



Equality and Diversity Policy

POLICY NUMBER

POL 07

Purpose of Policy

Derwentside Homes aims to ensure that equality and diversity lies at the heart of its employment practices and all services to customers, recognising the needs of individuals, groups and local communities.

Policy Statement

Derwentside Homes's Equality and Diversity Policy will be implemented in line with Derwentside Homes's Charitable Objects and the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance.

Derwentside Homes will ensure that this policy is implemented through the work of its Equality and Diversity Group, who will be responsible for the co-ordination, monitoring and delivery of appropriate strategies and action plans in meeting legal and regulatory requirements.

Performance Measures

- BVPI 164 Compliance with the Commission of Racial Equality Code of Practice for Rented Housing and "Tackling Racial Harassment";
- Number of reported incidents of racial harassment against tenants;
- Derwentside Homes will analyse customers by household type, gender, age, disability (including mental health problems) and ethnicity;
- Percentage of lettings to BME householders (GNPI 31);
- BV175 E-government – improving access to all customer services electronically by 2005;
- BV74(I) Tenant satisfaction with overall service provided by the landlord – BME Groups;
- BV74(II) Tenant satisfaction with overall service provided by the landlord – non BME Groups;
- BV75(I) Tenant satisfaction with arrangements for participation – BME Groups;
- BV75(II) Tenant satisfaction with arrangements for participation – non BME Groups;
- BV2(b) Duty to promote race equality.

Responsible Officer:	Head of Housing Services
Policy Author:	Head of Housing Services and Performance Monitoring Officer
Date Approved by the Shadow Board:	
Frequency of Review:	Three Years or as dictated by legislation/guidance
Review Date:	
File Reference:	
Consultees:	LSVT Working Group – Policies and Procedures; Tenants Forum; Staff; Management Team; Derwentside Homes Shadow Board;

Equality and Diversity Policy

1 Statement of Intent

- 1.1 Derwentside Homes is committed to the principle that all customers and staff have the right to the same high standards of provision and services
- 1.2 Derwentside Homes is committed to fair and equal treatment for all people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.
- 1.3 Derwentside Homes is committed to the recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity, which enables people from all ethnic groups to achieve their potential and not be subject to racial prejudice and racial discrimination.
- 1.4 Derwentside Homes is committed to equal opportunities and promoting positive attitudes. It will promote equality of opportunity for customers, staff, external bodies, job applicants and anyone whom our staff come into contact with.
- 1.5 Derwentside Homes will seek to ensure that no unlawful or unfair discrimination takes place against an individual or group, directly or indirectly, because of their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason
- 1.6 Derwentside Homes's approach to equality and diversity will be based on:
 - Transparency;
 - Accountability;
 - Proportionality;
 - Consistency;
 - Targeting.
- 1.7 Derwentside Homes is committed to achieving equality and diversity at the core of all its business activities. It defines equality as:
 - Eliminating unlawful discrimination of any type;
 - Treating people fairly with dignity and respect;
 - Making decisions or judgements about people based on individual merit not through bias, prejudice, assumptions or stereotyping;
 - Creating a climate where everyone has fair and equal access to employment and promotion opportunities;
 - Developing a working environment which is free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation or bullying;
 - Providing equality of access to our services, ensuring the highest standards of service delivery to all our customers.
- 1.8 Derwentside Homes defines valuing diversity as:
 - Recognising and respecting differences;

- Striving to achieve equality of opportunity for an increasingly diverse customer and staff group;
- Providing appropriate services that match differing needs and preferences;
- Providing understanding and promoting good relations between people who have different backgrounds and experiences.

1.9 As an integral part of its monitoring arrangements Derwentside Homes will monitor the level of service provision and take up of services. This information will take into consideration the range of potential service users within the District and the action which needs to be taken to ensure equitable treatment for all such groups.

2. Responsibility for Implementation

2.1 The Board and Chief Executive of Derwentside Homes will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented.

2.2 It is the responsibility of all employees and those working on behalf of or in partnership with Derwentside Homes to ensure that work is carried out in line with this policy and any related procedures.

2.3 Derwentside Homes will ensure that all areas of its business activities operate within the framework and principles of this Policy through the delivery of its Equality and Diversity Action Plans and Race Equality Scheme.

2.4 Derwentside Homes will coordinate the implementation of this Policy through its Equality and Diversity Group in ensuring that equality and diversity remains at the heart of the organisation's operations.

2.5 Derwentside Homes will publish its Race Equality Scheme as part of its legal obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which will inform its actions and business activities in tackling unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between people of different racial groups.

2.6 The Board of Derwentside Homes will receive regular monitoring reports to evaluate progress on equality and diversity in meeting its regulatory requirements.

2.7 Derwentside Homes will undertake surveys and research to monitor the satisfaction of its tenants in relation to the Equality and Diversity policy and will publish the results.

2.8 Derwentside Homes will use information from surveys and research to continually improve policies and improve services. It will also collate other relevant statistics and information and will use this when it undertakes reviews of policies and services.

2.9 The composition of the workforce of Derwentside Homes will be monitored in terms of ethnic origin, gender and disability to measure the effectiveness of the equality policy and assess the need to address any under representation.

Similarly, job applicants will be monitored to assess the effectiveness of recruitment practices.

2.10 Derwentside Homes will monitor the needs of housing applicants, tenants and service users to ensure that targets are being met in accordance with this policy.

2.11 The role of Derwentside Homes's Equality and Diversity Group will be to examine equality issues and examples of good practice, review and monitor the organisation's performance in this area, and to suggest innovative ways in which equality issues can be addressed both internally and externally

3.1 Implementation

3.1.1 Derwentside Homes will ensure that the principles of equality apply across all of its business activities and that it is an integral part of business planning and service delivery:

3.2 Governance

3.2.1 The Board of Derwentside Homes is fully committed to promoting equality and diversity across all of its business activities and is united in tackling discrimination of any type. The Board will ensure that:

- It provides effective leadership and delivers a clear vision on its principles relating to equality and diversity;
- Its composition and leadership arrangements fairly reflect and represent the diversity of the communities it serves;
- It adopts a recruitment policy and related procedures that reflect and promote equality objectives, continually reviewing their effectiveness;
- Its recruitment policy for appointment to the Board is aimed to ensure that membership is reflective of the communities it serves;
- It develops training and support programmes for new and existing Board members to assist them in leading the promotion of equality and diversity within the organisation;
- Its principle of achieving equality and diversity is given appropriate attention by setting targets and performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of the organisation;
- It incorporates the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance to ensure that all working practises and business activities reflect the principles of equality and diversity.

3.3 Employment

3.3.1 Derwentside Homes will operate effective equal opportunities policies and procedures through the application of employment policies, which will ensure that individuals receive treatment, which is fair, equitable and consistent with their relevant aptitudes, skills and abilities.

- 3.3.2 Derwentside Homes's recruitment policy is to employ the most suitable person for each position and the principle of equal opportunities is central to this process.
- 3.3.3 Derwentside Homes will eliminate all forms of discrimination in the areas of recruitment and employment and will take positive measures to encourage staff and potential staff from under-represented groups to take up employment and promotion opportunities.
- 3.3.4 Derwentside Homes will ensure that all applicants who consider themselves to have a disability and meet the essential criteria for a post will be selected for interview and measures will be adopted to take account of individual needs.
- 3.3.5 Derwentside Homes will ensure that job applicants and staff are provided with suitable access to buildings and premises, ensuring that the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 are met.
- 3.3.6 Derwentside Homes will ensure training programmes on race equality and respecting diversity are mandatory for all staff and will involve staff in regularly reviewing this training.
- 3.3.7 Derwentside Homes will consider a range of ways to open up access for people from different ethnic minority groups to join the organisation's workforce.

Further information will be contained within Derwentside Homes's Recruitment Policy.

3.4 Training and Development

- 3.4.1 Derwentside Homes will provide training and development that adheres to anti-discrimination and anti-oppressive procedures in line with relevant good practice.
- 3.4.2 Derwentside Homes will provide mandatory Equality in Action training for all staff as part of their induction programme, incorporating new legal or good practice developments relating to equality and diversity.
- 3.4.3 Derwentside Homes's selection criteria and selection procedures for courses leading to qualifications will ensure that equality of opportunity for all staff is given full consideration.
- 3.4.4 Derwentside Homes will ensure that all staff have the same training opportunities regardless of their working arrangements, receiving support from line managers as appropriate based on individual training needs.
- 3.4.5 All training and development opportunities will be identified through appraisal and this includes an appeals procedure which staff can access if they feel that they are being discriminated against.

3.4.6 Derwentside Homes will ensure that measures are implemented to analyse and evaluate all programmes delivered including the levels of opportunity provided across the organisation.

3.5 Meeting Housing Need

3.5.1 Derwentside Homes will work closely with other housing providers and Derwentside District Council (DDC) to identify and address differing housing and related needs of local communities through a range of options and initiatives to provide affordable housing.

3.6 Allocations

3.6.1 Derwentside Homes is committed to allocating homes in a way that promotes choice, considers local housing needs and encourages the development of sustainable and balanced communities.

3.6.2 Derwentside Homes will work with DDC in developing its Housing Strategy to remove any barriers which may discourage applicants from certain groups or communities.

3.6.3 Derwentside Homes will ensure that its Selection, Allocation and Transfer Policies and related procedures do not discriminate directly or indirectly in relation to gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.

3.7 Services

3.7.1 Derwentside Homes is committed to delivering the highest standards of housing and related services in meeting the needs of local communities. It will achieve this by:

- Treating people fairly regardless of ethnicity in all aspects of service delivery and access to services.
- Promoting good relations between people regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.
- Carrying out equality audits in key service areas in measuring the effective implementation of policies.
- Setting equality targets and performance indicators for key service areas.
- Promoting social inclusiveness through working in partnership with DDC and other Registered Social Landlords to establish housing support needs and preferences to meet the diverse needs of local communities.
- Providing periodic reports to the Board on how existing and future services meet the diverse needs of local communities.
- Providing services that are sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals, groups and local communities.
- Ensuring that customers, stakeholders and service users have suitable access to our customer service access points, ensuring that the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 are met.

3.8 Resident and Community Involvement

- 3.8.1 Derwentside Homes places tenant involvement and participation at the heart of its business activities and this includes incorporating BME residents' views, expectations and aspirations regarding our services.
- 3.8.2 Derwentside Homes will deliver high standards of service to people living in our communities within a framework of empowerment and Best Value.
- 3.8.3 Derwentside Homes will ensure that all residents have the opportunity to participate in developing and monitoring its Equality and Diversity Action Plan.
- 3.8.4 Derwentside Homes will reflect the views and expectations of local residents in its business planning and service review processes in monitoring performance and improving services.
- 3.8.5 In supporting residents associations, Derwentside Homes will work with those associations to ensure that equality and diversity principles are integrated into their terms of reference and are acted upon.
- 3.8.6 As part of its general approach to tenant participation and involvement, Derwentside Homes will develop and support structures to ensure that all groups are able to become involved in our activities regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, age, disability or any other reason.
- 3.8.7 Derwentside Homes will consult BME tenants on how they would like to be involved in participation and consultation in relation to service delivery and review.
- 3.8.8 Derwentside Homes will provide translation and interpretation services that encourage and facilitate involvement from all of our customers, stakeholders and service users.

3.9 Contractors, Consultants and Suppliers

- 3.9.1 Derwentside Homes will ensure that contractors, consultants and suppliers adhere to this policy and the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance in relation to equality and diversity.
- 3.9.2 As a criterion for award of work or contracts and as a condition for doing business, Derwentside Homes will specify its requirements on contractors, consultants and suppliers in meeting equal opportunities legislation and eliminating all forms of discrimination.
- 3.9.3 Derwentside Homes will develop standard contract arrangements with contractors, consultants and suppliers that meet equality and diversity principles in accordance with the Egan Report "Rethinking Construction".
- 3.9.4 Further information is available in our Procurement Policy.

4 Consultation

4.1 Derwentside Homes will consult tenants about Housing Management and changes in the company's practice and policy and to this we will consult in line with the arrangements established by Derwentside Homes Tenant Consultation Policy (POL 05). Consultation on the Equality and Diversity policy may also be carried out with:

- Statutory Agencies;
- Voluntary Agencies;
- Derwentside District Council;
- Other Registered Social Landlords;
- Representative Local Community groups;
- Advisory Bodies.

4.2 In addition Derwentside Homes will seek the views of customers and staff on its policies in a variety of different ways, including Service Review Groups.

4.3 Derwentside Homes will ensure that all information provided to service users is in plain language and in a variety of different formats and languages including Braille, large print, computer disk (CD), audio cassette. A Language Line service will be made available and Induction Loops provided at all Service Access Points.

4.4 Derwentside Homes will involve tenants and other stakeholders in setting standards, monitoring performance, evaluating and reviewing services and carrying out Best Value reviews as required.

4.5 Derwentside Homes will ensure that tenants are involved at a level at which they choose in accordance with the standards of the Derwentside Homes Tenant Participation Compact and its Tenant Participation and Consultation Policy, ensuring equality of access for consultation and involvement.

5 Review of Policy

5.1 Derwentside Homes will review this policy, as a minimum every three years or whenever there are any changes to legislation or case law, taking into consideration good practice and any research that would impact on this policy and/or service delivery, including trends in complaints received by Derwentside Homes. This policy will be reviewed and implemented in line with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance.

6 Legislation and Guidance

6.1 Derwentside Homes will ensure that our approach to Equality and Diversity is in line with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code and Guidance, Guidance for Charitable Registered Social Landlords – the Joint Guidance – the Charity Commission and the Housing Corporation. Derwentside Homes will have regard to Derwentside District Council's Homelessness and Housing Strategy in the formulation and implementation of its policies.

It will ensure that this policy is compatible with the obligations of existing legislation including but not limited to:

- Race Relations Act 1976 and associated Code of Practice issued by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE);
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and associated Code of Practice issued by the CRE;
- Code of Practice in Rented Housing – CRE;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and associated Codes of Practice;
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 & 1986 Amendment and associated Code of Practice issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC);
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended) including the Equal Pay (Amendment) regulations 2003, and the EOC Code of Practice on Equal Pay;
- Employment Rights Act 1996;
- Employment Relations Act 1999;
- Employment Act 2002;
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- Data Protection Act 1998;
- Housing Act 1988;
- Housing Act 1996;
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997;
- Race and Housing Inquiry Challenge Report 2001;
- Competency and Accountability 2004: code of governance, National Housing Federation 2004;
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003;
- Employment (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003;
- Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

European Directives

- The Race Directive 2000;
- The Employment Directive 2000;
- The Equal Treatment Directive 2000.