

HERRING HOUSE TRUST

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Herring House Trust exists to provide accommodation and services for single homeless people. HHT acknowledges that certain groups and individuals are unfairly discriminated against in society and are committed to actively opposing this. The policy is applicable to members of the Management Committee, paid employees, volunteers and service users. All appropriate policies and procedures will carry HHTs commitment to the principle of Equal Opportunities.

Finally, it is recognised that HHT operates in a world that has much injustice and discrimination within it. HHT must therefore be proactive in bringing about changes in attitudes and other constraints to equality of opportunity for all people in our society. It is expected that HHT will continue to actively develop its Equal Opportunities policy.

OBJECTIVES

HHT aims to ensure that all employees and volunteers and all applicants for employment will be given equal opportunity, irrespective of sex, race, nationality, skin colour, ethnic origin, disability, age, marital status, domestic responsibilities, sexual orientation or religious affiliation, in all aspects of recruitment, employment and training, and aims to ensure no applicant, employee or volunteer is placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions that cannot be shown to be justified on operational grounds.

The Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA) gives the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) a legal duty to:

- work towards the elimination of racial discrimination and harassment;
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people from different racial groups.

The CRE states that under Section 34 of the RRA, Housing organisations that are charities operate under charitable instruments. If a charitable instrument makes it lawful to confer benefits on people from a particular racial group, then the organization may do the same, so long as the beneficiaries are not defined by colour. For example, this means that, given the appropriate instrument, a housing association that is a charity may allocate accommodation or provide housing services to households of a particular race or ethnic or national origin or nationality. **Individuals should still be assessed according to their needs.**

IMPLEMENTATION

Day to day responsibility for its implementation lies with the management team. Communicating the policy will be by means of notices, leaflets, within job advertisements and application packs and within any documents for internal and external use. HHT will provide training and raise the awareness of everyone involved in the organisation so the

policy can be fully implemented. It will also form part of the induction procedure for all staff and volunteers, as they are required to ensure positive application of the policy. Breaches of this, as of all HHTs policies, may be the subject of disciplinary action.

Recruitment, Employment and Training – HHT intends to ensure it offers genuine equality of opportunity in all its employment practices.

- All paid workers will be instructed that there should be no discrimination on account of race, gender, skin colour, religion, disability, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or marital status.
- HHT will appoint, train, develop and promote on the basis of merit and ability.
- All paid and unpaid workers will be made aware that they have a personal responsibility for the practical application of HHTs Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Applicants for paid and unpaid positions will be given clear and accurate information about the posts through advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications and interviews in order to enable them to assess their own suitability for the position.
- Advertisements and recruitment drives shall be aimed at as wide a group of suitable qualified or experienced people as possible.
- All advertisements shall state that HHT is committed to Equal Opportunities.
- Only those qualifications and skills that are important for the job will be established as criteria for selection.
- Internal candidates will be encouraged to apply for positions and will be made aware of vacancies. All internal applicants will be judged on merit and will be subject to the same procedure as external applicants. HHT acknowledges the value of experience which will at all times be assessed and taken into account. All internal applications and requests for application packs will be treated in the strictest of confidence between administrative staff processing applications and the selection/interview panel. All information will be sent to the home address unless otherwise stated.
- All interviews will be thorough and conducted on a fair and objective basis and shall only deal with the candidate's suitability for the position and ability to fit the stated criteria.
- There will be no post ring fenced for promotion, however staff development will be given high priority through management and vocational training opportunities and encouragement of potential.
- It is the policy of HHT that it will not discriminate in the provision of internal and external training opportunities.
- Age limits for recruitment, selection, promotion or training shall not be restrictive to exclude certain groups of employees and volunteers unless justified and demonstrably valid on operational grounds of HHT.

- Training will be equally accessible to paid and unpaid staff. HHT will offer training programmes that are designed to maximise job-related skills, and through supervision and appraisal, to identify appropriate areas for further development.
- All staff and volunteers working for HHT will be trained to work with clients and offer a support package which is under-pinned by Anti-discriminatory practice, focusing on equality for each individual.
- All employees involved with recruitment, selection, promotion and training will be objective.
- Conditions of employment will be reviewed regularly in line with equal opportunities.
- HHT has a grievance procedure and paid and unpaid workers who believe they have been treated unfairly should follow this procedure in the first instance.
- Disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who is found to have committed an act of unlawful discrimination. Serious breaches of policy will be treated as gross misconduct and the disciplinary procedure actioned.
- In the case on any doubt or concern about the application of the policy in any particular instance, paid and unpaid workers shall consult their line manager.

Service Provision

- Each project will display its aims and objectives.
- HHT will establish standard procedures for referral, interviewing assessment, decision making and allocation. Detailed records will be kept and regularly monitored.
- Workers will take a sensitive and supportive approach with new residents and clients. Consistent and ongoing equal opportunities awareness will be provided to all staff in contact with service users.
- HHT will make clear to all service users its commitment to equal opportunities. Expectations for standards of behaviour and language will be made clear, providing appropriate support and training if needed.
- HHT will ensure that all its properties into which service users are resettled have a fair and clear admission procedure and criteria.
- HHT will actively liaise with specialist community and housing services to establish opportunities for move on and support networks.
- HHT will challenge any evidence of discriminatory practices of external agencies.

- Service users who believe they have been discriminated against should follow the complaints procedure in the first instance.

Management Committee

- When recruiting members for the Management Committee and in the election of officers, HHT will follow the equal opportunities objectives as above.
- Committee members will adhere to HHTs equal opportunities policy.

EQUAL ACCESS, SERVICE-USERS

Monitoring and Evaluation

The process of monitoring and evaluating the access for clients to our service forms an essential part of this policy. The information that we collate will inform our continuing good practice and ensure that we are offering a service that does not discriminate. We will achieve this through:

Stage One:

- Our **Initial Contact form** is used to gain basic information from any person presenting for accommodation, via phone, in person or via third person (through another agency).
- The information recorded includes: Race, gender, age, disability, specific individual requirements, economic status, pertinent convictions.
- This information informs us of the eligibility of the presenting person for accommodation within our service.
- The statistics are collated and results feedback to ensure that this policy is a good working document.

Stage two:

- Our **Booking-in form** expands on the information provided at presentation/referral stage, within 24 hours of being accommodated.
- The contents include detailed information expanding on the above, and including a detailed history. We use this process to gain information required by Supporting People via the client record form.
- The information recorded forms the basis of discussion for the Individual Support Plan.

Stage three:

- Our **Support Plan** is completed within 7 days of being accommodated and details the individual support required by the client while accommodated within each scheme.

- The Support Plan covers areas of housing, physical health, mental health, drug/alcohol use, finance, employment, training, and everyday living. It seeks to identify individual needs taking into account equality and diversity with each section and specific issue outlined, this forms the package of support provided and ensures that the service is tailored to the needs of the client.

The information collated through this procedure will be reviewed bi-annually within HHT review processes to ensure that equality and diversity is reflected through our service provision.

Approved by(on behalf of the Management Committee)

Date