

## BRENTWOOD HOUSING TRUST LIMITED

### **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

#### **Purpose and Scope**

The Trust is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all staff, job applicants, clients, visitors and suppliers and aims to ensure that its working environment, homes and services are free from discrimination and harassment.

The Trust does not discriminate against staff on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (protected characteristics).

All staff have a duty to act in accordance with this policy and treat colleagues with dignity at all times, and not to discriminate against or harass other members of staff, regardless of their status.

The Trust shall promote equality and diversity through positive action through the Board of Management and the Trust will strive to be an example of best practice in this field.

All staff will be given appropriate training on equal opportunities awareness and equal opportunities recruitment and selection best practice.

The Trust will take appropriate steps to accommodate the requirements of different religions, cultures, and domestic responsibilities. However, the Trust is only a small RP and cannot always predict the need for literature in other languages or formats. Where reasonably practicable, the Trust will obtain translations of and / or different formats of, its published literature.

Wherever possible the Trust will 'signpost' people to appropriate services that may help to enhance their opportunities and support them in tackling discrimination. The Board of Management will review the Trust's strategy yearly and areas of weakness and issues requiring further analysis will be identified. Action plans to achieve improved performance will be implemented and monitored and reviewed.

#### **The Trust's strategy**

Whilst the Trust's policy is to treat all people equally, ensuring equality requires that homes and services are provided in a way that reflects the differing needs of people in a diverse society; treating everyone the same does not promote inclusion and the Trust will seek to reflect and support diversity in our community. Similarly ensuring that the Trust's workforce at all levels of seniority reflects the communities in which we work will not occur by chance. Specific but different responses are therefore required to achieve our goals.

This policy summarises the Trust's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity and for the purposes of clarity sets out what the Trust proposes to do to prevent discrimination and promote inclusion based on the following:

- Race, colour or ethnic origin
- Nationality or national origin

- Gender or sexual orientation;
- Disability, including sensory impairment;
- Age;
- Religion or belief; and
- Marital or civil partner status.

### **Race Equality -Working with BME Communities**

The Trust is committed to the promotion of good race relations and equality of opportunity and has adopted the vision for race equality as set out in the Challenge Report 2001 and will work to promote good race relations amongst the communities in which the Trust works.

The Trust will support the Local Housing Authority and others in promoting housing services to everyone in the area irrespective of race and / or ethnicity, in accordance with Facing the Facts (commissioned by Essex Housing Officers Group) and will also work in accordance with the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidelines for RPs.

The Trust will comply with all relevant TSA regulations for the management of its homes and regularly (at least once a year) review the provision of services in order to identify any potential barriers that need to be tackled through positive practice. This includes undertaking impact assessments for all new policies as well as the reviewing of existing policies.

### **Gender**

The Trust is opposed to all forms of sex based discrimination and harassment and is committed to achieving gender equality both in the provision of services and in employment.

To achieve its aims the Trust will:

- Strive to create an environment that is free from harassment and sexist language and behaviour;
- Give equal consideration to applications based solely on their ability to do the job, and give equal opportunity to men and women for training, career development and promotion for employees;
- Create family friendly working practices to allow equal opportunity at all levels of employment within the Trust;
- Challenge sexist attitudes and practices evidenced within other organisations with which the Trust works; and
- Create a flexible working environment where work and home life responsibilities are recognised and supported.

### **Disability**

The Trust recognises that people with a disability are disadvantaged both by the environment and by social attitudes which reflect principally the needs of non-disabled people. The Trust's approach is therefore, to apply a social understanding of disability to ensure equality of opportunity for disabled people.

If you are disabled or become disabled and you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you are encouraged to contact the Chief Executive to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. The Trust may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser(s) about possible adjustments. The Trust will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason.

To achieve its aims the Trust will:

- Provide new homes and wherever practicable, refurbish older dwellings to standards which do or can be easily converted to meet the requirements of people with disabilities;
- Strive to provide services that are relevant to the needs of people with disability;
- Make sure that all our services and information about them are accessible and available to people with a disability;
- Ensure that any disabled person applying for a vacancy within the Trust will be judged solely on their ability to do the job;
- Monitor the physical features of the Trust's premises to consider whether those with a disability are disadvantaged compared to other staff and where reasonably possible, will modify its premises and equipment to accommodate people with a disability;
- Regularly audit our services and processes to make sure the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met; and
- Train staff in awareness and confidence to support people with a disability where needed;

## **Older People**

The Trust provides homes and services for older people. It is the Trust's mission to ensure that its homes and services are relevant to the needs of all residents, including older people, for as long as a tenant wishes to remain in their home. Our older residents will be treated with dignity and respect.

Not only does the Trust value older people as customers; it acknowledges the valuable role older people play within the workforce. The Trust will seek to ensure that all employment policies are relevant and fair to all age groups and will work to create an environment where people are judged on their talents, skills and experience, rather than on misconceptions and prejudices about age.

## **Sexuality**

The Trust recognises the very real discrimination that people face in their lives due to their sexuality and life choices. The Trust wants to create an environment where people of all sexualities are free from discrimination and harassment and feel safe to be open about their sexuality and difference if they choose to do so.

To achieve its aims the Trust will:

- Respect an individual's right to define their sexual identity;
- Protect the dignity of women and men at work;
- Work towards enabling employees to feel safe in being open about their sexual identity; and
- Ensure that appropriate awareness training is provided in existing training courses and where necessary make additional provision for such training.

## **Religion**

The Trust aims to tackle discrimination and harassment on the grounds of religion and belief and to promote good relations between people of different religions and beliefs.

To achieve its aims the Trust will:

- Strive to create an environment which recognises and respects all religions and beliefs and is free from discrimination and harassment;
- Develop employment practices and services in ways which recognise and respect religion and belief;
- Improve the understanding of religion and belief amongst staff so that they can sensitively address the needs of individuals and of different faith communities; and
- Work with other companies and agencies that provide services on the Trust's behalf to ensure that they are aware of the need to respect and be sensitive to the religion and beliefs of the Trust's tenants.

## **Recruitment and selection**

The Trust aims to ensure that no job applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics above. The Trust's recruitment procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

Job advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying.

The Trust take steps to ensure that its vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market and, where relevant, to particular groups that have been identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented within the organisation.

The Trust is required by law to ensure that all employees are entitled to work in the UK. Assumptions about immigration status should not be made based on appearance or apparent nationality. All prospective staff, regardless of nationality, must be able to produce original documents (such as a passport) before employment starts, to satisfy current immigration legislation.

## **Termination of employment**

The Trust will ensure that redundancy criteria and procedures are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.

The Trust will also ensure that disciplinary procedures and penalties are applied without discrimination, whether they result in disciplinary warnings, dismissal or other disciplinary action.

## **Fixed-term employees and agency workers**

The Trust monitors its use of fixed-term employees and agency workers, and their conditions of service, to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits, training, promotion

and permanent employment opportunities. Where relevant, their progress will be monitored to ensure that they are accessing permanent vacancies.

### **Part-time work**

The Trust monitors the conditions of service of part-time employees and their progression to ensure that they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities. All requests to alter working hours will be dealt with fairly and appropriately.

### **Breaches of the policy**

If you believe that you may have been discriminated or subjected to harassment you are encouraged to raise the matter through the Trust's Grievance Procedure.

Any member of staff who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary action under the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and, as such, may result in summary dismissal.