

Equality and Diversity Policy



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Policy Statement

The Whitefriars Housing Group (“Whitefriars”) is committed to ensuring that no individual or group is discriminated against or disadvantaged as a result of its activities. It recognises the existence and importance of differences within its population, and will therefore not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, sexuality, religion, faith or belief or any other grounds for unjustifiable discrimination.

Whitefriars aims to ensure that all customers and employees are dealt with fairly and equitably.

Whitefriars will lead by example, and will take active steps to challenge prejudice and discrimination.

This policy is supported by the following detailed Equality and Diversity Policies:

- Age Policy
- Disability Policy
- Gender Policy
- Race Policy
- Religion, Faith and Belief Policy
- Sexuality Policy.

These policies detail the specific actions we will take in relation to customers, employees and communities regarding these areas of diversity.

The suite of Equality and Diversity Policies will underpin all decisions taken by Whitefriars and all actions by its employees.

Scope of Policy

Whitefriars is committed to giving equality of opportunity to all people in relation to the activities of the Group. The Equality and Diversity Policies therefore cover:

- Provision of housing and all services to residents and applicants
- Recruitment of employees and employment practice
- The development of policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity
- Recruitment of the governing body members
- Appointment of consultants and contractors.

Whitefriars recognises that discrimination can take a number of forms:

- Direct
- Indirect
- Harassment
- Victimisation.

The Equality and Diversity Policies are designed to ensure that an appropriate structure is in place to mitigate the opportunities for this occurring, whether in service delivery or through employment practices.

Legal Duties

Whitefriars will abide by the responsibilities contained within appropriate and relevant legislation in relation to customers, employees and employment. These will be reviewed in light of any legislative changes.

As well as complying with the law, Whitefriars will follow the guidance and good practice recommended by the Housing Corporation, ODPM, the National Housing Federation, and the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.

Implementation and Monitoring

To ensure the effectiveness of the Equality and Diversity Policies, the Whitefriars Boards will:

- Monitor the provision of services to ensure that no inequalities exist and publish regular performance information
- Monitor the composition of their workforce and the take up of its services and take action to redress inequalities
- Consult regularly with relevant groups and customers
- Review the Policies regularly.

Whitefriars will publish this policy and make it available to employees, and to customers on request.

Employees and Board Members will be trained and provided with guidance on the policies to ensure that they clearly understand their position in law and the implications for them.

Whitefriars will regularly monitor the implementation of these policies and related practices to ensure that they remain effective and do not discriminate against either customers or employees directly or indirectly. Whitefriars will measure their effectiveness by:

- Collecting and monitoring records of the gender, disability and ethnic origin of the workforce and all those applying for housing
- Monitoring applicants for jobs in terms of ethnic origin, gender, and disability
- Producing regular reports to the management boards on the effectiveness of the policies, both in relation to customer and employment practices, and taking action to redress inequalities that are identified as a result of monitoring
- Taking appropriate action against any employee whose conduct or actions are inconsistent with the Whitefriars' commitment to equality and diversity.

Service Delivery

Whitefriars will promote equality of opportunity for customers by:

- Providing accessible information in a variety of appropriate languages and formats about the services available to customers
- Seeking to deliver services in ways which are appropriate to customers needs and, wherever possible, removing barriers which may deny access
- Using its powers, take reasonable steps towards ensuring that organisations providing services on its behalf operate in accordance with the aims of this policy
- Developing policies and procedures to ensure that the services it provides are fair and non-discriminatory, except where legal exemptions apply
- Making reasonable adaptations to buildings and in the workplace where appropriate and necessary to fulfill our obligations as a provider of a public service.

Customer Involvement

Whitefriars will ensure that its Customer Involvement Policy encompasses the principles of its Equality and Diversity Policy, and that:

- The operation of Whitefriars' formal Voices of Whitefriars Residents Group (VWR) is consistent with this policy
- Membership of the Voices of Whitefriars Residents will be open to all registered Tenants Associations, in accordance with recognition criteria approved by the Boards and the constitution of the Voices of Whitefriars Residents
- Whitefriars will work with individual tenants groups to encourage them to comply with this policy
- All tenants will be invited to be involved in the selection of Tenant Board members in accordance with Whitefriars governance requirements.

Employment Practice

Whitefriars is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and will:

- Have employment practices that meet legislative requirements
- Demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, Company Pay Strategy, performance and development management processes, training and promotion and by ensuring that the Company's job relativity (job evaluation) methodology has been tested to ensure that it is non-discriminatory
- Take action with the aim of having a workforce that reflects the communities it serves
- Inform all employees of this policy and of their rights to protection from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.

Whitefriars will take action to eliminate discrimination, which will include:

Recruitment

- All vacancies will be advertised in accordance with agreed protocols and in a way that does not discourage traditionally disadvantaged or under-represented groups from applying for posts
- Specific qualifications or experience will only be called for where essential to the job
- Training will be given to staff involved in recruitment to ensure that they understand and apply the policy
- Different means of promoting our vacancies will be considered in recruitment to positively encourage applications from under-represented groups in our employment
- All applicants with disabilities who meet the minimum requirements for a suitable job will be considered for interview
- All job applicants will be made aware of the Equality and Diversity Policy.

Training

- All employees will receive training to ensure that they understand and implement all aspects of the policy
- Whitefriars may consider setting up training schemes for employees from disadvantaged groups, as permitted under the relevant legislation, in order to enable them to acquire skills necessary to compete for jobs at all levels and grades
- As part of the Induction training for all new employees, Whitefriars' Equality and Diversity Policy will be clearly explained.

Working Environment

- Wherever reasonably practicable, suitable access for employees with disabilities will be provided
- Workplace and risk assessments will be carried out as appropriate
- Wherever reasonably practicable, the needs of employees with disabilities will be met, including providing adapted equipment and changes to building fabric and working methods to help meet those needs
- Flexible working arrangements will be offered to employees to assist with individual personal circumstances, provided that this does not conflict with service delivery commitments
- Whitefriars will endeavour to ensure that a supportive working environment is created for all employees so as to prevent the occurrence of any direct or indirect discriminatory practices.

Harassment

- Action will be taken to eliminate harassment at work. Harassment will be considered to be gross misconduct and disciplinary action may be taken
- Employees who consider that they are suffering harassment may invoke a formal grievance
- Whitefriars' literature will not contain any form of sexist, racist or otherwise discriminatory language
- Whitefriars will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of employees by other employees, customers, contractors or members of the public in any circumstances and will take appropriate action against the perpetrators
- Employees are positively encouraged to report incidents of harassment by customers and tenants through Health and Safety Incident and accident reporting processes.

Monitoring

- The composition of both applicants and the workforce will be monitored regularly to ensure the effectiveness of the policy and practices and recruitment procedures
- Regular reports will be made to the Boards of Management, recommending action where appropriate.

It is a condition of service that employees adhere to Whitefriars' Equality and Diversity Policy. Failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action being taken which could ultimately lead to dismissal.

Membership of Whitefriars Board

Whitefriars will endeavour to ensure that the composition of its governing bodies reflects the communities they serve.

This policy will apply to the recruitment of Board members. Where possible, action will be taken to redress any imbalance in membership.

The Whitefriars Board members are required to be aware of the organisations' commitment to equality and diversity at all times and are bound to comply with this policy in the discharging of their duties.

Contractors and Suppliers

Whitefriars will require that contractors and suppliers of services comply with its Equality and Diversity Policy.

A copy of this policy will be provided to all external contractors and service suppliers appointed to work for Whitefriars. All such organisations will be expected to ensure that their contractual duties are executed so as not to conflict with Whitefriars' policy.

Complaints against external organisations will be monitored closely. Whitefriars will take very seriously any allegations of discrimination or harassment made against such organisations, and will investigate them.

A condition of contract with Whitefriars will be that such organisations will be expected to take prompt and appropriate action against any member of their own staff found to be in breach of this policy.

Accountability

The Whitefriars Boards will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented in all areas of activity and for considering the implications arising from policy decisions they make. Regular reports will be considered by the Boards on the effect that their decisions have had on equality and diversity.

The Whitefriars Board will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and recommending policy changes to accelerate progress towards greater equality.

The Boards of Management will hold the Chief Executive and the Management Team of Whitefriars accountable for taking steps to ensure that this policy is promoted, understood and implemented by all employees. This responsibility encompasses the following requirements:

- All staff are aware of Whitefriars' Equality and Diversity Policy
- All staff receive equality and diversity training
- Monitoring records are collected in accordance with Whitefriars policies and procedures
- Customers have access to the Equality and Diversity Policy
- Action is taken against tenants who are in breach of their Tenancy Conditions in relation to this policy
- Disciplinary procedures are invoked where appropriate against employees whose actions are inconsistent with the policy
- Action is taken against consultants and contractors who are in breach of this policy.

Review

Whitefriars will review this policy every three years, and report any recommendations for change to its Board, to ensure that the organisations' policy and practices remain effective, keeps up-to-date with legislative change, regulatory guidance, reflects good practice guidance, and continues to be capable of achieving the stated objectives.

If you would like to contribute to the development of this policy or to become a member of the Equality and Diversity Champions Group, please contact:

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Need help in your own language?

French

**Pour vous assister en votre
propre langue**

Portuguese

Assistencia na sura propria lingua

Somali

Luqadaadoo lugugu caawinaayo

Farsi

برای کمک به زبانتان

Arabic

نمساعدتکم فی لغتکم

Kurdish

بۆیارمه تیدان به زمانێ خۆت

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