FORUM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Forum Housing Association is fully committed to all principles of Equality and Diversity and takes an approach which recognises the importance of the nine Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act (Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Sex, Sexual Orientation). As a demonstration of our commitment, this policy and procedure has had an Equality Analysis undertaken on it to ensure we offer a service and employment that is inclusive for all.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

POLICY STATEMENT

Forum Housing Association is fully committed to the principles of Equality and Diversity, and recognises through its Christian principles that its Equality and Diversity responsibilities are far greater than that of statute. We will strive to cover all areas where an individual or groups are disadvantaged in any way preventing them from reaching their full potential. We will make every effort to ensure that no applicant for housing or employment receives less favourable treatment than another because of their individuality. We recognise all nine Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act and as such are opposed to discrimination on the grounds of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation or any other individual characteristic that may affect the treatment of an individual.

We are committed to creating a culture of inclusiveness developing a work place which reflects the local population with which we work, heightening staff and resident/service user awareness to help people understand and deal with difference. We believe our employees and residents/service users are entitled to dignity and respect, under no circumstances will any form of discrimination, intimidation, bullying or harassment be tolerated. It is therefore our declaration to challenge discrimination in all its forms, direct and indirect by the use of positive action. We want to serve those within the communities we work; ensuring resident/service users have access to all services, wherever they live, whatever their background ensuring our services are equally accessible to all and by actively encouraging our partners to do the same in order to establish community cohesion.
We believe that it is in the Association's best interests, and those who work in it, to ensure human resources, talents and skills available throughout the community are considered when employment opportunities arise. To this end, within the Equality Framework, we are committed, whenever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce which broadly reflects the local community in which we operate. We have regular reviews and monitor our Recruitment and Selection Policy to keep up to date with good practice and changing legislation.

We are committed to ensuring that recruitment and selection, appointment and training and development are on merit and ability.

Our aim is to ensure that Forum Housing Association is an organisation that recognises and embraces diversity. The Association will strive to create a culture of inclusiveness promoting good Equality practice.

In practice the Association will value each individual, in their own right, regardless of whether or not they belong to any of the Protected Characteristics groups, enabling staff and residents/service users to be included, participating fully and contributing their best, valuing the different contributions individuals can make.

The Association will also ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

In addition to compliance with the above, the Association will adapt in line with future changes in legislation. However, the Association acknowledges that legislation is defensive and to this end exists to ensure organisations do not do the wrong thing. Therefore, the Association views compliance with legislation as a minimum and through its comprehensive annual Equality Outcome Objectives, the Association is ensuring it is going beyond legislative requirements and is making a real difference.

**PRACTICE STATEMENTS**

The Board, the Chief Executive and the Equality and Diversity Officer are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of and follow the Equality and Diversity policy.

Forum Housing Association will encourage all staff and residents and partnering organisations to share the values expressed in the Policy statement.

Every Board member and all staff members have a responsibility to ensure that this Policy is put into practice. A personal commitment is expected from everyone in making it effective and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow.
The Association’s Equality and Diversity Steering Group is responsible for ensuring through the Equality Outcome Objectives it sets challenging, yet achievable targets and will monitor the Association’s progress against this continuously evolving tool.

The Equality and Diversity Officer is responsible for promoting Equality and Diversity across the Association, ensuring that the Policy is up to date and monitored on a regular basis.

The Executive team are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the Policy is implemented in their particular areas of responsibility.

All Heads of Service and all Managers have a responsibility for the implementation of the Policy in their area of work and at their Services.

Every staff member, casual worker and volunteer within the Association has a duty to ensure promotion and compliance with this Policy and it is everybody’s responsibility to challenge and report discrimination.

Training for staff and Board Members to raise awareness of Equality and Diversity is available through an internal training Workbook. In addition to this, all new staff are required to attend an Equality and Diversity session at the Corporate Induction.

Training will also be made available through the Equality and Diversity Officer to residents or partnering organisations where appropriate.

Concerns relating to the Policy should be taken to the Line Manager in the first instance who will consult with the Equality and Diversity Officer if required.

The Board will be given quarterly reports to update on the progress of Equality and Diversity within the Association.

**Harassment and Bullying**

Any member of staff who harasses or bullies any other employee or resident/service user on any of the grounds covered within this Policy will be subject to the Association’s Harassment and Bullying and Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. In serious cases such behaviour will be deemed to constitute gross misconduct and, as such, will result in dismissal in the absence of mitigating circumstances.
Hate Crime and Hate Incidents

A Hate Crime is covered within the Criminal Justice Act (2003) and the Crown Prosecution Service defines Hate Crime as “Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person’s race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender”.

The Association would encourage and support any staff member or resident/service user subject to a Hate Crime to report this to the Police.

A Hate Incident is an incident which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by prejudice or hate.

Both Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents are deemed as acts of Gross Misconduct by the Association and as such, any staff member found to be a perpetrator of a Hate Crime or Hate Incident will be subject to the Association's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

Date of next review: March 2019.

Staff non-compliance with this policy may result in disciplinary proceedings.