

Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

July 2009

Introduction

Places for People embrace diversity because we firmly believe that what makes us different makes us stronger.

We are committed to reflecting diversity and delivering equality in all aspects of the Groups work. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination (either direct or indirect) and we will take positive steps to reflect this in our work.

We will treat everyone fairly and see the diversity of our communities and workforce as a positive strength.

We will continue to build strong communities with a sense of togetherness and we will continue to tackle disadvantage.

We want everyone to realise their potential and benefit from the cultural, social, economic and vitality of our neighbourhoods.

We will meet people's needs to the best of our ability and we understand that delivering equal outcomes does not always mean treating everyone as if they are the same.

Legal Obligations and Regulatory Requirements

Places for People recognises its legal obligations in relation to Equality and Diversity. The main pieces of the UK equalities legislation is listed here and covered in more detail on our Equality and Diversity Toolkit:-

- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Disability Equality Duty (DED) 2006
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (updated 1986)
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- CRE Code of Practice for Employment
- CRE Code of Practice for Housing
- Equality Act 2006

There are also certain requirements / standards in respect of Equality and Diversity set by organisations such as the Tenant Services Authority, Supporting People, CSCI and the Audit Commission which we are expected to meet.

We believe though that our responsibility for equality is wider than those areas currently covered by legislation and we strive to be an organisation which not only meets but exceeds the standards set by other bodies in this area. We are committed to achieving equality for all by removing direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion beliefs, HIV status, or disability plus any other ground which cannot be shown to be justified. We are also committed to tackling social exclusion in its widest sense.

Our Commitment as a Service Provider

- To build and deliver services, facilities and resources that are accessible, relevant and of use to every individual in the communities in which we work.
- To better understand who our customers are so that we are able to provide appropriate services which are accessible to all people within the communities which we serve.
- To be mindful that people are different and that when and how we help and advise our customers will be different.
- To provide clear, meaningful information about Places for People services in ways that are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our communities.
- To promote and market housing and other products and services to a range of different communities including: Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities, Gay, Lesbian, Disabled, different faiths etc.
- To work with partners in consulting with all sections of the community on service needs and provision.
- To monitor allocation of properties and evaluate services to ensure they do not discriminate or exclude individuals or people from different groups.
- To actively consult with different individuals and communities to ensure that services which are provided are responsive and reflect the diversity of need.
- To ensure that our services meet Best Value principles, Quality Assurance measures, The Audit Commission and Tenant Services Authority requirements.

Our Commitment as an Employer

- To foster working environments where all people are able to give their best and are free from discrimination, intimidation, harassment or bullying. Any member of staff displaying such behaviours will be subject to disciplinary action.
- To provide an environment where staff feel welcome and safe and where their dignity is maintained and respected at all times.
- To have a workforce reflecting the communities which we work in with people from the different groups represented at all levels in the staffing structure.
- To ensure that staff understand how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better quality services and so reduce inequality.
- To provide fair access to learning and development opportunities, encouraging and supporting staff in fulfilling their potential.
- To develop an effective communication strategy that actively involves and communicates our policies with all members of staff.
- To provide all employees, with the training and development they need to enable them to achieve the organisations goals in line with Equality and Diversity.
- To provide support to any members of staff who may experience any form of discrimination whilst at work and take appropriate action against perpetrators of harassment, victimisation or discrimination.
- To regularly review our policies to ensure they are fair and reflect best practice.

Responsibilities for Mainstreaming Equality and Diversity within Places for People

All members of staff have a responsibility for mainstreaming Equality and Diversity if we are to be successful in embedding it in to our everyday work. The table below outlines overall key areas of responsibility.

Board Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that policy is applied across Places for People • Ensure compliance with equality legislation
Diversity Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by Group Chief Executive • Corporate responsibility for Group wide activity • Communicates the importance of Equality and Diversity at Group level • Support managers in their local equality activities
Identified Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and lead on equality and Diversity objectives • Advise on strategic policy development and implementation • Provide Equality and Diversity information to regions to assist in the delivery of Regional action plans.
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set and agree targets for delivery of local action plans • Communicate the importance and adherence of Equality and Diversity • Promote equality of opportunity for staff members • Ensure that all staff reach their full potential • Use measures to address inequality • Actively consult with different individuals and communities to ensure that the services which are provided are responsive and reflect the diversity of need. • Monitor and review services in line with equality standards • Implement, monitor and review Equality and Diversity action plans • Ensure that staff are fully trained to perform their roles and that staff are released to attend mandatory programmes of training on Equality and Diversity.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the aims and objectives of the policy statement are achieved. • Encourage Equality and Diversity within Places for People and ensure that their actions do not contribute wittingly or unwittingly to unfair or discriminatory treatment of others. • Support colleagues who may be experiencing unfair or discriminatory treatment through bringing this to the attention of the perpetrator and/or by encouraging the recipient to take action through informal and formal procedures.
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that they adhere to the Group's equality and Diversity policy

Communicating the Policy

- All employees will receive a copy of the Equality and Diversity policy, in an appropriate format, and we will fully consult our employees when developing our equality scheme.
- The intranet will be used to communicate Equality and Diversity issues to both our employees and managers will be required to filter down this information to staff that do not have access to computers.
- Customers will receive a version of the Groups Equality and Diversity policy which will be clear and comprehensive and available in appropriate formats to meet identified needs.
- The policy will be held on the Groups intranet and a copy placed on the external website so that partners and other stakeholders can access.
- Managers are responsible for keeping all employees well informed of what is happening in the business regarding Equality and Diversity.
- Employees are expected to keep themselves informed of what is happening in the business and locally in the areas in which they work and are responsible for making any issues of concern or interest known to their management teams.

Putting this policy into practice

The delivery of this policy will be reflected through our Equality Scheme, our golden threaded business plan and specific initiatives listed below:

- Carrying out equal impact assessments and delivering outcomes
- Self assessments and improvement through diversity health checks

- Improving knowledge and understanding through our equality champions network
- Involving customers and partners to shape our future activities
- External and internal benchmarking
- Working with partners and sharing good practice
- Learning from complaints and compliments
- Delivering positive messages and clear direction throughout our learning and developing programmes
- Ensuring that equality and diversity is embedded throughout our procurement activity.

Monitoring and Review

We will review this policy and our employment practices and procedures every three years to ensure fairness for all. Breaches of this policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings. This policy is fully supported by our Executive and Board members and has been shared with our trade union representatives. This policy is an integral part of our managing delivery programme and will be used as a basis for our ethos and direction. It also underpins our business planning activity which is reviewed regularly and will be reflected in our annual report.

Contact Us

You can find out more or get in touch by visiting our website at: **www.placesforpeople.co.uk**

If you have any suggestions for improving this policy please contact the Diversity Team on **01904 650 153** or send an email to: **pamela.brown@placesforpeople.co.uk**

If you would like this document in another format or community language, for example in large print or on tape please telephone our customer contact centre on **0800 432 0002**.