2008/9/10	N Brandon
Continue to work with minority groups to remove barriers (e.g. at the Urban Care Centre)	2008	P Brown
Carry out impact assessments which include consideration of gender	2008	Directors
Review Domestic Abuse Policy	2008	C Lynch

Monitoring

Gender balance of staff (by number of organisational level) Report to Board
Gender balance of Board
Recruitment by gender and transgender Report to Business Support

Statistics

Statistics	2006	2007
% Staff Women	76%	
% Managers Women	69.5%	
% Directors Women	50%	
% Board Women	20%	

What we do

- 'Age in Workplace' Policy established
- Older Persons Strategy produced
- Younger Persons Strategy produced
- Foyers provide accommodation for 18 – 25 year olds
- Provide sheltered accommodation provided for older persons
- Extra Care provision
- Provide older person accommodation
- Mainstay Floating Support provision
- Silver Surfer IT Skills promoted in Sheltered Schemes
- Monitor age profile of work force
- Provide work placements for students/school children
- Work with various agencies e.g. Age Concern, Foyer Federation, NCH
- Provide accommodation for disaffected youth
- Provide equality training for staff which includes age
- Youth and Community Development Worker appointed
- Promote History Project to engage young people in community cohesion initiative
- Member of 'Action for Young People'
- Recruited Young Persons Services Manager
- Right to request to remain in employment beyond normal retirement age
- Promote NVQ's and other training across all staff
- Monitor job applicants by age
- Provide traineeships and modern apprenticeships in areas underrepresented by younger staff members
- Ensure training opportunities available to all regardless of age

What needs to be done (Action Plan)

	Target Date	Lead
Maintain funding for Youth and Community Worker	2008	P Brown
Promote recruitment of younger person (under 21's) where under representation	2008	N Brandon
Promote work of Younger and Older Persons Strategy	2008	L Purchase / C Lynch
Seek funding to promote age sensitive projects as part of Social Investment	2008	P Brown
Review age statistics with aim of removing barriers	2008	N Brandon
Monitor Board membership by age	2008	J Taylor

Age



Monitoring

Staff by Age
Applicants by Age

Report to Business Support

Statistics

Age & Disability Recruitment Analysis as from June 2006 to December 2006

Age	16-21	22-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-65	65+	Disability	Yes	No
Applied	15	105	58	62	26	2	2	Applied	11	259
1st Interview	4	39	21	26	9	0	0	1 st Interview	4	95
2 nd Interview	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2 nd Interview	0	4
Offer	1	6	5	4	1	0	0	Offer	0	17

Sexuality



What we do

- Monitor job applicants by sexuality
- Provide training for all staff on sexuality issues/awareness
- Work with Police to report hate crime
- Promote a culture of respect and dignity in the work place and in service delivery
- Have a harassment and bullying in the workplace Policy

What we need to do (Action Plan)

	Target Date	By
Monitor existing staff by Sexuality	2008	N Brandon
Monitor complaints by Sexuality	2008	C Lynch
Monitor residents by Sexuality	2008	A Iqbal
Maintain Refresher Training	2008	T O'Brien

Monitoring

Staff Report to Business Support Committee

Residents
Complaints Report to Operations Committee

Statistics

To be included in 2007 performance report on recruitment

Religion & Religious Beliefs



What we do

- Monitor job applicants by religion
- Equality training for all staff covers religion
- Promote a culture of respect for all religions
- Respect staff who wish to wear clothing relevant to their religion in the workplace
- Provide catering at staff and customer events that respects special dietary requirements relating to religion or religious beliefs
- Give time off for staff to attend prayer or provide facilities where staff can pray at work
- Respect non-Christian holiday calendar and allow staff time to attend other religious celebrations e.g. Eid
- Allow staff time off for pilgrimage according to their religion/religious beliefs
- Support events in the community such as Eid etc

What we need to do (Action Plan)

- Monitor staff by religion
- Staff questionnaire relating to religious requirements

Monitoring

Staff
Recruitment

Report to Business Support Committee

Statistics

To be included in 2007 performance report on recruitment.

Diversity – Guidance note to legislation

1. Introduction

This note outlines the current legislation and statutory requirements and is based on guidance provided by the Audit Commission.

2. Legislation

Equal Pay Act 1970

- Made it unlawful to pay men and women differently for the same or like work or on work rated as equivalent

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

- Made it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of sex or marital status in the provision of employment, goods and services.
- Made it unlawful to victimise a person for being involved in a sex discrimination case.
- The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was set up under the Act with power to issue codes of practice and monitor its implementation. This is now within the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR).

Race Relations Act 1976

- Made it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin in the provision of employment, goods and services.
- Made it unlawful to victimise a person for being involved in a sex discrimination case.
- It set up the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) whose duties are very similar to the EOC but in relation to race (Also now included within CEHR)

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

- Made it unlawful to discriminate against a person on ground of disability i.e. a person who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on her/his ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
- Introduced a duty of employers to make reasonable adjustments to physical features or other arrangements that would place the disabled person at a substantial disadvantage.

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

- If there is intention, behaviour that has the effect of causing harassment alarm or distress, including within the workplace, is a criminal offence under this act.

The Human Rights Act 1998

- Came into force in 2000. Applies to all public bodies
- Will have an equalities impact under several of the articles.
- Article 14 specifically prohibiting discrimination of any kind.

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975

- Prohibits direct discrimination in employment on the grounds that a person intends to/is currently/has undergone gender reassignment.

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

- Made race discrimination unlawful in public authority functions not previously covered by the 1976 Act.
- "Public authority" has been defined widely for this purpose. This means that law enforcement, whether by the police, local authorities or tax inspectors, are for the first time subject to race discrimination laws
- Certain public appointments, and the termination and the terms and conditions of public appointments, are also subject for the first time to race discrimination laws, as is the implementation of Government policies and services across the board.
- The Act also places a general duty on public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Age of Consent for Gay Men 2001

- This was lowered to 16
- However there is attached to this the "abuse of trust" law which criminalises any person who has sexual relations with someone they have a professional responsible relationship with.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

- Outlaw discrimination in employment and vocational training on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion or belief respectively.
- Direct discrimination - treating people less favourably than others on grounds of sexual orientation or religion or belief;
- Indirect discrimination - applying a provision, criterion or practice which disadvantages people of a particular sexual orientation or religion or belief and which is not justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim;
- Harassment - unwanted conduct that violates people's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment;
- Victimisation - treating people less favourably because of something they have done under or in connection with the Regulations, e.g. made a formal complaint of discrimination or given evidence in a tribunal case.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995: extended in 2004, whereby service providers will have a statutory obligation to take reasonable steps to remove physical barriers to disabled people or to provide services by other means.

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (mainly to be implemented by Dec 2006)

- Makes it unlawful for a public authority to discriminate against a disabled person when exercising its functions
- Requires public authorities to –
 - Have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against and the harassment of disabled persons
 - Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other persons
 - Tackle institutional discrimination through a duty to promote disability equality for the public sector

Civil Partnership Act 2005

- Same sex couples are entitled to the same employment benefits as married employees and same sex couples can make a legal commitment by forming a civil partnership.

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 1st. October 2006

- A minimum default retirement age of 65 years
- Bans direct and indirect age discrimination in recruitment, promotion and training in the workplace.
- Unfair dismissal and statutory redundancy rights extended to those 65 and over (unless they have reached the employers retirement age of 65 or over).
- Employers duties include:
 - Employers to consider an employee's request to continue working beyond retirement.
 - Employers to give written notice to employees at least 6 months in advance of their intended retirement date.

Housing Act 2004 Gypsies and Travelers

- Duty under the Race Relations Act to promote good community relations in regard to accommodation provision for Gypsies and Travellers
- Local authorities are required to include Gypsies and Travelers in the Accommodation Needs Assessment process, and to have a strategy in place which sets out how any identified need will be met, as part of their wider housing strategies.

The Gender Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2006 is an amendment to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. **The Gender Equality Duty** comes into force in April 2007. All public authorities must demonstrate that they are promoting equality for women and men and that they are eliminating sexual discrimination and harassment.

The specific duties, in brief, are:

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives.

- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
- To gather and use information on how the public authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders (i.e. employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- To implement the actions set out in its scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

The first scheme must be prepared by 30 April 2007 for Local Authorities (And April 2008 for RSL's).

3. Emerging Issues

New legislation to support equality and diversity agenda. These include:

Equalities Bill: (April 2007)

Part 1 - establishes the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and sets out its duties, general powers, and enforcement powers. The CEHR will take on the work of the existing equality commissions and will additionally assume responsibility for promoting equality and combating unlawful discrimination in three new strands, namely sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age. The CEHR will also have responsibility for the promotion of human rights.

Part 2 - sets out provisions prohibiting discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, premises and the exercise of public functions.

Part 3 - sets out provisions prohibiting sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions and creates a public sector duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

Work & Families Act 2006: April 2007

- Extending statutory maternity pay, maternity allowance and statutory adoption pay from 6 to 9 months;
- A power to introduce new paternity leave for fathers, enabling them to benefit from leave and statutory pay if the mother returns to work before the end of her maternity leave period; (Postponed to 2010)
- Introducing 'keeping in touch' days, whereby women on maternity leave and staff on adoptive leave can, by agreement with their employer, return to work for a few days during their leave;
- Extending the period of notice for return from maternity leave to two months, enabling employers and employees to plan more effectively for return to work;

- Extending the right to request flexible working to carers.

4. Key references, useful guidance

Disability

Code of Practice – Rights of Access: Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises www.disability.gov.uk/dda

DDA Helpline ddahelp@stra.sitel.co.uk

Department for Education website for all disability publications
www.disability.gov.uk

Disability Information Service www.dis.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission www.drc-gb.org

Royal National Institute for the Blind www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf www.rnid.org.uk

Job Centre Plus www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk for GIS and access to work information

Black and Minority Ethnic

Commission for Racial Equality www.cre.gov.uk

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance www.ecri.coe.int

Home Office Website www.homeoffice.gov.uk/raceact

Institute of Race Relations www.irr.org.uk

Gender

Equal Opportunities Commission www.eoc.org.uk

Opportunity Now www.business-impact.org

Women's National Commission www.thewnc.org.uk 0207276 2555

Women's Unit www.womens-unit.gov.uk

Age

Research DFEE www.dfee.gov.uk/agediversity

Age Concern www.age.org.uk

Information on Pensions: www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/pso &
www.pensions-pmi.org.uk

Age Positive www.agepositive.gov.uk (DWP site preparing for 2006)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

Amnesty LGBT Network www.amnesty.org.uk/action/nw/glb.html

GALOP: confidential L&G help-line 0207 704 6767 www.galop.org.uk

Lesbian & Gay Employment Rights www.lager.dircon.co.uk 020 7704
2205

Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk

Terence Higgins Trust www.tht.org.uk

Work Options

Department for Education & Employment www.dfee.uk/work-lifebalance
Employers for Work-Life Balance

www.employersforworklifebalance.org.uk

New Ways to Work www.new-ways.co.uk

Part-time Workers Regulations ACAS www.dti.uk/er/ptime.htm 020 7396
5100

Translations

M-four

M-four Translations

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