

Northwards Housing Comprehensive Equality & Diversity Policy

March 2006

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

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 here (link to <http://www.Northwards Housinghousing.co.uk/bestvalue/equality/policy.htm>). 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.

