

# **MACE HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LTD**

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

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# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

This Policy has been developed in order to recognise and value the diversity that exists and is evolving within Mace Housing Co-operative. It is based on principles of mutual respect, fairness, social inclusion and a commitment to tackle inequality and injustice. Specific policies relating to race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, and sexual orientation form a part of this Policy.

### **Meeting our legal responsibilities:**

The Association will work within all current and relevant anti-discrimination laws, for example:

- Equal Pay Act 1970, and Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986
- Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- EU Employment and Race Directives
- Employment Protection (Part-time Employees) Regulations 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (amended 2005 and 2006)
- Disability Equality Duty
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Protection From Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998

The Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission, and Department of Education and Skills all produce Codes of Practice. These codes give recommendations and guidance on how to avoid discrimination in employment.

They contain advice on the policies that are needed to prevent discrimination in such matters as the recruitment and treatment of employees. Other Codes suggest steps to promote equality in service delivery, for example - the CRE's Code of Practice in Rented Housing and the Code of Practice for Social Landlords - Tackling Racial Harassment (2001).

### **Gender Equality**

- The Co-operative is committed to promoting gender equality, eliminating sex discrimination and enabling women and men to participate on an equal basis.

### **Combating Disadvantage**

- The Co-operative will ensure its services are equally accessible to all.

### **Equality For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender People**

- The Association is committed to eliminating homophobic prejudice and discrimination.

### **Equality For People with disabilities**

- The Co-operative is committed to eliminating discrimination against people with disabilities and ensuring that people with disabilities can participate fully as equal citizens.
- The Co-operative will ensure that in carrying out all of its duties people with disabilities are free from prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives.

### **Equality On Religion And Belief**

- The Co-operative is committed to affording equal access to employment and services and will not discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief.

### **Eliminating Age Discrimination**

- The Co-operative is committed to eliminating age discrimination.
- We will consult younger and older people where appropriate in drawing up plans and making decisions.
- Services will be provided on the basis of need, regardless of age, except where this would be contrary to legislation.
- Age will not be used as a criterion to restrict access to services.

### **Black And Minority Ethnic Communities**

- The Co-operative recognises the growth in population of black and minority ethnic people and sees this as further enriching already diverse communities.
- Racism can affect these communities in different ways and the Co-operative will do all it can to prevent, tackle, and deal with such instances.
- We also recognise that black and minority ethnic people can face other forms of discrimination or disadvantage because of their age, gender, marital status, family circumstances, caring responsibilities, because they have a disability or because they are lesbian, gay, or bisexual or transgender. We will make sure our policies to tackle these issues include ways to address the needs of black and minority ethnic communities.

## **2. THE WAY FORWARD –MACE HOUSING STRATEGY**

The Co-operative will have a coherent, strategic approach to the issue of equality, which is effective and appropriate. This approach will be built into existing mechanisms of corporate/strategic planning and performance management. We will ensure our approach to equality and diversity issues, and to valuing diversity, are incorporated into service planning and delivery activities. Departments and individual managers will build in to their day-to-day activity the commitment to equality for all people.

Learning and development opportunities will be provided for all employees and elected members to enable them to fulfil the organisation's commitment to equality. We will comply with the best practice from legal, regulatory and inspection requirements. Codes of Practice and other guidance will be used appropriately to ensure progress on diversity.

## **3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

The aims of this policy will be progressed through the Equality and Diversity Action Plan, which encompasses service delivery and employment issues, and will be reviewed annually.

### **3.1. Working towards mainstreaming**

Equality will be embedded into the planning process, through programmes of the Co-operative and through the application of impact assessments on policies.

### **3.2. Organisational Development**

We will seek to challenge and change organisational culture and behaviour through formal training, workshops, seminars, and briefings.

### **3.3. Implementation and Monitoring**

The Co-operative will take the following steps towards achieving its policy of equality and diversity:

- the practices and procedures of the organisation will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly; information will be sought from all seeking housing and employment with the
- Co-operative to ensure its equality and diversity policies are being carried out in practice;
- where appropriate, targets will be established and performance monitored and reported to the Management Committee at regular intervals.
- the Management Committee will allocate appropriate financial and other resources to secure the full and effective implementation of this Policy;
- the Co-operative will consult with all relevant groups, including Adult Social Care, the health authorities and voluntary groups to identify special needs, and will work in partnership to provide appropriate housing and support;

- The management committee members and staff will receive suitable guidance on the operation of this policy and provision will be made for training. New employees will receive guidance on the operation of this policy as part of their induction.

#### **4. SANCTIONS**

The following actions may be regarded as disciplinary offences:

- Discriminating unlawfully against fellow employees or job applicants.
- Persuading, or trying to persuade, other employees, and/or management to discriminate unfairly.
- Victimising individuals who have made allegations about discrimination or who have provided information about such discrimination.
- Harassment or bullying.

Such matters will be addressed through the relevant disciplinary procedure. The Co-operative is opposed to all forms of harassment and will give positive support and assistance to victims of racial and/or other harassment. All claims of harassment will be thoroughly investigated and in substantiated cases, the Co-operative will take action.

#### **5. WELCOMING OUR RESPONSIBILITY**

Members and staff will work together to make sure the commitments in the Policy are turned into action.

- The Board, Chief Executive, and Director of Operation are responsible for ensuring the Policy is implemented throughout the Co-operative.
- Contractors and consultants are required to demonstrate their commitment and action to share our policy objective on equality and diversity.
- A copy of this policy will be made available to each of the Co-operative contractors. Contractors who do not have their own Equality and Diversity Policy will be expected to sign up to an agreement that their work adheres to the principles of the Co-op's Policy.
- All employees are responsible for ensuring that they work together to recognise and remove barriers to equality and justice, and behave in accordance with this Policy.
- The Co-operative will work with its partners to achieve the aim of providing the members with equal access to its services.
- To successfully tackle inequality the Co-operative recognises that it needs to develop and maintain good relationships with a range of partners, which means gaining the trust and confidence of those it is seeking to work with and serve (both now and in the future).
- Through its partnerships, the Co-operative will ensure that tackling discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and good community relations is included in any plans to improve services. The Co-operative recognises that a different approach may be required to engage successfully with

all members of the community, to ensure that their needs and aspirations are properly taken into account.

## **6. ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

The Co-operative believes that inequality can occur whenever a person or group is unaware of the services that exist and will ensure that its services are publicised to all sectors of the community and in particular to groups of people who may be facing discrimination or exclusion. We are committed to making information about our services accessible by:

- using plain English;
- providing appropriate translation and interpretation where requested or demand indicates the need;
- providing appropriate options and facilities for people with disabilities.

Key Co-operative publications will explain that the document can be made available on request in other languages and other accessible formats. The design and content of the Co-operative's website will take account of accessibility issues and requirements.

The Co-operative will ensure that information is available by means of:

- members publications and newsletters;
- members surgeries and meetings of Co-op members;
- tenants handbook;
- the website;

We are committed to ensuring that all our communications both internal and external will use images and language, which promote equality of opportunity and good community and race relations and eliminate any unlawful discrimination.

## **7. ACCESS TO SERVICES**

We will make every endeavour to ensure that our offices and services are accessible and appropriate to all customers. We will routinely consider the potential different needs of our customer base and flex services accordingly so as not to disadvantage them.

People who use our services are entitled to receive these free from discrimination and harassment. Information about our formal complaints procedure may be obtained through the Co-op's leaflet or from the website. The Co-operative will ensure that the principles of equality and diversity are applied to the provision of housing and other services, and will work with other agencies to assess and prioritise the needs of the local community, including minority groups and those who may be facing discrimination or exclusion

Employees and any other people providing services to the public are aware that they do not have the right to refuse to provide a service on the basis of a person's sex, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, nationality, or age. Contractors will have access to data when appropriate and on a need to know basis.

Complaints against contractors with regard to alleged discrimination or harassment will be thoroughly investigated by the Co-op and appropriate action taken where necessary.

Contractors will be expected to take prompt and appropriate action against any of their employees found to be acting in a way that breaches this policy. The Co-operative will ensure that the selection of contractors and consultants is fair and non-discriminatory.

## **8. EMPLOYMENT**

Mace Housing Co-operative is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and will appoint and promote employees on the basis of merit. It is the Co-op's policy to ensure that job applicants and employees are treated equally, regardless of their diversity.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees are recruited from all sectors of the local community. Recruitment will be open and fair and will conform to the requirements of this Policy and the Co-operative's Recruitment Procedure.

The Co-operative will regularly review and monitor its selection policy to ensure that individuals are selected, promoted, and treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Information regarding those seeking employment with the Co-operative will be regularly reported to the Management Committee to ensure compliance with this Policy.

## **9. MEMBERSHIP**

Every effort will be made to ensure that the Co-operative's Board of Management includes representation from all sections of the membership and takes account of the commitment to equality and diversity in its operation. Membership to the Board will be open and to all members and will conform to the requirements of this Policy and the Co-op's membership procedure.

## 10. TRAINING

We will ensure that all members of staff and Board Members will have the opportunities to ensure that this Policy is translated into action. In particular, training will be available for and provided to:

- All Board Members, staff and tenant groups with regard to equality and diversity issues;
- Board Members and Managers adhere to good practice in recruitment, selection, induction, performance review, employee welfare and provision of services;
- Board Members, staffs and tenant groups on preventing and challenging discrimination, harassment and prejudice.

It is the Co-op's responsibility to ensure that its employees have the skills they need to meet the requirements of this Policy. The Co-operative recognises that effective communication and the learning and development of both employees and members will play a key role in the implementation of the policy.

All Board Members and employees should undertake relevant training. The Co-operative will monitor the effectiveness of its training programmes and use the results to make continuous improvements.

In providing training, the Association will consider individual circumstances and requirements to ensure that no person or group is disadvantaged in any manner.

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