

# **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy**

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# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

## 1.0 STATEMENT OF INTENT

Equality, diversity and human rights are integral to the work of PBHA, and form a key part of our vision and mission. Our principles of participation, respect, inclusion, diversity and empowerment reflect the importance of and our commitment to respecting people equally, valuing the contributions of all, and treating everyone with fairness and dignity.

It is our mission to support those with long experience of social exclusion to take control over their lives and shape a brighter future. We support people's aspirations to increased social, educational and economic inclusion and our services are designed and delivered to this end.

PBHA will always observe and promote equality, diversity and human rights in all our work.

We are positively committed to challenging direct and indirect unfair discrimination, harassment or victimisation against anyone on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, physical or mental health, disability, social class, age, political or religious beliefs, offending history, HIV status, trade union activity, marital status, sexual identity or orientation, caring responsibilities or immigration status (henceforth referred to as 'equality strands').

We strive to ensure that our commitment to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice is reflected in all that we do, including the way we assess, allocate and provide housing, support and services; employ, manage and train staff; work with contractors, suppliers and agencies and recruit Board members.

As part of our commitment to promoting equalities and good relations, PBHA takes and creates opportunities to celebrate difference and diversity, including Black History Month, World Mental Health Day, International Women's Day, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Pride.

## 2.0 IMPLEMENTATION

**Legal requirements** – We act in accordance with all relevant equalities legislation and regulations.

## 3.0 GOOD PRACTICE

In addition to upholding the law, we support the provisions of the Equality and Human Rights Commission Codes of Practice in the provision of housing, services and employment.

We implement, monitor and keep under review detailed operational policies and procedures which ensure we adhere to good equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practice and the requirements of this policy. These include:

- Carers and childcare leave policy
- Codes of conduct (staff, volunteers and Board)
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Flexible Working Arrangements
- Grievance Procedure
- The Harassment Policy
- The Nuisance Policy
- Equality and human rights action plan
- Recruitment, Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Recruitment of Ex-offenders Contract of engagement in training for workschemes
- Guidelines on Recruitment and Selection
- Redundancy Procedure
- Retirement Policy
- Ring fencing paid opportunities for tenants and participants
- Staff Training and Development Policy
- Guidance on supervisory and development opportunities
- Working and Living Together
- Work-Life Balance Policy

## 4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Board** takes primary legal and moral responsibility for ensuring PBHA operates in an anti-discriminatory way in accordance with best equal opportunities, diversity and human rights practice.

The **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Committee** is a sub committee of the Board. It comprises Board members, staff, tenants and participants. It is chaired by a Board member and serviced by the Chief Executive. Its role is to: review the Association's compliance with legislation and regulation, its performance against targets and its strategies and policies relating to equal opportunities and diversity. The agenda for the meetings are set by a working group of tenants and participants who meet with the Chief Executive in advance.

The **Chief Executive** has overall responsibility for the implementation, management, monitoring and review of all relevant policies and procedures. **Senior and middle managers** are charged with promoting this policy.

In addition, all **staff, volunteers and cover participants** have an individual responsibility to:

- act in accordance with equal opportunities and anti-discrimination policies, procedures and good practice in everything they do
- pro-actively implement the Harassment Policy and Complaints Procedure, including supporting colleagues, tenants and participants where appropriate to challenge any discriminatory behaviour
- be aware of the disciplinary consequences of not abiding by equal opportunities policies and procedures.

All **tenants and participants** are encouraged and supported to behave in accordance with anti-discriminatory principles and are made aware of the Harassment Policy including the consequences of not abiding by it. The Chief Executive oversees all formally reported harassment allegations.

All **agents and contractors** providing services to PBHA are made aware of this policy and all Invitations to Tender released by PBHA require bidders to make a statement that they agree to abide by it.

## **5.0 PROVISION OF HOUSING AND SERVICES**

We seek to identify the needs of disadvantaged groups within our areas of operation and actively assist them to benefit from our housing and services.

We take appropriate action to ensure our activities are widely known and that applications are welcome from all sections of the community.

We ensure that anyone applying for housing or services is dealt with fairly without discrimination.

We seek to ensure that the housing, services and support that people receive are relevant to their individual needs and aspirations in a culturally sensitive and anti-discriminatory manner.

Where appropriate we provide or enable access to services to meet the specific needs and aspirations of particular groups.

## **6.0 EMPLOYMENT**

We ensure that the widest range of applicants are made aware of job vacancies and ensure that the job requirements are the minimum necessary.

We ensure staff are selected, trained, promoted and managed in a fair and equitable way consistent with their skills, aptitudes and abilities, with a view to ensuring the workforce reflects at all levels the communities and areas we work in.

We take positive action on the employment of disabled people, provide a Guaranteed Interview Scheme and are holders of the two ticks symbol. From time to time, we take positive action within the law on the recruitment of other groups of people if they are under-represented in the workforce.

## **7.0 BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND VICTIMISATION**

We make every effort to provide a living and working environment free from all forms of bullying, harassment, and victimisation.

We deal quickly, firmly and sensitively with all forms of discriminatory behaviour in accordance with our Harassment Policy.

Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures apply to all employees of PBHA and are applied to tackle misconduct and breaches of policy and codes of practice.

We are committed to the protection of vulnerable adults (POVA) from bullying, harassment, victimisation and any form of coercion or exploitation. We comply with local statutory requirements regarding POVA and the reporting of incidents.

PBHA subscribes to an advocacy service where tenants and participants can seek confidential support and advice on issues that may include bullying, harassment and victimisation.

## **8.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Key Performance Indicators relating to equalities and diversity are monitored and evaluated on a quarterly basis by the Senior Management Team and reported to the Board.

The Equal Opportunities and Diversity Committee meets three times a year to set policy and review the performance of the organisation. The Board reviews and re-sets Key Performance Indicators based on the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Committee.

PBHA believes strongly in service user feedback and consultation regarding the effectiveness of service provision.

## **9.0 COMMITMENTS AND UNDERTAKINGS**

We seek and recognise the value of a diverse workforce across the organisation and in all of our services. We know that people from all equality strands have an equal right to our services and to make a positive contribution to PBHA. We provide staff training and development on the basis of need and do not consider any other factor. We undertake to fulfil all the legal duties required by the legislation and regulations, including Equality and Diversity training for all staff.

We do not tolerate abuse, bullying, harassment or victimisation amongst or between our workforce, tenants and participants, or in our housing or services, and will deal with incidences under complaints, harassment, disciplinary and grievance procedures as appropriate. We are signed up to the National Housing Federation initiative in Business for neighbourhoods and take seriously our legal and moral obligations as a landlord for tackling racial harassment and/or racial and religious hatred in the community.

We actively promote mutual understanding and good relations between people across all equality strands. We actively exercise our rights and obligations as a Landlord to the fullest extent of the law in order to tackle perpetrators of hatred in local communities.

We set positive action targets in new lettings to improve diversity and be representative of the geographical areas in which we work. From time to time we may advertise posts to a specific group (where there is a genuine occupational requirement) or offer specific services to specific groups in order to address the balance of participation or meet particular needs. We actively seek to employ tenants and participants, and certain posts are ring-fenced in order to meet our commitment in tackling inequalities within the labour market and supporting those furthest away from employment.

We subscribe to the Social Model of Disability that it is not impairment but the barriers created by society that disable people. We understand that this phenomenon is not restricted to disability, but can affect people from all equality strands. As such, we constantly strive to reduce and eliminate barriers that may exist in PBHA in the built environment, information, policies and practices, attitudes and expectations to ensure that as representative a group of people as possible are included in all aspects of our work and services.

We are holders of the two ticks symbol 'Positive about disabled people' and offer a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for all disabled job applicants who meet the essential criteria in the Person Specification. We welcome applications for adjustments and review and implement reasonable adjustments throughout our recruitment and employment processes.

We offer a range of flexible working arrangements and work life balance measures, enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption terms to help all employees meet their caring and home requirements. In the aforementioned policies, and our dependants and compassionate leave arrangements, we ensure that all employees share the same employment terms and conditions, and therefore include recognition of partners regardless of gender or marital status.

We provide a supportive environment for carers and support carers to successfully manage the balance of work and caring responsibilities.

All staff have access to a support line offering financial, legal, professional, consumer, childcare and management advice and counselling.

We ensure that anyone returning to the organisation after a period of extended leave has the opportunity to take part in a programme of re-induction or re-training.

Ex-offenders are a specific target group for PBHA and we are committed to supporting ex-offenders to rehabilitate into the community. As tenants and participants, ex-offenders have the same rights and obligations as other tenants and participants.

In addition, we are positive about the employment of ex-offenders and having a criminal record will not necessarily bar someone from being employed by PBHA. We abide by the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, including claiming exemption regarding the declaration of unspent convictions because of our work with vulnerable adults. DBS disclosures are assessed at the relevant level and treated confidentially and sensitively. Relevant spent and unspent convictions are considered in relation to the particular post applied for, and the circumstances and background of the offence/s are taken into account.

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

PBHA is committed to Equality, Diversity and Human Rights in all of our work. Our core values of Participation, Respect, Inclusion, Diversity and Empowerment demonstrate this commitment to staff, tenants and participants and the outside world. But we should never be complacent about our commitment. We must constantly take the right steps to improve our performance in terms of Equality, Diversity and Human Rights. With this in mind, we have developed an action plan laying out the steps that we are committed to taking over the next three years.

We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable. Breaches of the policy will lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if appropriate, disciplinary action. The aim of the policy and the plan is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of:

- Race
- Gender
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and/or civil partnership
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Religion and Belief

PBHA has an Equality and Diversity Action Plan. This is because we recognise that people do not fit into just one of these categories and it is not helpful to label people according to their differences or similarities. To do so can be unhelpful in terms of people's self-esteem and can stop us working with tenants, participants and staff as individuals with individual needs and aspirations.

The 3 year Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy and Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually by the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Sub-Committee.

## Monitoring inclusion and performance

We monitor the following areas of activity from an equal opportunities and diversity perspective:

- access to housing and services (including lettings, housing allocations and VCS allocations)
- service satisfaction and complaints
- service outcomes (including positive moves, evictions, qualifications, jobs)
- participation and user involvement
- staff recruitment and selection
- staff supervisory and development opportunities
- staff training

From time to time, particular groups of people may be designated an equal opportunities or inclusion target group for reasons of positive action, specific funding initiatives etc.