Blackpool Coastal Housing

Equality & Diversity Strategy

Blackpool Coastal Housing

Document Information

Issue Date		07.09.10
Version/Issue Number		1
Document Status		Final
Effective From Date		07.09.10
Scope of Document	Strategy document covering all of BCH operations.	
Objective	To provide an overview of Blackpool Coastal Housing's strategy for delivering and improving Equality & Diversity	
Document Sponsor	**Name**	Peter Jefferson
	Job Title	Chief Executive
Author	**Name**	Michael Watson
	Job Title	Policy & Performance Officer
	Team	Policy & Performance
	Contact Tel:	01253 47 7782

Amendment Record

Date	Issue No.	Section/Page	Details of Change	Authorised By:

Amendment Notes

- Documents at draft status are to use letter designations to denote issue status: a,b,c etc.
- Documents at full issue status are to use number designations to denote issue status after full revision: 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, etc.
- For an amendment to a full issue document you are to use number designation to denote issue status: 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, etc.
- On full issue the draft amendment record should be deleted from the above table.
- Notification of the amendment must be sent to the person maintaining the Central Register.

Contents

1 Introduction 4

2 Our Equality and Diversity Principles 4

3 Where We Are Now 4

4 Where We Need To Be 5

5 How We Will Get There 5
5.1 Key Improvement Areas & Our Single Equality Scheme 5
5.2 Equality Impact Assessments 6
5.3 Code of Conduct for Board Members 6
5.4 Equality and Diversity Working Group 6
5.5 Complaints 7
5.6 Employment Monitoring 7
5.7 Hate Crime Reporting Scheme 7
5.8 Diversity Data Collection & Customer Insight 8

6 Improvement Action We Will Take By 2013 8
6.1 Knowing Our Community And Equality Mapping 8
6.2 Place Shaping, Leadership, Partnership And Organisational Commitment 8
6.3 Community Engagement And Satisfaction 9
6.4 Responsive Services And Customer Care 9
6.5 A Modern And Diverse Workforce 9

Appendix 1 – BCH Equality & Diversity Delivery Framework 10

1 Introduction

This document provides an overview of Blackpool Coastal Housing's strategy for delivering and improving Equality & Diversity. As such it contains information that is explained in more detail in our Comprehensive Equality Policy and Single Equality Scheme. Both of these documents are available on our website.

2 Our Equality and Diversity Principles

Our Equality & Diversity principles are set out in detail in our Comprehensive Equality Policy which is available on our web site.

Blackpool Coastal Housing recognises ten dimensions of equality:

1. Longevity – including avoiding premature mortality.
2. Physical security – including freedom from violence and physical and or sexual abuse.
3. Health – including wellbeing and access to high-quality healthcare.
4. Education – including being able to be creative, to acquire skills and qualifications and having access to training and lifelong learning.
5. Standard of living – including being able to live with independence and security and covering: nutrition, clothing, housing, warmth, utilities, social services and transport.
6. Productive and valued activities – such as access to employment, a positive experience in the workplace, work-life balance, and being able to care for others.
7. Individual, family and social life – including self-development, having independence and equality in relationships and marriage.
8. Participation, influence and voice – including participation in decision making and democratic life.
9. Identity, expression and self-respect – including freedom of belief and religion.
10. Legal security – including equality and non-discrimination before the law and equal treatment within the criminal justice system.

In recognising the ten dimensions of equality, this Comprehensive Equality Policy is guided by six key principles:

1. All residents, customers, service providers, employees and partners in the community have a responsibility to promote equalities and challenge discrimination and stereotyping.
2. All residents and customers are able to participate fully in the life of the community and celebrate its diversity.
3. Every resident and customer has equal access to high quality services that meet their needs. We recognise that there are some people who may need support in receiving this entitlement.
4. Every resident, customer and employee is entitled to a safe environment free from discrimination, victimisation and harassment.
5. Every employee is entitled to training and development and fair opportunities to promotion.
6. All residents, customers, employees and our partners in the community are encouraged to make their contribution to improving our services.

3 Where We Are Now

Self assessment against the Equality Framework for Local Government, indicates that BCH is a developing organisation.

As such, BCH has the following characteristics:

Board Members and staff understand the significance of equality of opportunity in creating local areas that people want to live and work in. They provide clear and visible leadership in building partnerships to address inequality.

- We have clear plans to undertake equality mapping and better understand the profile and needs of communities of interest within our locality.
- We have publicly committed to improving equality outcomes and the elimination of discrimination in both service delivery and employment.

- We are compliant with all legal requirements including having a Single Equality Scheme place.
- We have systems in place at corporate and service/unit levels to ensure the delivery, review and scrutiny of its equality and cohesion priorities.
- Key internal and external stakeholders and community members are involved in and consulted on equalities issues.
- We have earmarked specific resources for improving equality practice.
- We are carrying out both retrospective and prospective equality impact assessments.
- We are clear about its workforce profile and has plans to ensure equal pay and to improve representation where appropriate.

4 Where We Need To Be

BCH aims to be an excellent organisation in three years. As such we aim to have the following characteristics in three years time

- Board Members and staff will have a reputation for championing equality issues and ensure that the equality issues relevant to their communities are embedded in their strategic and delivery plans.
- We will work with all strategic partners and the voluntary and community sector, acting as an advocate to achieve defined equality outcomes.
- We will have good evidence of the equalities profile of the community based on national and local data that is regularly reviewed.
- We will be measuring progress on equality outcomes, be able to disaggregate data on relevant performance indicators, and be able to demonstrate real outcomes that have improved equality in services and employment.
- We will identify the changing nature of our communities and their expectations and then prioritise our activities and explain our decisions.
- We will provide good customer care by ensuring that services are provided by knowledgeable and well-trained staff who understand the needs of their communities.
- We will have improving satisfaction and perception indicators from all sections of the community and staff.
- Equality groups will be integrally involved in community engagement programmes.
- We will have forums for all equality stakeholders to share experiences and evaluate our progress.
- All parts of the organisation will be able to show tangible progress towards achieving outcomes which address persistent inequalities and narrow the gaps.
- We will implement action for equal pay outcomes and demonstrates progress on under-representation, flexible working, access to training and development and promotes an inclusive working culture based on respect.
- We will review our equality strategy and Single Equality Scheme every three years and seek innovative improvement challenges.
- Through our achievements we will be an exemplar of good practice for other organisations and agencies and will work with others to share best practice.

5 How We Will Get There

5.1 Key Improvement Areas & Our Single Equality Scheme

Following self assessment against the Equality Framework for Social Housing, BCH has identified the following key areas for improvement in order to bring about the outcomes at 4 above.

1. Knowing Our Communities And Equality Mapping
2. Place Shaping, Leadership, Partnership And Organisational Commitment
3. Community Engagement And Satisfaction
4. Responsive Services And Customer Care
5. A Modern And Diverse Workforce

BCH has made a strategic commitment to adopting a Single Equality Scheme (SES) approach to delivering our Equality and Diversity policy and bringing about the improvements we need to make. The reasons for this include:

- A recognition that inequalities are rarely experienced in isolation, but are often interdependent; a desire to strive for a holistic approach to service planning and delivery, rather than uncoordinated initiatives;
- A determination to see customers as real people, rather than as 'cases';
- A commitment to maximising the impact of resources and investment.

The SES sets out how BCH recognises the differences between people, and how this informs a differential approach to ensure that (as far as is practicable) any gaps between outcomes are identified and mitigated.

The SES also sets out how BCH will meet its obligations towards its own staff, both in terms of how they are treated as employees and how they are enabled to contribute towards our equality objectives. The SES is structured to demonstrate compliance with equality legislation.

The SES contains an Action Plan that sets out a practical work programme for all of our functions as a housing management organisation.

The SES is a fully 'live' document, in that it is subject to our governance and performance management systems.

5.2 Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments have been developed as a tool for ensuring that equality; social inclusion and community cohesion issues can be considered when drawing up policies or proposals, which affect the delivery of services, the carrying out of Blackpool Coastal Housing's functions, and the employment practice of the company.

Equality Impact Assessments are a key tool in helping us to:

- Determine how BCH's policies and practice, or new proposals, will impact or affect different communities, especially those groups or communities who experience inequality, discrimination, social exclusion or disadvantage;
- Measure whether policies or proposals will have a negative or positive effect on different communities;
- Make decisions about current and future services and practice in fuller knowledge and understanding of the possible outcomes for different communities or customer groups; and
- Develop ways of monitoring and reviewing the effects of new or changing policies or proposals if they are introduced.

The Board and Executive Directors of BCH have agreed a prioritised programme of Equality Impact Assessments and this is included in our Single Equality Scheme.

5.3 Code of Conduct for Board Members

BCH has adopted the national Model Code of Conduct for Members. The national guidance is supplemented by specific local guidance.

All BCH Board Members and co-opted Members must undertake to abide by the Code of Conduct. There is a specific provision in the Code relating to equality duties placed upon all public authorities.

5.4 Equality and Diversity Working Group

BCH has established an Equality and Diversity Working Group comprising representatives from each of BCH's Service Units. It is the responsibility of each Service Unit representative to ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered in relation to any proposed policy and to ensure that such consideration is recorded in minutes of meetings.

The Equality and Diversity Working group requests and analyses diversity employment and service delivery information from Service Units to ensure that Service Managers are using the information to help inform review processes. It also monitors the implementation and progress of the Single Equality Scheme.

5.5 Complaints

BCH monitors and will continue to monitor the impact of its policies and services on the public through its complaints procedure.

Under the procedure:

- All complaints will be monitored in accordance with the Census 2001 categories
- All Service Units will be required, as part of BCH's Performance Management System, to outline the diversity profile of complainants and highlight all complaints which relate to issues of racial harassment or discrimination
- All Service Units will be under a duty to consider the information collated in the Performance Management system and use it to inform future policy, as appropriate

Data about the diversity profile of complainants will be published in BCH's Annual Comments Compliments and Complaints Report.

5.6 Employment Monitoring

BCH believes that a workforce, that represents the community it serves, will be better able to respond to their needs. This will increase confidence and trust and ensure that BCH becomes an employer of choice. The business rationale is clear and unambiguous. In time, our diverse workforce will lead to greater business opportunities as we expand our customer base as more of our communities see us as their housing provider of choice.

BCH therefore will monitor the diversity of staff at recruitment, and in connection with training and development opportunities and on leaving BCH in order to set targets that work towards a workforce representative of the local community. BCH will also measure the progress of equality of opportunity by analysing staff diversity data, identifying any patterns of inequality and take the action necessary to remove any barriers.

5.7 Hate Crime Reporting Scheme

BCH shares Blackpool Council's commitment to tackling all hate crimes/incidents based on people's race, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, faith and belief by creating a culture whereby discrimination, real or perceived, is challenged and eradicated
BCH expects all employees to take action to report, challenge and prevent hate crimes/incidents whatever their origins, when carrying out their duties. Given this, BCH follows Blackpool Council's Hate Crime & Incident Reporting Policy.

The policy provides a mechanism for the reporting, recording, investigation, monitoring and evaluation of all hate crimes/incidents and encourages and promotes inter- agency responses to them.

BCH's commitment to tackling hate crime/incidents includes:

- Responding to cases of hate crime and participate in the development of multi agency solutions
- Contributing to local monitoring of all hate crimes/incidents and aiding the evaluation, review and development of best practice
- Making it clear to members of the public who harass employees that their behaviour will not be tolerated
- Making it clear that service may be withdrawn, if necessary and appropriate, in order to protect employees
- Supporting and advising employees who experience hate crimes/incidents from customers, by protecting them and by offering assistance where needed
- Supporting and advising a member of the public who has experienced or is reporting a hate crime/incident
- Ensuring details of incidents are recorded and seek further guidance if required

- Ensuring that all complaints of hate crimes/incidents are taken seriously and investigated as quickly and as effectively as possible by an appropriate person

5.8 Diversity Data Collection & Customer Insight

In March 2008 the Audit Commission recommended that Blackpool Coastal Housing further develop its approach to diversity to ensure a consistent approach to fully understanding the needs of community.

BCH has put in place guidance for staff to support diversity data collection which aims to:

- Provide standard data collection method to ensure a systematic approach to the collection of diversity data
- Ensure that all services are able to use data collection consistently and demonstrate targeted approaches to service improvement
- Make diversity information more widely available to staff

In August 2010 BCH commissioned HouseMark to develop a bespoke Customer Insight strategy to set clear aims, objectives and key actions in relation to tenant insight.

The main purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the organisation develops a significant understanding of its customers and their characteristics and behaviours. BCH has already embarked on a number of tenant insight initiatives but needs to develop a more co-ordinated approach. In achieving this purpose, the customer insight strategy and action plan supports the delivery of the organisations Vision and Mission as well as supporting the delivery of the Single Equalities Scheme.

6 Improvement Action We Will Take By 2013

The following paragraphs contain the improvement actions we will take by 2013. they are described in greater detail in our Single Equality Scheme.

6.1 Knowing Our Community And Equality Mapping

- Agree and implement an organisational approach to customer intelligence.
- Agree and implement an organisational approach to the use of equality and diversity data at organisational and service levels.
- Agree and implement an organisational approach to the sharing of equality and diversity data at organisational and service levels.
- Develop and implement research governance policy.
- Develop mechanisms to undertake consistent customer profiling across the organisation at service level.
- Identify issues from profiling exercises, determine priorities and implement solutions via planning processes.
- Integrate sources of customer intelligence to create a detailed picture at service and organisational levels.

6.2 Place Shaping, Leadership, Partnership And Organisational Commitment

- Agree clear organisational and partnership Equality Priorities and publicise.
- Agree, monitor and publicise Cohesion Priorities
- Include organisational Equality Outcomes in Business Plan
- Include service level Equality Outcomes in Operational Strategies and Team Plans
- Review Single Equality Scheme
- Complete and review current programme of EQIAs
- Send EQIA reports to Board
- Develop plans to ensure participation of underrepresented customer groups
- Develop plans to ensure the Board is representative of the community
- Review and monitor contractor services to determine compliance with Equality & Diversity objectives

6.3 Community Engagement And Satisfaction

- Provide consistent feedback to stakeholders on organisational Equality Priorities
- Develop an improved understanding of Equality Priorities of other agencies
- Develop mechanisms to ensure that satisfaction can be analysed by Equality strand

6.4 Responsive Services And Customer Care

- Involve customers in EQIAs
- Include service level Equality Outcomes in Operational Strategies and Team Plans
- Allocate appropriate resources to address recommendations arising from EQIAs
- Review and monitor contractor services to determine compliance with Equality & Diversity objectives
- Regularly report progress towards organisational and partnership Equality Priorities to Board
- Regularly report progress towards Cohesion Priorities to Board
- Identify vulnerable and marginalised groups and improve individual services to meet needs
- Carry out EQIAs on service changes to ensure human rights considerations are taken into account

6.5 A Modern And Diverse Workforce

- Identify key equality issues and objectives for each equality strand in the workforce development strategy
- Set objectives for a representative workforce
- Develop a deeper understanding of the local labour market
- Include equality requirements in training needs assessments
- Integrate equality issues into the IPA process

Appendix 1 – BCH Equality & Diversity Delivery Framework

DRIVERS (Where we need to be)			
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY LEGISLATION	AUDIT COMMISSION KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY	BCH CUSTOMERS	BLACKPOOL COMMUNITY PLAN

POLICY (The way we are going to get there)
BCH COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY POLICY

DELIVERY STRATEGY (What we will do to get there)
BCH SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

PLANS (What we will do)	
BCH BUSINESS PLAN	(What BCH will do)
OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES	(What teams will do in the next few years)
TEAM PLANS	(What individuals will do this year)

TOOLS TO HELP US PLAN AND DO
Audit Commission Knowing Your Communities Toolkit The Equality Framework for Local Government The Equality Framework for Social Housing CRE Code of Practice for Social Housing Complaints Process Hate Crime Reporting Scheme Customer Intelligence Strategy Code of Conduct for Board Members BCH Staff Equality & Diversity Working Group Blackpool Council Corporate Equality & Diversity Steering Group