

Aims

Northwards Housing aims to continue to create the area of North Manchester of national and international significance where people chose to live and in which companies want to invest; an area here all citizens benefit from regeneration and have equal access to the wealth, employment and other opportunities which this brings.

Northwards Housing recognises that improving equality is a fundamental aspect of achieving this aim. Northwards Housing recognises that equality will lead to:

- Culturally sensitive services that are responsive to the needs of the communities
- a workforce that is representative of the community
- a commitment to participation by all

The Comprehensive Equality Policy sets out our overall commitment to equality. It incorporates both our Equal Opportunities Policy in Service Provision policy and our Equal Opportunities in Employment policy, and sets out further commitments to processes, which will ensure that high quality services are available to everyone in Manchester. The Northwards Housing Equality & Diversity Action Plan, which accompanies this Comprehensive Equality Policy, sets out the specific actions that will be taken to achieve these aims. The Equality & Diversity action plan is intended to be a working document, and will be updated quarterly to reflect the work undertaken, and identify new work needed to further Northwards Housing aims. We will work in partnership with Manchester City Council to achieve the Equality Standard levels 1 to 5.

Legal obligations

Northwards Housing has a duty to promote equality of opportunities under the following legislation:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulation 1983
- Statutory Maternity Pay (General) Regulations 1986 and the various amendments to the Regulations
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Pensions Act 1995
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Sex Discrimination Act (Amendment) 1999
- Employment Act 2002 (Flexible working regulations)
- Race Relations (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

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Future Obligations

- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Equality Bill – expectations to come into effect 2007

Northwards Housing will ensure that we meet our legal obligations under these pieces of legislation, and in some areas will go further than the legislation demands in order to promote equality. These commitments are set out in Northwards Housing Equal Opportunities Policy in Service Provision policy and Northwards Housing Equal Opportunities in Employment policy.

Northwards Housing as a service provider

Statement of intent

The full Northwards Housing Equal Opportunities Policy in Service Provision policy can be found at www.northwardshousing.co.uk/bestvalue/equality/policy. Below is a summary of the main points of this policy, and the specific commitments that Northwards Housing makes as a service provider.

Northwards Housing is committed to promoting equality of access and efficient use of its services and facilities.

Northwards Housing will treat all people equally whether they are:

- Seeking or using Northwards Housing services or applying for funds
- Contracting to supply or purchase goods or services to or from Northwards Housing

Northwards Housing is committed to eliminating both direct and indirect discrimination. Within the resources available to it, Northwards Housing will provide appropriate, sensitive and accessible services. It will not discriminate on the grounds of colour, disability, ethnic origin, gender, religion, sexuality, or on any other unjustifiable grounds.

Northwards Housing will ensure that, where it funds services or projects in partnership with outside bodies, this policy will be used to promote equal opportunities in services which those bodies provide through partnership agreements.

It is the direct responsibility of the Board and Executive Management Team to manage and plan Northwards Housing's services in order to realise this policy. Every employee of the Northwards Housing has a responsibility to uphold and promote this policy.

Specific commitments

To help ensure that the Northwards Housing provides services to everyone fairly, the Northwards Housing makes the following commitments:

1. Northwards Housing services will be planned and delivered with the conscious intention of tackling discrimination and disadvantage. Northwards Housing will identify groups within the community whose needs/requirements are less well met than those of other groups
2. Northwards Housing will collect data to enable it to develop profiles for North Manchester's geographical communities and communities of interest. The profiles will include both demographic data about social inclusion issues (housing, employment, health), and perceptual data, as appropriate.

3. Northwards Housing will carry out two Impact Assessments on services, looking at each equality area. Impact Assessments will begin with gathering information about who uses the services Northwards Housing provides, and how this compares to the local community profiles for North Manchester residents.
4. Northwards Housing will develop Equality & Diversity Action Plan covering all equality areas. Consultation will be carried out with the groups and/or communities affected by the Action Plan to determine areas of priority, and to set performance indicators and/or targets where appropriate. The Action Plan will specify exactly what work is being undertaken, and what targets that work is intended to achieve. As well as being internally assessed, the Action Plan will be open to scrutiny by appropriate external bodies or groups (link to Equality Action Plan).

The Equality & Diversity Action Plan will also specify the resources required to carry out work to improve equality in their Department.

5. Northwards Housing recognises the need to have access to a very wide range of opinions and views in carrying out its decision-making and planning processes. There is also the need for on-going consultation with all sections of the communities, particularly with the various disadvantaged groups given the potential to often exclude them from consultation.

Northwards Housing will provide opportunities for the disadvantaged communities to express their opinions about Northwards Housing, the services it offers and how it provides them.

Northwards Housing will review its arrangements for consultation regularly to ensure that the different needs and requirements of different disadvantaged groups are properly represented in its consultation processes.

Northwards Housing will assist community groups, and especially those groups from disadvantaged sections of the community, to develop their knowledge of Northwards Housing procedures and their ability to influence the decisions of Northwards Housing through such consultation processes.

6. The Board Members of Northwards Housing are ultimately responsible for delivering equal opportunities in all its services. Board Members will provide overall direction and control of this policy.

Sub-Committees will assist the Board in the delivery of services. They therefore share responsibility for mainstreaming equalities issues in their work plans.

The Executive Management Team share responsibility for the implementation of the policy and for work plans adopted by the Sub Committees. Work plans for each service area will inform on how equalities objectives and responsibilities will be discharged. We will provide a template for all reports that go to Executive Management Team that includes Equality & Diversity.

Senior Managers are directly responsible for ensuring all their staff act in accordance with this policy and for providing staff with all necessary support and direction.

Each Northwards Housing employee will be responsible for their own behaviour being acceptable within the contents of Northwards Housing's equal opportunities

policy. All employees will be expected as part of their duties to actively address the inequalities involved and challenge others in their work thereby further enforcing Northwards Housing's equal opportunities policy.

Northwards Housing as an employer

Statement of intent

The full Northwards Housing Human Resources Equality Strategy can be found at www.northwardshousing/pmg/strategy/equality. Below is a summary of the main points of this strategy, and the specific commitments that Northwards Housing makes as an employer.

Northwards Housing is a significant employer in North Manchester. Northwards Housing fully recognises that its own employment practices are a major influence on the community at large, and intends that its equal opportunities policies should reach out into the community it serves. As such, Northwards Housing recognises its duties to treat all employees fairly, and to undertake specific work to ensure that direct, indirect and structural inequalities are not perpetrated within the company. As well as accepting its responsibilities under relevant legislation, Northwards Housing is committed to broad principles of social justice. It confirms that equal opportunity extends into all of the services it provides, as well as in its employment policies and practices. However, it particularly recognises that many people are discriminated against and disadvantaged in employment, and that passive policies will not reverse this discrimination and disadvantage. Human Resources will actively target under-represented groups and monitor all recruitment and selection methods to ensure we provide fair and equal processes. The Human Resource team will ensure staff development opportunities are provided to staff on an equal basis and will be monitored. Any reports of employee hate incidents will be actively dealt with in a sensitive, equal and fair manner. Therefore, Northwards Housing will actively promote programmes of positive action, with targets, in favour of oppressed, discriminated against and disadvantaged people to ensure equality of opportunity in employment.

The policy applies to potential, as well as actual, workers and relates to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, pay, terms and conditions of service, promotion, training, transfer, grievance and disciplinary procedures, and to the arrangements made for working in the company. The policy will be made known to all workers and applicants for jobs.

All sections of the population will have equal access to jobs offered by the Northwards Housing and no applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment than others because of her or his colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, disability, gender, marital status, sexuality, trade union activity or responsibility for dependants.

In order to combat indirect discrimination, no conditions or requirements will be applied to any Northwards Housing job which would have a disproportionately adverse effect on disabled people, sex, lesbians or gay men, or a particular racial group. The only requirements or conditions which will be applied will be those which are strictly justifiable and endorsed by Northwards Housing.

Specific commitments

To help ensure that all employees are treated fairly, Northwards Housing makes the following commitments:

1. Northwards Housing will actively monitor the make-up of its workforce, aiming to have a workforce which reflects the make-up of the population we serve.

Northwards Housing will set targets and will collect data to monitor progress towards meeting equality targets for women, black and disabled employees.

2. The effectiveness of the policy can only be judged by using information about how it is operating. Northwards Housing will use a monitoring system to collect data and allow assessment to be made by the Board & Executive Management Team of Northwards Housing, the Trade Unions, and the groups covered by the policy on the progress of developing a truly effective equal opportunity policy for employment in North Manchester. The aim of the monitoring system is to establish the extent to which ethnic minorities, women and disabled people are represented in:

- a. occupational and salary/wage groupings, and
- b. training and management development activities.

Northwards Housing will develop ways of monitoring the effectiveness of its policies towards lesbians, bisexual people and gay men.

The monitoring system depends upon information being available. Therefore, all employees and job applicants will be asked to indicate their ethnic origin and whether they are disabled on a self-classification basis and sexual orientation. The reasons for monitoring will be made clear to all job applicants. In addition, the Northwards Housing has a legal duty to publish an annual equality action plan for the company and to monitor progress. All Northwards Housing employees asked to indicate equality monitoring information, to ensure effective monitoring of progress towards equality of opportunity.

Northwards Housing is required by law to give certain information about its employees to government departments and agencies principally in relation to tax and national insurance matters. As well as gender and address the main items of information concerning the type and dates of employment; make-up of earnings and expenses such as allowances for clothing and equipment and use of cars; and reasons for leaving employment.

In addition, all hate crime inclusive of racist incidents will be monitored by Northwards Housing and reported to the Board, relevant Sub-committee and Police in accordance with guidelines set out in the MacPherson Inquiry.

However, Northwards Housing gives an absolute assurance that no information obtained as part of the monitoring of equal opportunity in employment by which an individual could be identified will be given to any government department or agency or organisation outside Northwards Housing (without their prior consent).

At regular intervals, comparisons will be made to measure the rate of change towards achieving full equal opportunity in employment. Northwards Housing expects improvements to be made and targets met in the employment position of black people, women, disabled people and consider setting targets for lesbians and gay men and, and Northwards Housing will consult with Trade Unions and the groups covered by the policy to determine measurable and attainable equality targets, which will be regularly reviewed, in all areas of under-representation.

3. The selection process is of crucial importance to this policy, and every stage of the process must be carried out by people who fully understand and are committed to the principles of the policy. Northwards Housing will ensure that any employee or Board Member involved in any stage of the recruitment process is thoroughly briefed and trained in the provisions of this policy. It will determine target dates, by which time untrained persons, or those displaying negative

attitudes towards the policy, will not be permitted to make decisions about the recruitment, promotion, or transfer of staff.

4. Job requirements will be reviewed to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any of the groups covered by the policy. The detailed policies promoting equality of opportunity in the recruitment and selection.
5. Northwards Housing will provide resources for:
 - a. training for all employees, giving priority to key supervisory and management decision makers, and for all those dealing directly with the public, to promote equal opportunities and combat all forms of discrimination, and
 - b. positive action programmes to promote training for those disadvantaged groups to assist them to enter areas of employment where they are under-represented,
 - c. assistance with re-entry to employment for employees who have had to take a career break,
 - d. assisting employees in identifying plans for their own training and development needs. Encouragement will be given to identifying career paths which fall outside traditional stereotyped roles, and,
 - e. Partnerships with contractors and other organisations with whom it works and
 - f. assisting staff with childcare, and
 - g. creating a work life balance policy.

Northwards Housing as Community Leader

Statement of intent

Northwards Housing recognises that it has a duty to act as a Community Leader. This involves promoting initiatives and issues which are in the interests of the City. Northwards Housing is committed to supporting the Council by putting equality of opportunity at the heart of everything it does, and intends to promote this aim. To do this Northwards Housing will form active relationships with others in the private, voluntary and other parts of the public sectors, and will share good practice and learning with these partners.

The commitments below set out some of the ways in which Northwards Housing will form such active relationships. They also set out some of the good practice examples that Northwards Housing is committed to developing. As work progresses on these issues, further information will be added to the Equality & Diversity Action Plan.

Commitments

As well as making specific commitments as a service provider and an employer, Northwards Housing makes the following commitments as a Community Leader:

1. Northwards Housing will maintain clear equality objectives. Our current equality objectives are to:
 - Recognise that discrimination and disadvantage exist, and understand how this affects Northwards Housing service users and employees
 - Redress these imbalances to ensure equal access to both services and employment
 - By doing this, create North Manchester of national and international significance where people choose to live and in which companies want to invest; an area where all citizens benefit from regeneration and have equal access to the wealth, employment and other opportunities which this brings
 - Promote and publicise the work of Northwards Housing organisation by using private, voluntary and other parts of the public sector, publications and other methods.

2. Northwards Housing will regularly and thoroughly measure progress towards equality. Progress will be measured in a number of different ways. These will include:

- Monitoring of service usage where appropriate (explained in detail above)
- Monitoring of employees in appropriate ways (explained in detail above)
- Auditing and updating of the Equality & Diversity Action plan
- Monitoring publication material and promotion of vacancies

As an integral part of the monitoring process equality targets will be revised and updated.