



STEVE BIKO HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Equality and Diversity Policy

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1 Introduction

Steve Biko Housing Association (SBHA) is committed to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and services we commission/contract including our employment practices. SBHA serves diverse communities in Princes Park, Picton and surrounding areas of Liverpool. We value diversity, and recognise the benefits of employing a diverse workforce as a Black and Minority Ethnic social housing provider in relation to our customer service and growth as an organisation.

Through our work in providing affordable housing for diverse communities, we recognise that in order to meet people's needs and harness their abilities we need to understand them.

It is our aim to understand the needs of our residents, communities and staff in order to be better placed to meet them and strengthen our values within with organisation.

Sound equality and diversity practices are an indicator of a modern, forward thinking organisation that makes its work relevant to all those who need it.

2 Policy Statement

As a landlord and employer, we will help ensure fair treatment for all members of the community, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity. We recognise that because some groups or people experience prejudice and discrimination, in order to make opportunities available for all, we will strive to ensure that no-one receives less favorable treatment or is disadvantaged by any conditions, requirements, provisions in criteria, procedures or practices that cannot be justified, or victimised for taking action against discrimination or harassment.

SBHA Aim to:

- Provide an environment where people feel included and are able to make choices
- Provide services and homes that are accessible and respond to individual needs
- Address and tackle discrimination experienced by individuals and groups
- Promote the benefits of diverse communities
- Have a positive impact and influence locally, by setting an example for others to follow
- Create environments where everyone's contribution is respected and valued
- Ensure that at work employees have the opportunity to grow and develop
- Consideration is given to Equality and Diversity in our investment decisions.

3 Impact Assessment(s)

SBHA undertake Equality Impact Assessments on their policies. This gives due consideration to the association's risk analysis and enables the organization to mitigate potential risks, at the same time providing assurance for people.

Implications:

Equality and Diversity

In delivering projects for tenants staff consider the implications for tenants who have English as a second language by avoiding local colloquialisms without explanation, and providing interpreting service where needed.

Example: SBHA ensure that all tenants have equal access to information and services regardless of age

Example: same sex partners receive the same rights and conditions and entitlements to SBHA services, staff in same sex relationships are entitled to parental leave and flexible working

Example: where refreshments are provided at meetings catering takes into consideration dietary needs of people.

Financial/VFM –SBHA will ensure that any financial impact of the policy changes, are identified and documented along with areas that create Value for Money.

Privacy/Data Protection –this policy is linked to the collection/use of personal data from staff/customers including data processing. SBHA are familiar with The Information Commissioner Office and requirements to comply with data protection obligations. SBHA will apply the most effective ways to meet the code of practice in order to meet individual expectations of private through application of Privacy Impact Assessments (P.I.A's).

Health & Safety

SBHA will pay high regard to the effect of the policy and practice on the protected characteristics groups of staff and customers for example;

People with a disability

Hearing Impairment

Mobility Impairment

Long Term health condition (such as cancer)

Mental health impairment (such as depression)

Learning disability

Dyslexia or dyspraxia

Unseen disability such as diabetes

Example: A member of staff with diabetes is allowed regular breaks for food and drink.

SBHA will document and evidence impact assessments and measures undertaken to address impact in summary reports for the Board. Where negative impact is found SBHA will consider how to amend the policy or practice.

4 Policy Review

This policy will be subject to review in September 2021. This policy will remain in effect until the review is undertaken. SBHA regularly review its policies and practice to ensure they are kept up to date and meet the requirements of current legislation. Where changes to legislation fall outside the agreed review period, the policy lead will plan for a review at the earliest opportunity.

Specific procedures will not be included in policies and will be agreed by the Management Team.

5 Reference Material

The Localism Act 2011

The Equality Act 2010

European Convention on Human Rights

RNIB guidance for people with visual impairments 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

6 Policy Contents

6.1. SBHA Aim to:

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6.2. What SBHA mean by Equality and Diversity

- Recognizing differences
- Celebrating diversity
- Offering choice
- Adjusting services to meet peoples' needs
- Respecting that everyone is individual

6.3. Who is effected?

There are many people, individuals and groups that face social disadvantage and discrimination for example:

- Black and Minority ethnic (BME) communities
- People with a specific religion or belief
- Disabled people

- Older people and younger people
- Households headed by women
- People of different genders and those who identify as transgender
- Gay men, bi sexual people and lesbians
- Homeless people
- Pregnant women and those on maternity leave

This list is not exhaustive but helps to raise awareness about the issues

6.4. Scope

This policy applies to everyone it services and to everyone who works for SBHA. Diversity encompasses a multitude of areas such as gender, race, disability, physical ability, mental capacity, education, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, values, ages, cultures (the list is not exhaustive).

Embracing diversity means acknowledging, understanding and appreciating the differences between individuals and developing a workplace that enhances their value. By being flexible in our approach it is then possible to achieve a rewarding environment.

Valuing Diversity is about seeing everyone as individual for example valuing the abilities and skills they can bring to the organisation. Equality is about emphasizing inclusiveness, openness and fairness offering a positive outlook on the many differences. It is usually prompted by external factors such as legislation and codes of practice.

This Policy covers all aspects of the work of SBHA including the following;

Service Delivery

Allocations & Lettings

Access to Information

Dealing with incidents and complaints

Tenant participation

Tenant satisfaction

Procurement]

Governance

Staff and Employment

The above list is non-exhaustive

6.5. Work life Balance

SBHA recognise that everyone has their own unique needs which require a flexible response. SBHA is committed to developing skills and providing tools, resources and a supportive environment for employees.

Our employees work with their managers to make choices to help them balance their work and personal life whilst also meeting the needs of the organisation and our customers.

Equality and Diversity Strategy

- To better service our customers and continue our success, we must attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce
- Job applicants expect employers to have a positive track record on Equality and diversity
- Our vision is to be recognised as a leader in diversity best practice and make a positive difference to the communities in which we work
- It is our aim to try to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to take positive action to provide equal opportunities for all in the service we provide and as an employer.
- We will challenge all forms of discrimination

6.6. Responsibility for Policy implementation

It is the responsibility of;

The Board working with the Director and Management Team for ensuring that both statutory and regulatory obligations are met. Also that all staff receive the appropriate guidance and training to develop their awareness and responsibilities to fulfil SBHA's obligations.

All employees, and in particular Line Managers etc., have responsibility to ensure the continuing success of the implementation of this policy by:-

- Refraining from harassment and discrimination
- Bringing to the attention of Management any suspected practices in breach of this policy
- Ensuring that the provision of employment and service delivery is carried out in a non-discriminatory manner
- Working together to promote a harmonious working environment and eliminating discrimination and harassment.

6.7. Breach of this Policy

Breach of SBHA's policy on Equality and Diversity will be taken seriously and the appropriate response taken, whether this is one of its employees, its tenants or other service users and providers.

6.8. Values

SBHA believe that a positive attitude to diversity can help to build more harmonious and cohesive communities through a provision of services sensitive to diverse needs.

We believe that diversity and inclusion stimulates creativity, innovation and success.

By recognising and valuing diversity and equality, SBHA working environment can enhance individuals' productivity.

SBHA recognise and understand the history of discrimination in Britain and the areas in which they operate and the many groups that are stereotyped to create generalised and negative perceptions in society, for example, ethnic origin, gender, race, sexuality, disability, age, religion, and refugee status. SBHA are committed to ensure that their business and communications are free from discrimination that might be based on such stereotyping.

Challenging disadvantage and discrimination is at the core of the work undertaken by SBHA. SBHA provide housing and support for people who have a greater than average need according to established criteria.

6.9. We will show our commitment by:

- Participating in inclusive and diverse events and activities that fit with the aims of the organisation
- Actively engaging with diverse communities
- Continuous training and development of our management and staff
- Recruiting a diverse workforce
- Positively promoting images of diversity in our publications and premises
- Encouraging and enabling our partners to implement diversity practices
- Encouraging and enabling our residents groups to implement diversity practices
- Developing policies and services which are sensitive to ethnicity, culture, Gender and disability
- Developing policies and services which are sensitive to ethnicity, culture, Gender and disability
- Complying with relevant legislations such as The Equality Act 2010
- Actively challenging discrimination committed by staff, tenants or partners by placing diversity at the heart of our organisation we create a culture that encourages every member of staff to think about equality and diversity in everything they do.

6.10 LEGISLATION

SBHA are accountable to The Regulator and are therefore required to recognise the full range of needs, values, and diversity of the neighbourhoods we serve. SBHA acknowledge and adhere to the recommendations set out by the National Housing Federation who have provided an Equality and Diversity Framework as a source of guidance to bring together legislative guidance and regulatory requirements in all equality areas to ensure equality issues are centre to the organisations strategic thinking and action including reporting arrangements. ;

The Equality Act 2010 provides the framework which sets out the nine 'protected characteristics' which the legislation aims to protect as follows:

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Race, Religion or belief, Sex (man or a woman) Sexual orientation.

6.11 MEETING HOUSING NEED

We will liaise with statutory agencies to share their assessment of the housing needs of local communities, especially those groups facing discrimination so that these are recognised and prioritised.

We will regularly review how we can contribute to meeting these needs

by using our existing stock or developing new housing.

We will consider working in partnership with specialist agencies where we feel they are better equipped than ourselves to meet the needs.

In developing new homes, we will ensure that the design of homes meets the cultural and other (security) needs of the households (where these are known) we are going to be rehousing.

In developing new homes, we will ensure that we follow guidance for people with disabilities e.g. RNIB guidance for people with visual impairments, that all ground floor accommodation is accessible to people in wheelchairs, and is developed to lifetime home standards

6.12 ACCESS TO HOUSING

We will promote fair access to housing by following our Allocations Policy at SBHA. The Localism Act 2011 gives local authorities and housing associations greater flexibility to make best use of their housing to meet the diverse and changing needs of their communities.

Monitoring the allocation of our homes, including the quality of accommodation to ensure that discrimination does not occur.

Ensuring that our priority system for assessing the re-housing needs of our own residents reflects equality principles.

6.13 SUPPORT

We will ensure that we consult all residents effectively and individually through surveys and through mechanisms such as resident' meetings to ensure that the housing service meets their needs.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires housing providers to give "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations where they exercise a public function.

We will ensure that tenant involvement and participation activities promote an active involvement of all groups of residents and including tenant participatory groups and we will challenge resident's discriminatory behaviours.

We will ensure that our complaints procedure is accessible to all and response to complaints will be in an accessible format.

We will not tolerate harassment of residents and will take the strongest possible action against perpetrators. We will be proactive in co-operating with other agencies and taking a lead where appropriate in dealing with all forms of harassment.

We will provide appropriate means of communication such as the provision of an interpreting service and key information in various formats as required.

We will try to ensure that the housing service responds sensitively to the needs of vulnerable residents. Where financially possible, additional resources will be provided in response to the needs of vulnerable residents (e.g. reasonable adjustments to the home)

We will provide support for older tenants appropriate to their social, cultural and religious needs either directly or in partnership with other agencies. Such as checking and visiting during cold weather periods, signposting older tenants to external support, advice, and health services.

We will maintain records on the communication needs of residents in line with the Accessible Information Standard.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>

European Convention on Human Rights, which gives people protection for a range of human rights, several of which are relevant to housing providers. Through our community engagement work we are able to foster good relations and encourage cohesion between communities.

SBHA believe that collecting vital statistical information relating to our customers is of utmost importance as this enables us to identify who our customers are and what service needs might exist as a result. Information is gathered at sign ups and stored on our software system. Staff at SBHA will contact our customers from time to time to ensure our information is up to date, but also rely on customers informing us of any changes to their information. The information we have is based on what our customers have chosen to tell us. Customers are at the heart of our business, we strive to provide customer focused services. This information enables us to understand how we may need to adjust our services to meet the requirements of our customers.

6.14 PUBLICATIONS SUPPORTING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

We aim to ensure that people are not treated less favorably than others because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, or any other reason.

The following policies and strategies specifically support our diversity aims:

- Business Plan
- Communications Strategy
- Equality and Diversity Strategy
- Anti- Harassment Policies
- Housing Management policies such as Allocations & Lettings, ASB, Harassment, Domestic Violence
- Employment policies including, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Appraisal, Grievance and Disciplinary policies,
- Tenant engagement strategy

Information, promotion and performance in relation to Equality and Diversity issues will be provided to employees, customers and the Board in a range of ways:

SBHA Website, customer newsletters, staff briefings, local events, Annual report and other relevant publications.

7.0 EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

SBHA will actively seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all current and potential employees.

We will conduct and monitor our recruitment in an open and accountable way and according to equal opportunities practices, and will regularly review the results of the monitoring to ensure fairness is evident at all stages.

We will seek to make full use of positive action provisions permissible within legislation in the recruitment of Board members and employees.

We will strive to prevent harassment of staff by other staff or residents and if and when it occurs take swift action to stop it.

We will seek to ensure that within our training efforts to meet the business needs of the organisation will be regularly reviewed to ensure the distribution of training opportunities are fair and equal.

We will ensure that selection for employment, career development opportunities, access to benefits, facilities and services are fair and equitable and based solely on merit.

We will train staff to ensure everyone has a basic awareness of equalities and diversity issues, as well as training to meet the specific needs of their post.

We will only use contractors and agents who have an equality and diversity policy, which is consistent with our aims.

We will only use contractors in occupied dwelling who are prepared to sign up to our 'Customer Care' standards and will not give them any more work if there is a substantial and unresolved breach of the guidelines.

We will ensure that our selection of consultants and contractors is fair and non-discriminatory.

8.0 Steve Biko Housing Association Board

SBHA will ensure that our Board is fully representative of the local community by having an open and accountable recruitment process and by the use of positive action to recruit members from Black and minority Ethnic Backgrounds.

Board members will be regularly briefed on equalities issues and will receive regular monitoring reports on key areas of activity, both on service delivery and employment.

All staff have responsibility for ensuring that this policy is put into practice. We expect a personal commitment from all employees in making it effective, and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow. Additional and specific responsibilities apply to those who manage staff and to those who are involved in recruitment, training and development.

All members of staff have a contractual responsibility to:

- Ensure that they understand the values and benefits of equality and diversity
- Attend mandatory training
- Familiarise themselves with this policy, follow it, and ensure that any staff or volunteers for whom they are responsible do also.
- Draw to the attention of their line manager any instances of apparent discrimination or harassment, or any perceived problem in relation to employment or to the provision of services.

9.0 Communication

A copy of this policy will be given to all job applicants and new residents, and will be available on Steve Biko Housing Association's website. The policy will also be available to staff. The Policy will also be included with tender information and contracts for work undertaken for us by external organisations and individuals. Training in the importance and use of this policy will be part of an individual's induction to the organisation and regular refreshers will be available to all staff

10. Governance of this policy

<p>Equality and Diversity</p>	<p>Equality impact assessments (EIA's), are applied to our policies and procedures to ascertain effectiveness of policies in practice and impact on the various constituents served by respective policies, employees, tenants, and potential customers of the organization</p> <p>Negative impacts found in EIA's will be considered by Management Team and staff in order to make the required amendments to policy or practice.</p> <p>An Equality and Diversity Action Plan is to be developed by SBHA Management Team and actions included in SBHA service areas and staff work programmes.</p>
<p>Customer and staff Involvement and Consultation</p>	<p>Revised Policies will be available on the Website for SBHA Tenants All Staff are consulted on updated policies at Staff Team Briefings</p>
<p>Monitoring and Review</p>	<p>KPI are included in Staff work programmes these are monitored through regular work reviews and joint team meetings.</p> <p>This strategy provides the framework for our commitment to promoting equality and diversity and our aims. We will realise our aims through raising awareness and understanding, communicating our intentions, taking actions and monitoring progress.</p>

	<p>Designated staff will meet on a regular basis to review the policy and practice associated with the policy requirements, conditions, provisions, criteria and practices in monitoring and revising. If they are found to actually or potentially discriminate against any particular groups, actions will be proposed and agreed to resolve issues.</p> <p>We will use information and analyse data to understand the priority areas that need to be addressed, and to shape service delivery, this will include information on local demographics, our customers, customer involvement activities, customer satisfaction, complaints, anti-social behaviour, Lettings, Board and workforce profile, recruitment and selection, learning and development, Grievance and Disciplinary.</p>
Responsibility	<p>The Board have corporate responsibility for ensuring that this policy underpins all aspects of SBHA's work. Reports to Board will include an update on relevant equality and diversity issues, including performance information. The Director has responsibility for developing the culture within the organisation which this policy can operate effectively and for ensuring that it is implemented. The Director and Managers are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented in their particular area(s) of responsibility. The Director and Management Team are responsible for the operation, monitoring and review of this policy in relation to employment and training.</p>