



# **Family Housing Association Equality Scheme**

## 1. EQUALITY STATEMENT

Family Housing believes that tackling inequalities provides a strong foundation for cohesive and confident communities. We believe that everyone has the right to equal access to life opportunities, including representation, services and employment. To achieve this we are committed to working towards removing barriers to opportunities and to narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged and others. This Equality Scheme is our public commitment of how we plan to meet the duties placed upon us by the equality legislation.

The Scheme demonstrates how the Board plans to continue to meet its equality duties. It will also act as a framework for compliance with legislative and policy guidance. The principles of equality, fair treatment and social inclusion for all are therefore to be the basis for every aspect of the Association's business and operation.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

This Equality Scheme demonstrates Family Housing Association's (FHA) commitment to its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Language Act 1984.

## 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Scheme is to create an environment where equality and diversity is integral to the day-to-day work of FHA. It reflects our commitment and intent in meeting our statutory and moral obligations.

## 4. OUR VALUES

**Innovation** – we continuously strive to be the best we can whilst seeking creative ideas to improve and grow

**Honesty** – we will be clear and truthful in what we say and do

**Trust** – relationships are built on mutual trust and respect; we trust people to do the right things for the right reasons

**Fairness** – we will endeavour to remove barriers and to treat people fairly and impartially

**Respect** – we will treat people as individuals and value diversity

**Accountability** – we will accept the responsibilities of our role and be accountable for our actions and for doing what is right.

## 5. AIMS

This Equality Scheme aims to:

- Communicate our position on Equality and Diversity and show our commitment to anti discriminatory practice.
- Meet the legislative and policy requirements we have as a public service provider and ensure that equality and fairness are embedded in all areas of our service delivery, planning and employment.
- Create a working environment where all staff are treated with professionalism, dignity and respect without having to face discrimination or harassment.
- Provide services that are sensitive to differences in needs, aspirations, languages and culture and to recognise the diversity of local communities and individuals, and to encourage collaboration between different communities.
- Take action to address any existing disadvantage in our services.

## 6. LEGISLATION

The Equality Act 2010 incorporates all the previous equality acts and anti-discrimination regulations into one framework and brings new responsibilities and rights in the workplace and when providing or accessing goods and services.

### **General and Specific Duties**

Since April 2011, the Act has placed a 'General Duty' on organisations when carrying out public functions, which require that they:-

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations, tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The aim of the general duty is to ensure that we can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in our day-to-day activities. The duty ensures that equality considerations are built into the design of policies and the delivery of services and that they are kept under review.

Welsh specific public-sector equality duties came into force on 6 April 2011 via the Welsh Government and include measures to ensuring that the above General Duty is met.

**'Specific Duties'** include:

- Creating, publishing, reviewing and reporting on a Strategic Equality Plan;
- Identifying equality objectives reflected in the Strategic Equality Plan, including pay difference objectives;
- Undertaking engagement: involving and consulting people; Creating an evidence base: collecting evidence and data.

## **The Act**

The Equality Act defines those who are protected as having one or more of the following 'Protected Characteristics' or Equality Strands:

### **Age**

Age discrimination in its simple form, refers to situations where chronological age is used to determine whether or not people have access to employment or goods and services. Whatever form it takes, it implies a devalued status to people due to their age, particularly older and younger people.

### **Disability**

A person is defined in the legislation as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### **Gender Equality**

The word 'gender' is often used in place of the word 'sex' in equality issues. 'Gender' does not appear in equality legislation (except for 'gender reassignment' – see below) but 'sex discrimination' and 'gender discrimination' are generally interchangeable.

Gender reassignment is a personal, social and sometimes medical process by which a person's gender presentation (i.e. the way they appear to others) is changed.

Not all transsexual people undergo medical supervision to change their gender. People who decide to live in the gender opposite to that assigned at birth, but do not undergo any medical procedures, are protected from discrimination.

### **Marriage & Civil Partnership**

Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

### **Religion & Belief**

Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect a person's life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition

### **Sexual Orientation**

Sexual orientation refers to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes. Assumptions and perceptions of a person's sexual orientation are also covered by the law.

### **Race & Ethnicity**

In legislation 'race' refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origin

### **Pregnancy & Maternity**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

### **Welsh Language**

We recognise that, as a Welsh based organisation, we have a special responsibility for the Welsh language and culture. The provisions of the Welsh Language Act 1993, as updated by the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, require that in the conduct of public business in Wales, public bodies will treat the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality.

Being a Welsh speaker is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act. Our separate Welsh Language Scheme sets out how we will act within the principles contained in the Welsh Language Act.

## 7. WHAT WE WILL DO

- We consult with relevant groups and specialist organisations during the planning and development stage of specialist housing schemes in order to establish particular needs.
- We offer training to our Board members, contractors and consultants on the needs and requirements in relation to equalities. Training for staff will be compulsory
- We request our customers' information in relation to their age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and preferred language during application process and throughout their tenure.
- We will use the information provided to tailor our services to customers' needs.
- We will monitor allocations by age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. We will use positive initiatives to encourage a particular section of the community to use our services where evidence shows that there is a low level of take up of any services we provide.
- FHA recognises that, in order to make informed choices, people need to receive information in a manner that they can access and understand. We will provide information about our housing and support services which is clear, comprehensive, accessible and easily understood. FHA believes it is vital to be able to facilitate translation and provide access to appropriate community languages, large prints, brail and audio etc.
- Our website provides a host of ways to get the required information in the format they need.
- We consult with relevant groups of services users and work closely with specialist organisations and agencies when delivering specialist support services.
- We will assess the Equality Impact when writing and reviewing our policies to ensure all actual or perceived discrimination is removed.

- We are aware that some people may experience harassment, victimisation, intimidation or abuse because of their race, faith, disability or sexuality. This is referred to as 'hate crime'. Our ASB procedures recognise hate crime linked to the equality strands and we take appropriate action to deal with such matters.
- Training and development opportunities will be offered to all staff on a fair and equitable basis.
- We will not impose unnecessary dress restriction that could be discriminatory. However, health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks specific items of clothing such as overalls, protective clothing, etc., need to be worn. If such clothing produces a conflict with an individual's religious belief, the issue will be sympathetically considered, after carrying out a risk assessment, with the aim of finding a safe but satisfactory solution.
- Consideration will be given to any 'reasonable adjustment' to features of the job, or work conditions to remove barriers that may disadvantage an employee or job applicant. This may take the form of specialist aids, adapted workplaces, changes in working practices etc.
- FHA maintains monitoring information on the composition of staff groups and regularly review this data. Such information helps us to make sure that our equality plans are working.
- In our community engagement we will seek to ensure that we reach all groups of service users so that they feel part of the decision - making process.

## **8. REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION**

We will Review this Scheme every 3 years.

## **9. DIFFERENT FORMAT**

Please contact us at the address shown below to obtain a copy in a format or language you require. We recognise the diverse needs of the communities we serve and welcome communication in different languages and format upon request.