

## SERVITE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

<b>Policy Guardian:</b>	Corporate Services Manager
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<b>Diversity compliant:</b>	Yes
<b>Data Protection compliant:</b>	Yes
<b>Health &amp; Safety compliant:</b>	Yes

## **1. Policy Aims**

- 1.1 Servite Housing Association is committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all. Our aim is to provide an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life, and offer a culture that respects and values each others differences.
- 1.2 Servite Housing Association is committed as a landlord, purchaser and provider of services, and employer, to provide equality of opportunity so that people are treated fairly regardless of age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Association operates a zero tolerance stance towards incidents involving equality and diversity issues.
- 1.3 All employees are required to abide by this policy. Our aim is that we have a representative and diverse workforce and that each employee feels respected and able to give of their best. The policy also covers discrimination by and towards members of the public, committee, members, contractors and staff from other agencies. Servite Housing Association opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to employment.

## **2. Objectives**

- 2.1 Servite Housing Association wishes to ensure equality and diversity practices are integrated into everything it does. Therefore we will adopt the following principles:
  - Promote equality and diversity and social inclusion in the communities we work in
  - Deliver equality of opportunity in all areas of our service provision
  - Provide an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life, and a culture that respects and values each others' differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity
  - Promote equality and diversity within employment for existing and prospective employees

Servite Housing Association will set further operational targets with in our Departmental Activity Plans which will further support this policy.

## **3. Delivery**

- 3.1 **Servite Housing Association will promote equality and diversity and social inclusion in the communities we work in:**

All of Servite Housing Association's key strategic documents will take account of the principles of this policy and each will contain an equality statement to reinforce this.

The principles of this policy will run through all Servite Housing Association's policies and each will contain an equality statement to reinforce this. Policies will be regularly reviewed to reflect changes and to

ensure they do not discriminate either directly or indirectly against any group or individual.

We will maintain existing and develop new policies and procedures which deal with specific issues that are key to the delivery of this policy, for example Anti Social Behaviour, Bullying and Harassment Policy, and Grievance Policy.

We will, where feasible, make information and official documents available in alternative formats, for example, large print, disk and community languages. (Through our association with Happy to Translate.)

We will encourage those we work with, such as contractors and consultants to have appropriate equality and diversity policies or to adopt the Servite Housing Association Policy.

We will ensure our employment practices, including recruitment and conditions of employment are fair and not discriminatory against any group or individual. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Association.

We will ensure new staff and committee members receive induction and training on this policy, and appropriate training and guidance on promoting equality and diversity is given to existing staff.

We will take part in relevant joint working and partnerships which promote the Association's and/or the community's understanding of, and effectiveness in dealing with, equalities issues.

We will identify and share good practice in equalities issues.

### **3.2 The delivery of equality of opportunity in all areas of our service provision:**

We will encourage and support active participation in our governing body structure, residents groups, focus groups and tenant panels which reflects the composition of Servite membership

We will consult with service users and the wider community where relevant in the review of policies.

We will provide appropriate housing within a suitable environment, consulting with the community and other partners or agencies to achieve this.

We will build new homes to an appropriate standard.

We will provide equal access to housing and the associated housing management and maintenance services. This will include working with partners to achieve this objective.

We will, where feasible, make information and official documents available in alternative formats, for example, large print, disk, community languages.

We will gather relevant equal opportunities statistics relating to applications for housing, our members, and applicants for employment and staff members to help us monitor this policy and any targets set within other policies. We will monitor performance against comparable service providers where possible.

As appropriate we will undertake equality impact assessments to ensure that our services are compliant with equality legislation and are meeting the needs of our diverse communities.

### **3.3 Committee and Management Responsibilities**

Servite's Committee of Management fully accepts responsibility for the implementation of this policy, with operational responsibilities delegated to the Chief Executive.

Servite Senior Management shall ensure that they and their staff operate within the policy and arrangements, and that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination. Each manager will ensure that they:

- Demonstrate commitment to the Policy by incorporating it into departmental plans/objectives.
- Be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Policy within departmental plans/objectives.
- Ensure that policies and strategies are communicated to all employees and allow for discussion and feedback.
- Ensure that all employees understand their responsibilities i.e. any form of discrimination will not be tolerated and will be treated as a serious offence which may lead to disciplinary action.
- Effectively manage and deal promptly and thoroughly with any complaints of discrimination including harassment, victimisation and bullying.
- Deal promptly with complaints of inequality and ensure the matter is investigated thoroughly and any other steps taken.
- Consider their actions and ensure that there is no scope for inequitable practices. They must ensure fairness and equality of treatment in all practices.

Unacceptable behaviour and practices must not occur, however if or when a situation arises it will be dealt with immediately, as inaction is not an option. Breaches of the Equality and Diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct.

### **3.4 Individual Responsibility**

Whilst the responsibility for ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination rests with management, the attitudes of staff members are a vital to the success of the organisation. In particular, all members of staff should:

- Ensure that they do not discriminate in any matter of employment or service provision/delivery by treating all individuals or groups fairly and respectfully;

Not discriminate against, harass, abuse, intimidate or victimise other employees or service users.

- Ensure that they understand the Policy and are clear about its implications i.e. that any breach of the policy will be treated seriously and may lead to disciplinary action not excluding the sanction of dismissal.
- Not induce or attempt to induce other employees to discriminate against, harass, intimidate or victimise other employees or service users.
- Take appropriate action if there are apparent breaches of the Policy. Informing their Line Manager or Human Resources Officer in the first instance.

### **3.4 Member Responsibilities**

The Tenancy Agreement details the rights, obligations and responsibilities in holding an Association tenancy, with respect to areas relevant to equality and diversity such as anti social behaviour and harassment. The Tenant Handbook also offers guidance and information in these areas.

### **3.5 Departmental Activity Plans**

Departmental Activity Plans will support the delivery, operationally, of this policy. All areas of the business will be covered by these plans with regular reviews taking place so that effectiveness can be measured and further improvements developed in all areas of our business.

## **4. Training**

- 4.1 Servite Housing Association is committed to training and developing staff and committee members to their full potential in order to deliver a high quality of service in all areas of its business to members and the public.
- 4.2 The employee induction programme will include an overview of this policy, including responsibilities for the promotion and delivery of equal opportunities as relevant to their job descriptions. Committee members and staff will receive updates on these issues and specific training on any specialised areas of equalities issues as required. Training needs are identified on an ongoing basis by various means including through the regular staff one to one sessions and the annual staff appraisal process.

## **5. Monitoring and Reporting**

- 5.1 The Committee will monitor this policy through reports which will be produced annually and presented to the Committee of Management. Reports will include Equal Opportunities Statistical reports on applicants for housing and employment, members, and staff.
- 5.2 The information collected for monitoring purposes will be treated as confidential and it will not be used for any other purpose.

- 5.3 The effectiveness of the Policy will also be measured against any targets set within Departmental Activity Plans and performance will be reported to the Committee of Management on an annual basis.

## **6. Review**

- 6.1 This policy will be approved by the Committee of Management and is reviewed in consultation, with staff, members and other relevant agencies. It will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, or monitoring and reporting or good practice reveals that a change in Policy is required sooner.

## **7. Legislative Guidance**

- 7.1 This policy has been developed within the framework of existing equal opportunities legislation. This commitment to continual evaluation will ensure that all new or anticipated legislation will be reviewed and incorporated within the policy as appropriate.

The Association aims to comply with all relevant current legislation including the Equality Act 2010.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Glossary**

#### **Diversity**

Is about valuing individual differences. Servite is committed to valuing and managing peoples' difference to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential. Servite recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experience can bring fresh ideas and perceptions that will benefit Servite as well as respect for all clients.

#### **Equality**

Making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality is not about treating everyone the same way, but recognises that their needs are met in different ways. Equality focuses on those areas covered by the law, namely the key areas of age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

#### **Ethnicity**

A strict definition of an ethnic group is a group regarded as a distinct community by virtue of certain essential characteristics - a shared history which distinguishes it from other groups and a cultural tradition of its own. Sikhs and Gypsies are examples. However, it has come to have a broader meaning and the expression "ethnic monitoring" is used in reference to groups defined by colour, race or national origin as well.

#### **Gender**

The word 'gender' is often used in place of the word 'sex' in equality issues. 'Gender' does not appear in legislation (except for 'gender re-assignment' - see below) but 'sex discrimination' and 'gender discrimination' are generally interchangeable.

#### **Genuine Occupational Requirements**

The Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act and the Religion or Belief Regulations and the Sexual Orientation Regulations allow for circumstances where a person's sex, racial group, religion or sexual orientation is a genuine requirement for a particular job.

#### **Sexual Orientation**

Whether a person is attracted to people of their own sex, the opposite sex or both sexes. Assumptions and perceptions of a person's sexual orientation are also covered by law.

#### **Direct Discrimination**

Treating someone less favourably than others based on their belonging to one of the groups covered by discrimination law.

## **Indirect Discrimination**

A policy, practice, procedure, provision or criteria that applies to everyone in the same way but might disadvantage a particular group, and which cannot be objectively justified in relation to the job or circumstances.

## **Harassment**

Conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating, offensive or intimidating environment. The intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant; it is the impact on the individual which determines whether harassment has taken place.

## **Victimisation**

Treating someone less favourable and discriminating against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination, complained about the behaviour of someone harassing them or given evidence in someone else's discrimination complaint.

## **Positive Discrimination**

Giving advantage to groups in society which are often underrepresented. Positive Discrimination is unlawful in the UK.

## **Positive Action**

Addressing imbalances by encouraging members of underrepresented groups (usually in relation to job applications). Positive action may be applicable in setting equality targets. No quotas will be set by Servite but equality targets may be set to encourage people from a particular underrepresented group or groups to apply for vacancies.

## **Failure to make Reasonable Adjustments**

Where arrangements disadvantage because of a disability and reasonable adjustments are no made to overcome the disadvantage.

## **Liability**

Employers have legal liability for any act of discrimination (including harassment) carried out by their employees unless the employer can show that they have taken all reasonably practicable steps to prevent it.