



EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Black Country Housing Group Limited (the Group) is committed to a policy of equality of opportunities in its employment and working practices.

No job applicant, employee, associate or client will be treated less fairly because of their race, creed, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, cultural background, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, domestic circumstances, political opinion, social position or age.

Opportunities for training, development and promotion will be available to all staff. Training in equal opportunities will be provided to all Board members, managers and staff to enable them to carry out the requirements of this policy.

The group will fulfil its statutory duty with regard to current legislation and emphasis will be put on promoting equality of opportunity and not merely preventing discrimination.

2. APPLICATION

The procedure applies to all employees, job applicants, associates and clients of Black Country Housing Group Limited.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive has the overall responsibility for the Equal Opportunities Policy and for the subsequent development, review and monitoring of the policy on a continuing basis, and will ensure that it is understood and implemented by all employees. Additionally, all staff have the responsibility to implement the policy, managers have responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of the policy, and the HR department has the responsibility to ensure the policy is reviewed regularly and no less than every two years.

4. PROCEDURE

General

- The Group recognises that some individuals and groups are disadvantaged and fully supports all the relevant legislation, statements and associated Codes of Practice.
- The Group will seek to identify the needs of disadvantaged minority groups in its area of operation by establishing close relationships with those groups.
- The Group will seek to ensure that the membership of the Board of Management adequately reflects the community it serves and is mindful of its commitment to equality of opportunities.
- The Group will seek to ensure equality of opportunities and treatment for all our employees and will not tolerate harassment, intimidation or victimisation of any individual or group.
- Where necessary the Group endeavours to make appropriate provision for applicants and employees who have sensory impairments or other disabilities.
- The Group will consult with staff and stakeholders to ensure employment practices and service delivery are appropriate.

Employment

- The Group will ensure its recruitment, selection and employment practices are fair and non-discriminatory.
- The Group will actively encourage employment applications from all sections of the community and the Group's Equal Opportunities policy will be mentioned in recruitment advertisements and other publicity material.
- The Group will develop professional awareness in all staff who are involved in the recruitment, selection and management of employees (including discipline and dismissal) including the provision of information and written instructions and support, where appropriate.
- The Group will provide equality training for managers and any staff responsible for recruitment and selection.
- The Group seeks to encourage and facilitate the employment of people with disabilities including making reasonable adjustments to premises and working conditions.
- The Group recognises that staff also have domestic responsibilities and will endeavour to provide reasonable opportunities to combine work and such domestic responsibilities.
- The Group has formal procedures for dealing with racial and sexual harassment or victimisation where customers, staff or contractors are involved, whether as victims or as offenders.

- Acts of harassment, discrimination, bullying, victimisation or other acts of an offensive nature towards others, including those relating to race, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation are regarded as acts of gross misconduct.
- The Group will monitor the profile of the staff in terms of gender, disability, age and ethnic groups and, where under-representation is indicated, will take steps to address this.
- The Group will report regularly to the Board of Management on equality issues.
- The Group will inform all staff of this policy through the Intranet or Staff Handbook, as appropriate.

Training, Development and Appraisal

- This policy aims to ensure that individuals are trained, promoted and appraised solely on the basis of their merit to perform the duties of the position.
- All employees will have equal and direct access to training and development opportunities to enable them to realise their full potential and contribute, to the best of their abilities, to the aims and objectives of the organisation.
- All employees will receive Core Training in Equal opportunities and Diversity.
- Specific training in anti-discriminatory practice will be made available to all staff and may be a compulsory solution where an investigation or appraisal indicates training as appropriate.

Tenancy Services

- The selection of residents for accommodation shall be based only on their need for the housing in question within the limits of the agreed selection criteria.
- The Group has policies to ensure that the services it delivers are fair and non-discriminatory, except where legal exemptions apply.
- The Group endeavours to record and monitor the ethnicity, gender and disability of housing and homelessness applicants.

Contractors and Suppliers

- The Group will be mindful of its Commitment to equality of opportunities when hiring contractors and other agencies to work for and with it.
- All contractors and suppliers of services must comply with the Group's Equal Opportunities Policy.
- All contractors and suppliers are required to abide by the BCH Contractors' Code of Conduct with regard to Equal Opportunities and to provide the Group with a copy of their Equal Opportunities Policy. Single traders and other small employers are required to give a statement confirming their acceptance of the Code of Conduct.

5. RELATED LEGISLATION

This policy complies with the following legislation and associated Codes of Practice:

- Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- The Race Relations Code of Practice for the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment, 1983
- Race Relations Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Work and Families Act 2006

6. RELATED PROCEDURES

- Recruitment & Selection
- Diversity Strategy
- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary
- Grievance
- Harassment
- Training
- Appraisal
- Confidential Reporting

Additionally, there are other related policies in specific operational areas, such as Housing Management, Maintenance, Social Care, Supported Housing, Care and Repair.

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