 <p><b>Northwards Housing</b> North Manchester's Council Homes</p>		<b>Report to:</b> Northwards Housing Board 9 <sup>th</sup> September 2008		<b>Item No:</b> <h1>15a</h1>	
<b>Title:</b>		Northwards Housing Single Equality Scheme			
<b>Date:</b>		28 <sup>th</sup> August 2008			
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<b>Confidential:</b>					
<b>For:</b> (Please tick action required)		<b>NOTING</b>		<b>DISCUSSION</b>	
				<b>APPROVAL</b> ✓	
<b>PURPOSE OF REPORT</b>					
To ask the Board to approve Northwards Housing's Single Equality Scheme for 2008-2011.					
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>					
It is recommended that Board note the content, format and actions planned within the Scheme, and approve the Scheme for publication.					
<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>					
<b>Equality &amp; Diversity:</b>		The Single Equality Scheme plays an important role in Northwards strategic approach to equality. The Scheme outlines the organisation's aims and objectives in this area over the next three years and details actions required to achieve them.			
<b>Financial:</b>		Publishing costs			
<b>Staffing:</b>		None directly			
<b>Decency Target:</b>		None directly			
<b>Governance:</b>		Good governance requires a commitment to Equality and Diversity and the implementation of measures to ensure we are addressing the needs of all our customers and communities.			
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>		Northwards have a legal obligation under the Race, Disability and Gender Equality Duties to produce and publish an equality scheme and action plan; Northwards are going one step further and addressing the needs of all equality groups.			

**Equality & Diversity Implications (Please tick where relevant):**

BME	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Parents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Violence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Disability



Alcohol/Drug Mis-users



**Consultation/Consideration:**

	<b>Yes, No or N/A:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Sub-Committee:</b>	Yes	HR & Equality	August 08
<b>Area Panel:</b>	Yes	Fourways, Riverways and Wilton	April 08
<b>Task Groups:</b>	Yes	BME Forum, Disability Forum	June 08
<b>Ward Councillors:</b>			

**Northwards Housing Single Equality Scheme 2008-2011**

**1.0 Background**

1.1 Under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006 Northwards Housing has the following statutory duties:

Race Equality Duty

The general duty of an organisation is:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To promote equality of opportunity
- To promote good relations between persons of different racial groups

There are also a series of specific duties which included the publication of a Race Equality Scheme and an Action Plan to outline how these objectives would be met.

Disability Equality Duty

The general duty of an organisation is:

- To promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- To eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA
- To eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability
- To promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- To encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- To take steps to meet disabled persons' needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment

Again the specific duties require that an organisation produces a Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Involvement of disabled persons throughout this process is a principle aspect of this duty.

Gender Equality Duty

The general duty of an organisation is:

- To eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

An organisation must again produce a Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

- 1.2 Northwards have decided that our commitments should extend beyond the duty to promote Race, Disability and Gender Equality. We believe that it is only by incorporating the needs of all individuals and groups living and working in our area that we can truly provide a service that is both fair and equal.

As a result, we have decided to produce a Single Equality Scheme. It will provide a strategic overview as to how we intend to meet our statutory duties under the Acts, as well as addressing the needs of other equality groups – age, religion/belief and sexual orientation.

## **2.0 Consultation**

- 2.1 A key aspect of any equality scheme is the involvement and participation of under-represented groups. Over the last 6-8 months Northwards have been consulting with a wide range of residents, employees and community organisations to identify specific needs and obtain recommendations for future action.

- 2.2 Northwards have consulted, amongst others:

- Disability Forum
- BME Forum
- NH Retirement Housing Forum
- HR & Equality Sub-Committee
- NH Area Panels
- Employee Equality & Diversity Working Group
- Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M)
- Dashmesh Sikh Temple
- Jamia Khizra Mosque
- Disabled Living
- Manchester Deaf Centre
- City Centre Project
- Lesbian and Gay Foundation

## **3.0 Single Equality Scheme 2008-2011**

- 3.1 The proposed Single Equality Scheme for approval is available on the governance website.

- 3.2 Northwards intend to have the Scheme professionally designed and published in a glossy format once the content has been approved by the Board.

## **4.0 Summary of the Scheme**

- 4.1 The proposed Single Equality Scheme for 2008-2011 will take the following format:

- Foreword by the Chief Executive

- Introduction
- Overview of the Single Equality Scheme
- Our Commitment
- Achievements So Far
- Involvement Statement
- The Six Equality Strands – An in depth look into issues arising in each area and the objectives set by Northwards for the next three years
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Monitoring and Review
- 3 Year Action Plan

4.2 As previously stated, key objectives for all areas of equality have been set in accordance with recommendations made through the consultation process. Objectives are also set in line with legal obligations and equality best practice recommendations.

4.3 Key objectives within the Single Equality Scheme for the next three years include:

- New recruitment initiatives and work place programmes to support under-represented groups to access training and employment in Northwards.
- Ensure the use of Customer Profiling Data to improve performance and service delivery.
- Carry out more Equality Impact Assessments on new and existing policies to further embed equality.
- Further Equality & Diversity training for the Board and employees to build capacity and promote equality.
- Establish greater links with minority ethnic residents and encourage them to become more involved with Northwards.
- Ensure all new projects and initiatives take into account the impact on Community Cohesion with regard to the needs of all equality groups.
- Work with contractors to streamline approach to equality and increase partnership working on employment and equality training initiatives.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

5.1 It is recommended that the Board note the content, format and actions planned with the Scheme, and approve the Scheme for publication.

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## Foreword

Northwards Housing is much more than a social housing landlord, we are a community. A large community that includes staff, tenants and all of those we work with. Northwards is also a diverse community, meaning that there is a wonderful variety of cultural and personal differences amongst us.

For this reason, equality and diversity is a central and essential part of Northwards Housing's objectives and is part of everything that we do. So what does this mean? "Equality" means to treat people fairly and equally "Diversity" is to value the differences of all of those individuals and groups that help make up the community.

At Northwards we understand and embrace these differences. This booklet brings together the work we have done with our residents and partners, toward encouraging acceptance, raising awareness and increasing understanding within our community. It also outlines our legal obligations and duties that help to increase and promote equality of opportunity and help to tackle discrimination and harassment.

Northwards Housing wishes to go beyond these legal obligations and work with all of those involved to do so. Together, we will help develop and improve ways of encouraging understanding and acceptance towards all of the individuals that make north Manchester such a unique and diverse place to live.

*Robin Lawler*  
Chief Executive, Northwards Housing

## **Introduction**

Northwards Housing is an 'Arms Length Management Organisation' (ALMO) that took over management of over 12,900 Council homes in North Manchester in December 2005.

We recognise that people experience discrimination, harassment and victimisation on a daily basis as a result of their race, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We acknowledge the impact this may have on a person's ability to access support, training and employment in their local area and recognise the barriers this can create for an individual to become a valued member of their community.

Northwards believes it is only through valuing difference and respecting the diverse needs of all individuals that we can truly achieve cohesive, inclusive and successful communities.

To support us in achieving this, Northwards has decided to set out our approach to diversity by way of our Single Equality Scheme. The scheme describes Northwards' commitment to equality and outlines the actions we will be taking to improve our services as an employer, service provider and community representative in the next three years. The Single Equality Scheme is supported by a three year action plan.

### ***Our Equality Scheme***

This is Northwards Housing's first Single Equality Scheme. The Scheme outlines how we intend to meet the general and specific requirements under the Race Equality Duty, the Disability Equality Duty and the Gender Equality Duty. It also states our commitment to promote equality to all people who access our services, join our workforce and live in our communities.

As a leading employer in north Manchester we recognise the importance of reflecting the area we serve in our workforce and Board. In such a diverse and culturally vibrant community it is vital that we too share these qualities and provide a service that is tailored to individual needs. We are keen to employ a workforce that reflects the skilled workers already present in the area, as well as playing a key role in supporting the training and development of local people.

Northwards Housing's core values and objectives play a key role in shaping our commitments and guide the development of this scheme:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Core Values</b></p>
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<p><b><i>Top class customer service</i></b></p>
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We will provide an excellent and accessible level of service to all of our customers.

***Local services***

We take pride in being based within North Manchester and delivering local services to our customers.

***Embracing equality and diverse communities***

We will treat everyone fairly and with respect, and we will embrace diverse communities and identities.

***Tenant focused***

Tenants are at the heart of everything we do. We will involve tenants in our decision making, consult and listen to them to develop and improve services.

***Committed to our employees***

We will value and support our employees to develop and retain a highly skilled and motivated staff team.

***Accountable***

We will be open with and accountable to tenants, employees, the Council and partners in of our dealings.

**Objectives**

***Warm, Safe and Affordable Homes***

To provide warm, safe and affordable homes for all our tenants through advice, support and a multi million pound investment programme which will create jobs for local people.

***Successful Communities***

To contribute to the regeneration of North Manchester, and work with partners to help develop successful communities.

***Quality Services***

To work with customers to develop and deliver excellent services that satisfy their needs and aim to meet their aspirations.

***Value for Money***

To provide sound financial management, and to ensure that we offer excellent value for money to our customers.

***Safer places to live***

To work with partners and local communities in helping to reduce crime, fear of crime, and anti-social behaviour.

***An Attractive Environment***

To help develop a safe, sustainable and attractive environment within North Manchester, which contributes to the pride and well-being of local communities.

***Promote Equality and Diversity***

To understand the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities of North Manchester, and to work with partners to address inequality and to meet the needs of vulnerable people.

Northwards Housing already has a positive track record in diversity and in May 2007 we achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Equality Standard is a tool to challenge institutional processes that can lead to discrimination as part of the culture, administration

and governance of an organisation. Northwards is now working towards Level 3 of the Standard and hopes to achieve this in September 2008.

It is Northwards' intention to go beyond our statutory and legal duties. We want to show that we embrace the true value of a diverse workforce; going the extra mile to ensure that our work environment is one where individuals can be themselves without fear of discrimination, victimisation or unfairness. We want to play a leading role in our neighbourhoods; to show that diversity brings with it economic prosperity, cultural richness and a sense of community pride.

## **Our Commitment**

In north Manchester, as across the whole of the UK, there are groups within our communities that experience discrimination, harassment, victimisation and various forms of inequality on a daily basis.

Northwards Housing is proud to serve such a diverse area, but is unwilling to accept such inequality as a part of every day life. We offer a commitment to all those who live in our communities, and who work for and with Northwards Housing, that we will use all means necessary to ensure that we embrace everyone in our community, and our workforce, on an equal basis. We promise to listen to the needs of all individuals and groups, and to respond accordingly.

Our Comprehensive Equality Policy outlines our commitment to ensuring a fair and equal service for all. However, we know much work still needs to be done to tackle the deep-rooted inequalities that have existed within our society for many years now.

Northwards Housing endeavours to become the leading player in our community when it comes to Equality & Diversity. We want to encourage and work with all our partners, particularly Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Police, as well as:

- Local community and voluntary organisations
- Trade Union officials
- Individual employees
- Members of the public

Working together we believe we can make north Manchester a better place to work and live by promoting change, embracing difference and most of all valuing diversity.

At the heart of a cohesive community lies a shared sense of belonging, pride and mutual understanding. We realise that it is only through open dialogue, sharing of best practice and involvement in its true sense that we can begin to create communities not just of tolerance, but of empathy, respect and shared understanding.

## **Overview of the Single Equality Scheme**

### **Legislative Context**

Under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006 Northwards Housing has the following statutory duties:

- Race Equality Duty
- Disability Equality Duty
- Gender Equality Duty

#### ***Race Equality Duty***

In 2001, the Race Relations Act was amended to give public authorities like Northwards a new statutory duty to promote race equality. The intention of the duty was to ensure that public authorities provide fair and accessible services, and improve equal opportunities in employment.

The general duty of an organisation is:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To promote equality of opportunity
- To promote good relations between persons of different racial groups

There are also a series of specific duties which included the publication of a Race Equality Scheme and an Action Plan to outline how these objectives would be achieved.

#### ***Disability Equality Duty***

In 2005 a similar duty was introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to help transform how the public sector works for disabled people. The duty aims to ensure that disability equality is built into the way public authorities carry out their functions.

The general duty of an organisation is:

- To promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- To eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the DDA
- To eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disability
- To promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- To encourage participation by disabled persons in public life
- To take steps to meet disabled persons' needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment

Again the specific duties require that an organisation produces a Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Involvement of disabled persons throughout this process is an essential requirement of this duty.

### **Social model of disability**

Northwards Housing has adopted the social model of disability and designs all its services to operate on this model. The social model was developed by disabled people and their organisations to challenge the traditional view (the medical model) that they are disabled by their physical, mental or sensory impairments.

Instead the social model states that people with impairments are disabled by barriers that exist in society. Therefore, if people with impairments are to be able to participate fully in mainstream society, the way society is organised must be changed. Barriers can include the physical environment, organisational procedures, discrimination, stereotypes, inaccessible information and inaccessible transport.

The social model makes the important distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. The key definitions are:

#### **Impairment:**

Particular individual limitations of the mind, body or senses.

#### **Disability:**

The exclusion experienced by people with impairments due to social and environmental barriers.

The social model provides the basis by which the Disability Equality Duty in Northwards will be successfully implemented. Public bodies can make a significant contribution towards removing disabling barriers that exist in society. This can be achieved by changing how our services are provided, how disabled people are employed in our organisation, and how Northwards Housing uses our influence in the wider community.

### ***Gender Equality Duty***

Thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the government recognised that discrimination was still taking place. As a result, the Equality Act 2006 brought with it a new duty to promote gender equality. This new duty means that, rather than relying on individuals to make complaints about sexual discrimination, there is a legal responsibility on public authorities to show that they are treating men and women fairly.

The general duty of an organisation is:

- To eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination

- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women

### **Other Equality Strands**

Northwards Housing welcomes the equality duties as a way to improve our services to employees, customers and the community. We see the duties as a means to evaluate the progress we have made so far and to highlight future improvements we can make to further promote equality.

Northwards has decided that our commitments should extend beyond the duty to promote Race, Disability and Gender Equality. We believe that it is only by including the needs of all individuals and groups living and working in our area that we can truly provide a service that is both fair and equal.

As a result, we have decided to produce this Single Equality Scheme. It provides a strategic overview of how we intend to meet our statutory duties under the Acts, as well as providing a clear approach to equality in all six areas of diversity:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race
- Religion/Belief
- Sexual Orientation

We have looked at all six areas individually for the purposes of this Scheme, but we also recognise that people or groups do not fit easily into one box and we acknowledge throughout the Scheme that many people face multiple levels of discrimination in their daily lives.

In recent years there has also been an influx of new diversity legislation, such as:

- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations and Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Equality Act 2006
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Housing Act 2004 Gypsies and Travellers
- Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Northwards' Equality Scheme will ensure that all our service delivery and employment policies, procedures and practices comply with these legislative requirements. Our commitment is not solely about meeting legal obligations; it is about valuing our customers and employees and recognising the positive benefits of a diverse workforce and community.

## **Strategic context**

Manchester City Council's Community Strategy is delivered through the Local Strategic Partnership (Manchester Partnership).

Northwards contributes to the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Partnership Forum (one of the seven thematic partnerships that operate below the Manchester Partnership) which leads on performance against outcomes. The partnership enables a focus for the work in developing and sustaining existing neighbourhoods in the city.

The Sustainable Community Strategy also supports the City's Strategic Regeneration Frameworks for each district with neighbourhood action coordinated through the City's Ward Co-ordination system.

The North Manchester Regeneration Framework sets out a vision for north Manchester:

"... to create a series of high quality sustainable communities, each providing a broad range of living facilities and services that meet the life demand of existing and new residents".

Northwards work closely with the North Manchester Regeneration Team, who are responsible for overseeing the Strategic Regeneration Framework in the north Manchester area, to help bring this vision to life. In particular, new initiatives to promote community cohesion and integration are being explored, including a pilot Community Cohesion Action Plan in the Harpurhey ward.

In 2005 the Manchester Partnership adopted the Manchester Community Engagement Strategy (MCES). As member of the partnership Northwards supports the strategy which sets out a definition of community engagement, why we do it and the aims and objectives we have for the development of inclusive community engagement across the city. Equality and diversity are central to inclusive community engagement.

## **Local Context**

North Manchester has a long history of welcoming people and is today one of the most diverse districts in one of the most diverse cities in the northwest. We have communities with a wide range of nationalities, ethnic groups, faiths, ages, abilities and persuasions.

According to the Census Survey (2001) around 12.4% of the north Manchester's population are from black and minority ethnic (BME) populations, the principal communities being those in the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas. The Census also highlighted that around 12% of 16-74 year olds living in north Manchester are long term sick or disabled.

Northwards recognise that the area has changed significantly since the time of the Census; taking account local demographical changes as well as a significant increase in economic migrants coming from Poland and other Eastern European countries following the enlargement of the EU in May 2004, and again in January 2007.

As a result Northwards carried out our own profiling exercise to gather up to date information on exactly who our customers are. The results are outlined in the table below:

**Diagrams/charts to be inserted by publications and design.**

Northwards is very proud to work with such a variety of people and is keen to improve our services to best meet the aspirations of the community we serve.

### **Involvement Statement**

Northwards Housing works with many key partners to ensure that the services we deliver are appropriate to all our customers, and that they are delivered fairly and with respect to the individuals we serve. We work closely with Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Police, the Primary Care Trust and the Manchester College (formerly Manchester College of Arts & Technology and the City College Manchester).

Working with stakeholders ensures that equality and diversity issues are addressed in an appropriate way and with consideration of differing needs. We have consulted with residents, leaseholders, disability organisations, faith groups, voluntary and community organisations and other housing associations to ensure that successful ways of promoting equality have been addressed in this Scheme.

Northwards has consulted, amongst others:

- The Disability Forum
- The Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Forum
- Northwards Housing Retirement Housing Forum
- Human Resources & Equality Sub-Committee
- Northwards Housing Area Panels
- Employee Equality & Diversity Working Group
- Faith Network for Manchester (FN4M)
- Dashmesh Sikh Temple
- Jamia Khizra Mosque
- Disabled Living
- Manchester Deaf Centre
- City Centre Project
- Lesbian and Gay Foundation

Consultation was carried out through a variety of mechanisms, including one to one interviews, employee surveys, focus groups and local events.

Northwards also used ad hoc opportunities, such as our International Food and Dance Festival in May 2008, to get feedback from residents not already involved in our service and ask them for their suggestions for improvements.

Through consultation we were able to ask employees, residents and community groups about the range of services we provide and give them the opportunity to feedback on how we have been doing. They were then able to offer their own suggestions on actions that they felt we should take over the next three years to improve services in all equality areas.

### **Our Achievements So Far**

Since December 2005, Northwards has taken massive strides to ensure that equality sits at the heart of everything we do.

### **Leadership and Governance**

Northwards Housing believes that the key to a successful organisation rests in leadership that is accountable, representative and fair. With a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to equal opportunities for all, our Board members and senior managers set the standards which the organisation will follow.

Northwards Housing's Comprehensive Equality Policy sets out our overall commitment to equality. It incorporates both our Equal Opportunities Policy in Service Provision and our Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy. Our Board members are ultimately responsible for the direction and control of this policy, assisted by our four sub-committees and our own Northwards' Equality & Diversity Officer. Members of the Board undertake annual Equality and Diversity awareness raising sessions to make sure they are familiar with any changes to equality practices or legislation.

Our Board Equality & Diversity Champion also plays a vital role in ensuring that equality objectives remain at the forefront of organisational developments, whilst Northwards' Chief Executive assumes the role of Employee Equality & Diversity Champion.

As employee Champion, the Chief Executive chairs Northwards Housing's Equality and Diversity Working Group. The group is made up of a cross section of employees from across the organisation that have an interest in diversity and who wish to play a role in promoting equality.

The group focuses on how we are performing and makes recommendations for improvement, consults on important issues (such as new policies and impact assessments) and provides a forum for real debate on current equality issues.

Northwards Housing produces a yearly Equality & Diversity Action Plan to set out the achievements we expect to make in the coming year. Every area of the organisation is covered by the plan and progress is monitored through the HR & Equality Sub-Committee, the Equality & Diversity Working Group and equality & diversity resident forums.

As part of our commitment to equality, all Northwards employees are expected to play a role as ambassadors of diversity, actively addressing any inequalities on a day to day basis and challenging others to do the same.

This general approach will ensure that the entire organisation recognises and places a value on diversity, championing equality and challenging discrimination wherever it may occur.

### **Employment and Training**

As a leading employer in north Manchester, Northwards recognises that we have a responsibility to ensure that our workforce reflects the community we serve and offers equality of opportunity in our recruitment policies and practices.

Northwards recognises that the only way we can truly support all our employees to reach their full potential is to have a robust understanding of each and every person's individual needs. We realise that we must first have a clear understanding of who our employees are.

Organisational Health Statistics are produced on a quarterly basis. These include a breakdown of the number of Women, BME and Disabled employees we have working for Northwards. The report also breaks these figures down by team and seniority so that Northwards has a clear picture of where people are working within the organisation, so we can monitor the career progression and development opportunities for under-represented employees.

Northwards is also introducing a new indicator that will monitor the number of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) employees working for the organisation. This will highlight the career development of LGB employees, enabling an analysis of any potential barriers faced by certain individuals and highlighting any unintended discrimination.

Northwards operates a zero tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and believes that being open and transparent will ensure that all individuals are given the support to reach their full potential.

Northwards is keen to ensure that all applicants are made aware of our equal opportunities policies and are encouraged by our commitment to fairness and equality. This applies equally to potential employees, and to existing employees who are keen to progress within the organisation.

We recognise that where we advertise, and how we advertise, can have a bearing on the people we attract to work at Northwards. As a result,

Northwards tries to be innovative in our recruitment techniques. For example, we have subscribed to the Ethnic Britain web directory to further our reputation as positive employers of minority ethnic members of the community. Therefore we not only ensure that we advertise in local press, but also in specialist publications that will reach some of the under-represented members of our work force.

Northwards hold stalls at the annual Disability Jobs Fair, LGBT Jobs Fair and BME Jobs Fair. We also attended local job fairs in the north Manchester area to encourage applications from people in our own community.

When a new employee joins Northwards Housing, we take all steps necessary to ensure they feel welcomed and supported in their new working environment.

As part of Northwards' induction process all new members of staff are required to take part in Equality & Diversity Awareness training. This clearly sets out Northwards' commitment to equality, ensuring the new employee feels confident that they will be supported as an individual, whilst at the same time raising an awareness of their responsibility to respect the people they will be working with and to promote equality at every opportunity.

This process is supported by an innovative Diversity Workbook Programme. All Northwards employees are expected to study our 'Respect for People' workbook which covers a range of diversity issues on age, gender, race, sexuality, faith and disability. After the study every employee is asked to complete an online knowledge test to ensure they have good understanding of the issues raised in the workbook. All employees are offered the chance to take the test by themselves, or if more support is needed, they can take part in a group assessment. Northwards has showcased this programme at good practice seminars and many other employers, including our main contracting partners Manchester Working, have followed our lead in introducing the Diversity Workbook Programme.

Northwards realises that, as well as offering general equalities training, there is much more work to do to ensure that the benefits of diversity are realised in the everyday running of the organisation. To do this we have offered extra training for front-line staff and managers to ensure all individuals are aware of the challenges faced by minority groups; and to provide extra knowledge and support for every employee to carry out their jobs effectively and with sensitivity.

Here is an example of some of the training and awareness sessions that has been offered to Northwards employees:

- Communicating with Disabled People
- Islam Awareness Sessions
- Sikh Awareness Sessions
- Judaism Awareness Sessions
- DDA Awareness Training

- Domestic Abuse Training
- 'Respect Agenda' Briefings
- Deaf Awareness Training
- Hate Crime Awareness Training
- Sexual Orientation Awareness Briefings

Northwards realises that training and raising awareness must take place on an ongoing basis and values these sessions as vital to the delivery of services and an important part of employee development.

## **Service Delivery and Customer Care**

How well we meet the needs of our customers is a number one priority at Northwards Housing. We believe that excellent customer care can only be delivered through an extensive knowledge of the needs of every individual, providing a service that is responsive and sensitive to that need.

The first step in this process is to know exactly who our customers are.

Our 'Fair and Equal' surveys are designed to capture important information about individual customers, such as their ethnicity or whether or not they have a disability, as well as their preferred media to communicate with them as customers. This exercise is ongoing and by August 2008 we aim to have detailed information on the needs of over 70% of all our customers, and plan to achieve 100% by June 2009.

From this information we aim to design a service that is responsive to every customer's individual need. For example all information we communicate to them will be in their preferred format (large print, Braille, on CD etc), and the manner in which we deliver the service will be sensitive and respectful to them as individuals.

Northwards has taken extensive measures to ensure that the service we offer takes into account the range of needs of all our customers. For example:

- All our letters, publications and newsletters are offered to the customer in alternative format, including large print, Braille and CD.
- Northwards has recently produced a DVD of our tenant handbook as an alternative to the written publication. The DVD is designed to meet the needs of customers whose first language is not English, who may have learning difficulties or disability, as well as people who have visual or hearing impairments or who have low literacy skills.
- Our website has also been redesigned to ensure accessibility for disabled customers. For example, users can change the text size or download software to assist with reading. All major publications are translated into the nine main community languages spoken in our area, and are also available to access on our website.
- We have produced a Communications Handbook for employees to use when communicating with residents.

- Northwards, and our contracting partners, use the BIG Word translations service to ensure effective communications can take place between our employees and customers who do not speak English. We also provide language interpreters for non-English speaking residents who wish to attend meetings or events.
- Cultural awareness sessions for employees has also helped to ensure that we are aware of any religious or cultural traditions that our customers wish us to take into account when we are delivering services.
- All employees are trained how to access information on a customer's communication preference, and to use helpful aids such as flash cards and phone stickers to ensure they are making full use of our range of communication techniques.

At Northwards we are proactive to the special requirements of our customers. We have arrangements in place to anticipate the needs of new customers and to offer continuing support to existing customers. For example, we collect information on the communication needs of all new customers at letting interviews; this helps us to respond appropriately to their needs from the very beginning of their tenancy.

Northwards Retirement Housing services provide an invaluable support to older and disabled residents. A close working relationship with organisations such as 'Ageing Well North', Valuing Older People, Manchester ZEST team and Manchester Housing Support Service for older, BME and LGBT residents ensures that the service not only provides safe and affordable housing, but that individual residents' health and well-being are our top priority.

The Retirement Housing Team has received Deaf Awareness training to further assist them to support older and disabled residents who are deaf or hearing impaired.

Northwards' Neighbourhood Warden Service also plays a significant role in identifying and supporting vulnerable tenants through community walkabouts and by providing home and personal safety equipment to local residents. The Neighbourhood Wardens have also been recognised for delivering some best practice examples in the work they carry out with young people in the area.

As part of a citywide Manchester Domestic Abuse Strategy, Northwards Housing has entered into a partnership with Parkway Green Housing Trust, Willow Park Housing Trust, Eastlands Homes, Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Police to review and redesign our services. The Domestic Abuse Partnership Group (DAPG) was formed in March 2007 to expand the services offered by housing providers to victims of Domestic Abuse.

The partnership seeks sustainable solutions to allow victims to remain in their homes, rather than becoming homeless. A key part of this strategy has been the implementation of a new Sanctuary Scheme; providing security in the victim's current home.

This scheme improves the physical security of the victim's home and surroundings by installing extra security measures, to prevent homelessness. Each package is individually designed to suit the victim and the property, whilst taking a zero tolerance approach towards the perpetrator.

Proactive work with Greater Manchester Police also helps in the identification of repeat victims of Domestic Abuse. Northwards has appointed Domestic Abuse Champions within the organisation to train all front line members of staff and to lead on this new initiative.

In April 2007 Northwards Housing was recognised for all our hard work in delivering top class customer service by being awarded with the 'Charter Mark'. Charter Mark works with the government to set high standards for excellence in customer service, including the way in which organisations incorporate the needs of all their customers into service delivery.

All these services provide a valuable resource to the diverse range of our residents.

## **Consultation and Involvement**

Northwards is committed to ensuring that all our policies, practices and procedures meet the needs of the people living in our area. To do this effectively we realise that all the decisions we make and actions we plan must be done through consultation and engagement with local people.

As north Manchester is such a diverse area we realise that involvement and consultation must be carried out in a way that people find accessible and inclusive. We offer a variety of ways for people to get involved and have their say.

### Residents

Northwards Housing's tenants are offered the opportunity to become Tenant Board Members. Members can then have a say and influence Northwards' wider aims and objectives, as well as scrutinising new policies and plans to make sure that the organisation delivers on our promises. Northwards has four Tenant Board Member positions.

Our Board Sub-Committees give members a forum to look in more detail at important issues and make recommendations to the Board. Members of the public can join the Sub-Committees as co-optees to share their experience in particular areas. For example, we have co-opted a member of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (and formerly the Disability Rights Commission) who is also a Northwards' tenant, onto our Human Resources and Equality Sub-Committee. This member brings valuable insight into disability issues, both nationally and locally.

Other opportunities to get involved come through our three local area panels. These panels are made up of residents and councillors representing the area, and are responsible for assessing how Northwards is performing at a local level. They also make recommendations for improvement to the Board.

Northwards also recognises that some residents may have a particular interest in being involved in more specific areas of service. Northwards has established a series of resident forums who meet on a regular basis to discuss service improvement.

Northwards Equality and Diversity Forums are currently made up of two separate groups:

- BME Forum, including refugee representatives
- Disability Forum

These forums play a vital consultative and scrutinising role to help assess how we are meeting the needs of disabled residents, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, and people who are new to the area.

These groups meet every two months to review our services, recommend improvements and discuss how we can make a difference to them and to our communities.

The forums have been heavily involved in Equality Impact Assessments Northwards have carried out, including those in the Repairs and Home Improvements Service. Members have also been involved in our Access to Services Review Forum looking at how our residents currently access all our services and what measures can be introduced to improve accessibility even further.

Northwards tries to make the groups as informative and rewarding for residents as it is for us. Guests are invited to attend the meetings to discuss topical debates or provide more information about events happening in the area. For example, we have had guests from Disabled Living, Manchester Equipment and Adaptations (MEAP), Police Community Safety Officers as well as officers from within the organisation to discuss areas of interest such as waiting times for Re-Housing, the 'Respect Agenda' and the Decent Homes Programme.

Another area where residents get involved is the Tenant Inspector Scheme. This is where a group of residents evaluate first hand front line services and make recommendations to improve the outcome for customers. Residents are also asked to be Mystery Shoppers when they use a particular service and give their feedback. Northwards have also used specialist organisations to carry out mystery shopping of our services, including an evaluation by a local disability organisation 'Disabled Living'.

Other ad hoc areas of involvement for tenants have taken place. For example, we worked with local people from a range of religious backgrounds to create a

Multi-Faith Calendar in 2007. We focused on twelve different faith groups that are popular in our area and used positive images of places and people in north Manchester.

It is only through this direct involvement and honest, unbiased feedback that Northwards Housing can continue to refine, amend and improve services to meet the needs and aspirations of local people. This also ensures that Northwards operate in a way that is open, transparent and accountable to all the people we serve.

### Employees

One of Northwards' key values is our commitment to our employees, valuing the contribution that every person makes to the success of the organisation.

At Northwards we recognise the importance of a supportive and open working environment where people feel free to express themselves and are given the opportunity to develop their skills and reach their full potential.

It is only through harnessing individual talent and being flexible in our approach to personal development that we can realise our ambition of being a highly skilled, highly motivated and progressive workforce.

A vital element in achieving this goal is through employee consultation; unearthing the day to day experiences of each individual and reacting to their individual concerns and requirements. One recent example of this of our employee survey; we asked for feedback and comments from employees on their workplace environment and their opportunities for personal development. The response rate to this survey was a very encouraging 89% of all employees.

Northwards have set up several forums to provide a platform for employee involvement. The Equality & Diversity Working Group provides a pivotal forum for employees to voice their concerns and make recommendations for improvement. The group has representation from all areas of service, and has a crucial scrutinising role when it comes to new policies and procedures.

The group is also responsible for providing feedback on Equality Impact Assessments, assessing how we are meeting the expectations of the Diversity KLOE, monitoring the organisational E&D Action Plan and charting progress towards the next level of the Equality Standard.

Our regular Equality & Diversity newsletter 'Fairground' brings organisational equality initiatives to the attention of other staff, dispels negative myths about minority groups and promotes positive practices throughout the organisation.

There are many other resident forums where Northwards' employees are asked to share their thoughts and offer opinions on a wide range of topics, such as the repairs service, allocations and northwards regular newsletter the 'Northwards Natter'.

All Northwards employees attend regular cascade briefings which provide a great opportunity to share new initiatives and gather feedback. In recent months staff have been consulted through the briefings on such things as how they would like to see the organisation develop, and have been made aware of our achievements, such as becoming members of the 'Respect Agenda' and our success in reaching Equality Standard Level 2. Individual team briefings are also used to share information on a more service based level.

By being able to listen to employees, recognising the value of everyone's opinions, reacting to people's individual concerns, and sharing in the successes of the organisation, Northwards can become an employer that not only involves employees but reflects their aspirations in all that we do.

### **Partnership Working**

Northwards recognises that we cannot work alone to achieve greater equality in our workforce and in our local communities. We place an important emphasis on partnership working in everything we do. We believe this is the most effective way to deliver a cohesive approach to equalities, ensuring that key partners are working with us with similar values and shared objectives.

Northwards has four main contracting partners who help deliver our Home Improvements Programme. They are:

- Manchester Working Ltd
- Wates
- GJ Seddons
- The Lords Group

Working closely with our contractors and sub-contractors ensures that our aims and objectives in terms of equality are also being reflected in the work they carry out for us. We have built equality principles into our contract agreements and ask for regular reports on how our partners are meeting equality objectives in terms of employment, training and service delivery.

We also work alongside Manchester City Council, Greater Manchester Police and other local statutory bodies to ensure that a shared approach is taken to equality in the local area. This includes shared initiatives on tackling anti-social behaviour and hate crime, as well awareness raising events and community activities.

Northwards is keen to involve local community organisations and groups in all aspects of our work. We have close links with local BME organisations, faith groups, young people's projects and LGB support networks. We believe that it is only through first hand feedback can we truly address the individual needs of the diverse range of people we serve.

## **A Closer Look at the Six Areas of Equality**

### **Age**

Ageism is a form of discrimination that is more regularly experienced across all age ranges than any other type of discrimination.

Unlawful age discrimination happens when someone is treated unfavourably because of their age, without justification, or is harassed or victimised because of their age. This treatment can often be based on misconceptions and stereotypes that are held about different age ranges. For example, older people are often viewed as being friendly, moral and upstanding citizens but as less intelligent or capable. This can be compared to stereotypes regarding young people, who are often that they can be seen as aggressive, intimidating and unruly.

There is an unprecedented demographic shift in the UK today; the number of younger people is slowly dwindling while the older section of the population rapidly expands. This is due mainly to the fact that people are now healthier and are therefore living longer lives than before. People are also having less children than they did twenty or thirty years ago, and the 'baby boomer' generation of the 1940's and 50's are now just reaching retirement age.

#### **What are the implications?**

Assumptions through stereotypes about a person's age can directly lead to discrimination, for example;

- Assumptions that it is normal for older people to have lower expectations, reduced choice and control and less account taken of their views.
- Failure to offer choices in health and social care, and making assumptions that older people might not want the sort of life chances that younger people do.
- Seeing a position of authority as related to age, meaning a young candidate may not be respected or taken seriously because of age.
- Young people not getting the same opportunities to influence policy or services.

### **Some Facts and Figures**

- 10% of companies across the UK have no staff over fifty.
- The annual cost to the UK economy of age discrimination in employment is £31 billion
- In 2006, 9.6% of men aged 65 and over and 11.1% of women aged 60 and over were still in employment.
- Older people remain unemployed longer than their younger counterparts: 37% of those aged 50 and over remain unemployed for more than 12 months against 27% of those aged 25-49. (*Labour Market Statistics December 2006*)
- The number of people aged under 50 is set to fall by two per cent by 2016 and the number aged between 50 and 69 is set to increase by 17 per cent.

*Statistics from Employers Forum on Age*

### **What does the law say?**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations came into force in the UK. The legislation applies to employment and vocational training, prohibiting unjustified direct and indirect age discrimination, and the harassment and victimisation of a person on the grounds of age.

The law also:

- Gives rights to employees to request to work beyond retirement age, and a duty to employers to consider such requests
- Employers must give at least six months notice to employees before their intended retirement date
- Bans unjustified retirement ages below 65
- Removes the current age limit for unfair dismissal and redundancy rights

### **What is Northwards doing?**

Recent legislation has been introduced to ensure that people are no longer denied jobs or harassed because of their age, and in most cases, workers of all ages will have an equal chance of training and promotion.

Northwards will treat all people with respect and encourage applications from a wide range of age groups to access training and employment within our organisation.

Northwards recognises the role we play as service provider and the implications our policies and decisions have on the people we serve. We value the contribution that people from all age ranges can bring and work hard

to ensure that the intergenerational work we carry out provides everyone with the opportunity to be involved in shaping our services.

Our Retirement Housing services provide invaluable support to older and disabled residents. Regular forums are held with residents providing them with the opportunity to have their voice heard and to provide some feedback on what we can do to further support the needs and aspirations of older residents.

Northwards' Neighbourhood Warden Service plays a significant role in supporting the needs of older and vulnerable residents through community walkabouts. The wardens therefore provide a friendly face of reassurance while at the same time listen to the needs of residents who may otherwise be isolated or excluded. The Warden Service also carries out excellent work with young people in our area.

Northwards is developing links with local voluntary organisations such, as the City Centre Project, to tackle issues and barriers faced by young people in the community. We recognise that a major concern for many young people is finding suitable housing and learning the skills to successfully sustain tenancies. Northwards is to embark on a number of projects to address these shortages and intend to implement new initiatives to involve more young people in shaping their community.

### **Key Objectives for the next three years - Age**

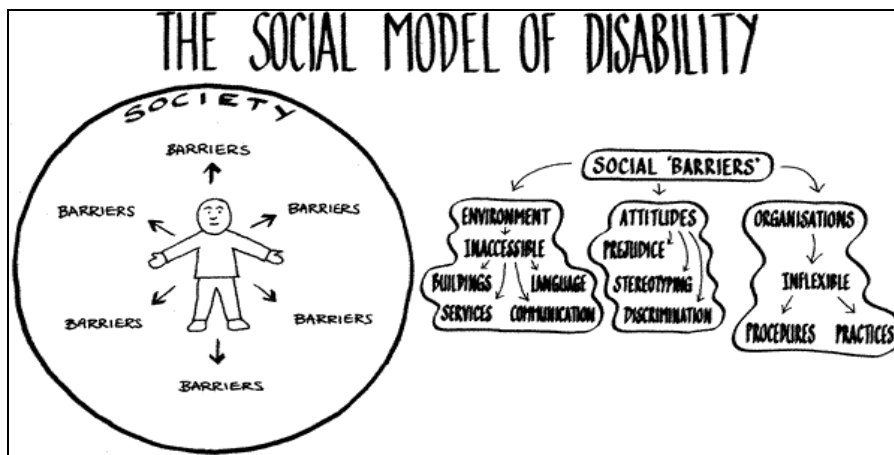
- Ensure policies are designed to encourage flexible retirement and working beyond normal retirement age
- Monitor recruitment practices to ensure compliance with Employment Equality (Age) Regulations
- Actively engage with more young people to encourage them into education, training and employment
- New and innovative initiatives to be implemented to involve more young people in the governance structure
- Attract a more diverse range of residents into our Retirement Homes

## Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as “a *physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out day to day activities*”.

Northwards Housing has adopted the social model of disability. This model was developed by disabled people and organisations to challenge the traditional view that people are disabled by their physical, mental or sensory impairments. The social model emphasises that it is actually the barriers that exist in society, such as the physical environment, organisational procedures, stereotypes and inaccessible transport, that really disables people.

As a result, if people with impairments are to be able to participate fully in mainstream society, the way society is organised must be changed.



### Disability in Employment

Disabled people as a group have historically suffered, and continue to suffer, persistent disadvantage when trying to access employment. Employed disabled people are also more likely to exit work than non-disabled employees, and once out of work, they are less likely to move back into employment than other groups. It is also important to note that:

- People with mental health conditions and people with learning disabilities have the lowest employment rates.
- Disabled men earn between 9-17% less than non-disabled men, disabled women earn between 6-11% less.
- Disabled people are more likely to move from full-time to part-time work, and are less likely to receive training.

**What does the law say?**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 introduced new measures to tackle discrimination towards disabled people in key areas such as employment and access to goods, facilities and services.

The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person in employment and gives employers a duty to make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled employees to carry out their work.

The new legislation also has an impact on service providers, making it unlawful to treat disabled people less favourably than other people for a reason related to their disability. Service providers are also required to make reasonable adjustments in the way they deliver services, for example adjusting physical features of their premises.

Under the Disability Equality Duty 2005 public bodies are required to actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. The duty encourages employers and employees to work together to break away from rigid employment practices, identify what adjustments and support might be needed, and to find flexible ways of working that may benefit the whole workforce.

### **Disability in north Manchester**

According to the Census 2001 around 12.6% of the population aged in north Manchester between the ages of 16-74 is permanently sick or disabled. In a Customer Profiling exercise carried out by Northwards Housing we discovered that around 41% of our residents consider themselves to have a disability. Around 19% of these residents defined their disability as a physical impairment, 13% had a long term illness, 5% stated that they had Mental Health problems and 5% stated that they had a hearing impairment.

Northwards is aware that these statistics demonstrate particularly high needs and as such we have a clear duty to respond to the individual requirements of our disabled residents and to adapt our services accordingly.

Northwards publishes quarterly Organisational Health Reports to our Human Resources and Equality Sub-Committee. From these reports Northwards have established that 3.75% of our employees are disabled. However we are aware that the top 5% of earners are all non-disabled people.

### **What is Northwards doing?**

Northwards realises that equality of opportunity for disabled people cannot be achieved by merely treating disabled and non-disabled people in the same way. Indeed, as an organisation we recognise the real business benefits of tailoring our employment practices and service delivery to meet the needs of disabled people.

Experience has actually shown us that this can not only benefit disabled employees and residents, but can have profound benefits for non-disabled people also.

Northwards Housing became Disability Symbol, or 'two tick', users in September 2007. This enabled us to review our current processes and ensure that our recruitment process is accessible, fair and able to suit the needs of disabled applicants. The symbol offers a visible sign of our commitment to employing, retaining and developing disabled people.

When Northwards began in December 2005 many of our employees were transferred from the employment of Manchester City Council. As part of this agreement disabled employees were still able to access the Housing Disabled Officers Network at the Council. However, Northwards recognised that we must be more proactive in the support we give our employees and through our employee E&D Working Group we are now creating our own disabled employee support groups, amongst others, in partnership with other Registered Social Landlords.

Supporting our disabled residents is also a high priority for Northwards. A Disability Forum is held every two months to give our disabled residents the opportunity to raise any issues they may have with accessing services, and to provide valuable feedback on our new policies, projects and initiatives. An Access to Services Review, in consultation with disabled residents, also highlighted further measures we can introduce to support disabled residents, and in particular people with learning disabilities or hearing impairments.

### **Key Objectives for the next three years - Disability**

- New recruitment initiatives and work placement programmes to support more disabled people to access training and employment in Northwards
- Implementation of Access to Services Strategy
- Further Equality Impact Assessments on new and existing policies
- Review of waiting times to re-house disabled people
- Disability Forum to hold a Disability Awareness Event in the local community
- Deliver more awareness training for Board and Employees, including Mental Health Awareness Sessions.
- Review of delivery of equipment and adaptations service with MEAP (Manchester Equipment and Adaptations Service)

## Gender and Transgender

Women and men have the right not to be discriminated against, as both employees and customers, because of their gender. Although these rights are protected by the law, discrimination and inequality of treatment still occurs on a daily basis in the way services are managed and delivered to men and women.

### Some Facts and Figures

- Discrimination is estimated to account for 25% - 50% of the pay gap between men and women. Women are still earning on average 17% less than men.
- Women form the majority of local government workforce and are mostly concentrated in lower paid and part-time jobs.
- Young Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black Caribbean women are three to four times more likely to take a job at a lower level than they are qualified for.

### Examples of possible Sex Discrimination

Example;

*An employer transfers a woman from her post against her will because she is having a relationship with a colleague. If the employer does not transfer men in the same circumstances, this transfer may be direct sex discrimination.*

Example;

*An employer specifies that applicants for a job must be over six feet tall, even though this would not affect the person's ability to do the job. This would be indirect discrimination against women, since it is less likely for many women to fit this criteria and the height of a person bears no relation to job role.*

Women make up nearly half of the UK's workforce yet they still earn on average 17% less than men. Given that girls and young women are continuing to outperform boys in education it is surprising that this has not been translated into earnings. In fact, women are still working predominantly in lower paid jobs. For example, in the domestic, catering and caring sectors.

Women who have continued on to further education have only recently broken into sectors which have historically been dominated by men, such as the legal and medical professions. However, little significant change has taken place in other areas. For example, only 1% of people working in the construction industry last year were women.

As a result of gender discrimination, it is clear that there is an imbalance in the way that men and women are treated. It is this imbalance that needs to be addressed.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 made discrimination unlawful on the grounds of sex and marital status. It set out provisions for equality between men and women in terms of access to employment, vocational training, promotion and other terms and conditions of work. However, despite this legislation inequalities persist in the way men and women were treated. In response the government has introduced new legal responsibilities for public authorities through the Gender Equality Duty 2007.

The duty has placed an increasing emphasis on public bodies to not only address inequalities, but to actively change the way services are delivered and tailor them to the individual needs of both men and women. In this respect, whilst it is acknowledged that women are a minority group facing distinct issues, the needs of men must also be equally considered and responded to appropriately. All public authorities must demonstrate that they are promoting equality for women and men and show how they are eliminating sexual discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

### **What is Northwards doing?**

Northwards Housing is committed to delivering excellent services to all our customers but we recognise that these services can only be delivered through a strong, healthy and productive workforce. As such, Northwards strives to create a working environment tailored to the individual needs of our employees. We aim to achieve this by offering flexible working practices, supportive working environments and excellent opportunities for personal development.

As an employer and service provider Northwards is keen to play an active role in addressing the issues faced by both men and women in our workforce, and in our communities.

In a Customer Profiling exercise carried out by Northwards Housing we discovered that 61% of our residents are female. This is a higher percentage than the national average so Northwards must be aware of the implications this may have on service delivery and customer care.

As an employer we are aware that women make up 48% of our overall workforce, and that of the top 5% of earners 46% are women. While we are pleased that there is a significant representation of women at all levels of the workforce, Northwards must ensure that our organisational policies and procedures reflect the individual needs of both our female and male employees.

Our commitment to a work/life balance sets the standard by which we want to progress as an organisation.

As an employer, we have already introduced flexible working conditions to support the needs of our workforce. Amongst other benefits, flexible working helps to accommodate male and female employees who have parental and/or caring responsibilities. Flexible working also plays a key supporting role for female employees returning from maternity leave, enabling them to balance their new role as mothers with their professional careers.

Looking ahead, we see the introduction of our new Family Friendly Policy as another means to support the needs of both men and women within the workforce. This policy is being developed through consultation with employees and managers and is hoped will give further clarity and assurance to individuals about the benefits and support they can access as Northwards employees.

Our new People Strategy will also reassert our commitment to equal opportunities, both through the recruitment process and in the training and development of all our employees.

## **Transgender**

The Gender Equality Duty has also placed the concerns and needs of the transgender population at the heart of the equalities agenda.

The term 'Transsexualism' stems from the scientific assessment of a when a person has been assigned one gender (usually at birth based on their external anatomy) but identifies as belonging to another gender, or does not conform with the gender role prescribed to them.

In recent times many individuals and support groups have moved towards the terminology of 'Transgender', or simply 'trans', rather than 'Transsexualism' as these terms are seen as less prescriptive, and in many ways more reflective of people who, for example, have not or do not intend to undergo, gender reassignment.

### **The Gender Reassignment Process**

When an individual declares that they wish to legally transition from one gender to another they must follow the 'Gender Recognition Process'. The process involves an assessment by a multi-disciplinary medical team and involves several key stages, including hormone treatment and surgical procedures. At the end of the process the individual will have their original birth entry confidentially marked to indicate that they have become recognised in their acquired gender.

## **What does the law say?**

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 made it illegal to discriminate against someone who “intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone, gender reassignment”. This means employers must ensure that they do not discriminate against a transgender person through their practices, policies and procedures.

The introduction of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 provided further support for transgender people enabling them to apply for a Gender Recognition Certificate and thereby legally change their gender identity.

The Gender Equality Duty has taken one step further and places a responsibility on public authorities to actively ensure the inclusion of trans people in all activities, whilst at the same time promoting the equality of men and women in general.

## **What are the key issues for trans people?**

The struggle for recognition through the equalities agenda has historically aligned the transgender population with the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community. However, this often leads to confusion that the concerns of the transgender community are related to the issue of sexual orientation when in fact they are predominantly concerned with issues surrounding gender identity and the right to live under a chosen gender.

Other concerns raised by the transgender community include:

- Fear of discrimination, abuse or harassment
- Anxiety about the appropriateness of facilities (for example, gender specific toilets in public spaces or offices)
- Lack of knowledge or understanding from employers and the public
- Insensitive or inappropriate services

## **What is Northwards doing?**

Northwards recognises that discrimination and abuse is all too often a daily occurrence for many transgender people in our communities. As a result, we have made a commitment to all transgender people living in our area, and to all existing and potential employees, to ensure that they are treated equally, fairly and with respect. Further, to ensure that they feel safe, secure and valued members of the community.

Northwards will review existing policies to ensure that they do not directly or indirectly discriminate against transgender people. We will also assess the impact that any future policies or practices may have on the transgender population and their role as community members.

Northwards has reviewed our Hate Incident Policy and Procedure, taking into account the issues faced by the transgender population. In line with this

review, awareness training will be delivered to all front line members of staff to raise awareness of the effects that hate incidents have on amongst others, transgender people. We will also actively seek to prevent any such further incidents.

As a leading employer in the area we also have a responsibility to ensure that all members of the community are included and involved in shaping the area in which they live and the environment in which they work. Northwards endeavours to do this through various initiatives including resident involvement forums and through the establishment of an employee support group for our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans employees.

### **Key Objectives for the next three years – Gender and Transgender**

- Review the Flexible Working Policy in consultation with employees in line with new legislation and considering the needs of single parents and carers.
- Review existing policies to ensure that needs of trans people are being considered and addressed.
- Monitor the number of transgender people within the workforce and raise awareness of trans issues through the E&D Working Group.
- Review of employee Domestic Abuse Policy, building upon recent positive work on Northwards Housing Domestic Abuse Policy for Residents. This will give equal focus on how Domestic Abuse can affect women, men, LGB partners and other minority groups.
- Establish mentoring programmes to encourage and support personal development and career progression.

### **Race**

Under the Race Relations Act 1976, racial discrimination arises when a person or group is treated less favourably than another in similar circumstances 'on racial grounds'. This means that a person can be discriminated against because of their colour, race, nationality or ethnic origin.

Everyone has an ethnicity and this ethnicity is self-defined. It can be based on common ancestry, memories of a shared past, a shared cultural identity including language or religion, nationality or physical appearance.

For the purpose of this Scheme, Northwards use the term "minority ethnic" to refer to all groups that are not recorded under the "White British" ethnic group category in our area. However, we do not in any way assume that minority ethnic groups are only defined by skin colour or race.

According to the Census 2001 around 12.4% of the north Manchester's population comes from minority ethnic backgrounds. The principal communities live in the Cheetham and Crumpsall area. Following the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004, and again in January 2007, there has also been a significant increase in economic migrants from Poland and other Eastern European countries living in the area.

Northwards own Customer Profiling exercise gives a more accurate and up to date picture of residents living in our area that are from a minority ethnic background. The exercise revealed that around 15% of people who responded were from minority ethnic backgrounds, with 2% of those people stating that they are refugees. The minority ethnic population was highest in the Wilton Panel area, which covers Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall; with large Asian, Irish and Black African communities.

### **Some Facts and Figures**

- 70% of people from minority ethnic communities live in the 88 most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK and are often subject to harassment, stereotyping and racism.
- 30% of Gypsies and Irish Travellers, of whom England and Wales has an estimated 300,000 live on unauthorised sites, and consequently suffer from bullying and harassment. They also face acute discrimination as many local public services have low awareness of needs.
- In England the risk of permanent exclusion from school is much higher for some minority ethnic groups, especially Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils, Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils and Black Caribbean pupils.
- Black and minority ethnic people are more likely to be unemployed regardless of qualifications, sex or age.
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, with the same characteristics as White women, are 30% more likely to be out of work.
- Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi households are more likely to live in homes that fall below the decent homes standard than white households.

Final Report of the Equalities Review: *'Fairness and Freedom'*.

### **What does the law say?**

The Race Relations Act 1976 made it unlawful to discriminate against a person because of their race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin. The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 goes one step further and places a duty on public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people from different racial groups.

The Housing Act 2004 places a further duty under the Race Relations Acts to promote good community relations in regard to accommodation and provision of services to Gypsies and Travellers.

### **What is Northwards doing?**

Whilst Northwards realises that there has been great strides towards greater equality in recent times, there is still considerable evidence that many people still face discrimination and disadvantage in their daily lives simply because of their race or ethnic background.

Northwards has already taken considerable steps to ensure that our employment policies and practices do not discriminate or disadvantage any individual or group.

We monitor all existing employees and new applicants for employment, promotion and training by racial group, helping the organisation to evaluate performance on achieving our race equality objectives.

The adoption of positive action measures are encouraged by race relation legislation. This enables Northwards to address any potential barriers by encouraging members from under-represented groups to apply for employment or to offer further training to help develop potential. For example, Northwards regularly advertises vacancies in the Ethnic Britain directory to encourage applications from minority ethnic groups and to help raise our profile as an equal opportunities employer.

Northwards also work closely with our residents to ensure that the services we deliver are appropriate and do not discriminate against people from different ethnic groups. Our BME Forum gives our residents a real opportunity to feedback on our services as well as offering us new suggestions on how we can better serve the needs of our minority ethnic communities.

Northwards also realises that we must play a leading role with our partners to ensure that our race equality objectives are met. Our contracting partners share our ethos and report to Northwards on how they are meeting equality targets in the services they deliver to residents on our behalf, and also in relation to their own recruitment practices.

Northwards works closely with Greater Manchester Police to address issues such as community safety and hate crime. Northwards realise that we must play an active role in protecting our neighbourhoods, and ensuring that the people who live there do so without the fear or persecution or harm.

Northwards realise that whilst great strides have been taken to promote equality, there is much more we can do to address the needs of minority ethnic communities in our area. We also recognise that we need to offer more opportunity and support for employees to develop within the organisation and to reach their individual potential.

## **Key Objectives for the next three years - Race**

- Ensure that members of minority groups are more aware of employment opportunities at Northwards
- Develop the potential of existing employees through training and mentoring initiatives
- Provide further training for the Board and Area Panel Members on issues faced by minority groups
- Make greater links with more of our residents from minority ethnic backgrounds and ensure that they are informed and actively consulted on issues affecting them and their neighbourhoods
- Make sure all our services are developed to further meet the needs of minority groups
- Work together with Manchester City Council to co-ordinate services to gypsies and travellers living in north Manchester
- Further partnership working initiatives with local voluntary organisations and groups to gather information and to raise awareness of issues facing minority ethnic groups
- Work with Manchester City Council to further community cohesion initiatives in north Manchester

## **Religion and Belief**

Recent equality legislation has come into force to protect the rights of individuals from being discriminated against on the grounds of their religion or belief. The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Act 2003 ensures that direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of religion, is unlawful.

Indifference and ignorance toward religion can often lead towards discrimination. It is important to recognise that religion is different from ethnicity and assumptions can not be made about what religion, if any, a person may follow by simply judging their racial background.

### Possible examples of religious discrimination

Example;

An employer introduces a 'no headwear' rule for all employees. This would put Sikh men who wear a turban and Jewish men who wear a kippah at a disadvantage.

Example;

During an interview, a Christian woman refers to the Church that she regularly attends. Although she has the skills to do the job successfully, the interviewer does not employ her because she does not like the idea of working alongside someone who believes in God.

Example;

A landlord will only open a laundry room on a Saturday. This suits most of the tenants who are Christian. However, some tenants are Jewish and Muslim. Saturday is their religious day and they are unable to use the laundry room when it is open.

### **Religion and Belief in north Manchester**

The Census 2001 indicated that around 70% of the white UK population, 71% of black people and 53% of those of mixed ethnic background give their religion as Christian. Islam was found to be the most common faith in the UK after Christianity at around 2.7% of the total population.

These figures are reflected in north Manchester with Census figures indicating that around 72% of people are Christian, but 5% are Muslim. Northwards Customer Profiling exercise indicated that over 77% of our residents are Christian with Islam again being recorded as the second most popular belief held (3%).

However, there are a number of other religions and beliefs held in the local area including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Paganism, Rastafari, Shinto, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism, as well as a large Jewish population living in the Cheetham Hill area.

### **What is Northwards doing?**

Northwards recognises the right of all individuals to hold and practice their own particular religious beliefs. We realise that we have a responsibility as an employer and a service provider to take into account people's beliefs and to respond to them fairly and with sensitivity.

Northwards introduced a number of policies and procedures to ensure that religious needs are taken into account. For example, we offer employees flexible working conditions giving them the opportunity to attend prayer or to respect religious events and festivals. We also give employees the opportunity to learn about different religions and customs through regular cultural awareness sessions at local Mosques, Sikh Temples and Synagogues.

Northwards is committed to delivering services that are sensitive to the needs of all our residents. For example, when arranging home visits with residents we will try to ensure that this does not conflict with religious days or festivals, and we offer wherever possible the choice of male or female visiting officer.

Northwards has carried out other awareness raising exercises, such as the publication of a multi-faith calendar in 2007, but also realises that this work must be ongoing.

### **Key Objectives for the next three years – Religion/Belief**

- Ensure all policies take into account the cultural needs of employees and residents through detailed Equality Impact Assessments
- Work closely with local faith organisations, such as the Faith Network for Manchester, to increase awareness and to promote good relations between different religious groups in the local community
- Share positive practice and deliver cultural awareness training alongside contracting partners to increase knowledge about cultural traditions and religious practices of local residents
- Ensure the information gathered from our customer profiling is used to deliver culturally sensitive services to residents

### **Sexual Orientation**

In recent years the gay rights movements across the UK have been extremely successful in their struggle to have the rights of gay people recognised by society and protected by the law. However, whilst many battles for equality have been won, homophobia is still a prevalent issue faced by many gay people both in the workplace and in their communities.

Homophobia can manifest itself in many forms, such a verbal or physical abuse. The effects of homophobia on the individual can be severe often leading to exclusion, isolation and in many cases a fear for personal safety.

### What does Sexual Orientation mean?

This refers to the romantic, sexual or emotional attraction an individual feels towards another person.

*Heterosexual:* attracted towards a person of the opposite sex  
*Homosexual:* attracted towards a person of the same sex  
*Bisexual:* attracted towards people of the opposite sex and of the same sex.

The term **gay** can refer to men or women who are attracted to a person from the same sex as they are, although gay women also commonly refer to themselves as **lesbian**.

### Sexuality in north Manchester

As no national census has ever asked people to define their sexuality there is no hard data on the number of gay men, lesbians and bisexual people living in the UK. The estimated figure is around 6% of the population.

In Manchester there is a large visible gay community. There is a thriving bar, restaurant and nightlife culture in the Canal St district ("The Gay Village") catering for some of the needs of the gay population, attracting not just people from the city but from all around the Greater Manchester area. Manchester Pride, Manchester's annual Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) festival, is one of the largest festivals held in the UK every year.

Northwards Housing's Customer Profiling exercise revealed that at least 2% of our residents identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Northwards has a duty to respond to the specific needs of all residents and is committed to providing a service that is fair and sensitive to the needs of our gay community.

### What does the law say?

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 made workplace discrimination against gay people unlawful. This means that employers must ensure that their policies and procedures do not discriminate against or disadvantage gay people, and that they must protect gay members of staff against harassment or victimisation.

In spite of these regulations there is evidence to suggest that gay people are still regularly facing workplace discrimination. For example, research carried out by the University of Cardiff for Stonewall, the UK's leading gay and lesbian lobbying group, found that one in four lesbian, gay or bisexual people in Wales had been dismissed or forced to leave a job at some point in their working lives because of their sexuality.

It is hardly surprising then that nearly half of gay employees still feel unable to reveal their sexual orientation at work.

The passing of the Civil Partnership Act 2004 gave same-sex couples the right to form a civil partnership giving them legal recognition of their relationship. Employers and service providers must review any relevant policies and procedures to include the needs of people who are in a civil partnership.

Other legislation has recently been passed to which helps to protect gay and lesbian people from harassment and abuse. Section 146 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 came into effect in April 2005, which gave the courts in England and Wales more power to impose tougher sentences for offences motivated or aggravated by the victim's sexual orientation.

However, the Equality and Human Rights Commission estimates that over 90% of homophobic crime is still not being reported because victims are too frightened or embarrassed to report the crime.

It is clear that while there have been great steps forward in terms of equality, there is still many barriers being faced by gay people and much hostility that must be overcome.

### **What is Northwards doing?**

Northwards is committed to ensuring that our lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees and residents are treated fairly, equally and with respect.

We regularly consider how we can improve the work environment to provide a safe and supportive environment for gay people. We are aware that 'coming out' at work can be a difficult decision for many gay, lesbian and bisexual people. We try to ensure that people can feel comfortable doing so without the fear of negative reactions from work colleagues or the fear that it could have any detrimental effect on their career prospects.

In 2007 Northwards became Stonewall Diversity Champions. The Diversity Champions Programme is Britain's good practice forum in which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace. This offers a visible sign of our commitment to gay employees, while also helping the organisation to review our policies to ensure they are inclusive of the needs of our LGB employees.

Northwards is also working closely with other Registered Social Landlords in Manchester to develop employee support groups for LGB employees.

We recognise that more work is needed to support the needs of LGB people living in our communities. Northwards will be working closely with our contracting partners to ensure that our employees are delivering sensitive services to our LGB residents.

Following a review of our Hate Incident Policy the need to support local residents against homophobic abuse or victimisation was highlighted. Northwards must work hard to help prevent such incidents from occurring and ensure that the support given to victims is sensitive to their needs.

### **Key Objectives for the next three years – Sexual Orientation**

- Ensure that employees, and contracting partners, have a good awareness of the needs of LGB people
- Tackle homophobia in the workplace and in our local community through awareness raising and partnership working
- Take part in Stonewall's annual Workplace Equality Index
- Ensure Human Resources policies and procedures reflect current legislation
- Increase the amount of consultation carried out with LGB residents and organisations
- Establish shared LGBT employee group

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and subsequently the Disability Discrimination Act 2006 and the Equality Act 2006, local authorities are required to conduct Equality Impact Assessments on all policies, strategies and projects to ensure that they do not discriminate in terms of Race, Disability and Gender.

Northwards has committed to go beyond these legal obligations to ensure that our practices do not also discriminate on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. As a result, our Equality Impact Assessment process encompasses a thorough review of our procedures by looking systematically at all areas of potential discrimination, harassment or inequality.

Coupled with this, Northwards sees the Impact Assessment process as a mechanism to identify areas where positive practices can be developed or shared with other areas of the organisation. In this way, we promote equality not only as an essential element of our service, but also as a means to develop good relations between different groups and members of the community.

The involvement of stakeholders is vital to this process, and consultation is required for every team, when they are carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. This can be carried out through a variety of mechanisms:

- One to one conversations
- Individual or group e-mail
- Focus groups
- Meetings
- Events

Northwards works with as many partners as possible when carrying out assessments to ensure that all equality groups are represented, and that a variety of issues can be addressed. We have worked with:

- Disability Forum
- BME Forum
- Equality & Diversity Working Group
- Disabled Living
- Lesbian and Gay Foundation
- Faith Network for Manchester
- Church Action on Poverty
- Black Health Agency
- Refugee Action
- Manchester Working Ltd
- Wates Living
- GJ Seddons
- Lords Group

Northwards have produced a toolkit with clear guidance for all managers and lead officers to ensure the Equality Impact Assessment process is robust and meaningful. The process is carried out over a number of stages.

### Initial Screening

This involves the identification of any potential impacts which new or revised policies and procedures may have on upon service users. Through an analysis of existing data or feedback, an informed decision is made on the likelihood that the policy or procedure could have an impact on a diverse range of individuals or groups. If it is established that a potential differential impact is likely, or there is not enough information to make a decision, then the process moves forward to the next stage. If it is certain that no impact is likely the policy or procedure can proceed to approval stage with an agreed time for review.

### Full Assessment

A Full Assessment requires that consultation is carried out with all relevant groups that have been indicated as potentially having an impact from the policy or procedure. This will involve consultation with all relevant stakeholders, for example, employees, partner organisations, residents or

local community groups or organisations. Recommendations from the consultation process will be used to amend the policy or procedure, where necessary, and to plan any actions needed to reduce adverse impacts or to further promote equality.

### Publishing Results

All Equality Impact Assessments are to be published on the intranet, with a summary of the results made available to all stakeholders and relevant groups on the Northwards website. Results will also be used to inform other areas of service, where applicable, and to influence future organisational strategy and action plans.

A timetable for Equality Impact Assessments is published annually, and all new policies and procedures are assessed before they can be considered for approval.

## **Monitoring Progress against Equality Objectives and Targets**

Monitoring of Northwards Housing's equality objectives is built into our performance management and business planning systems.

We have reviewed our Performance Management Framework and, in line with this review, several new equality indicators have been introduced which now sit alongside existing indicators upon which Northwards regularly reports.

In line with this Scheme and our new People Strategy, Northwards is to re-examine existing targets and performance indicators regarding the recruitment, retention and career development of employees. These will be measured in terms of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation.

Regular reports will be submitted to the Human Resources & Equality Sub-Committee and the Equality & Diversity Working Group, to highlight how under-represented groups are progressing within the organisation and to target areas for improvement.

Equality objectives are driven by the organisation's Equality and Diversity Action Plan which is reviewed annually. This ensures that individual actions and targets are put in place to help meet overarching aims and objectives, including the measures outlined in this Scheme. The Action Plan is monitored by the Human Resources & Equality Sub-Committee, the employee E&D Working Group, Northwards Area Panels and the resident's forums.

Annual Team Improvement Plans in the organisation also highlight actions that must be carried out to ensure that equality and diversity principles are met and that services are responding appropriately to the needs of all our customers.

Northwards also has in place a number of information gathering mechanisms which will help us to effectively monitor the impact of our policies and practices on different equality groups. These include:

- Customer Profiling Surveys
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Monitoring of complaints and compliments received by Northwards Housing
- Monitoring of employees by equality category
- Area panels and Northwards Resident Forums
- Results from a wide range of customer satisfaction surveys
- Employee satisfaction surveys

It is through developing robust information gathering and impact assessment systems that Northwards Housing will be able to measure our progress in meeting equality objectives and targets set out within this Scheme. We will publish regular updates on the Scheme on our website with an annual review of our achievements.

These methods for reporting and gathering information will also help us to monitor the effectiveness of this Single Equality Scheme and help us prepare for the publication of future schemes.

## Northwards Housing Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2008-2011

### 1.0 Corporate Culture and Governance

Link	Equality Strand	Action	Lead Officer / Team	Timescale	Outcome
1.1	All	Integrate the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process into the revised policy implementation/approval process.	Business Improvement Team (S.Finegan)	October 2008	EIAs are systematically carried out when policies are being created or reviewed.
1.2	All	EIA Toolkit, Guidance and examples of previous assessments to be published on the intranet.	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	September 2008	EIA process is accessible and transparent
1.3	All	Training for all managers to be carried out on the EIA process, including identification of 'high impact' policies and procedures.	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	September 2008	Managers able to prioritise reviews in terms of the impact on equality, and are skilled in carrying out assessments.
1.4	All	EIA Timetable to be drafted in consultation with senior managers and made available on the intranet.	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	Annually	The process is systematic and accessible.
1.5	All	Integrate the need to consider the implications of new policies and projects on Community Cohesion into the EIA toolkit.	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	January 2009	The implications for community cohesion are systematically addressed.

1.6	All	Diversity training and awareness raising sessions for the Board and Area Panels.	Governance Manager (D.Roberts)	Annually	Board and Area Panels are aware of their responsibilities and the possible implications of organisational and local actions on minority groups.
1.7	All	Promote involvement of under-represented groups in the governance structure through new initiatives.	Governance Manager (D.Roberts)	February 2009	More people from minority groups are represented and included in the decision making process.
1.8	All	A programme of work and training to be drafted and implemented for the E&D Working Group.	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	Annually	Members have a better awareness of the issues facing a wide range of minority groups.
1.9	All	Hold diversity awareness raising days/lunches across the organisation.	E&D Officer / Governance Manager (T.Kelly/D.Roberts)	Bi-Annually	Northwards commitment to equality and diversity is continually emphasised.
1.10	All	Ensure issues of equality are integrated into the proposed organisational counselling service.	Business Services (S.Wood)	March 2009	All employees are aware that they can seek support from the service.

## 2.0 Employment and Training

Link	Equality Strand	Action	Lead Officer / Team	Timescale	Outcome
2.1	Disability / Gender	Review of flexible working procedure to include needs of carers and disabled employees.	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	April 2009	More flexibility in working arrangements that will benefit amongst others single parents, carers and disabled employees.
2.2	All	Ensure diversity aspects are included in the 'People Strategy' and publicise and promote to existing employees and a diverse range of potential employees.	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	November 2008 (Stage 1)	Northwards is seen as an equal opportunities employer, and more people from under-represented groups are employed and retained by the organisation.
2.3	Disability	Review achievements made through the Disability Symbol and report to the HR & Equality Sub-Committee with Action Plan for improvement.	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	Annually	More disabled people access the recruitment process and are recruited, retained and developed within the organisation.

2.4	Disability	DDA awareness training to be carried out with all managers.	E&D Officer / HR Team (T.Kelly/L.McBurnie)	Annually	Managers are up to date on legislation and are aware of the barriers faced by disabled people.
2.5	Disability	A Disability Support Package is to be produced for disabled employees and their managers/teams.	E&D Officer / HR Team (T.Kelly/L.McBurnie)	January 2010	Disabled employees feel valued and supported in their job role.
2.6	Race, Disability, Gender	Monitor and report by ethnicity, disability and gender key areas of employment in line with the CRE Code of Practice, DRC Recommendations on Good Practice and the GED. These are to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Grievances</li> <li>• Disciplinarys</li> </ul>	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	Quarterly	Employees are treated fairly and equally and any possible direct or indirect discrimination is highlighted.
2.7	Race, Disability, Gender, Sexuality	Address under-representation of minority groups within the workforce. This will include reports outlining targeted advertising initiatives and work placement opportunities undertaken.	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	Quarterly	Northwards reflects and is representative of the local community.
2.8	All	To investigate the benefits of becoming Housing Diversity Network Members and	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	March 2009	Mentoring opportunities are open to under-

		implementing the 'Edge Forward' mentoring programme.			represented employees to help further personal development.
2.9	Sexuality	To take part in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index and draw yearly action plans for improvement.	HR Team / E&D Officer (L.McBurnie/T.Kelly)	Annually	The needs of LGB employees are continually reviewed and addressed.
2.10	All	To review relevant HR policies to ensure they are consistent with recent legislation.	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	Annually	Northwards HR policies comply with legislative requirements.
2.11	All	Family Friendly Policy to be published and promoted to all employees. Guidance to be issued to managers and employees.	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	December 2008	Employees enjoy a successful work/life balance.
2.12	All	Annual Diversity Training for all employees and set timetable for supplementary training to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E&amp;D Induction (Diversity Workbook Programme)</li> <li>• DDA Awareness</li> <li>• Mental Health Awareness</li> <li>• Hate Crime Training</li> <li>• Sexual Orientation Awareness</li> <li>• Cultural Awareness Training</li> <li>• HIV/AIDS Awareness</li> </ul>	HR Team / E&D Officer (T.Kelly/L.McBurnie)	Annually	Employees understand the importance of equality and diversity within the workplace, and can support the needs of all residents.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New and Emerging Communities</li> </ul>			
2.13	All	Take part in the Investors in Diversity Programme	HR Team / E&D Officer (T.Kelly/L.McBurnie)	April 2009	Equality is further embedded and promoted to existing and potential employees
2.14	Gender	Work with JIVE to carry out a workplace analysis for female employees	HR Team (L.McBurnie)	April 2009	Female employees are aware, and can take advantage of, the opportunities for development within the organisation.
2.15	Gender	Carry out an exercise to monitor the number of transgender employees and promote equality	HR Team / E&D Officer (L.McBurnie/T.Kelly)	October 2009	Northwards support the individual needs of transgender employees and ensure they are not discriminated against within the workforce.

### 3.0 Access and Customer Care

Link	Equality Strand	Action	Lead Officer / Team	Timescale	Outcome
3.1	Race, Religion and Belief	Create a welcome pack for residents from different cultures who are new to the area. This will	Resident Involvement Forum (C.Tyrell)	July 2009	New residents are welcomed into the area and are given

		include information on local area, for example doctors, dentists, libraries, community centres, places of worship etc.			support to settle into the community.
3.2	Race, Disability	Review training for employees on translations services offered by Northwards.	Business Improvement Team (S.Finegan)	Sept 2008	Employees can effectively respond to the alternative communication needs of customers.
3.3	All	Monitor satisfaction with the re-housing service by equality strand.	Re-Housing Team (A.Duffield)	Quarterly	The re-housing process is fair and accessible to all.
3.4	Sexuality	Review Lettings Policy to ensure rights of same-sex partners are being recognised.	Re-Housing Team (A.Duffield)	December 2008	LGB residents are not indirectly discriminated against in the lettings procedure.
3.5	Age	Carry out an EIA on the Local Lettings Policy, with particular emphasis on age banding of properties.	Re-Housing Team (A.Duffield)	December 2008	Lettings policy is more inclusive of the needs of younger tenants.
3.6	All	Training for front line officers on use of communication information stored in Contact Manager.	Business Improvement Team (D.Dalton)	September 2008	The individual communication needs of all residents are being addressed.
3.7	All	Carry out satisfaction audits for minority groups. For example, LGB	Business Improvement Team	Bi-Annually	There is a more in depth knowledge of

		residents, hearing impaired residents, older and vulnerable residents, non-English speaking residents	(S.Finegan)		the issues facing under-represented or vulnerable groups.
3.8	Disability	Ensure customer profiling data is being used to influence service delivery.	Repairs Team (A.Wood)	January 2009	Customer's individual needs are being addressed.
3.9	Disability	Review effectiveness of priority service for disabled residents.	Repairs Team (A.Wood)	February 2009	Repairs for disabled residents are prioritised to ensure no detrimental effect occurs.
3.10	Gender, Race, Disability	Carry out an analysis by equality strands on customer satisfaction with the service.	Repairs Team (A.Wood)	October 2009	Satisfaction levels for minority groups are measured and any inequalities are addressed.
3.11	All	Equality issues are taken into account when reviewing project briefs for Home Improvements Programme	Asset Management Team (C.Hopkins)	December 2010	Everyone is given equal opportunity to benefit from improvements.
3.12	All	Ensure procurement processes and contracts build equality specifications into tendering process.	Home Improvement Team/Asset Management Team (S.Kirkham/C.Hopkins)	March 2009	Equality is seen as a high priority in the tendering process.
3.13	All	Ensure involvement of minority groups throughout the	Regeneration Team (G.Lees)	Quarterly	Under-represented groups are

		development of the Community Regeneration Project			engaged and involved in community regeneration.
3.14	Disability, Race	Report on progress of Access To Services Strategy.	Business Improvement Team (D.Dalton)	Quarterly	Northwards provide a fair, equal and accessible service.

#### 4.0 Service User Involvement

Link	Equality Strand	Action	Lead Officer / Team	Timescale	Outcome
4.1	All	Ensure under-represented groups are involved in all consultation exercises/service reviews carried out by NH.	SMT (S.Finegan)	As required	Needs of under-represented groups are taken into account.
4.2	All	Provide Diversity Training to TA's and offer support in engaging under-represented groups in their area.	Resident Involvement Team (C.Tyrell)	Annually	TA's understand the role equality plays in success community engagement and empowerment.
4.3	Age	Investigate the possibility of establishing a Youth Volunteer Programme to further engage with young people in the local area.	Resident Involvement Team (C.Tyrell)	April 2009	Northwards provide volunteering opportunities for local people.
4.4	Gender, Age, Religion / Belief	Explore possible interest in further E&D Forums for other minority groups, for example LGBT	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	May 2009	A wider range of residents have the opportunity to

		Residents, Women, Young People.			engage with Northwards.
4.5	All	Set up Resident Advisory Panels to incorporate residents who cannot or do not wish to attend meetings but are willing to provide feedback on an ad hoc basis.	Business Improvement Team (S.Kohli)	April 2009	Residents unable to attend formal meetings have the opportunity to put their views forward.
4.6	All	Support E&D Forums to produce a Hate Incident Information Leaflet to raise awareness and outline reporting procedure.	E&D Officer (T.Kelly)	January 2009	Forum members are actively involved in supporting other residents to access hate incident reporting process.
4.7	All	Review use of Community Facilities and investigate other options, for example drop ins for community groups, resident forums.	Resident Involvement Team (C.Tyrell)	April 2009	Community facilities are utilised effectively and to the benefit of the wider community.

## 5.0 Harassment and Domestic Abuse

Link	Equality Strand	Action	Lead Officer / Team	Timescale	Outcome
5.1	All	Promote revised Hate Incident Policy and Procedure to all employees and residents.	Neighbourhood Services (J.Wilson)	September 2008	Hate incidents are reported and dealt with efficiently and with sensitivity.
5.2	All	Review satisfaction by equality	Neighbourhood	November 2009	Satisfaction with the

		category of Hate Incident Reporting Process.	Services (J.Wilson)		new procedure is analysed and any cause for dissatisfaction are addressed.
5.3	All	Training for all front-line employees and awareness raising sessions on the effects of Hate Crime on different minority groups.	Neighbourhood Services/ E&D Officer (J.Wilson/T.Kelly)	September 2008	Employees are following the new procedure and are aware of the issues facing victims.
5.4	All	Promote positive action taken against perpetrators of Hate Crime.	Neighbourhood Services/ E&D Officer (T.Kelly/J.Wilson)	Quarterly	Awareness is raised of actions taken by Northwards and our zero tolerance approach to crime.
5.5	All	Review of pilot Domestic Abuse Policy and Sanctuary Schemes.	Neighbourhood Services (E.Foster)	January 2009	Success of new scheme is measured and outcomes addressed.
5.6	All	Promote awareness of Domestic Abuse, including non-stereotypical victims of abuse (heterosexual men, gay men and gay women, disabled people)	Neighbourhood Service/E&D Officer (E.Foster/T.Kelly)	March 2009	Awareness is raised of the issues surrounding domestic abuse.

## 6.0 Partnership Working

Link	Equality Strand	Action	Lead Officer / Team	Timescale	Outcome
6.1	All	Establish an Equality and Diversity Assessment Programme for contracting partners.	Home Improvements Team (S.Kirkham)	April 2010	Northwards act as an exemplar of equality and diversity.
6.2	All	Create a central monitoring point for contracting partners equality policies, Diversity KPI's and training initiatives.	Home Improvements Team/ E&D Officer (S.Kirkham/T.Kelly)	October 2008	Equality performance is monitored and a partnership approach is taken to address needs of under-represented groups.
6.3	All	Publish a local Community and Voluntary Group Directory/Database which is regularly updated with relevant contact details.	Business Improvement Team (M.Whalley)	January 2009	Employees can access the database and use for involvement and consultation exercises.
6.4	All	Work in partnership with Manchester Regeneration Team on Community Cohesion Strategy to bring together existing actions and to plan future initiatives.	Regeneration Manager/E&D Officer (G.Lees/T.Kelly)	October 2008	A partnership approach is taken to ensure cohesion initiatives are successful.
6.5	Age	Work with local schools to promote positive community relations and develop new initiatives.	Resident Involvement Forum/ Neighbourhood Wardens	March 2009	Northwards are actively involved in helping to promote and create

			(C.Tyrell/T.Dalton)		successful, integrated communities.
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