

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Infotech Support Limited is committed to promoting equality and celebrating diversity. It has adopted the strategy of a whole organisational approach to equality and diversity. This strategy is known as “mainstreaming” which means that equality and diversity issues will be addressed within our corporate planning processes, setting of policy objectives, service delivery and reviewing our performance.

Infotech Support Limited believes that no person should suffer disadvantage by reason of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, or because of their religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, age, disability or marital status and opposes any discrimination which denies this.

The Association has provided structures, ways of working, communication and management which are designed to ensure that no customer, employee or potential customer or employee experiences unfair discrimination or harassment.

The Association takes action to ensure equality of opportunity in the provision of its housing services, in the recruitment of Board Members, and in the employment of staff who provide these services.

The Association has set clear standards against which its performance can be measured in an open and accountable manner.

2. DEFINITIONS

Equality is about an understanding that:

- Certain groups within society experience common forms of discrimination.
- We have a duty to help change that situation as an employer, landlord, service provider, partner and through contractors and procurement.
- We need to systematically monitor our service delivery and employment practices to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate any discriminatory behaviours, policies and practices

Diversity emphasises the value to business in:

- Respecting and understanding individual differences and individuality

- Maximising the unique contributions of individuals in the Associations activities

Mainstreaming is Thames Valley Housing's aim to ensure that equality objectives are incorporated and become an integral part of governance, management and duties of every board member and employee.

Discrimination can take many forms including

- Direct discrimination- treating one person less favourably than others.
- Indirect discrimination- creating a condition, term of employment, or requirement of service delivery, which cannot be justified, and which in practice prevents people from certain groups from receiving a service.
- Institutional Discrimination- the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service or employment condition to people from certain groups.
- Harassment- individuals or groups of individuals are harassed or abused because they are from certain groups.
- Victimisation- where a person is treated less favourably because they have or it is suspected that they will pursue their rights to equality in service or employment condition via the grievance/complaints procedure or legal proceedings; or they are a witness involved in a discrimination case and may also be victimised by others and treated less favourably

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

Valuing and managing diversity

Infotech Support Limited recognises the need for diversity in its approach to employment. Employing individuals from a wide range of backgrounds should enable the Association to have a greater focus to meet customer needs over a broader area of issues and provide the range of skills necessary to meet changing needs and agendas.

We will ensure that we canvas as widely as possible for applications for Board members and jobs in order to establish a Board and workforce that is genuinely representative of the local communities it serves and its customer base. Where necessary positive action will be used to ensure this representation.

Staff responsibilities

In order to fully implement the policy all staff need to be aware of their responsibility to integrate equality and diversity in their day-to-day activities.

Staff must be aware of and responsible for equality and diversity in their behaviour with colleagues, customers and stakeholders and in identifying equality objectives through the appraisal process, projects, plans and initiatives, and progressing those objectives in their day-to-day work.

Equality Standards

The Association has established Equality Standards with the aim of achieving the highest standards of equality in the following areas:

- Policy and Planning
- Employment – recruitment, selection, development and retention
- Communication and Corporate Image
- Community Development and Resident Involvement
- Service Delivery and Customer Care

A summary of the Equality Standards appears as Appendix 1. The full standards are available on the staff intranet and on request. The Association will carry out regular audits to ensure that the standards are being met

Training and development

Infotech Support Limited acknowledges that responsibility for the successful implementation of equality and diversity in employment and service delivery lies with Board members and employees. The organisation will therefore, promote enhanced awareness of unfair discrimination or potentially discriminatory practice, attitudes and behaviour so that they can be identified and eliminated

Everyone engaged in selection, recruitment and promotion will undertake appropriate equality and diversity training, and all employees will undertake relevant equality and diversity training to raise their awareness, and understanding of issues in the workplace and service delivery. The organisation will attempt to encourage all employees to undertake training relevant to their appointment and will ensure that no one is refused access on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, or because of their religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, age, disability or marital status.

Infotech Support Limited will also ensure that the content of all training courses reflects its commitment to equality and diversity and that external training providers will be evaluated and assessed to ensure that the course material and delivery of information complies with the details of this policy.

3. COMPLAINTS

An employee or customer who feels they have not been fairly treated within the scope of this policy should raise the matter through the Association's Grievance Procedure (for employees) and Complaints Procedure (for customers)

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees have a general responsibility to comply with this policy. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all employees of the Association. Employees should also ensure non-discriminatory conduct at work and in their relations with the Association's customers

Managers of the Association have additional responsibilities for communicating this policy to all employees and ensuring that all employees are fully aware of their individual responsibilities and legal responsibilities.

If an employee in undertaking duties and responsibilities on the Association's behalf witnesses a discriminatory incident, they have a duty of care to other employees and members of the public to challenge discriminatory behaviour and practice and in the case of racist and other discriminatory incidents a duty to report and record the incident.

5. CONSULTATION

Board members and staff have been consulted before final approval of this policy and will be consulted and participate in all subsequent policy reviews.

6. REVIEW

Infotech Support Limited acknowledges that this policy is not a static document and that it will require ongoing review. Changes to the document may be required for a number of reasons including new legislation or through lessons learned as the policy becomes operational. A review of this policy will therefore be undertaken annually as part of the review of Standing Orders.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS/SOURCE LEGISLATION

The Equal Pay Act 1970, The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Race Relations Act 1976, The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, The Employment Rights Act 1996, The Employment Relations Act 1999, The Part-Time Working Regulations 2000, The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

APPENDICES

Equality Standards – Quick Guide

DATE UPDATED/INTRODUCED

Updated March 2011