



Equality and Diversity Strategy

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TEAMS AFFECTED:	ALL STAFF & BOARD MEMBERS

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अनुवाद और अन्य रूपविधान पूछने पर उपलब्ध हैं कृपया 0151 235 2328 पर सम्पर्क कीजिये

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Foreword by the Board Champion

I'm delighted to introduce Liverpool Mutual Homes' Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008/9 – 2010/11.

LMH, being a new organisation, needs to ensure it embeds Equality and Diversity across the organisation. Our services must be accessible for customers from all the diverse communities within Liverpool and to achieve this we will invest in training our staff and implement a robust performance management structure to ensure we are monitoring our progress and to help us identify issues where customers are unable to access services.

Based on what we have learned so far, we are now looking to the future. We have some important challenges coming up for the organisation in the field of Equality and Diversity. These include maintaining the commitment and focus on these issues across the organisation at all levels; improving the depth of information we have about our customer profile and using this information at all times to ensure services are provided in an appropriate way, accessible to all customers and potential customers.

As Board Champion, I look forward to working with the Executive Champion, staff, customers and partners in overseeing the implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy

Will Roby

Board Champion – Equality & Diversity
the aims of our policy are:

Introduction

Liverpool Mutual Homes (LMH) is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and valuing the diversity of both our staff and the communities we serve. Equality is used within this strategy as a short-hand for 'Equal Opportunities' and is based on the legal requirements to comply with anti-discrimination legislation; protecting people from being discriminated against on the grounds of their race, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, marital status, gender or age. For the purposes of this strategy diversity is understood to mean 'recognising, respecting, accepting and valuing differences between people.

The social housing sector by nature includes some of the most disadvantaged groups within the community, and LMH considers that we have a key role to play within Liverpool in tackling disadvantage as a local employer and a social housing landlord. LMH aims to become one of the lead agencies in championing equality within Liverpool.

LMH wishes to create and sustain an organisational culture which values people from all sections of the community and the contribution each individual can make to LMH's work.

LMH aims to comply with all relevant anti-discrimination legislation, codes of practice and regulatory requirements. We are committed to promoting equality throughout the organisation and require all staff, residents, Board members, partners, stakeholders and contractors to participate fully in achieving our aims. LMH will ensure appropriate training; guidance and advice are provided to meet these aims and commitment.

Strategy Aims

The aims of this strategy are:

- To enable equality of opportunity in the provision of housing, services, employment and training;
- To meet the diverse needs of all customers, staff, and stakeholders regardless of race (including Gypsies and Travellers), religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age and to promote social inclusion;
- To eradicate inequality and discrimination against people, communities and organisations with which we work.
- To ensure we work closely with the diverse range of people within our neighbourhoods, empowering residents to influence services provided.
- To provide LMH's staff, residents, Board members, partners, stakeholders and contractors with a clear understanding of the organisation's commitment to promoting equality and diversity in our role as an employer and social landlord.
- To outline how LMH will achieve, maintain and measure compliance with its statutory and regulatory obligations
- To provide a framework for monitoring performance and achieving best practice across all business areas including employment, service provision and governance; and,

To provide a strategic framework for continuous improvement in equality and diversity issues.

Legal & Regulatory Framework

The legal and regulatory framework and other guidance which LMH will take into account in our work on equality and diversity are set out in Appendix 1. In line with our status as an RSL, LMH aims to meet the Housing Corporation's requirements, currently set out in the Regulatory Code and Guidance 2002 and Good Practice Notes 4 and 8. We also aim to work in line with the Audit Commission's guidance as set out in the Key Line of Enquiry no. 31 Diversity.

LMH is aware that in order to comply with legislation, an understanding of the requirements must be built into all our strategies and policies.

Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategy rests with the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team, who are responsible for developing a culture in which the strategy can be implemented and operated.

The Board is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the strategy objectives and ensuring that LMH's equality objectives underpin all business activities.

LMH's Vision

LMH's Corporate Plan outlines our Vision and Mission with a specific focus on Diversity

LMH's values relating to equality are:

- We are here for the whole of Liverpool;
- We will deliver quality services in the knowledge that we are providing homes for life;
- We are preserving social housing in Liverpool for future generations;
- We are improving peoples lives and are fully inclusive in the way we operate;
- Our aim is to improve local quality of life and remove any barriers that exist; and,
- We will always be the best we can for the benefit of everyone.

Our five year corporate plan goals and aspirations include:

- Viewed as an inclusive organisation by partners, staff and Customers as a result of embedding equality and diversity within the culture of the organisation;
- The whole Organisation, the Board and Staff reflect LMHs Customer base;
- Services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of current and future Customers;
- Satisfaction levels are consistent across all groups and Communities;
- Consistent and effective engagement with all;

and,

- Enable people to lead independent lives in their homes

Policy Statement

LMH recognises that Equality and Diversity is key to achieving the highest standard of performance and providing quality services.

Continually improving our performance in relation to Equality and Diversity is important to LMH because:

- We aim to work towards a just and tolerant society;
- It makes good business sense; and
- We recognise the legal and regulatory framework in which we work.

LMH is committed to achieving the best possible performance on Equality and Diversity to enable us to:

- Understand our customers - understanding the diversity of our customers and their needs is central to delivering continuous improvement and high quality services;
- Partnerships - excellent performance on Equality and Diversity is a key criterion in the selection process for all types of partnerships;
- Ensure that services and products are relevant to the needs of our customers and sustain long-term demand;
- Recruit and retain the best staff. By having a fair and transparent recruitment process, we aim to employ a diverse range of staff. LMH is committed to supporting and encouraging all staff to reach their full potential; and
- Deliver sound business leadership. LMH recognises that board members and Executive Management Team need to understand the needs of their customers. We will achieve this by ensuring these bodies reflect the diversity of the communities in which we work.

LMH will ensure policies and procedures do not cause discrimination, or allow discrimination or disadvantage to be an obstacle to accessing services, or to the recruitment, training and promotion of staff.

LMH is committed to achieving equality in regards to:

Age: We recognise the Employment Equality (age) Regulations and will not discriminate against anyone seeking employment or employed by LMH on the grounds of age. We will strive for age equality in service provision to residents.

Disability: LMH will strive for disability equality in service provision and employment. LMH will publish its Disability Equality Scheme in March 2008.

LMH will strive to provide services which are relevant to the individual needs of people. LMH will work with other agencies to provide support services where appropriate.

LMH will ensure employment practices do not unfairly discriminate anyone with a disability.

Faith: LMH will not tolerate discrimination against anyone due to their religious beliefs (Faith) or lack of religious beliefs (Faith), both within the communities in which we work and within the workforce.

Gender: We recognise our duties under the Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act, Gender Recognition Act, Equality Act and codes of practice and strive for gender equality in service provision and employment for men, women and transgender people.

Marital status: LMH will not discriminate against anyone because of their marital status.

Racial background (including Gypsies and Travellers): LMH is committed to achieving racial equality; both in the workplace and in the communities we serve.

Sexuality: We want to create an environment where Lesbian women, and Gay men are free from unfair treatment and harassment and feel safe to be open about their sexuality, if they choose to do so. LMH aims to ensure that our employment policies and service delivery are not based on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual.

People with additional support needs: LMH will aim to ensure its services are accessible to all and will seek to provide additional advice and support to those who need it.

Other diverse groups: LMH recognises that people may fit into more than one social grouping. LMH will strive to promote social cohesion within communities.

LMH will ensure its services are accessible to everyone, valuing the diversity of our customers, staff, contractors and partners in the following ways:

Recognising potential areas for discrimination

LMH recognises that individuals or groups may suffer discrimination or disadvantage on the grounds of:

- Race/ethnicity or national origin/colour/nationality
- Sex (including transgender/ transsexual)
- Sexuality (gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual)
- Religion/belief/faith
- Cultural practice
- Thought or political opinion
- Employment status
- Age
- Social class
- Language
- Marital Status
- Domestic circumstances (including caring and childcare responsibilities)
- Financial circumstances
- Disability & Illness
- Where they live
- Seeking asylum or refugee status
- Literacy

LMH current position

LMH is a new organisation (formed April 2008), and while Equality and Diversity is a key priority for the organisation, it faces significant challenges to ensure all its services comply with legislation and to embed Equality and Diversity throughout the organisation. Details of all the challenges are set out in the action plan and a summary of the key actions is set out below:

- Compiling a significant database of information about customers' needs in order to be able to shape services to the specific needs of our locality;
- Appointing a Customers Equalities Manager;
- Setting up an Equality Group comprising of staff at all levels across the organisation as well as the Board Champion for Diversity and Executive Management Team Champion for Diversity;
- Provision of training – obligatory training for staff in winter 2008/09 and ongoing training and information through different forums;
- Building relationships with community groups through meetings, informal communications and attendance at events;
- Beginning a process of Equality Impact Assessments across the organisation;
- Reaching Level 3 of the National Equality Standard;
- Reviewing Hate Crime and Domestic Violence Strategies and reporting systems;
- Developing LMHs Disability and Gender Equality Action Plans
- Ensuring every member of staff is involved in implementing the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan to help embed a culture of Equality and Diversity throughout LMH;
- Introducing a suite of performance indicators and challenging targets to ensure continuous progress;
- Building on existing customer consultation to create ongoing consultation structures with diverse groups and encourage more customers to become involved in LMH's services; and,
- Ensuring full compliance with DDA requirements.

Leadership

Introduction

Equality and Diversity is a strategic priority for LMH and therefore needs to be led effectively and visibly by the Board of Directors and Executive Management Team in order for it to become part of LMH culture. This chapter sets out the reasons for this and the approach LMH takes to ensuring strong leadership in this area.

Why is leadership important to this agenda?

The business case and legislative framework for Equality and Diversity make it a compelling field to progress however, without clear leadership and visible commitment through action, change will not occur.

In the Audit Commission's 2004 report on *'The Journey to Race Equality'* the characteristics of a leader that were seen to be most effective were:

- leaders at all levels, and members and non-executive directors, giving consistent messages about the importance, rationale and aims of (race) equality work;
- keeping non-executive directors and members informed about progress and actively focusing on tackling barriers;
- demonstrating commitment by action, not just written words ; and
- recognising and supporting the potential of champions at all levels

(The Journey to Race Equality, Audit Commission, Jan 2004)

These apply to equality in all areas and LMH is committed to embodying these principles in order to meet our objectives as set out in the previous chapter.

How are we leading the Equality and Diversity agenda at LMH?

The significance of strong leadership in progressing the equality agenda cannot be underestimated. Strong leadership means that issues relating to Equality and Diversity are addressed regularly by the Board and Executive Management Team. It is critical that the impact of their decisions on different communities within Liverpool is always a priority consideration.

LMH will ensure this is the case through a number of methods:

Board Champion and Executive Management Team Champion for Diversity whose role is jointly to:

- Champion the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan amongst Board and Area Board members;
- Increase and raise awareness of all Equality and Diversity issues amongst Board and Area Board members;
- Represent the Board by providing staff with strategic guidance and support in relation to Equality and Diversity issues;
- Be consulted on and receive information about the progress of the action plans and strategic equality and diversity initiatives;
- Attend LMH meetings and briefings as appropriate;
- Attend relevant events on behalf of LMH; and
- Attend meetings with the Customer Equalities Manager to make sure both parties are fully briefed on current issues helps to ensure that Equality and Diversity remains on the strategic agenda for LMH.

Monthly updates to Executive Management Team on achievements, issues, good practice and legislation.

The LMH Equality Group comprising of staff from across the organisation will:

- Report to the Board every six months on progress made against the targets in the action plan;
- Feed back on Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) undertaken on each service area and agree the following action plan and set priorities for further EIAs;
- All Board reports requiring a decision have a consideration of Equality and Diversity and how the decision could benefit LMHs communities; and,
- Identify resources for Equality and Diversity.

Part of the culture at LMH

The Board and Executive Management Team are committed to embedding Equality and Diversity in the culture of LMH. It will be an integral part of every policy and service as well as being part of everyone's role at LMH. LMH is committed to mainstreaming equality across all policies and strategies and all managers therefore have a responsibility for this. Our staff want to ensure that they are able to provide an appropriate and accessible service to all our customers. Specifically relating to high level leadership, LMH Governance Strategy clearly addresses the Equality and Diversity agenda in the recruitment, induction and work of Board Members. This approach is consistent with those for employees throughout the organisation.

LMH and our Partners

Leading the agenda on Equality and Diversity also means working closely with partners to ensure they are working in line with our commitments. This also means identifying and exploiting opportunities in partnership working for promoting diversity and removing inequalities. LMH is involved in this on a number of fronts:

- Liverpool First (Local Strategic Partnership)
- Citysafe (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership)
- Neighbourhood Management Service (Liverpool City Council)
- Liverpool Race & Housing Working Group

Benchmarking and Best Practice

LMH will take every opportunity to ensure it learns from the good practice across the housing sector this will include attending any benchmarking groups and relevant training. This will help us ensure we are continuously pushing the organisation to meet this agenda in new and innovative ways

LMH will use our position in order to benefit the communities of Liverpool wherever possible. We want to work with our key stakeholders to ensure a holistic approach to improving communities and opportunities in Liverpool.

Knowing Our Community

Introduction

LMH recognises that the local context for Equality and Diversity is very important. If we do not know who our customers are or who they will be in the future, we cannot plan services to meet their needs. This is a key theme and a key challenge for LMH to establish information about our customers and their needs.

The more information LMH has and is able to use to shape services to suit the customers living in our homes and those who will be living in our homes in the future, the better experiences will be for all our customers and our communities.

Information can be gained through numerous methods – through the personal information we hold about each of our tenants, through the information and feedback given through surveys on all our services and through regular consultation. Each of these will be addressed in this chapter.

Collecting information

LMH will collect information on the following:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Languages spoken, read and understood
- Preferred communication method
- Religion
- Any other need

This information has begun to be collected through our Customer Diversity Survey which is given out to customers by all staff who meet with them.

This information will be stored in our housing management system Orchard and will be used in a number of ways as detailed below.

Using information to improve services

LMH will use this information in a number of ways:

- To reflect the individual access requirements of tenants;
- To reflect within our wider service improvement planning processes; and
- To identify ways that we can meet customer access requirements.

We will use this information to monitor our performance in terms of meeting customer contact preferences as follows:

- We will hold the number of households who have informed us about their contact preferences;
- We will know the number of alternative addresses we hold for customers;
- We will have a profile of our customers ethnic make up;
- We will have an age profile for our customers;
- We will hold information about disability;
- We will hold information about any specific communication requirements; and
- We will hold information about religion and faith.

Once collected and stored, customer information will then be used in a number of ways to improve services for example:

Alerts on the housing management system that allow the user to identify any specific requirements for the customer when they contact.

- Ensure staff are aware of any specific needs before contacting or visiting customers. This will mean that services such as translators can be arranged in advance or that specific needs such as disabled customers requiring staff to wait for a period while they respond to a knock at the door can be taken into account;
- Information will also be used to identify customers not accessing LMH services enabling us to work towards removing barriers; and
- It will allow service developments to be tailored to ensure that they are specifically of relevance to LMH customers.

Consultation and working in partnership

The participation and involvement of customers, community groups and other agencies, such as the voluntary sector and other housing organisations, is crucial to LMH meeting the needs of the community. Consulting directly with our tenants must be a priority for understanding specific needs, LMH will encourage their participation in decision making processes, through a number of methods:

- Board and Area Board
- Tenants & Residents Associations
- Estate Inspections
- Customer Surveys
- Leaseholder Survey
- Leaseholder Focus Group
- Mystery Customer Exercises
- Customer Information
- Tenant Inspectors
- Consultation Events/Seminars
- Annual Tenants' Conference
- Tenant Training Programme
- Information/Consultation on the Web
- Individual Feedback Opportunities
- Text Messaging
- Reading Panel

LMH is currently building on existing consultation structures to ensure that the needs of specific groups of customers is a particular focus of the action plan for 2008/2009 and beyond.

Community cohesion

Knowing our customers means knowing the communities where they live, the positive and negative aspects of them, and working with other agencies to improve community life across the city.

A document from the LGA in 2004 describes Community Cohesion in the following way:

A cohesive community is one where there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods encouraging positive interaction between groups.

And specifically highlights the importance of:

- Neighbourliness
- Active Community participation
- Work supporting integrated communities
- Intergenerational work
- Sports/cultural events that cross ethnic/religion/age boundaries
- Tackling anti-social behaviour
- Creating safer communities
- Tackling social exclusion
- Removing feelings of powerlessness
- Working in partnership with other agencies and voluntary groups to promote these issues

LMH wants to contribute not only as a service provider but as a partner agency to ensure a holistic approach to creating cohesive communities within Liverpool and particularly to aid in addressing a number of the issues listed above.

Providing excellent services

LMH is committed to providing excellent services for everyone living in our homes. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out across all key areas of our business to look at what LMH is doing to ensure diverse groups can access services and areas for development. This chapter highlights the main service areas and challenges for the next two years. These challenges are then translated into the action plan to ensure they are progressed.

Contacting LMH

LMH aims to:

- provide an excellent customer service that meets our customer expectations;
- provide an accessible service through greater use of technology e.g. LMH web site and
- tailor services to the needs of customers.

Challenges

- Provide clear, customer approved, comprehensive information in plain English and free from jargon;
- information provided in different languages, Braille, audio or large print;
- portable loops available at housing offices;
- reporting repairs and ASB through the web and through texts;
- appointment system for all repairs;
- out of hours services for repairs and anti-social behaviour with an interpretation facility
- ensuring Housing Offices comply with Disability Discrimination Act Legislation;
- identifying customers who are not accessing the service and identifying barriers through consultation;
- ensuring customer needs (e.g. regarding disability, literacy skills or other vulnerabilities) are recorded on the system and used proactively to ensure services are tailored to individual customer needs; and,
- ensuring new web site meets requirements for all customers including Plain English, Browsealoud and resizable font.

Lettings

LMH will work with Liverpool City Council through Property Pool, the Council's choice based lettings system.

Challenges

- Ensure those in greatest need are given preference for housing ;
- Allow customers an element of choice in where they live;
- Ensure compliance with Housing Act 1996, Homelessness Act 2002 and Code of Guidance;
- Contribute to the prevention of homelessness;
- Help promote safe and sustainable communities;
- Ensure all sectors of the community have equal opportunity to bid for a home;
- Empower applicants to make a genuine choice in their future home;
- Make best use of LMH accommodation;
- Compliance with the CRE Code of Practice;
- Ensuring all processes meet the requirements of the Civil Partnership Act;
- Ensuring all applicants are encouraged to identify any particular need related to disability, religion or cultural practices for example, to help make sure properties are appropriate providing a comprehensive service for new tenants to ensure any needs are identified;
- Referral methods for tenancy support;
- Simplified application process to make services more accessible;
- Working with community groups to ensure all groups understand how homes are allocated;
- Providing comprehensive analysis of applications, expressions of interest and successful applications by a range of diverse group and by property type; and
- Ensuring the applicants preferred communication method is used proactively during the letting process.

Housing Management

LMH will work with partner agencies to:

- Prevent and deter residents from becoming involved in Anti Social Behaviour and use all available powers to stop ASB;
- Create sustainable communities on LMH estates by delivering a Tenancy Management Service that complements our investment in the “LMH standard” for Decent Homes;
- Ensure all LMH Tenants abide by their tenancy conditions;
- Ensure the environmental maintenance on our estates is at the highest possible standard;
- Create sustainable communities by providing a support service to ensure vulnerable tenants are able to maintain and sustain a home;
- Maximise our customers incomes;
- Provide a range of cost effective opportunities for customer to be able to pay their rent;
- Minimise our customers rental debts by recovering arrears through an effective process;
- Provide specialist accommodation service to our vulnerable customers e.g. elderly, disabled, young people and homeless, working in partnership with other agencies to ensure access to appropriate support services;
- Increase the range of structures for participation across all areas;
- Ensure appropriate support is provided to tenants and residents to get involved both individually and in their community;
- Ensure effective consultation and participation in all aspects of service delivery and service improvement;
- Ensure all customer feedback is valued and is used to improve service delivery and meet customer needs; and
- Ensure we promote Equality and Diversity and develop links with all hard to reach groups including, ethnic minority groups, disabled people, older people and young people.

Challenges

- Review of Hate Crime and Domestic Violence Policies;
- Working in partnership with other agencies to provide diversionary activities for young people;
- A victim support policy for victims of ASB that specifically takes account of diverse needs of BME communities;
- Accessing Intensive Family Support for vulnerable families;
- Providing support to victims of Domestic Violence as detailed in the domestic violence policy;

- Dictaphones available for tenants with disabilities or lacking basic skills needs to record ASB or use on estate inspections;
- Reviewing our gardening service available for older and vulnerable tenants;
- Ensuring that there is an awareness of sheltered housing amongst the BME community and understanding the need for this now and in the future
- Continuing to progress in meeting the objectives of the Domestic Violence Forum in reducing domestic abuse and supporting victims in Liverpool;
- Meeting the national Respect Standard for Housing Management;
- Complying with the revised CRE Code Of Practice for Housing;
- Promoting Money Advice services to specific groups e.g. BME community groups;
- Develop working with young people to provide information on budgeting skills;
- Effectively using customer diversity information to ensure that contact is being made in the most appropriate way for the customer to respond quickly to arrears;
- Develop a strategy to assist vulnerable groups contact us;
- Profile of customers involved in our services to identify where specific efforts to engage groups need to be put in place;
- Customers are able to share their views through direct contact with any LMH Officer, through e-mail, text, at meetings, through our consultative panel, at the annual conference, surveys, focus groups, seminars, training sessions, phone or letter;
- Developed links to BME communities, older peoples' forum, youth news editor, youth conference and attend a diverse range of events with hard to reach groups;
- Encourage involvement from BME tenants;
- Encourage involvement and promote activities to young people;
- Strengthen links with community groups to promote understanding of LMH and the services provided; and
- Increase profiling to ensure all active tenants are included.

Regeneration

LMH will work with partner agencies to:

- Improve health, wellbeing and safety of our customers;
- Provide a responsive and accessible customer focused repairs service;
- Develop a comprehensive Asset Management plan;
- Improve sustainability and the environment;
- Maintain and improve the physical condition of our homes;
- Make efficient use of resources within the team and appointed partners;
- Develop partnering arrangements to share costs and improve efficiencies;
- Develop partnership arrangements for supplies and materials;
- Improved energy efficiency of the stock; and,
- Increase customer satisfaction & choice.

Challenges

- Ensure vulnerable customers whose homes require improvements are supported;
- Setting up a task team specifically dealing with equality & diversity issues for partners and their staff;
- Review of Aids and Adaptations policy to improve the service;
- Integrating Aids & Adaptations with improvement work to ensure minimal disruption for customers;
- All staff involved in collecting customer information to help provide a tailored service;
- Tailor services through installation of flashing or vibrating door bells and fire alarms; tailored kitchen; appropriate height for door viewers; extended door handles
- knowing who is and who isn't able to access the repairs service and identifying barriers;
- ensuring all staff are able to provide a sensitive and appropriate service by using customer information held on IT systems;
- improving customer experiences and understanding of the Aids and Adaptations process;
- ensuring partners staff are able to provide the same level of service as LMH staff and have access to the same customer information;
- improving on or meeting targets within the workforce profile for diverse groups;
- To challenge the status quo and embrace new ways of doing business that benefits our customers;
- To ensure that the procurement process is simple, clear and focused on achieving value for money;
- To drive the development of innovative procurement solutions;

- To build positive business relationships with partner organisations and procurement consortia;
- To involve customers in procurement decisions;
- To promote positive sustainability via smarter procurement;
- Developing standard pre qualification questionnaires to strengthen the section relating to equality and diversity;
- Include clear clauses relating to Equality and Diversity in contracts and framework agreement; and
- To build consideration of Equality and Diversity issues into the evaluation process for appointing contractors.

Moving Forward

All the challenges identified in this chapter will be reflected in policies and procedures and monitored by relevant managers. A timetable of equality impact assessments across service areas will be developed. This process will ensure that progress is monitored and new challenges responded to.

Equality & Diversity and LMH Workforce

Introduction

Equality and Diversity applies not just to our customers but also to employees and potential employees of LMH. This chapter sets out how LMH ensures transparent and fair recruitment processes; encourages diversity through positive action and provides opportunities for development to all in the workplace.

LMH will ensure equality and welcome diversity in all aspects of employment policy and practice including:

- Recruitment and selection
- Training and development
- Consultation and participation
- Pay and benefits/pensions and benefits
- Grievance and employee welfare
- Appraisal and promotion
- Membership of a recognised trades union
- Non members of a trades union.

Membership of a Trade union is voluntary and staff may choose to be a member or choose not to without prejudice

LMH aims to have a diverse workforce which broadly reflects the communities within which we work. We aim to develop appropriate and effective policies and procedures to eliminate discrimination and to create a working environment where harassment of any kind is known to be unacceptable. As an employer we aim to ensure that all employees treat each other with dignity and respect at all times however, where this does not happen, we want to enable complaints to be brought forward without fear or intimidation.

Key principles

LMH is striving to be an equal opportunities organisation and as such opposes all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. Our aim is to recruit, train and develop our employees on the basis of their ability and the requirements of the job. We seek to have a workforce that is comparably representative of the local community.

Employment and recruitment and positive action

With regard to employment, this policy will apply to recruitment, training, pay, conditions of employment, work allocation, promotion and general welfare of staff and any other employee benefits.

In relation to recruitment, selection and retention LMH will ensure that the best person for the job is appointed and that unfair or unlawful discriminatory practices are eliminated. It contains essential information and advice for the selection panel incorporating the legal requirements and recommended good practice.

LMH will monitor application forms to assess the response to advertisements and to ensure that no individual or group of people is being treated unlawfully or unfairly. This information helps LMH to monitor the effects of policies relating to Equality and Diversity and assist us in development of future best practice.

LMH is committed to working towards a workforce representative of our local community. Vacancies are advertised externally to encourage applications from across Liverpool.

Current staff profile is as follows:

<u>Category</u>	<u>LMH Number</u>	<u>LMH %</u>
Women	118	52%
Men	110	48%
% of Top 5% earners that are female		2%
White including Irish / White Other	186	82%
Not Known / Not Disclosed	29	13%
Black or Black British	3	1%
Chinese	1	
Mixed	7	3%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
% of Top 5% earners whose ethnicity is NOT White British	0	
Staff with a disability	10	4%
% of Top 5% earners who state they have a disability	Not Available	Not Available
Christian	Not Available	Not Available
Muslim / Other	Not Available	Not Available
No religion	Not Available	Not Available
Not Known / Not Disclosed	Not Available	Not Available
Heterosexual	Not Available	Not Available
Gay / Lesbian	Not Available	Not Available
Not Known / Not Disclosed	Not Available	Not Available
Aged under 18	Not Available	Not Available
Aged 18 - 29	Not Available	Not Available
Aged 30 - 39	Not Available	Not Available
Aged 40 - 49	Not Available	Not Available
Aged 50 - 59	Not Available	Not Available
Aged over 60	Not Available	Not Available

Information presently not available will be collected during the coming 12 months.

To help LMH achieve this aim, we will work on a range of positive action initiatives. These include:-

- promoting the housing sector with young people from the BME community;
- advertising vacancies externally and displaying vacancy bulletins in local faith centres; and
- a commitment to work towards the Government's 'two ticks' standard showing commitment in employing disabled people.

Knowing and supporting our diverse workforce

Knowing our workforce is as important as knowing our customers. LMH will capture information regarding:

- gender
- age
- ethnicity
- disability

We will do this through staff surveys and application forms. This information is used to ensure that all Human Resources practices are fair and also to ensure that the needs of staff can be recognised and addressed in a supportive environment.

Supporting a diverse workforce also means taking a rigorous approach to challenging discrimination and tackling harassment and bullying in the workplace. Clear policies on these issues are in place to ensure staff from all backgrounds feel happy working for LMH.

Training and development of staff

Our Human Resources policies are based on a fair assessment of abilities within a process that recognises, accepts and values individual differences. Staff will be selected or encouraged to participate in development activities on the basis of their abilities, their needs and those of LMH in relation to their current jobs or potential future jobs.

All managers involved in recruitment and selection or identifying development needs and opportunities will be required to ensure that there is no discrimination on arbitrary grounds and that selection is based on job related criteria. Workforce development is essential to the success of our Equality and Diversity Strategy and will be provided by:

- Ensuring that newly appointed employees are made aware of our strategy in their induction and our developed to an appropriate level;
- Ensuring that staff involved in recruitment and selection processes are given appropriate development which makes them familiar with the strategy and gives them an understanding of both direct and indirect discrimination;
- Ensuring that staff are familiar with LMH's commitments to Equality and Diversity and the Equality and Diversity strategy and action plan; and,
- Extending relevant training to partner staff to ensure consistency.

An ongoing training programme will be developed.

This approach will be monitored through regular meetings of the Equality Group, drawing on performance indicators and customer feedback amongst other indicators.

All employment policies will be monitored at least annually to ensure processes are fair.

Work / life balance

LMH will support staff, both male and female, who have responsibilities as carers, including caring for children, a person with a disability and older people. LMH will, within the constraints of effective service delivery, make the best possible use of flexible working practices to support carers in our workforce. LMH will make reasonable provision in the development of policies and plans, delivery of services and access to employment opportunities that reduces or removes barriers to carers as service users or employees.

All new staff will receive at least 1 days training on Equality and Diversity as part of a standard Induction Policy; existing staff will receive refresher training every 3 years. Training will be delivered to Board Members, Area Board Members and members of funded and recognised Tenant and Resident Associations.

Ensuring quality & improving performance

Introduction

This strategy has set out the way forward for LMH and its customers in relation to Equality and Diversity. This chapter sets out how we will ensure that we maintain momentum on this path and identify and respond to challenges as soon as they occur.

Reviewing the strategy and action plan

A full review of the Strategy will take place in August 2010. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated monthly in order for the document to remain current and to review progress towards achieving all the targets within the Action Plan.

Performance indicators

As part of the commitment to quality and continuous improvement in areas of Equality and Diversity, LMH will develop a suite of national and local performance indicators relating to our services, our customers, our workforce and partners.

Our action plan sets out specific actions and challenging targets to ensure we achieve our Corporate Plan focus on Diversity

LMH will consult its customers on a number of service standards in this area which are:

- We will ensure that customers receive equal access to services irrespective of age, race, sex, disability or sexual orientation;
- We will ensure all staff are trained on Equality and Diversity issues and ensure they are equipped to deal with customers' needs;
- We will offer an interpreting service to all our customers who have difficulty communicating in English or British Sign Language; and
- We will make available leaflets and information in large print, on audio tape, in Braille or in different languages as required.

We will seek to maximise customer involvement in decision making and information sharing and actively promote inclusion from all groups that make up a community.

These will be monitored by the Equality Group and our Tenant Inspectors.

Key Challenges - looking to the future

Between September 2008 and March 2010 LMH faces key challenges in embedding Equality and Diversity across its services in doing so complying with legislation, responding to the diversity of our customer base and improving access to services for all and supporting and developing all staff in the workplace.

The Framework for ensuring quality and progress

A number of robust frameworks will be put in place to ensure that ongoing monitoring takes place during this period:

- The Board Champion and Executive Champion for Equality and Diversity will promote Equality and Diversity issues at the most senior levels;
- Twice yearly performance information on agreed performance indicators and targets will be presented to the Board and Area Board;
- The Executive Management Team will receive quarterly updates on progress against the action plan; and
- The Equality Group will meet regularly to monitor and coordinate progress related to the action plan.

Feedback

We welcome suggestions and complaints from people who use or provide our services. We believe that this can provide some important lessons to help us ensure that our services are improved for everyone.

If you have something to say about any LMH's policy, then please let us know. Please refer any comments in writing to:

Liverpool Mutual Homes
Commutation Plaza
1 Commutation Row
Liverpool
L3 8QF

Tel: 0800 678 1890

Email: Andrew.oates@liverpoolmh.co.uk

Appendix 1

Legal Requirements and Regulatory Requirements

Legal Requirements

Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (amended 2004) - Made it a criminal offence to employ anyone subject to immigration control unless they have permission to live and work in the UK. From May 2004, amended regulations came into force amending the procedures which organisations have to follow in order to assure themselves that new employees are eligible to work in the UK.

Civil Partnership Act 2004 – same sex couples who register a civil partnership have the same rights as a married couple.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005 – prohibits discrimination against disabled people in employment and in the provision of services, including the management and disposal of premises.

Public bodies must carry out their duties in a way that eliminates discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity for disabled people. Landlords must provide 'reasonable adjustments' if these are needed by a disabled person to live in a property.

Equality Act 2006 – it is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex. The Act imposes a duty to promote equality of opportunity for women and men.

Equal Pay Act 1970 (amended 1984) – prohibits discrimination in pay and conditions of work between men and women

Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 – makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of religion and belief. The regulations apply to vocational training and employment.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 – makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. The regulations apply to vocational training and employment.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 – makes it unlawful to 'directly' or indirectly' discriminate against on the grounds of age. The regulations apply to employment.

Gender Recognition Act 2004 – It is illegal to discriminate against trans-sexuals in the work place. Trans-sexual people who have acquired legal recognition of their gender can obtain benefits and state pension in the same way as anyone else of that gender.

Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – makes it illegal for any person to pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another.

Race Relations Act 1976 amended 2000– outlaws racial discrimination in employment, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services and the disposal and management of premises.

Public bodies must carry out their duties with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good race relations.

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 – makes it unlawful to stir up hatred against people because of their religious beliefs or lack of them.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 – makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of gender or to discriminate against married people in the field of employment.

Regulatory Requirements

- The Housing Corporation Regulatory Code 2005
- The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing 2006
- The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Employment 2006
- The Housing Corporation Good Practice Notes 4 (Race Equality and Diversity) & 8 (Equality and Diversity)
- Race and Housing Challenge Report
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 Code of Practice: Rights of Access. Services to the Public, public authority functions, private clubs and premises (amended 2006)
- The Duty to promote Disability Equality Statutory Code of Practice, England and Wales December 2006
- Employment and Occupation 2004
- This Policy also addresses the Audit Commission expectations outlined in its Key Lines of Enquiry.

As a member of the National Housing Federation (NHF), LMH will also take into account guidance produced by the Federation, e.g. the NHF Code of Equality in Housing.