



## Corporate

### Equality and Diversity

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<b>Scope:</b>	This policy applies to Circle Anglia, Circle 33 Housing Trust, EPIC Trust, Invicta Telecare, Mole Valley Housing Association, Old Ford Housing Association, Roddons Housing Association, Russet Homes, South Anglia Housing, Wherry Housing Association.
<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 2005
<b>Review Date:</b>	March 2010
<b>Signed Off :</b>	Circle Anglia Shadow Board, 22 March 2005
<b>Author:</b>	Caroline Thompson, Head of Policy and Planning
<b>Policy Owned by:</b>	Policy Team
<b>KLOE:</b>	Diversity
<b>QAF (Supported Housing):</b>	n/a
<b>Statute:</b>	Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amended) Human Rights Act 1998 Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulation 2003 Gender Recognition Act 2004 Civil Partnership Act 2004 Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005 Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 05 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 Age Discrimination Act 2006 Equality Act 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

# Equality and Diversity

## 1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and board members of Circle Anglia.

## 2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Circle Anglia is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and fairness and tackling discrimination.
- 2.2 We believe not only that we have a moral responsibility to work towards a fairer and more just society, but also that achieving high standards in equality and diversity makes good business sense, through ensuring that we understand and meet the needs of our customers and in being able to recruit and retain talented and skilled employees from all sectors of the community.
- 2.3 Circle Anglia is a major group of landlords, a service-provider, employer and purchaser of goods and services in the areas in which we work and as such we have the ability to make a significant local impact through our commitment to diversity.
- 2.4 We recognise that people are different and aim to ensure that we treat each individual with dignity and respect.
- 2.5 We recognise that certain groups in society may experience prejudice, discrimination and less favourable treatment on grounds such as gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, physical or mental disability, religion or religious or other beliefs, political beliefs, marital or family status, sexuality or sexual orientation, age, caring responsibilities, medical conditions such as HIV or AIDS, or other reasons.
- 2.6 We will ensure that equality and diversity is mainstreamed throughout our policies, procedures and practices in order to avoid any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying and ensure all individuals are treated with respect, fairness and courtesy.

## 3 Policy

- 3.1 We will:

- Meet all relevant legal and regulatory requirements regarding equality and diversity.
- Expect all employees, contractors, board and committee members to abide by the policy.
- Encourage a corporate culture where equality and diversity is treated as a key, integral value for the organisation.
- Eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination in our business.
- Incorporate equality and diversity into our business and planning mechanisms.
- Seek to ensure that our governing bodies mainly reflect the diversity of the population we serve.
- Seek to ensure that our workforce at all levels of the organisation mainly reflects the population we serve.
- Strive to ensure communication is non-discriminatory, accessible to all and actively promotes equality.
- Provide choice, access and quality of services that meet the diverse needs of all communities wherever possible.

Strive to meet housing needs in the areas in which we operate.

- Take prompt, responsive action in all cases of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- Actively consult the diverse range of tenants to ensure that their views form an integral part of the decision making process.
- Provide good quality housing of the type and design that people require.
- Influence our contractors, partners, consultants and suppliers to meet the highest standards of equality and diversity.

## **4 Legal and Regulatory Framework**

4.1 We will meet all relevant legal requirements relating to equality and diversity.

This includes:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as amended
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and The Race Relations (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Amendment Act 2005

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Human Rights Act 2000
- Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002
- Part-time (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment ( Regulations 2002
- The Employment Equality Regulations 2003, 2005 and 2006
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Gender Recognition Act 2004
- The Equality Act 2006
- The Racial And Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Age Discrimination Act 2006
- [Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Public Authorities ) (Statutory Duties) Order 2006] (NB if Housing Action Trust)
- Rehabilitation of Offences Act 1974
- ERA 1996
- Part-time Workers Regulations,
- Fixed Term Workers Regulations
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Disability Equality Duty
- Statutory Code of Duty on Racial Equality in Housing 2006.

4.2 We will meet all regulatory requirements relating to equality and diversity. These are set out by the Housing Corporation in the Regulatory Code, which states that

“Housing Associations must demonstrate, when carrying out all their functions, their commitment to equal opportunity. They must work towards the elimination of discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals. They must promote good relations between people of different racial groups.” (2.7)

“The association is fair in its dealings with people, communities and organisations with which it has relationships and takes into account the diverse nature of their cultures and backgrounds.” (2.7a)

“The governing body has adopted an equalities and diversity policy that covers all aspects of equalities and includes race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.” (2.7b)

“Specifically in relation to black and minority ethnic (BME) people, the policy incorporates targets associations should set in the following areas: lettings, tenant satisfaction, dealing effectively with racial harassment, governing body membership, staffing, representation in resident associations, employment performance of suppliers, contractors and consultants.” (2.7c)

- 4.3 The Code also expects associations to provide good quality services “by being responsive to the individual characteristics and circumstances of residents”. (3.5.4)
- 4.4 The recommendations in the Housing Corporation’s Good Practice notes 4 and 8 have been taken into account in drawing up this policy.

## **5 Responsibilities**

- 5.1 The Management Board of Circle Anglia has ultimate corporate responsibility for ensuring that equality and diversity underpins all aspects of the group’s work, including member organisations.
- 5.2 The Group Chief Executive and Deputy Group Chief Executive are responsible for ensuring that there is an organisational culture in place in which this policy can operate effectively and for ensuring it is implemented.
- 5.3 Members of the Group Executive Team (GET) are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented in their areas of responsibility.
- 5.4 All employees and contractors 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, not only on our premises and in our properties but including work related social events, hospitality events, travelling and staying away from home while on business.
- 5.5 All Circle Anglia employees, contractors, board and committee members are expected to abide by this policy. Any breach will be taken very seriously and we will take a zero tolerance approach towards unlawful discrimination.

## **6 Corporate Culture**

- 6.1 Circle Anglia will ensure that employees, board members, contractors, residents and service users, our customers and stakeholders are made aware that equality and diversity is of key importance to the group. We aim to develop a culture where equality and diversity issues are discussed openly on the basis of facts not assumptions. We are committed to ensuring that all employees, customers and stakeholders believe the organisation takes decisions in a fair manner. All involved in the organisation can give examples of the group's active commitment to equality and diversity.

## **7 Governance**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 We will provide training on equality and diversity to board members so that they are comfortable discussing the issues and are able to demonstrate their personal commitment to it.
- 7.3 It is also essential that the organisation's governing bodies are diverse and representative of the communities they serve so that they are better able to understand the issues faced by those they seek to provide services for.
- 7.4 Circle Anglia will set targets for board membership that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. There will be a planned approach towards meeting these targets, balancing the need for experience and continuity on the one hand; and refreshing the membership and moving towards meeting diversity targets on the other hand.

## **8 Employment and Training**

- 8.1 Circle Anglia aspires to a diverse workforce which has the skills to achieve the organisation's 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 staff have an equal opportunity to develop their potential and progress within the organisation and are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination.
- 8.2 We will monitor staff satisfaction with Circle Anglia's performance on diversity.
- 8.3 We will analyse staff satisfaction results by ethnicity, gender and disability.

## **Recruitment**

- 8.4 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 a thorough and rigorous job analysis process, we will ensure that we only measure skills and/or attributes which are clearly relevant to job demands and are free of bias. All assessments for selection and promotion will be monitored to ensure that they do not unfairly exclude or disadvantage any section of the population. We will consider our methods and locations for advertising vacancies to ensure that they reach an appropriate target audience.
- 8.5 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.

## **Genuine Occupational Qualification**

- 8.6 Where a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) exists, this means that an organisation can lawfully discriminate on grounds of race or sex and seek to appoint from a particular sex or racial group. One of the relevant GOQ exceptions is providing personal 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.
- 8.7 The HR Department, following legal advice, will always make the final decision on whether a GOQ can be used.

## **Terms and Conditions of Employment/Engagement**

- 8.8 Circle Anglia will ensure that terms and conditions of employment/terms of engagement are free from all forms of direct and indirect discrimination and apply equally regardless of age, gender, marital status, race, nationality, disability, religion or religious or other beliefs, sexual orientation, social or educational background or family or care responsibilities. Our grievance and disciplinary procedures will operate without discrimination.
- 8.9 Circle Anglia recognise the need to balance personal and work life and that flexibility with regard to working patterns assists the broadest range of people.

Circle Anglia will carry out Equality Impact Assessments whenever significant changes are proposed to staff working conditions.

### **Internal Progression**

- 8.10 Circle Anglia is committed to creating opportunities within the organisation for staff who can demonstrate their competence and therefore has a policy of creating opportunities for internal promotion and career progression. This is an outcome-focused approach, causing a “filtering-up” of BME and female employees from junior levels where they generally make up a higher proportion of the workforce to more senior levels. We will keep under review the extent to which the internal first approach provides a workforce which accords with our equal opportunities policy to be broadly representative of the diverse populations of the areas in which we operate.

### **Training**

- 8.11 All staff will be given opportunities to have their learning and development needs met through a variety of interventions including internal training, external events, coaching, e-learning and shadowing as appropriate. Permanent staff and where relevant, staff on fixed term contracts will also be given the opportunity to apply for sponsorship funding, in line with the sponsorship policy to undertake a course of study via day release, evening class, flexible learning or NVQs.
- 8.12 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.

### **Employing People with Disabilities**

- 8.13 We aim to ensure that anyone with a disability, whether an applicant for a job or an existing employee, is protected from harassment and less favourable treatment by others and, as far as possible, is not disadvantaged by their disability.
- 8.14 It is our intention to ensure that we do everything reasonably possible to enable staff with disabilities to carry out their job and to make any such adjustments as far as are reasonably practicable to the working environment, working practices, role responsibilities and to the terms and conditions of employment 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.

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## Summary of Equal Opportunities in Employment

8.15 We will:

- seek to comply with the Race Relations, Sex and Disability Discrimination Codes of Practice in Employment;
- 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;
- ensure that our employment policies and management practices enable the retention of a diverse staff group:
- recruit, develop and promote staff on the basis of a fair, objective and rigorous assessment of competence and potential;
- expect staff to treat all residents and service users, our customers and each other fairly and with respect;
- 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 the staff profile, recruitment, promotion, training, study opportunities, complaints, grievances and reasons for leaving by ethnic group, gender and disability;
- 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.

## 9 Communication and Access to Information and Services

9.1 Circle Anglia believes that effective two-way communication between our customers, staff and stakeholders is key to delivering services that meet the needs of individuals.

9.2 We will ensure that information provided is in an appropriate format, non-discriminatory in content and actively promotes equality and diversity where possible. Leaflets, customer letters and other corporate documents will provide information in community languages on how to access translations. All documents will be translated on request. We will also provide transcriptions into Braille, large-print and audio-tape on request.

9.3 We will provide interpreters, including British Sign Language, on request. We will make the service easily available for telephone customers who need

interpretation. We will also have a minicom set up in all offices and ensure that staff are trained in its use. We will aim to ensure that our website is accessible to all our customers. We aim to produce information in a variety of multi-media formats that meet customers' varying needs.

- 9.4 We will ensure that we meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act to ensure that all our customers are able to use our offices that are open to the public.

## **10 Service Delivery**

- 10.1 Circle Anglia aims to provide services that meet the diverse needs of its residents and service users across all areas of service delivery. 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. We also aim to ensure that our tenants receive the right level of advice, support and benefits to meet their needs.
- 10.2 We will ensure that our policies do not discriminate unfairly against certain groups of customers. For example, we will grant equal tenancy rights to same-sex couples as to heterosexual couples.
- 10.3 We will monitor tenant satisfaction by ethnicity across the range of our services with the aim of ensuring there is no significant difference between different ethnic groups.
- 10.4 An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment will be carried out whenever policies are introduced and whenever there are significant proposed changes to services.

## **11 Lettings**

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 We will monitor our transfer list and transfers made by ethnicity, to ensure that all tenants in need of a transfer are able to equally access the system.
- 11.3 We will monitor perceptions of property quality at letting and refusals of offers of accommodation by ethnicity to ensure there is no significant difference between ethnic groups.
- 11.4 We will monitor Shared Ownership applications and uptake by ethnicity.

## 12 Discrimination, Victimisation and Harassment

12.1 Harassment is unjustified, unreasonable or inappropriate treatment of, or behaviour towards another person which causes alarm, distress, discomfort or worry because of ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS or general medical status, age, marital status, physical or mental health problem or disability. Harassment may include bullying. It is also recognised that there may be no obvious motivating factor. Ethnic origin includes colour, race, religion, religious or other beliefs and national origin.

12.2 Harassment will be unlawful discrimination if:

- unwanted conduct takes place in the workplace and in Circle Anglia properties
- it is on discriminatory grounds
- with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
- where it is reasonable to form the view that this is the impact of the offending behaviour.

The following types of behaviour may amount to harassment:

- physical assault
- physical or verbal abuse including threats
- suggestive comments or gestures
- suggestive or offensive emails
- insulting or abusive behaviour or comments
- isolation or exclusion from work opportunities.

This list gives examples only and is not exhaustive.

12.3 Circle Anglia has adopted the definition of a racist incident from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. This is as follows:

“A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or by any other person.” (Macpherson Report, 1999)

12.4 Our harassment policy applies equally to staff and contractors. Any complaint against a member of staff should be referred immediately to the appropriate line manager. A complaint of harassment against a consultant or contractor should be referred immediately to the relevant departmental Director.

- 12.5 We will tackle all forms of harassment (including racial harassment) promptly using a victim centred approach. We will send out a clear message that harassment of any form will not be tolerated. We will use a range of methods to resolve harassment cases.
- 12.6 We will monitor cases, actions taken and outcomes. We will seek feedback from residents and service users who have reported harassment to us on how satisfied they are with how their case was dealt with.

### **13 Sensitive Medical Conditions**

- 13.1 People living with sensitive 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.
- 13.2 We will not discriminate against residents or potential residents who may have sensitive medical conditions and will provide routine services in the normal manner.
- 13.3 Information about the personal circumstances of residents with HIV or AIDS, or other sensitive medical conditions will be handled according to our Confidentiality and Data Protection policies and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- 13.4 Information will only be passed to another staff member where it is necessary for the provision of care and support.
- 13.5 We will not breach confidentiality. Contractors will not be informed of a resident's medical status, as their procedures should cover the taking of adequate precautions where there may be any risk of infection. Any abnormal situations which staff and contractors face should be discussed with the relevant team manager.
- 13.6 We will be sympathetic to the circumstances of residents who have to spend long periods of time in hospital, during which their homes may be empty. Where appropriate we will assist residents to obtain their maximum housing and other benefits during this period.
- 13.7 Staff will be mindful of the particular circumstances of people living with HIV or AIDS, or indeed with any sensitive medical issue when dealing with complaints of harassment. As with other forms of harassment, we will expect to pursue the harassers.

## **14 Resident Involvement**

- 14.1 Circle Anglia aims to understand the diverse needs of its residents and service users. We will actively consult residents to ensure that their views form an integral part of the decision making process.
- 14.2 We will take into account cultural and religious issues when arranging resident/service user meetings, for example avoiding meetings on dates of religious festivals and ensuring any food provided is appropriate.
- 14.3 We will set and monitor targets to ensure that tenant/service user groups are representative of the communities they serve.

## **15 Neighbourhood Renewal/Community Development**

- 15.1 Circle Anglia aims to improve the quality of life of all tenants through its community development and neighbourhood renewal activities. We will ensure tenants and local community groups are consulted and their views taken into account by the Group when developing and managing these services.
- 15.2 We will work in partnership with the local community to avoid conflict and promote good relations between all minority groups.

## **16 Asset Management and Development**

- 16.1 Circle Anglia will review the condition of its housing stock as part of its asset management strategy ensuring that the needs and aspirations of its 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.
- 16.2 We will work in partnership with BME associations as part of our programme for developing new homes. We will set a target for the number of homes developed with or for BME associations.
- 16.3 We will set targets to ensure that satisfaction levels for new and existing housing are equally as good for all residents/service users.
- 16.4 We will provide an Adaptations service for tenants who need additions or alterations to their home to meet their mobility needs.

## **17 Contractors, Consultants, Partners and Suppliers**

- 17.1 Circle Anglia believes that promoting equality and diversity through procurement can improve competitiveness, value for money, quality of service and increase customer satisfaction. Circle Anglia has significant purchasing power and is therefore in a position to influence contractors, suppliers and consultants to meet the highest equality and diversity standards.
- 17.2 We will ensure that consultants, contractors and partners are aware of the importance of equality and diversity to 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 sections of the community.
- 17.3 We will require all significant suppliers of goods and services to provide us with their equal opportunities policy and monitoring information on the diversity of their workforce.
- 17.4 We will monitor resident/service user satisfaction with contractors by ethnicity to ensure that all contractors are delivering a suitable service to all our tenants.

## **18 Monitoring**

- 18.1 We will collect the necessary statistical data to accurately profile the workforce and to monitor recruitment practices, together with tenant satisfaction. 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.
- 18.2 The Management Board will receive an annual report on Equality and Diversity from the Deputy Group Chief Executive.

## **19 Publicising the Policy**

- 19.1 Circle Anglia publicises its policies and procedures on to residents and staff in a number of ways:
- Resident Handbook
  - Leaflets
  - Resident Newsletter
  - Resident Website
  - CIRANO; Policy Bulletins and Training.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
GOQ	Genuine Occupational Qualification

## Related Documents

Document	Link
Connected Policies:	<a href="#">Gender Equality Plan</a> <a href="#">Disability Equality Plan</a>
Forms and Letters:	
Leaflets:	N/A
Other:	

## Version history

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

<b>Version no.</b>	2	<b>Date effective:</b>	December 2008
<b>Full / partial review?</b>	Partial review to check compliance and gather feedback from staff around language.		
<b>Brief summary of changes:</b>	Expanded definition of harassment. Updates to statutory requirements. Update to section on sensitive medical conditions. Amendments to reflect new governance arrangements.		
<b>Staff consultation (teams):</b>	All colleagues via Cirano. Policy Champions Senior Managers' Diversity Group Company Secretariat HR Risk Management Group Communications		
<b>Resident consultation:</b>	Comments from Circle 33 resident on behalf of the Involvement Steering Group. Mole Valley Operations Working Group		
<b>Signed off by:</b>	n/a		
<b>Legal consultation</b>	Eversheds Diversity specialist		
<b>Author:</b>	Caroline Thompson, with updates provided by Zoe Buick		

<b>Version no.</b>	3	<b>Date effective:</b>	
<b>Full / partial review?</b>			
<b>Brief summary of changes:</b>			
<b>Staff consultation (teams):</b>			
<b>Resident consultation:</b>			
<b>Signed off by:</b>			
<b>Author:</b>			