

Core Business

Equality and Diversity

Scope:	This policy applies to all Group members: Anglia Maintenance Services, Circle Anglia, Circle Living, Circle 33 Housing Trust, EPIC Trust, Invicta Telecare, Mercian Housing Association, Merton Priory Homes, Mole Valley Housing Association, Old Ford Housing Association, Roddons Housing Association, Russet Homes, South Anglia Housing, Wherry Housing Association
Effective Date:	October 2010
Review Date:	October 2011
Signed Off :	Management Board, 29 September 2010
Author:	Bobby Arthur, Policy Officer
Policy Owned by:	Group Policy
National Standards/ Regulation	Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (Cross-cutting theme of Equality and Diversity applies across the regulatory framework) Statutory Code of Duty on Racial Equality in Housing 2006 Statutory Codes of Practice on race, gender and disability equality duty
Legislation:	Equality Act 2010

Equality and Diversity

1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all individuals working at all grades, including employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, home workers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers (collectively referred to as **staff** in this policy). The principle of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination applies equally to the treatment of former staff, visitors, service users and suppliers of our current workforce.
- 1.2 This policy applies to the advertising of jobs and recruitment and selection, training and development, opportunities for promotion, conditions of service, benefits and facilities and pay, health and safety, conduct at work, grievance and disciplinary procedures and to termination of employment.
- 1.3 The policy also applies to the allocation of housing, adjustments to properties and common areas, service delivery and consultation with **customers**.
- 1.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Circle Anglia works to enhance the Life Chances of customers by providing safe, secure and affordable homes, developing quality services that meet customers' needs and engaging with customers to build inclusive and sustainable communities.
- 2.2 Circle Anglia recognises that certain groups in society may experience prejudice, discrimination and less favourable treatment on the grounds of their protected characteristics, and that this still limits people's choices and chances in life.
- 2.3 Circle Anglia is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling unlawful discrimination. We will not discriminate against staff, customers, visitors, suppliers or others based on their sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief, disability or age (collectively referred to as **protected characteristics** in this policy and the Equality Act 2010).
- 2.4 As a major group of landlords and service providers and as an employer and purchaser of goods and services in the areas in which we work, Circle Anglia has the ability to make a significant local impact through our commitment to diversity.
- 2.5 We will meet the requirements relating to equality and diversity laid down in the Equality Act 2010 by working to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between all of our residents, service users and staff.
- 2.6 We will also meet the requirements of the regulatory framework published by the Tenant Services Authority. Equality and diversity applies across all six National Standards, particularly the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

3 Policy

3.1 We will:

- Encourage a corporate culture where equality and diversity is treated as a key, integral value for the organisation
- Incorporate equality and diversity into our Life Chances planning
- Prepare a Single Equality Scheme for each Registered Provider
- Eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination in our business
- Seek to ensure that our governing bodies and our workforce at all levels of the organisation mainly reflect the population we serve
- Actively consult the diverse range of customers to ensure that their views form an integral part of the decision making process
- Take prompt, responsive action in all cases of discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation
- Strive to ensure communication actively promotes equality, is non-discriminatory, and is accessible to all
- Influence our contractors, partners, consultants and suppliers to meet the highest standards of equality and diversity
- Expect all employees, contractors, board and committee members to abide by this policy.

4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 Circle Anglia will mainstream equality and diversity into our business and planning mechanisms so that decisions made are relevant to the needs and aspirations of the people we serve.
- 4.2 The Management Board of Circle Anglia has overall responsibility for the effective operation of our equality and diversity policy and ensuring compliance with the statutory framework prohibiting discrimination.
- 4.3 The Group Chief Executive and Executive Director Board have day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review. Members of the Executive Director Board are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented in their areas of responsibility
- 4.4 All staff are responsible for ensuring that the policy is incorporated into their work activities, in all their dealings with customers, colleagues and anyone else they come into contact with during the course of their employment or engagement. This includes work on our premises and in our properties, as well as work related social events, hospitality events, travelling and staying away from home while on business.

5 Breaches of Policy

- 5.1 Any breach of this policy will be taken very seriously and we will take a zero tolerance approach towards unlawful discrimination. Any member of staff who is found to have committed acts of discrimination or harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in line with our [Disciplinary](#) policy. Such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and as such may result in summary dismissal.

6 Governance

- 6.1 A governance structure that reflects and understands the diverse communities it represents is critical to leading an organisation that celebrates diversity. Circle Anglia will encourage applications from groups who are under-represented onto our boards.
- 6.2 We will provide training on equality, diversity and inclusion to board members so that they are able to discuss the issues fully and demonstrate their personal commitment to leading promotion of diversity across all of Circle Anglia's activities.

7 Homes

- 7.1 Circle Anglia aims to provide homes and services that meet the diverse needs of customers. We believe that all customers should be able to access housing, support and care services with the same ease and that the quality of our service is the same high standard for all.
- 7.2 We will strive to meet housing needs in the areas in which we operate. We will monitor nominations and raise concerns with the local authority if they do not appear to be in line with housing need in that area.
- 7.3 We will ensure that no current or potential customers is discriminated against or victimised by letting or selling a property on less favourable terms due to a protected characteristic.
- 7.4 Circle Anglia will review the condition of our homes as part of our asset management strategy, ensuring that the needs and aspirations of residents are taken into account. We aim to be aware of the diverse needs of our customers so that we can provide good quality new housing of the type and design that people need.
- 7.5 We will provide an Adaptations service for tenants who need additions or alterations to their home to meet their mobility needs. More information is available in the [Adaptations](#) policy.
- 7.6 Customers with disabilities may request reasonable adjustments to common parts if they are at a substantial disadvantage and the adjustment is required to enable them to utilise facilities and obtain access to their homes. Customers, or someone acting on their behalf, must make such a request in writing and may be required to pay for or contribute towards an alteration.
- 7.7 We will monitor customers' satisfaction across the range of our services with the aim of ensuring there are no significant differences across the strands of diversity. We will monitor perceptions of property quality at letting and refusals of offers of accommodation.
- 7.8 We will set targets to ensure that satisfaction levels for new and existing housing are equally as good for all customers.

8 Services

- 8.1 We will ensure that our policies do not discriminate against any individual person or specific groups of customers. For example, we give equal standing to tenants who are married, civil partners, or gay, lesbian or heterosexual common-law partners.
- 8.2 An **Equality Impact Assessment** will be carried out locally whenever policies are introduced and whenever there are significant proposed changes to services. We will seek to improve our understanding of our customers' diverse needs, and use this information to ensure our Equality Impact Assessments are meaningful.
- 8.3 Circle Anglia aims to promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing through our community development and neighbourhood renewal activities. We will work in partnership with local people to avoid conflict and foster good community relations.
- 8.4 We will provide a range of opportunities for customers and local community groups to have their say on decisions that affect them and scrutinise our performance. We will ensure that input from consultation is an integral part of the decision making process.
- 8.5 We will monitor service user groups to ensure that they are representative of the communities that they serve. We will take into account cultural and religious issues when arranging meetings, for example avoiding meetings on dates of religious festivals and ensuring any food provided is appropriate.
- 8.6 Circle Anglia will ensure that our customers have access to information about their rights and responsibilities, and the opportunities and services that are available. We will provide translation, transcription and interpreting services that are relevant to customers' needs. More information is available in our [Translations, Transcriptions and Interpreting](#) policy.
- 8.7 We will aim to ensure that our website is accessible to all customers and to produce information in a variety of multi-media formats so that the varying needs of customers are met.
- 8.8 We will ensure that we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that all of our customers are able to use the parts of our offices that are open to the public.

9 Direct and Indirect Discrimination

- 9.1 Discrimination may be direct or indirect and may occur intentionally or unintentionally.
- 9.2 **Indirect discrimination** occurs when an individual is subjected to an unjustified provision, criterion or practice that puts them at a particular disadvantage because of their protected characteristic.
- 9.3 **Direct discrimination** occurs when someone is put at a disadvantage for a reason related to one or more protected characteristic. This includes treating someone less favourably because of their association with someone with one or more protected characteristic or because they are incorrectly perceived to have one or more protected characteristic.
- 9.4 Direct discrimination also includes **harassment** and **victimisation**. Circle Anglia will take prompt, responsive action in all cases of discrimination, bullying, harassment or

victimisation. We will send out a clear message that harassment of any form will not be tolerated, and will tackle all forms of harassment (including **racial** and homophobic harassment) promptly using a victim centred approach.

- 9.5 We will use a range of methods to resolve harassment cases, including those outlined in our [Antisocial Behaviour](#) and [Harassment](#) policies when dealing with harassment experienced by and perpetrated by customers.
- 9.6 We will monitor cases, actions taken and outcomes. We will seek feedback from customers who have reported harassment to us on how satisfied they are with how their case was dealt with.

10 Certain Medical Conditions

- 10.1 People living with certain medical conditions such as HIV, AIDS, cancer and multiple sclerosis will be treated with the same respect and dignity as any individual who approaches us for information, advice or assistance. We will ensure that a staff member or customer with any of the above-mentioned medical conditions is not discriminated against, victimised or treated less favourably due to their illness.
- 10.2 Information about the personal circumstances of staff members and customers with any of the above medical conditions will be handled according to our [Data Protection](#) policy and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Information will only be passed to another staff member where it is necessary for the provision of care and support.
- 10.3 Staff will be mindful of the particular circumstances of people living with any of the above medical conditions, or indeed with any sensitive medical issue, when dealing with complaints of harassment. As with other forms of harassment, we will strive to pursue the harassers.

11 Contractors, Consultants, Partners and Suppliers

- 11.1 Circle Anglia will ensure that consultants, contractors and partners are aware of the importance of equality and diversity to us and are required to comply with our equality and diversity policy when carrying out services for us. We will help them to understand the diverse needs of our customers in order that they are better equipped to provide an efficient service to all our service users.
- 11.2 We will require all significant suppliers of goods and services to provide us with their equality and diversity policy and monitoring information on the diversity of their workforce.

12 High Performance, People and Culture: Employment and Training

12.1 Circle Anglia aspires to a diverse and inclusive workforce that has the skills to achieve the organisation's commitments and strategic goals. We aim to employ a workforce that reflects at all levels the diversity of many of the communities we serve. We are committed to ensuring that all staff have an equal opportunity to develop their potential and progress within the organisation, and are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination.

12.2 We will:

- seek to comply with the Race, Gender, Disability and Equal Pay Codes of Practice and any other guidance issued by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission in relation to the Equality Act 2010
- within the framework of law and wherever practical, aim to achieve and maintain a diverse workforce which reflects the population of the local communities in which Circle Anglia provides services
- recruit, develop and promote staff on the basis of a fair, objective and rigorous assessment of competence and potential;
- ensure that our employment policies and management practices enable the retention of a diverse staff group
- expect staff to treat all customers and each other fairly and with respect, as stated in the [Staff Code of Conduct](#)
- provide a working environment where harassment and offensive behaviour and discriminatory jokes are unacceptable and where individuals are able to bring complaints without fearing prejudice
- provide diversity awareness training tailored to the needs of new staff, managers and 'front line' service providers
- set targets and monitor across the protected characteristics the staff profile, recruitment, promotion, training, study opportunities, complaints, grievances and reasons for leaving
- analyse and take appropriate steps to act on any discrepancies identified through monitoring
- inform all our staff that they are required to follow the Equality and Diversity policy at all times.

12.3 We will monitor staff satisfaction with Circle Anglia's performance on diversity, and will analyse these results across the protected characteristics.

Recruitment

12.4 Circle Anglia is committed to recruiting staff who meet the required competency profile for the job they have applied for, irrespective of their background. Through robust job analysis, we will ensure that we only measure skills and/or attributes which are clearly relevant to job demands and are therefore justified on non-discriminatory grounds. We aim to ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristic. Our [Recruitment](#) policy and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities and that sufficiently diverse sectors of the community are reached.

- 12.5 Whenever a disability prevents a suitably qualified individual from undergoing standard selection procedures, appropriate alternative arrangements for assessment will be made. If an applicant with a disability meets the minimum person specification requirements for the job they have applied for, they will automatically be shortlisted.
- 12.6 We recognise that the Equality Act 2010 allows **positive action** to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs.

Genuine Occupational Requirement

- 12.7 Where a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR) exists, this means that an organisation can lawfully discriminate on the grounds of a protected characteristic and seek to appoint someone with a particular protected characteristic.
- 12.8 One of the relevant GOR exceptions is providing personal support services promoting the welfare of members of a particular sex and/or racial group, where those services can best be provided by a member of the same sex or racial group, for example a female Asian worker for a scheme for Asian women. Human Resources will always make the final decision on whether a GOR can be used.

Working for Circle Anglia

- 12.9 Circle Anglia will regularly review terms and conditions of employment/engagement, benefits and facilities to ensure that they are free from all forms of direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of any protected characteristics. Our grievance and disciplinary procedures will operate without unlawful discrimination.
- 12.10 We recognise the need to balance personal and work life and that flexibility with regard to working patterns assists the broadest range of people. We will ensure requests to alter working hours are dealt with under our [Flexible Working](#) policy.
- 12.11 We will carry out Equality Impact Assessments whenever significant changes are proposed to staff working conditions. Where appropriate, steps will be taken to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and to provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
- 12.12 We will promote a healthy working environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and in which no one feels threatened or intimidated because of his or her differences. We will support colleagues experiencing discrimination, bullying, victimisation or harassment in line with our [Fairness and Dignity at Work](#) policy. We will take disciplinary action against anyone committing any form of personal harassment as stated in our [Disciplinary](#) policy.

Employing People with Disabilities

- 12.13 We aim to ensure that anyone with a disability is protected from any unlawful direct discrimination and, as far as possible, is not disadvantaged by his or her disability. If a staff member is disabled, or becomes disabled in the course of employment with us, they are encouraged to tell us about their condition, which will enable us to support them as much as possible.

- 12.14 We are committed to doing everything reasonably possible to enable staff with disabilities to carry out their job. We will make any such adjustments, as far as are reasonably practicable and proportionate, to ensure no disabled person is placed at an unreasonable disadvantage and to enable anyone who becomes disabled to remain in their job or to be redeployed to a suitable alternative position.
- 12.15 These adjustments may apply to the working environment, working practices, role responsibilities and to the terms and conditions of employment. There may be circumstances where it is not possible for us accommodate any suggested adjustments, and we will ensure that we provide staff with information as to the basis of our decision not to make any adjustments.

Internal Progression and Training

- 12.16 Circle Anglia is committed to creating opportunities within the organisation for staff who can demonstrate their competence. We will review regularly the extent to which internal promotion and progression provides a workforce that meets our desire to be broadly representative of the diverse neighbourhoods we serve.
- 12.17 Staff learning and development needs will be identified through regular appraisals. All staff will be given opportunities to have these met through a variety of learning methods. Permanent staff and where relevant, staff on fixed term contracts, will be given the opportunity to apply for funding, in line with the [Sponsorship](#) policy, to study via day release, evening class, or flexible learning.
- 12.18 Attendance on internal and external training courses and professional study is monitored to ensure all staff are given an equal opportunity to obtain the benefits of training and development. We monitor our use of the conditions of service of fixed-term and part-time employees and their progression to ensure they are being offered appropriate access to benefits and training and promotion opportunities.

Termination of Employment

- 12.19 We will monitor redundancy selection criteria and procedures to ensure that they are fair and objective and are not directly or indirectly discriminatory.
- 12.20 We will also ensure that disciplinary procedures are carried out fairly and uniformly for all staff. See [Fairness and Dignity at Work](#) and [Disciplinary](#) policies.

13 Monitoring & Review

- 13.1 We will collect the necessary statistical data to ensure the effectiveness of this policy and to ensure that it is achieving its objectives. We will adhere to data protection obligations in the way we handle and store this information. We will set targets across the areas set out in this policy and report performance against them to Boards and Committees as agreed in the performance management system adopted by the group.
- 13.2 This policy is reviewed annually, following which the Management Board will receive an annual report on Equality and Diversity. Members of staff are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved by contacting the [Group Policy team](#).

Glossary

Term	Definition
Customers	People who are currently or potentially in receipt of services from Circle Anglia, including tenants and residents, people receiving care or support services.
Direct Discrimination	Less favourable treatment of a person compared with another person because of a protected characteristic
Equality Impact Assessment	A method of assessing and consulting on the effects that existing and proposed policies / service functions are likely to have on people from diverse backgrounds
Genuine Occupational Requirement	Exceptions to the law regarding discrimination are permitted where someone's gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation is genuinely needed for them to be able to carry out their duties
Harassment	Unwanted conduct on the grounds of or relating to any of the protected characteristics or political opinion, which, in the reasonable opinion of the recipient, has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading or offensive environment. This can include physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct
Indirect Discrimination	The use of an apparently neutral practice, provision or criterion which puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who do not share that characteristic, and applying the practice, provision or criterion cannot be objectively justified
Positive Action	The steps that can be taken by employers to encourage people from groups with different needs or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs.
Protected Characteristics	These are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. More information is available on the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission
Racial Incident	Circle Anglia has adopted the definition of a racist incident from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: "A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or by any other person." (Macpherson Report, 1999)
Staff	Employees, consultants, contractors, trainees, home workers, part-time and fixed-term employees, casual and agency staff and volunteers of Circle Anglia
Victimisation	Less favourable treatment of an individual because of their action (or there is belief that they have acted) to assert their rights against discrimination on their own behalf or on behalf of someone else

Related Documents

Document	Link
Connected Policies:	Antisocial Behaviour Disciplinary Fairness and Dignity at Work Flexible Working Policy Harassment Recruitment Sponsorship Staff Code of Conduct Translations, Transcriptions and Interpreting

Version History

Version no.	1	Date effective:	March 2005
Full / partial review?	New policy		
Staff consultation (teams):	n/a		
Resident consultation:	n/a		
Signed off by:	Circle Anglia Shadow Board, 22 March 2005		
Author:	Caroline Thompson, Head of Policy and Planning		

Version no.	2	Date effective:	November 2008
Brief summary of changes:	Partial review to check compliance and gather feedback from staff around language.		
Colleague consultation:	Expanded definition of harassment, updates to statutory requirements, update to section on sensitive medical conditions amendments to reflect new governance arrangements. Partial review to check compliance and gather feedback from staff around language.		
Resident and service user groups consulted:	All colleagues via Cirano, Policy Champions, Senior Managers' Diversity Group, Company Secretariat, HR, Risk Management, Group Communications		
Results of resident and service user consultation:	Comments from Circle 33 resident on behalf of the Involvement Steering Group. Mole Valley Operations Working Group		
Other consultation:	Eversheds Diversity specialist		
Signed off by SMPRG:	October 2008		
Author:	Caroline Thompson, with updates provided by Zoe Buick		

Version no.	3	Date effective:	October 2010
Brief summary of changes:	Desktop review to check compliance with Equality Act 2010		
Colleague consultation:	Head of Human Resources, Group Governance, Sasha Harrison, EDB, GOT		
Resident and service user groups consulted:	Changes involved compliance with legislation. The review in 2011 will include consultation with residents and service users and will benefit from the publication of the EHRC Code of Practice for Housing		
Other consultation:	Devonshires solicitors - Housing Management and Employment		
Signed off by:			
Final sign-off:			
Author:	Bobby Arthur, Group Policy team		