



## Equality and Diversity Policy

<b>Procedure owner/author:</b>	<b>Housing Services Manager</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Stoke on Trent Housing Society Board</b>
<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup> December 2018</b>
<b>Next review date:</b>	<b>December 2023</b>

### 1. Policy Statement

Stoke on Trent Housing Society recognises that certain groups and individuals in society may be disadvantaged because of the discrimination they experience as a result of age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. These are protected characteristics under the law and we are committed to ensure that our policies and practices promote equality of opportunity for all.

The Society is committed to equality and diversity across all its services and aims to ensure that no one is treated less favourably for a reason that cannot be justified.

The Society will:

- Ensure that the services we provide are without bias and prejudice and are accessible to all of our Tenants.
- Work with other organisations to tackle the barriers that our tenants face.
- Work towards eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity.

We want all employees, job applicants, tenants and board members to feel valued, respected and able to participate. Therefore any form of prejudice, discrimination, harassment or victimisation will not be tolerated.

This policy sets out the framework to explain how we work to ensure that discrimination and inequality of opportunity do not occur within the Society.

### 2. Accountability and Responsibility

This policy will apply to:

- The recruitment and employment of staff and Board Members
- Our service provision

It will be the responsibility of all staff and Board members to implement this policy.

### 3. Legal Framework

The Society will comply with the Equality Act 2010 which identifies nine characteristics / strands of diversity which are protected from all forms of discrimination. These are defined within the Act as:

- Race
- Disability
- Sex or gender
- Gender identity
- Age
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity

In addition to those who possess a protected characteristic listed above, those who are perceived to possess a characteristic and those who are associated with someone who possesses a characteristic (e.g. family members or friends, but can also include anyone who provides unpaid support i.e. carers) are also protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

### 4. Policy Statement

The Society has a number of function and relationships and will have due regard to the Equality Act 2010 in the areas identified below:

#### ***Partners and Contractors***

- Ensure that the partners/contractors with whom we work have an Equality and Diversity Policy in place or understand and are willing to adopt our policy
- Invite our contractors to attend equality and diversity training organised by the association

#### ***Staff and Board Members***

- Ensure that all staff and Board members are aware of and fulfil their obligations with regard to equality and diversity issues
- Challenge and investigate discriminatory behaviour and enforce the disciplinary procedure when necessary
- Take steps to ensure diversity within the staff team and at board level
- Equip staff to provide a tailored service to Tenants based on the Tenants needs
- Provide equality and diversity training
- Ensure that our recruitment and selection practices are fair and that all appointments are made on merit
- Report any suspected breaches of this Equality and Diversity Policy to the Housing Services Manager or, in the case of a Board member, to the Company Secretary

Employees who breach this policy and associated procedures will render themselves liable to investigation and to possible disciplinary procedure.

Board members who breach this policy will render themselves liable to investigation in accordance with our Board Members' Code of Conduct.

#### ***Access and Service Delivery***

- We will ensure that our services are accessible and fair to all tenants and that they are provided free from discrimination

- We will monitor the allocation of our homes to ensure that they are let fairly and without discrimination
- We will collect and use profiling information to ensure fairness and tailor our services to meet the needs of individual tenants
- We will provide information to our tenants where requested and relevant in a range of accessible formats

### ***Policies and Procedures***

We will develop positive policies and procedures to:

- Promote and monitor equal opportunities
- Prevent, and where necessary deal effectively with, any form of discrimination, harassment, prejudice and victimisation

We will screen all new policies for equality impact to ensure that the policy does not discriminate against any equality strand. If the screening identifies possible discrimination we will carry out a full equality impact assessment.

## **5. Definitions**

### **Equality**

Treating everyone fairly and ensuring that they are given fair chances. It is not about treating everyone in the same way, but recognising 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, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

### **Diversity**

Valuing individual differences.

### **Harassment**

This is conduct that violates a person's dignity or is intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive. 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 favourably 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 giving evidence in someone else's discrimination complaint.

### **Positive Discrimination**

Giving advantages to groups in society which are often under-represented, positive discrimination is unlawful in the UK.

### **Positive Action**

For example, addressing imbalances in the workforce by encouraging members of under represented groups to apply for jobs.

### **Failure to make Reasonable Adjustments**

Where arrangements disadvantage an individual because of a disability and reasonable adjustments are not made to overcome the disadvantage.

### **Direct Discrimination**

Treating a person less favourably than others based on their having one of the protected characteristics under discrimination law.

## **7. Review**

To ensure this Equality and Diversity Policy remains effective, the Society will:

- Review it at regular intervals, when significant changes are made to legislation or guidance or when related policies and procedures are amended
- Present any changes to the Society Board for approval
- Make any amendments known to employees
- Communicate and consult with employees and contractors by bringing the Policy to their attention through induction and continued training