



## Selby District Council Housing Services

### EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

#### OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The overall purpose of this policy is to ensure that Selby District Council's Housing Service Unit promotes equality and diversity in all its activities and services to customers, recognising the needs of individuals, groups and local communities.

This policy aims to complement Selby District Council's corporate Equality and Diversity policies whilst providing specific guidance on how the Housing Service Unit can ensure equality and diversity is at the heart of all its practices.

#### HOW THE POLICY WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

Those working at a management level are responsible for making sure that all legal and regulatory obligations are met. All staff will receive guidance and training to make sure that they are fully aware of their responsibilities with regard to equality and diversity policies and have the necessary skills to carry them out.

#### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

##### BVPI's

BV74 - The percentage of all council tenants, or a representative sample of council tenants, stating that they are satisfied with the overall service provided by their landlord when surveyed: with results further broken down by (i) black and minority ethnic and (ii) non-black and minority ethnic tenants.

BV75 - Satisfaction of tenants of council housing with opportunities for participation in management and decision-making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord: with results further broken down by (i) black and minority ethnic and (ii) non-black and minority ethnic tenants.

BV156 – The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people

Development of tenant empowerment (numbers of tenants involved in decision-making)

##### Local Indicators

LIE01 - % housing applications from ethnic minority backgrounds

LIE02 - % allocations made to ethnic minorities

LIE03 - % of anti-social behaviour cases reported by ethnic minorities

LIE04 - % of homeless decisions made relating to ethnic minorities

LIE05 - Number of racially-motivated incidents

## **TARGETS**

### **Corporate Target**

To achieve Level 2 of the Equalities Scheme

### **Satisfaction**

82.5% tenant satisfaction with overall service provided by the Housing Service Unit

70% tenant satisfaction with arrangements for participation

### **Lettings**

To ensure that lettings to BME applicants are proportionate to BME householders in housing need in the area

### **Dealing with Racial Harassment**

To achieve 100% victim satisfaction with the support and manner in which their incident was dealt

### **Tenant Groups**

To ensure that representation of BME tenants and residents is proportionate to the ethnic profile of the community the Housing Service Unit serves

To ensure that the terms of reference for every tenant group includes a statement on equal opportunities

To ensure all tenant groups receive training on this policy and on equality and diversity

**Policy approved by Social Board:**

**First Review Date:** August 2007

**Responsible Officer:** Policy and Partnership Officer

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

### **1 STATEMENT OF INTENT**

- 1.1 Selby District Council's Housing Service Unit is committed to the principle that all customers and staff have the right to the same high standards of provision and services.
- 1.2 The Housing Service Unit is committed to fair and equal treatment for all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.
- 1.3 The Housing Service Unit is committed to the recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity, which enables people from all ethnic groups to achieve their potential and not be subject to racial prejudice and racial discrimination.
- 1.4 The Housing Service Unit will seek to ensure that no unlawful or unfair discrimination takes place against an individual or group, directly or indirectly, because of their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.
- 1.5 The housing department's approach to equality and diversity will be based upon:
  - Transparency;
  - Accountability;
  - Proportionality;
  - Consistency;
  - Targeting.
- 1.6 The Housing Service Unit will monitor performance and is fully committed to working with the Equal Opportunities Work Group (EOWG) and implementing the Corporate Equality Scheme to aid the improvement of equality practices within the Council.
- 1.7 The Housing Service Unit accepts its responsibilities to comply with all relevant legislation including the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986, The Equal Pay Act 1970, the Race Relations Act 1976 and 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999.
- 1.8 This policy applies to all aspects of the Housing Service Unit including Property Services, Rent collection and Arrears Recovery. All Housing Service Unit policies will be reviewed to ensure they comply with this policy.

### **2 OUTLINE OF SERVICE**

- 2.1 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that the principles of equality apply across all of its activities and that it is an integral part of service delivery. We will work to ensure that our staff, residents and tenants are not subjected to discrimination, harassment or injustice – either directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, disability, religion and cultural practice,

sexual orientation, gender, language and communication, age, economic status, employment status, lifestyle or appearance.

- 2.2 The housing department recognises its obligation to ensure the fullest participation of the whole community in every aspect of its operations and the housing department aims to embrace equality and diversity across all of its activities.
- 2.3 This policy aims to support Selby District Council's corporate policies on equality and diversity and improve the ways in which the housing department try to eliminate discrimination and promote good practice.

### **3 SPECIFIC NEEDS**

- 3.1 The housing department will take into account the specific needs, which may arise of older and vulnerable people, people with disabilities, and Black and Minority Ethnic groups, in a manner that promotes equality and inclusiveness. The housing department will also learn from its partners and other organisations in order to deliver better services to meet the needs of its customers.

### **4 STAFFING AND EMPLOYMENT**

- 4.1 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that Selby District Council's corporate policy on 'Equal Opportunities in Employment' is fully implemented within its department.
- 4.2 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that every housing employee is trained on equality, in partnership with the Human Resources Unit. Those with management responsibility will ensure that this policy is implemented throughout the department and that all employees understand it.

### **5 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1 The Housing Service Unit will ensure equality of opportunity for all staff in the selection procedures for courses leading to qualifications identified at a JPR and will make a provision for this annually within the training budget.
- 5.2 It will ensure that all staff have the same training opportunities regardless of their working arrangements, receiving support from line managers.

### **6 MEETING HOUSING NEED**

- 6.1 The Housing Service Unit will work to identify and address the housing needs and related needs of local communities through a range of options and initiatives, to provide affordable and supported housing. The needs of the local community will be addressed in the Housing Strategy.

### **7 ALLOCATIONS**

- 7.1 The Housing Service Unit is committed to allocating homes in a way that promotes choice, considers peoples' needs and encourages the development of sustainable and balanced communities.

- 7.2 The Housing Service Unit will develop its housing strategy to remove barriers, which may discourage applicants from certain groups or communities.
- 7.3 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that its Selection, Allocation and Transfer policies and related procedures do not discriminate directly or indirectly in relation to gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.

## **8 SERVICE DELIVERY**

- 8.1 The Housing Service Unit is committed to delivering the highest standards of housing and related services in meeting the diverse needs of local communities. It will achieve this by implementing the corporate 'Equal Opportunities in Service Provision' policy and by:
- Treating people fairly regardless of ethnicity in all aspects of housing service delivery and access to services;
  - Promoting good relations between people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason;
  - Monitoring demographic changes in the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population resulting from any dispersal of asylum seekers to Selby district and thus ensuring that asylum seekers and refugees receive appropriate support services in assisting their integration into local communities;
  - Promote social inclusiveness through working in partnership with other housing providers to establish housing support needs and preferences to meet the diverse needs of local communities;
  - Providing periodic reports to Social Board and management meetings on how existing and future services meet the diverse needs of local communities;
  - Providing housing services that are sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals, groups and local communities;
  - Ensuring that customers, stakeholders and service users have suitable access to our customer service access points, ensuring that the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 are met.

## **9 HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION**

- 9.1 The Housing Service Unit will take vigorous action against perpetrators of any form of harassment to its residents or staff.
- 9.2 The Housing Service Unit will implement the Corporate Statement on Equal Opportunities by working with other agencies and organisations to eliminate discrimination, harassment and attacks on any group or individual.
- 9.3 The Housing Service Unit will actively encourage the reporting of racial incidents, provide effective support and guidance and proactively resolve any incidents.
- 9.4 All forms of harassment or discrimination against or by a tenant, employee or contractor will be dealt with promptly, firmly and sensitively.

- 9.5 Where the perpetrator is known and is a service user, employee or contractor, the housing department will take appropriate action against them. All potentially violent incidents will be recorded and monitored. Relevant staff will be informed of any new additions to the Potentially Violent Register, to ensure their safety.
- 9.6 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that all staff are also made aware of the Discrimination Reporting Form, which should be used to report any incidents of discrimination. This involves discriminatory practice including incidents relating to race, religion, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation.
- 9.7 The Housing Service Unit is committed to working in partnership with the Community Safety Partnership and providing any necessary help and assistance to implement the Selby District Community Safety Partnership Action Plan.
- 9.8 For further information on harassment and discrimination please see the Housing Service Unit's policy on Anti-Social Behaviour.

## **10 RESIDENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, FEEDBACK AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

- 10.1 The Housing Service Unit places tenant involvement and participation at the heart of all its activities, and this includes incorporating BME residents' views, expectations and aspirations regarding our housing service.
- 10.2 The Housing Service Unit will deliver high standards of service to people living in our communities within a framework of empowerment and Best Value.
- 10.3 The Housing Service Unit will reflect the views and expectations of local residents in its service planning and review processes in monitoring performance and improving services.
- 10.4 In supporting community groups, including Tenants' and Residents' Associations, the Housing Service Unit will work with those groups to ensure that equality and diversity principles are integrated into their terms of reference and are acted upon.
- 10.5 As part of its general approach to tenant participation and involvement, the Housing Service Unit will develop and support structures to ensure that all groups are able to become involved in our activities regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.
- 10.6 The Housing Service Unit will actively consult all key diversity group representatives on how they would like to be involved in participation and consultation in relation to service delivery and review.
- 10.7 The Housing Service Unit will provide translation and interpretation services that encourage and facilitate involvement from all of our customers, stakeholders and service users.

## **11 CONTRACTORS, CONSULTANTS, SUPPLIERS AND PROCUREMENT**

- 11.1 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that contractors, consultants and suppliers and organisations receiving funding from the housing department adhere to this Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 11.2 As a criterion for award of work or contracts and as a condition for doing business, the Housing Service Unit will specify its requirements on contractors, consultants and suppliers in meeting equal opportunities legislation and eliminating all forms of discrimination.
- 11.3 Further information is available in Selby District Council's Contracts Procedure Rules and Code of Practice.

## **12 CONSULTATION**

- 12.1 The Housing Service Unit will seek the views of customers and staff on our policies in a variety of different ways.
- 12.2 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that all information provided to service users is in plain language and in a variety of different formats and languages on request including Braille, large print and audio cassette. A Language Line service will be made available and Induction Loops provided at all Service Access Points.
- 12.3 The Housing Service Unit will involve tenants and other stakeholders in setting standards, monitoring performance, evaluating and reviewing services and carrying out service reviews as required.
- 12.4 The Housing Service Unit will ensure that tenants are involved at a level at which they choose in accordance with the standards of the Tenant Participation and Consultation Policy, ensuring equality of access for consultation and involvement.

## **13 MONITORING**

- 13.1 The Housing Service Unit will use information from surveys and research to continually improve policies and services. It will also collate other relevant statistics and information and will use this when it undertakes review of policies and services. We will monitor services to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds find them equally accessible and are equally satisfied with our service delivery.
- 13.2 The Housing Service Unit will monitor the needs of housing applicants, tenants and service users to ensure that targets are being met in accordance with this policy.
- 13.3 The collection and analysis of information regarding the numbers, ethnic origin and disability status of staff or services users shall be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## **14 REVIEW**

- 14.1 The Housing Service Unit will periodically review this policy, ensuring that Equality and Diversity lies at the heart of all housing services and employment practices.
- 14.2 There will be an automatic review of this policy whenever there is a change of policy or legislation from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The policy will be reviewed when other information becomes available that will impact on the policy, such as the outcome of a Best Value Review.

## **15 LEGISLATION AND OTHER DOCUMENTS**

Race Relations Act 1976 and associated Code of Practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and associated Code of Practice issued by the CRE

Code of Practice in Rented Housing CRE

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 & 1986 Amendment and associated Code of Practice issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission

Human Rights Act 1998

Equal Pay Act 1970

Employment Rights Act 1996

Employment Relations Act 1999

Employment Act 2002

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

Data Protection Act 1998

Housing Act 1988

Housing Act 1996

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Race and Housing Inquiry Challenge Report 2001

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

Employment (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

## **16 OTHER RELATED POLICIES**

The housing department aims to reflect its policy on Equality and Diversity throughout all its policies and procedures and specifically through continuous improvement reviews. The following policies are those most closely related:

**Corporate Policies:**

Selby District Council's Corporate Statement of Equal Opportunities

Selby District Council's Equality Scheme – Celebrating Diversity

Selby District Council's Equal Opportunities in Employment

Selby District Council's Equal Opportunities in Service Provision

Selby District Council's Equal Opportunities Policy (Service Area)

Selby District Council's Discrimination Reporting Form

Selby District Council's Contracts Procedure Rules and Code of Practice