



## Hunters Hall Housing Co-operative Equality and Diversity Policy

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Hunters Hall Housing Co-operative will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in other non-written format, and in a variety of languages.

# 1. Introduction and Objectives

1.1 The Governance of Hunters Hall Housing Co-op (HHHC) is managed through the following related policies and documents:

- Allocations Policy
- Codes of Conduct for Management Committee members and HHHC staff
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Training and Development Policy
- Grievance and Discipline Policy
- Membership Strategy
- Appraisal Strategy
- **Equality and Diversity Policy**

1.2 Governance is defined as the arrangements HHHC has for leadership, direction and control.

1.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) outlines the seven Governance and Financial Management Standards that shall be complied with by HHHC and the Management Committee (MC):

1. *The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its Tenants and other service users.*
2. *The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its Tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.*
3. *The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial wellbeing, whilst maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.*
4. *The governing body basis its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.*
5. *The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.*
6. *The governing body and its senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.*
7. *The RSL ensures that any organisational changes or disposals it makes safeguard the interests of, and benefit, current and future tenants.*

1.4 The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect on 1 April 2012. The Charter aims to help improve the quality and value of services that social landlords provide to tenants and customers. Social landlords are required to perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services. This outcome describes how HHHC should achieve for all tenants and other customers regardless of their age, disability, gender assignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

1.5 HHC is a landlord, service provider and an employer. It also buys goods and services. In these roles, HHC will aim to:

- Ensure respect, fairness and understanding
- Value and embrace diversity and eliminate discrimination

1.6 This policy sets out:

- Our key objectives and commitments
- Useful definitions
- Protected characteristics
- Responsibilities under the policy
- How the policy will apply and be managed across HHC business
- The link to an equality and diversity action plan

1.7 This policy updates the HHC policy from November 2013.

## 2. Key Objectives and Commitments

2.1 The Co-op believes that equality and diversity is about recognising differences, respecting each other as individuals and tailoring the services we offer to meet differing needs. We aim to promote an atmosphere where people are valued and respected. Our policy therefore has the following headline objectives and commitments in respect of equality and diversity:

### Objectives

1	Knowing who our customers are and providing flexible, responsive services
2	Remaining in touch with our staff and customers by listening to and learning from them
3	Have a well-informed staff group and Management Committee that values and cultivates equality and diversity
4	Have policies, procedures and practices that help promote and deliver good equality and diversity outcomes for staff, HHC tenants, applicants for housing, as well as the wider local community where practicable

### Commitments

HHC shall use an annual Equalities and Diversity Action Plan to set targets to meet its objectives and monitor progress towards meeting these targets. The Action Plan will be able to be shaped and scrutinised by HHC tenants and staff.

This Action Plan is shaped by the context of the Co-op deciding in May 2019 to seek a partnership with another RSL. Whilst the action plan will be modest in scope,

assessment of tenders while seeking a partner will be able to consider potential partner landlords contributions towards equality and diversity.

### 3. Useful Definitions

3.1 The following terms are often used when talking about equality and diversity.

Terms	What this means
Equality	Making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality may not always mean treating everybody in the same way, but it does mean recognising their needs are met in different ways
Diversity	Refers to a range of individual differences across the population. By embracing diversity we attach value to individuality – which includes a person’s background, culture, skills, attitudes and experience, as well as their personal character. Differences can be visible and invisible factors
The Equality Act 2010	The law that protects the rights of individuals and advances equality of opportunity for all
Protected Characteristics	The ground upon which discrimination is unlawful: - age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation
Direct Discrimination	Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic
Indirect Discrimination	Applying a supposedly neutral policy, practice, procedure, provision or criteria that unfairly disadvantages people that share a particular protected characteristic
Discrimination by Association	Discrimination against someone who has an association with someone who has a protected characteristic
Discrimination by Perception	Discrimination against someone because they are wrongly thought to have a protected characteristic, or are treated as if they do
Harassment	Conduct that violates a person’s dignity or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment
Victimisation	Treating someone less favourably and discriminating against them because they have pursued (or intend to pursue) their rights, complained about the behaviour of someone harassing them or given evidence in someone else’ s complaint
Managing Diversity	An organisation that is aware of the composition of its tenants and customers it provides services to and understands and works towards providing its service using that kind of mix itself. That an organisation has a range of human resource packages that encourage people from a wide mix of backgrounds to be involved in delivering service. That an organisation has strong service management and delivery practices to help people with a range of different needs to access service with ease

Positive Actions	Lawful actions can be taken to address representation imbalances or overcome disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic have experienced
Reasonable Adjustments	Arrangement made to assist an individual in overcoming difficulties or disadvantage experienced, in relation to employment or accessing goods and services, because of a disability

## 4. Protected Characteristics

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the protected characteristics that give specific groups of people protection. These characteristics are:

- Age
- Being or becoming a transsexual person
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or having a child
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation

4.2 HHHC is committed to ensuring that throughout the organisation we give protected characteristic people protection and that there will be a consistent approach to promoting equality and diversity. We would not tolerate any form of prejudice, direct and or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

4.3 We expect everyone who works for us to share this set of values and support us in its application.

## 5. Responsibilities under this Policy

5.1 The Management Committee (MC) has the ultimate responsibility for managing Equality and Diversity within HHHC and ensuring that our legal and regulatory obligations are met.

5.2 The Director is the owner of the Equality and Diversity policy and the Action Plan that puts HHHC objectives and commitments into effect. The Director should promote a working culture that respects and values differences and promotes dignity and equality and diversity. The Director shall invest

resources in training and awareness on equality and diversity issues for staff and MC.

5.3 Staff with supervisory responsibility shall ensure that their areas of service comply with this policy and that all actions assigned to them in the Action Plan are delivered. Staff with induction responsibility shall ensure that the values in the policy are communicated to employees during induction training.

5.4 All staff have a personal responsibility for the implementation of this policy and to ensure that they treat others with respect and dignity in both employment and service delivery.

5.5 All staff have a responsibility to be alert and to challenge behaviours and practices which result in unfair discrimination when they occur. Where a member of staff does believe that such behaviour is occurring, they should draw this to the attention of their manager to ensure the matter is dealt with appropriately.

## **6. Managing and Applying the Policy across HHC Business**

### **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

6.1 The Co-op will demonstrate its commitment to effective equality and diversity management in all aspects of employment. This includes recruitment, training, performance and development, and pay.

6.2 The Co-op operates a Recruitment and Selection policy that ensures that fair and just employment practices are in place. People are recruited on the basis of their own merit, experience, ability and potential. Vacancies shall be advertised in a way that does not discourage disadvantaged or under-represented groups from applying. All applicants with disabilities who meet the minimum requirements for a suitable post shall be interviewed.

6.3 The composition of applicants for roles in the organisation, the Management Committee and the workforce will be monitored. Should data indicate a lack of equality and where appropriate and permissible in law, positive action shall be taken to encourage under-represented groups to apply for roles.

6.4 All contracts of employment will be issued in accordance with the job role and not the job holder. Terms and conditions will be standard across all employees. Employees will not receive less favourable terms and conditions for any reason other than relating to the job role and grade it has. The Co-op

has a Staff Handbook which is accessible to all employees which includes a copy of the Equality and Diversity Policy.

6.5 The Co-op is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for those members of staff who are disabled or become disabled for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 during their employment with the Co-op. If you are a disabled employee or are likely to become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your disability so that we can support you appropriately.

6.6 Some employees and job applicants may have particular religious observance needs. Where it is possible to do so, the Co-op shall look to meet such needs.

6.7 The Co-op recognises the requirement of a working environment which supports the diverse need of its staff with a framework of policies and has procedures to ensure appropriate assistance is available to staff who need it. The Co-op provides a confidential employment counselling service to all employees and information on this service is displayed in the Co-op office and contained in the induction pack.

6.8 The Co-op is committed to help its employees fulfil their potential at work while finding the right work/life balance by offering a Flexible Working Hours Scheme.

6.9 The Co-op operates a contribution pay and benefits structure that is fair, transparent and affordable with no disparities in salary due to protected characteristics.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

6.10 It is vital that all MC members and employees are able to participate and benefit from any training opportunities or development activities without discrimination or fear of harassment. Equality of access will apply to all training activities with training and development available to all employees according to their job role.

## **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

6.11 The Co-op shall aim from 2020 to provide regular 1 to 1's and annual performance reviews for staff. This should be possible through a change in the staff structure. Within these review, employees are given the opportunity to receive coaching and support, discuss performance, good working practices and areas for improvement.

## **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

6.12 The principles in this policy shall be applied in the recruitment and development of MC members. Participation in the MC shall be open to all regardless of protected characteristics. MC members are required to be aware of the Co-op's commitment to effective equality and diversity management and must comply with this policy in carrying out their duties.

## **PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES**

6.13 The Co-op will work to ensure there is no discrimination in terms of allocation of work to contractors and consultants, or in purchasing from suppliers. The Co-op shall ensure that our suppliers are aware of this policy and will encourage them to have similar objectives. Where services are provided by external consultants and contractors, they are expected to adhere to and work in accordance with this policy whilst providing services to the Co-op.

## **POLICY MANAGEMENT**

6.14 The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that a policy that considers equality and diversity is likely to be a better policy. So HHC will apply a screening process to establish if an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out on any new HHC policies or on any existing policies at time of review. The HHC EIA process help ensure that equality and diversity management is built into what we do. The HHC EIA will consider the following:

- Outcome and purpose of policy
- Protected characteristic groups affected by the policy
- Who the target audience is of the policy or who is intended to benefit from the proposed policy and how
- Include any relevant documents, evidence, or research
- Report if any consultation has taken place with protected characteristic groups to inform this assessment
- What the likely impact of policy is
- How the policy will be put into effect and who will be responsible
- How the policy fits into our wider policies
- Whether a budget is allocated for this policy work

## **TENANCY ALLOCATIONS**

6.15 The Co-op will ensure that anyone applying for a property is dealt with fairly and without discrimination. The Co-op will adhere to its own policy for transfers. The Co-op is a member of Edindex who operate the common housing waiting list for Edinburgh and through which allocations of housing



are made. All members of Edindex including HHHC subscribe to the good practice principles of equality and diversity.

## **ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SERVICE PROVISION**

6.16 The Co-op recognises the importance of customer engagement in shaping and delivering the services it provides and will seek to involve customers. Being aware of, and proactive about, managing the diverse needs of customer will help ensure we can provide the right services and meet the right needs. We will aim to meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders by:

- Creating a work culture which values diversity, inclusiveness and respect, and helps our employees to reflect those values in their dealings with the people who use our service and all other stakeholders
- Ensuring we provide an accessible service to all our customers
- Providing clear, meaningful information about what we do and how we do it for customers, potential customers and other stakeholders, in ways that best suit their individual needs
- Identifying as early as possible any individual requirements that may need to be met in order for a customer to fully access our service
- Being responsive to changing needs and requirements

6.17 Information can always be provided in various formats: Braille, CD, large font and different languages can be requested. We will communicate regularly to current service users, tenants, employees and stakeholders through newsletters and our Annual Report. HHHC has an arrangement with a translation service to provide document translations or face to face translation.

6.18 The Co-op will work to support and promote activities for community support. We recognise that how we deliver services may need to be different to meet diverse needs. We are committed to taking a proactive approach to work with local community organisations to enhance community cohesion and social inclusion. A positive approach to diversity will promote understanding and good relations between people understanding and good relations between people who have different backgrounds and experiences, and this will enhance the Niddrie House area.

## **MONITORING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY**

6.19 The Co-op will collect and report on data relating to the diversity of the community. The data will be analysed to identify any anomalies in the

distribution of diversity factors. These anomalies shall be investigated and positive action taken to redress any imbalance.

6.20 The type of data which will be used will include information about:

- Ethnicity
- Age
- Gender
- Marital/Civic Partnership Status
- Disability
- Beliefs
- Sexual Orientation

6.21 Data will be collected about key processes carried out by the Co-op where a risk of unfair discrimination exists, specifically:

- Recruitment and selection
- Allocation
- Complaints Handling
- Grievance and disciplinary

## 7. Equality and Diversity Action Plans

7.1 HHHC shall produce and deliver an annual Equality and Diversity Action Plan.

This plan will shall be developed with staff, MC, and tenant input. It shall be agreed by the MC and owned by the Director with progress being reported quarterly to the MC. Appropriate resources shall be allocated to support the delivery of the Plan. The 2019 Customer Satisfaction Survey can be utilised to gather information through face to face interviews on the needs and aspirations of Co-op relevant to an E & D Plan.

7.2 The plan will set tasks and outcomes based on HHHC's 4 key Equality and Diversity objectives

1	Knowing who our customers are and providing flexible, responsive services
2	Remaining in touch with our staff and customers by listening to and learning from them
3	Have a well-informed staff group and Management Committee that values and cultivates equality and diversity
4	Have policies, procedures and practices that help promote and deliver good equality and diversity outcomes for staff, HHHC tenants, applicants for housing, as well as the wider local community where practicable

7.3 Through delivery of an Equality and Diversity Plan, HHHC will be able to work towards mainstreaming its services and operations for equalities and diversity, and working towards improvement and best practice.