

KING STREET HOUSING SOCIETY

EQUALITIES POLICY

1.0 STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Society was founded in 1966 to provide housing for people in need, on a fair and equitable basis. The Society is committed to the creation of a fairer society and acknowledges that certain groups and individuals are unfairly discriminated against. It is committed to taking positive steps to help redress the effects of unfair discrimination and disadvantage and to promote equality of opportunity.

The purpose of the statement is to set out the Society's commitment to eliminating discrimination from all aspects of its work; to outline policy priorities; and to give the mechanisms for implementing, monitoring and co-ordinating progress towards the achievement of those policy objectives.

The Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code requires housing associations to:

“demonstrate, when carrying out all their functions, their commitment to equal opportunity. They must work towards the elimination of discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals. They must promote good relations between people of different racial groups.”

The Regulatory Code also requires the adoption of a policy that covers all aspects of equalities and includes race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.

2.0 SCOPE OF POLICY

The Society's equal opportunities policy applies equally to the following areas:

- the provision of housing and services;
- recruitment, employment and training of staff;
- selection of contractors and suppliers used by the Society;
- recruitment and training of committee members and shareholders
- the operation of all the Society's policies

This policy covers the key contents of the Race Equality Code of Practice, jointly published in 2002 by the CRE, NHF, Federation of Black Housing Organisations and the Housing Corporation.

3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objective of this policy is to eliminate unfair discrimination in those areas where the Society has control, and to take positive action to redress the effects of past discrimination in relation to:

- a) Access to the Society's housing; the quality of accommodation offered to people in need; the provision of maintenance and other related services to tenants. This includes the protection of tenants' rights in relation to racial and other forms of harassment.
- b) Recruitment and selection procedures; ensuring equality of opportunity for all job applicants and prospective applicants:
- c) The provision of training and development opportunities on an equitable basis so that all employees are promoted and treated fairly on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and regardless of other factors
- d) The way the Society designs and develops new housing and in the practices of its contractors and consultants.
- e) The access provided to individuals targeted by this policy for becoming shareholders and committee members of the Society

The Society recognises that the achievement of these objectives will require changes to current practice and is committed to providing the necessary training to enable management and staff to understand and implement their responsibilities under the policy.

The relevant statutory requirements are contained in the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It is also the intention of the Society, through the implementation of this policy, to fully comply with the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code on race equality and equal opportunities, and in particular to take note of the Race Equality Code of Conduct (2002).

5.0 RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Society's Committee of Management having formally adopted the equal opportunities policy, accepts responsibility for its implementation and for monitoring its effectiveness.

Day-to-day responsibility for implementation lies with the Chief Executive of the Society. Besides the statutory duties not to discriminate, all staff have a responsibility to ensure the positive application of this policy. The Chief Executive will have a responsibility to ensure that a positive approach towards equality issues is embedded within the staff culture. This includes the encouragement of relevant training and challenging attitudes that may conflict with this policy.

The policy will be implemented in the areas mentioned under section 2 by:

- Regular reviews of current practices and identification of weaknesses in procedures;
- Establishment of equality targets and regular performance reviews;
- Devising and implementing positive action programmes where appropriate;

- Monitoring progress and reporting to Committee at regular intervals and periodically reviewing the policy itself.

Breaches of this as of all other Society policies, may be the subject of grievance and disciplinary procedures.

King Street Housing Society expects all staff, tenants, Committee members and agents to subscribe to, and abide by this policy. We will also do our best to ensure that other organisations and individuals we work with will also abide by it.

6.0 ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING – FAIRNESS AND QUALITY

- a) The Society will set annual targets for allocation of permanent housing to Black and Minority Ethnic applicants. For 2004/5 we will aim to let 10% of all lettings to Black and Minority Ethnic applicants. This is reflective of the B.M.E population in the area as a whole, and takes account of anticipated growth in the B.M.E population. This target will be reviewed annually.
- b) The performance of the Society in meeting this target will be monitored quarterly by the Committee of Management when considering Performance Indicators. The Housing Services Manager will be responsible for producing statistics showing the numbers of properties let during the previous quarter/year and the numbers going to each group identified in the lettings plan.
- c) The Committee will also monitor the quality of accommodation offered to B.M.E applicants and the satisfaction of tenants against ethnicity and disability. We will monitor the race and ethnicity of waiting list applicants and monitor the results of allocations in regular Committee reports. When our waiting list opens we will inform Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Ethnic Minorities Forum and other Housing Associations, in order that applications can be widely canvassed.
- d) The Society will issue notices in community languages offering assistance with translation or interpretation. The Society will also offer choices that reflect cultural diversity. For example, we will respect a reasonable tenant request to be seen by staff of a particular gender, should this be required for religious or cultural reasons.
- e) We will take action against those who carry out racial and other forms of harassment and provide support and assistance for tenants who suffer harassment. In doing so, we will follow the Home Office Code of Practice and adopt the definition of a racist incident as set out in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report.
- f) We will seek to identify and provide for the needs of individuals who require housing with care and support, and give advice and information where our own resources are limited. We will endeavour to provide housing that meets the needs

of people with disabilities, and that can be adapted to meet changes in personal circumstances.

- g) Wherever practicable we will respond positively to requests for aids and adaptations to be incorporated into existing properties to meet the needs of disabled tenants.
- h) The Society will seek to ensure that all tenants and leaseholders are consulted as to whether the services it provides meet the needs of everyone.
- i) In any case where tenants or leaseholders voice discriminatory views these should be challenged but firm action including court action should be undertaken in case of harassment.
- j) The Society's Complaints procedure is open and available to anyone who is affected by the Society's activities and assistance with interpretation will be provided if necessary.
- k) The Society will seek to avoid discrimination in the allocation of work to contractors or consultants and, as far as possible, the Society will ensure that contractors or consultants comply with this equal opportunity policy.

7.0 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The Society will monitor customer satisfaction of its tenants by means of regular surveys. This will include:

- a) A sample of customers will be surveyed monthly by telephone and the race and ethnicity of the tenant will be monitored at this stage. Data will be regularly presented to the Committee of Management setting out satisfaction levels of customers in relation to their race and ethnicity.
- b) New tenants will be surveyed in relation to their general satisfaction with the property and the service they have received and this will be cross-referenced against race and ethnicity.
- c) A satisfaction survey of all tenants will be undertaken every 3 years. This will follow the National Housing Federation's model format and will include questions about disability and ethnicity. This will allow the Society to measure levels of satisfaction among all groups.

Target: The satisfaction of BME customers should not vary markedly from the satisfaction of customers overall.

8.0 RECRUITMENT OF STAFF AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Society will ask applicants for staff and committee posts to self-certify their race and ethnicity. This data will be presented to the Committee of Management from time to time in order that the Society can monitor the fairness of its recruitment policies.

We will offer training and study opportunities to enable staff who may have experienced past disadvantage to develop their careers, and managers will agree a programme with all members of staff at the induction process or during the annual appraisal.

We will offer appropriate training to all Committee members and set out equal opportunity principles in all literature provided to new and potential members.

We inform all our staff that they are required to follow the equalities policy at all times, and ensure that they regularly keep up to date with the Society's policies by regularly circulating information and advice. Managers will challenge any attitudes or behaviour that deviate from this policy.

The Society will also seek to put in place a balanced Committee of Management, with a range of relevant skills and experience and a membership that is reflective of the population as a whole, in relation to race, gender and disability. The Society's strategy for the recruitment of a balanced Committee is as follows:

- Where vacancies arise, the Chairman, in partnership with the Chief Executive, will review the composition of the Committee in terms of the experience and qualifications of members and the overall balance of the Committee in terms of race, gender, disability and race or ethnicity. Broadly speaking, the Committee should be representative of the population of the area in respect of these factors.
- Where vacancies arise, and the Committee is felt to be unbalanced in relation to the population of the area as a whole, the Society will make direct approaches to suitable B.M.E, disabled or male/female (as appropriate) candidates who are known to members or staff of the Society. The Society will also approach the local Ethnic Minorities Forum to ask if they wish to nominate a suitably qualified member from the B.M.E community, where appropriate.
- New members of the Committee, including co-optees, will be offered a comprehensive training package in order to allow them to play an effective role in the Society.

Target. 10% of staff and committee members should be from BME groups. For both staff and committee membership the Society should aim for a rough balance between genders, with males not constituting more than 70% of the total in either case.

9.0 RACIST INCIDENTS

All residents have the right to feel secure in their home.

We have adopted the Home Office Code of Practice on reporting and recording racist incidents. This includes the adoption of the definition of a racist incident as set

out in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report. We will update our policy on racial harassment in line with these documents.

10.0 APPOINTMENT OF CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS

The Society employs a range of contractors and consultants, ranging from small jobbing builders to larger housebuilders. The Society has a responsibility to ensure that the quality of the service provided by these agents is equally good (or bad!), regardless of the race, ethnicity, gender, disability or other characteristics of the resident.

The Society will ensure that agents are aware of the Society's equality policy and that to work with us they need show that they are promoting equality of opportunity.

The Society will ask all applicants to the approved list to provide a copy of their equal opportunities policy and applicants should demonstrate that they act fairly in the recruitment of staff and the provision of their services.

11.0 RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

The final responsibility for implementing this policy lies with the Committee of Management.

Census data on ethnicity

The 2001 census provides information on the ethnicity of the population in the seven districts:

(resident population - percentage)

	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese or other ethnic group
Cambridge	89.4	2.0	3.8	1.3	3.5
East Cambs	97.9	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.6
Fenland	98.6	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.2
Huntingdonshire	97.2	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.5
South Cambs	97.1	0.9	0.9	0.4	0.8
Forest Heath	93.9	2.4	0.6	1.9	1.2
St Edmundsbury	98.0	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.4
England	90.9	1.3	4.6	2.1	0.9