



## **Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy Statement**

### **Our Commitment**

LHA-ASRA Group values the diversity of all communities and wants its services, facilities and resources to be accessible and useful to every individual who wishes to contact or do business with the Group. LHA-ASRA Group recognises that certain groups and individuals are more likely to suffer discrimination and face inequality because of, for example, their race, gender, age, socio-economic background or sexual orientation or because they suffer an impairment, are transgender or because of the specific religion or belief that they hold.

LHA-ASRA Group, both as an employer and provider of housing, is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity so that no one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, gender, acquired gender, disability, AIDS/HIV status, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or religion or belief.

LHA-ASRA Group will ensure that its equal opportunities policies are applied in all aspects of its service delivery and will require all Board members, employees and those who supply us with goods and services to comply with these.

### **Implementation of policy**

LHA-ASRA Group is committed to promoting equal opportunities and ending discrimination in all its functions and activities. Specifically these include:

- access to housing and services
- the provision of those services
- the development of new housing
- the employment and training of colleagues
- the use of contractors or consultants
- the governance of our organisation

## **Access to housing**

The LHA-ASRA Group provides homes for those in housing need. The Group will ensure that its Allocations Policy is open, accountable and committed to preventing any direct or indirect discrimination. The Allocations Policy will be explained to all tenants and prospective tenants, and made freely available to all those who request it.

Where possible, the allocation of tenancies will take into account the importance of the needs of the communities within which we operate. The LHA-ASRA Group monitors the ethnicity of its allocations and sets targets for allocations to black and minority ethnic tenants. Our performance and targets are reviewed annually by the Board and where any shortfalls in achieving these are identified, the Group take steps to address them.

## **Provision of housing services**

LHA-ASRA Group will make sure that our services are provided to all users in the same way, and treat everyone with courtesy and respect. The Group will provide a service that is sensitive towards the needs and circumstances of any individual or group that may face discrimination, and be supportive to those who may be vulnerable or have special needs.

All forms of harassment are unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the Group. The Group will take action against those who carry out harassment, support and assist those who suffer any such harassment, and will be proactive in co-operating with other relevant agencies. The Group will consult with those experiencing discrimination to make sure that services meet their needs, and that all tenant participation and consultation activities promote the full and active involvement of all groups. Action will be taken where it is found that discrimination has taken place in any of the group's tenants' associations and forums.

All complaints made to the Group on the basis of race, gender, acquired gender, disability, AIDS/HIV status, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or religion or belief, will be monitored to ensure that particular groups are not being disadvantaged.

Where appropriate, the Group will provide information in languages other than English and will provide an interpretation service through Language Line, Type talk or sign language, and will ensure that all our offices are equipped with Mincom. The Group will take all reasonable measures to ensure that our offices and services are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

### **Housing development**

In the development of new housing stock, LHA-ASRA Group recognises that it needs to build properties which meet the requirements of existing and prospective tenants. Some areas may be more likely to be unattractive or hostile towards particular vulnerable or disadvantaged groups or individuals, and where Group are developing in these areas; the Group will take steps to ensure tenants feel safe and secure and can live without the threat of harassment.

Any new developments will take into account the special needs of people with disabilities, and where possible a proportion of units will be designed to wheelchair standard, or adaptations will be made available. Tenant consultation and tenant surveys, during and after the development process, will take into account the specific needs and satisfaction of disadvantaged groups and individuals. Where significant dissatisfaction is identified, LHA-ASRA Group will endeavour to make redress and ensure that such issues are fed back into the future development process.

### **Employment and training of colleagues**

LHA-ASRA Group recognises that developing a diverse workforce reflecting the different sectors of society is an integral part of our organisational development. The Group believe that developing such a workforce will enable us to provide better, more sensitive and more effective services.

As an employer, LHA-ASRA Group's policy is to treat all job applicants and prospective applicants, both internal and external, equally. Our recruitment and selection procedures are designed to ensure equality of opportunity by selecting candidates solely on the basis of their competence and abilities. All those involved in the recruitment and interviewing processes receive equal opportunities training.

LHA-ASRA Group monitors all appointments and colleague turnover to ensure that there is no institutional bias or discrimination. A report to the LHA-ASRA Group

Board is made on an annual basis. Where there is evidence that any group has been persistently under-represented, the Group will take positive action to improve the situation. This may involve encouraging the career development of individuals or the selection of trainees who are members of the groups identified as being under-represented. In particular, positive steps will be taken to encourage under-represented groups at a managerial level to achieve advancement.

All colleagues and Board members must attend equality and diversity awareness training and are made aware of their obligations and requirements under the Group's policies. All job applicants are made aware of the Group's commitment towards equal opportunities, and of colleague's requirement to undergo equal opportunities and diversity training.

LHA-ASRA Group will take action against those who carry out harassment against any colleagues and will fully support colleagues who are the victims of any such harassment. Where the harassment has been carried out by another colleague, grievance, harassment, whistle-blowing and disciplinary procedures will be used to ensure proper redress is made.

As an employer, the Group shall endeavour to accommodate, and be sensitive towards, any special requirements relating to race, gender, acquired gender, disability, AIDS/HIV status, age, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or religion or belief, and recognise the responsibilities of those with dependants.

### **Contractors and consultants**

LHA-ASRA Group recognises that it is a major provider of employment and business to our contractors and consultants, and that the Group have an obligation and opportunity in this area to promote equal opportunities. All contractors and consultants employed are checked to make sure they have Equal Opportunities Policies which match our own, and they are made aware of the Group's Equal Opportunities policy and their responsibilities to abide by it. LHA-ASRA Group will ensure that the selection of all its contractors and consultants is carried out in a fair and non-discriminatory way. The Group will collect, record, and analyse data on the profile of all contractors and consultants registered on our approved list, and of firms that have been invited to tender, been short-listed, or awarded work. This

information will be systematically analysed and monitored in the same way as colleague representation statistics. Where fair representation is shown to be lacking, Group will try, in consultation with the Board, to take positive action to improve the representation.

## **Partnerships**

LHA-ASRA Group will ensure that our selection of partnerships with other organisations is fair and non-discriminatory. These partnerships may include tenant and resident associations, other housing associations, voluntary and other agencies, and local housing companies. The Group will make clear to any such partner our Equal Opportunities policy and procedures, their obligation to abide by these, and the requirement to communicate their commitment towards equal opportunities. Where possible, the Group will promote equal opportunities within partner organisations. LHA-ASRA Group will take appropriate action where it is found that discrimination has taken place in any tenant groups.

## **Governance**

LHA-ASRA Group's Equal Opportunities policy applies equally to the Board, its sub-committees and our various tenant groups. The Group will ensure that the members of our various committees, advisory panels and working groups reflect the diverse profiles of our communities and tenant population. Where such groups are under-represented, the Group will take positive action to improve this. Recruitment to Group's various governance bodies will be fair and non-discriminatory. All members of committees will be encouraged to attend equal opportunities and diversity training and they will be made aware of relevant policies and procedures and their responsibilities and obligations.

## **Responsibility to implement equal opportunities**

The ultimate responsibility for adhering to equal opportunities lies with the Board. Whilst the Chief Executive and the Group Management Team are responsible for ensuring policies and procedures are implemented throughout the organisation, the HR and Remuneration committee is specifically responsible for the overall monitoring and development of the Equal Opportunities Policy.