



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1) POLICY STATEMENT

The Equal Opportunities Policy is intended to cover all areas of operations within Milnbank Housing Association. The principles upon which it is based are applicable to the activities of all Staff, Committee members and the Association as a whole. In recognition of the Association's commitment to equal opportunities, an Equality Action Plan is compiled and reviewed annually.

The Management Committee, as employers, is jointly responsible for any acts of discrimination by Committee members, Staff or agents and as such aims to prevent and eliminate discrimination. The day to day responsibility of ensuring equal opportunities is maintained is delegated to the Management Team; with the Director retaining the overall equalities remit.

2) EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AIMS

The Association aims to ensure that it provides equal opportunities:

- a) In the services it provides to residents, applicants and other customers.
- b) In access to membership of the Association, the Management Committee and the engagement of members and other volunteers in its activities.
- c) In its recruitment and employment of staff

The Association seeks to ensure that no person is treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons applying for housing, employment or work under contract to the Association on the grounds of their gender, marital status, family circumstances, employment status, disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality, age, religion or sexual orientation

3) EQUAL OPPORTUNITY LEGISLATION

The Association is committed to the implementation of good practice throughout the organisation and is committed to the provisions of the various Equal Opportunities legislation, Codes of Practice and Guidance Notes.

The main legislation the Association complies with is The Equality Act 2010 which harmonised and replaced previous legislation. Details of the main points for this and other relevant legislation and how they impact on the Association in terms of equal opportunities is as follows:

- a) The Equality Act 2010
Under this Act it's unlawful to discriminate against an employee or job applicant because of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. It also covers direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination by association, perception discrimination, harassment, third party harassment and victimisation.
- a) Human Rights Act 1998
Act now extends to the right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions and protection of property, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of convention rights.

- c) Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 & 2010
This Act places a statutory duty on housing associations to encourage equal opportunities. This stipulates such areas as tenant participation and consultation, allocations, homelessness strategies, grounds for recovery of possession and rights under the Scottish Secure Tenancy must meet the requirements of this Act.

4) ORGANISATION ARRANGEMENTS

To help fulfil its commitment to Equal Opportunities the Association will collect and monitor appropriate information in relation to: -

Housing - including housing applicants, applicants accepted, applicants rehoused, development programmes, homeless strategy.

Employment - including advertising, requests, interviews.

Current Racial Profile -including tenants, employees, shareholders, Committee members.

Tenant Participation/Consultation - including membership details of the Association, publicity of equal opportunities issues.

The Committee will be presented with an annual statistical report based on the above.

5) RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ASSOCIATION AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

- a. Residents -As a public body, the Association will seek to provide sufficient and appropriate information to residents and other customers by a method that ensures information is available regardless of disability or impairment.
- b. Housing Applicants - The Association will seek to ensure that information about allocation procedures is easily available, and that decisions about access to the housing list and the allocation of property is made solely on the basis of housing need. (For full details please refer to the Allocations Policy)
- c. Agreements with other Housing providers - The Association will seek to ensure that outside parties involved in housing agreements comply with the Association's own standard, as a minimum, regarding equal opportunities.
- d. Contractors/Consultants Equality Compliance - As recipients of public subsidiary, the Association will seek to ensure that public funds are not used to promote practices that may be based on discrimination. Consequently the Association will seek to award to those Contractors and Consultants who develop and implement an Equal Opportunities Policy or agree to abide by the Associations Equal Opportunities Policy.
- e. The Community - The Association actively promotes its involvement in networking and supporting local community groups and encourages the promotion of equal opportunities in all forms.

- f. Harassment and Grievance - The Association has implemented Dealing with Harassment Policy and Complaints Handling Procedure to respond to complaints of harassment or grievance in order that such cases are dealt with fairly and impartially.
- g. Confidentiality - The Association will seek to ensure that the staff and management committee members observe the Code of Conduct in terms of confidentiality and in relation to personal information regarding tenants, clients, staff, Committee Members and others, regardless of their circumstances, status or any other factors.
- h. Health and Safety - The Association has implemented a Health and Safety Policy to ensure that everyone is equally informed and aware that their health and safety needs are given fair and equal consideration.
- i. Training & Development - The Association will facilitate training for staff and committee members in order to recognise the importance of equal opportunities and, where necessary, provide additional training for staff that recruit, select and train employees.

6) EMPLOYMENT

The Association will seek to ensure that all individuals will be treated fairly and equally and any decisions on staff development, recruitment and selection will be based on the essential job evaluation and criteria. The Association is a recognised 'Positive about Disabled People' user which demonstrates our commitment to good policies and practices in the employment with people with disabilities. The Association's pay system is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

The Association's recruitment process is detailed in the Recruitment & Selection Policy which guards against unfair discrimination and covers job evaluation, job description, job specification, advertising, short listing, interviewing and offers of employment.

7) DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

To maximise awareness, this policy is distributed to all employees, Contractors and Consultants, it forms part of the Committee Members Handbook and is displayed in the Associations office. It will be available on request, free of charge, to any member of the public. This policy is available in: Braille, type talk and large print. The Association shall also arrange the use of an Interpreter or Advocate if possible. The Association operates a Miniloop system and a member of staff is trained in sign language.

8) MONITORING & REVIEW

The monitoring of equal opportunities is delegated senior managers and findings presented to committee. This policy is reviewed and adopted annually or as otherwise deemed necessary by the Management Committee

APPENDIX 1

EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

AIM OF THE PLAN

The aim of this Equality Action Plan is to actively promote the Association's continuous commitment to equality in all areas of operation. This plan supports the Equal Opportunities Policy and consolidates equality issues from other organisational policies and procedures.

APPRAISAL OF THE CURRENT POSITION

As part of the Equal Opportunities Policy review, committee members are provided with statistics for monitoring purposes. These figures cover issues relating to: Residents Profile, Association Membership, Ethnic Monitoring, Employment Monitoring etc. These figures are studied and any necessary action is implemented.

TARGETS AND ACTION

It can be difficult setting realistic targets that reflect the needs of all customers. In terms of equality the Association strives to set various targets, in addition to those specified in the Equal Opportunities Policy, these include:

TARGET AREA	ACTION DATE
<p><u>Governance</u> The Association has a number of policies relating to equality e.g. the Complaints Handling Procedure provides access to all customers who wish to lodge a complaint against Association practice. This policy is reviewed annually.</p> <p>Dealing with Harassment Policy is also in place whereby the Association makes a commitment to take action against the perpetrators where harassment exists. This policy is reviewed every 2 years.</p> <p>All Association policies are available in a variety of formats including Braille & large print; residents will be reminded of this in the next newsletter. This information is also displayed in the Association reception area.</p> <p>In recognition of the number of residents with poor mobility, the Association offers a home visiting service; residents will be reminded of this in the next newsletter. The Association is reviewing the current tailored service offered to vulnerable residents with a view to enhancing this provision.</p> <p>The Association has a number of flats that have been specially adapted to facilitate tenants who are deaf or have impaired hearing. The Association has an audit of this equipment.</p>	<p>August 2015</p> <p>Feb. 2016</p> <p>Summer 2015</p> <p>Summer 2015</p>
<p><u>Management Committee</u> The Association always endeavours to ensure that the Management Committee reflects the profile of the area and where imbalances exist, an attempt is made to remedy them. There is a mixed range of skills and expertise within the committee. Regular Committee Skills Audits are undertaken & updated as part of the annual review of the</p>	<p>May 2015</p>

<p>Organisational Training & Development Plan.</p> <p>Committee members, and representatives from other groups within the area are actively encouraged to participate in training, this includes training in equal opportunities</p>	
<p><u>Contractors</u></p> <p>It is a pre-requisite for any contractor wishing to be considered for the Association's tender list to agree to abide by our Equal Opportunities Policy. A comprehensive review of the Approved Contractors List is undertaken & reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Aug. 2015</p>
<p><u>Staff</u></p> <p>With the exception of appointments of Support staff, all vacancies within the Association are open to everyone to apply. MHA operates an open recruitment policy.</p> <p>The Association's Equal Opportunities policy forms part of employees Induction. Staff are issued with an updated version of this policy upon each annual review.</p> <p>Staff undertake a job review each year where their personal development plans are updated. Job reviews are scheduled for each October/January with workplace support sessions held on an on-going basis.</p>	<p>April 2015</p> <p>October 2015</p>
<p><u>Tenant Participation/Consultation</u></p> <p>To support the Association's commitment to Tenant Participation a strategy has been implemented and is regularly monitored. An update is reported on a quarterly basis. Participation and consultation is via Focus & Community Groups and the Association offers childcare provision to ensure equal access. In addition, the location of residents meetings is varied to take account of mobility issues.</p> <p>The Association consults on an annual basis on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and area meetings to seek their preferred method of communication.</p>	<p>April, August, November 2015 & Feb 2016</p> <p>August /September 2015</p>
<p><u>Development</u></p> <p>The Association endeavours to reflect the needs of the community when developing new builds and renovating properties, this includes discussions with other agencies. This includes promoting independence by designing, where possible, homes to allow disabled people to gain access.</p> <p>The Association applies for funding to provide adaptations every financial year, where there is a funding shortfall; the Association meets this sum whenever possible.</p>	
<p><u>Maintenance</u></p> <p>The Association's target to remove graffiti is within 24 hours and immediately if it is of an offensive nature.</p> <p>The Association has an in-house repair team who can offer a quick response to requests to assist residents with disabilities e.g. grab rail for the common close.</p> <p>Through support staff, residents are offered support during major repair works within their properties. E.g. during the</p>	

<p>kitchen replacement programme the sheltered common room was available for residents to use.</p>	
<p><u>Allocations</u> The Association strives to provide equality of opportunities for all housing applicants by basing our Allocations Policy on guidelines, standards etc produced by governing bodies. All allocations involve 2 members of staff. The Allocations Policy is reviewed every 2 years.</p> <p>Allocations involving staff or committee members are subject to the Association's Control of Payments & Benefits Policy.</p> <p>The Association monitors ethnic origin from all applicants, this is part of the housing application form. From details supplied, records are kept on gender etc and are used purely for monitoring purposes.</p> <p>The Allocations Policy allows for applicants who require carers to be considered for larger accommodation and in terms of areas, an allocation would not be made where there is potential of racial or any other form of harassment.</p>	<p>Sept. 2015</p>
<p><u>Rents</u> The Association is aware of tenant's income and this information is taken into account during the rent review process. The Rent Policy is reviewed on an annual basis.</p>	<p>February 2015</p>

