

## **SOUTH ESSEX HOMES**

### **Equal Opportunities Policy Statement**

South Essex Homes aspires to ensure that:

- Residents build strong, proud communities
- Residents develop shared values and a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood
- Residents are involved, engaged and consulted on all key issues
- Diversity is valued and all residents are treated fairly

We aim to be fair and reasonable and non-discriminatory in carrying out all our responsibilities. Equality and diversity will be at the heart of everything that the company does. We are determined to sustain our commitments to promoting equality and diversity by making our services accessible to everyone no matter what their:

- Age
- Race
- Nationality
- Sexual orientation
- Health grounds
- Trade Union membership
- Appearance
- Unrelated criminal background
- Disability
- Colour
- Religious / or other beliefs
- Marital status
- Political affiliation
- Class
- HIV status
- Gender
- Ethnic or national origin
- Gender reassignment
- Responsibility for dependants
- First language
- Income
- Domicile status

### **Legal Framework**

We will promote justice and fair play at all times and fully comply with our legal obligations under the following:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986, Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Act 1999
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Employment Equality (Religious/Beliefs & Sexual Orientation) Act 2003, and Age Regulations 2006
- Equalities Act 2006
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1974
- Protection from Harassment Act 1977
- Local Government Act 2000
- Statutory Codes of Practice

## **Implementation**

We will engage residents and build cohesive communities by:

- Welcoming views from different groups and individuals, especially those who are under represented in our consultation forums
- Meeting the diverse and at times complex needs of all our residents
- Making sure our communities are fully informed, involved, engaged and consulted on all aspects of our work
- Making sure our services are accessible, responsive and meet the needs of the individual users of our service
- Working with our diverse communities and all our partners to build social cohesion - helping to build strong, proud and tolerant communities
- Listening and communicating effectively with residents and other stakeholders

## **Service Delivery**

We will review current functions and policies across all the services we provide to:

- Maximise opportunities to address the needs of disadvantaged groups and communities within major new initiatives, policies and strategies. (These can include, for example, modernisation programmes, a review of caretaking services, racial harassment policy, etc.)
- Ensure that disadvantaged groups have equal access to housing services
- Improve conditions by making the best use of resources available.
- Make sure we and our contractors communicate with residents in the way they prefer
- Ensure that disadvantaged groups are given access to appropriate information to make informed choices about where they want to live (leaflets, signs in Area Offices, language lines, etc.)
- Work with our partner organisations that have the responsibility to identify and address the needs of asylum seekers, travellers and other hidden groups and support their integration in Southend.

- Work with partners to provide a safe living environment, to tackle racial harassment, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence quickly and effectively, including hate crimes, breaches of Anti Social Behaviour Orders and racist incidents (for example, all racist and other offensive graffiti will be removed within twenty four hours of it being reported)
- Work with partners to support victims of crime
- Develop partnership working, using a multi-agency and multi disciplinary approach, with the council, the police, health/Primary Care Trusts and other agencies, so that local people receive well co-ordinated services that will improve their quality of life

### **Employment, training and supporting staff**

We will work to ensure that:

- Staff are valued, well trained and reflect the local population
- Employment policies are fair to all
- Staff understand and meet our customers' needs
- No one seeking employment or provision of service is treated less favourably
- The Board, staff, and contractors are able to incorporate equality and diversity issues into their roles and deliver non- discriminatory services
- We conform to anti-discrimination legislation in the recruitment and selection, retention and promotion of staff.
- We set out procedures and codes of conduct and make sure that everyone knows and understands them
- We develop procedures for dealing with any breaches of these codes; this could take the form of grievance procedures, harassment and bullying policies
- We provide counselling services where necessary and ensure confidentiality at all times
- We provide, where appropriate interpretation and translation services

### **Monitoring outcomes and improving performance**

We will:

- Develop monitoring systems to collate all relevant equality related data in a way that will enable us to deliver our commitments to equality and diversity and improve service delivery
- Set targets to make sure we are delivering on diversity
- Use our understanding of our customer base to prioritise resources
- Consider positive action initiatives where appropriate
- Ensure procurement policies are monitored to make sure we comply with our obligations and equality legislation

- Clearly set out our approach to compliments, complaints and comments and monitor them by the six equality strands; gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religious beliefs
- Conduct equality impact assessments as we review, change or initiate new policies, procedures or projects

This Policy Statement will be reviewed every 2 years in consultation with tenants and residents.

May 2006