Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Paragon Asra Housing Limited
September 2018
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APPENDIX A: PA Housing’s ten aims
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Paragon Asra Housing Limited (PA Housing) is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in its working environment that supports the diverse makeup of its staff, underpinned by supportive employment policies and practices. PA Housing recognises the importance of monitoring, measuring and reporting on the policy and improvements made in meeting the policy statement.

Ten Pearl Commitment: PA Housing has chosen a simple ten point commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion that reflects the priorities for our services 2018-20. This is set out in Appendix A.

5. Practical support for a diverse workforce

As an employer committed to equality and diversity, PA Housing supports a variety of measures to create a working environment that supports the diverse makeup of its staff, underpinned by supportive employment policies and procedures. PA Housing will actively consider participation in initiatives to ensure its workplace is free from any form of discrimination, discrimination by perception, indirect discrimination, discrimination in relation to caring responsibilities, part-time and job sharing, and job-related policies and practices.

PA Housing is committed to helping its employees fulfil their potential at work whilst finding the right work/life balance through its flexible scheme and flexible working policy, and providing opportunities to job share where appropriate. It is also committed to supporting employers with other initiatives such as by offering flexible family iniciations, e.g. salary sacrifice scheme for a flexible way to manage childcare costs.

PA Housing’s policies are designed to promote equal opportunity and protection against discrimination for both employees and customers.

1. Purpose

1.1 PA Housing aims to tackle discrimination or disadvantage that it incurs or is inflicted on as an organisation. PA Housing aims to provide equality of opportunity and the facilities it can proactively and ensure that no individual or group is directly or indirectly advantaged or disadvantaged or treated unfairly in an environment which is free from any form of discrimination with regard to the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (includes colour, nationality and ethnic origins)
- sex
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief

1.2 PA Housing recognises the importance of monitoring, measuring and reporting on the policy and improvements made in meeting the policy statement.

1.3 This policy also reflects PA Housing’s responsibility for equality and diversity obligations to its customers. It applies to all staff, employees (including board members and volunteers), customers, suppliers, visitors and contractors. PA Housing recognises the importance of monitoring, measuring and reporting on the policy and improvements made in meeting the policy statement.

2. Definition of Equality and Diversity

2.1 Equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equal opportunity and access for all groups, both in employment and for goods and services, the basis of which is supported and protected by legislation.

2.2 Diversity can be described as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and invisible differences and by respecting people’s rights and views, and being aware of the different viewpoints, diversity is valued, harnessed and taken account of.

2.3 Equality and diversity are not interchangeable but are interdependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued, harnessed and taken account of.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to customers, employees, volunteers and suppliers. It applies to on-site and off-site operation and involves residents and volunteers who represent PA Housing or its services.

3.2 Any external contractors, third parties or sub-contractors providing services on the basis of a specification set by PA Housing are responsible for adhering to this statement. They will monitor their performance and take all necessary steps to ensure good performance and appropriate behaviour. Any issues that arise with regards to equality or diversity will be taken very seriously and resolved in the strongest possible terms where appropriate.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 PA Housing acknowledge that it is an employer committed to equality and diversity and takes action to prevent discrimination, harassment or victimisation, thoughtlessness and stereotyping.

4.2 PA Housing recognises the importance of monitoring, measuring and reporting on the policy and improvements made in meeting the policy statement.

4.3 PA Housing has chosen a simple ten point commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion that reflects the priorities for our services 2018-20. This is set out in Appendix A.

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PA Housing’s policies are designed to promote equal opportunity and protection against discrimination for both employees and customers.
6. Review and monitoring

6.1 PA Housing undertakes monitoring to meet statutory requirements and achieve best practice. This is used to inform and improve our employment practices. If any discrimination is identified as a result, PA Housing will take corrective action to eliminate it.

6.2 The make-up of PA Housing’s workforce and employment practices are monitored by the PA Equalities and Diversity Advisory Group to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice. Statistics and analyses are prepared and those relating to the workforce are shared with the PA Housing Staff Committee, which includes the trade unions as members.

6.3 Surveys are conducted regularly in order to gain the views of employees and these include a section on diversity and the working environment. The survey results are used to measure whether the aims of this policy are met.

6.4 PA Housing will publish its policies and achievements on an equality and diversity in an annual report, which will include:

- Statistical progress reports can be on any aspect of the policy, including training, complaints or, where relevant, performance management;
- Our performance on employment practices, such as recruitment, respect and diversity will be on the agenda at each team meeting.

6.5 PA Housing undertakes monitoring to meet statutory requirements and achieve best practice. Statistics and analysis are provided and those relating to the workforce are shared with the PA Housing Staff Committee, which includes the trade unions as members.

6.6 The company is committed to ensuring that its employees are trained in equality and diversity, and that managers are aware of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. PA Housing subscribes to an independent service that allows employees to have their levels of knowledge and awareness measured and learnt anonymously in the Executive and Board level.

7. Training

7.1 PA Housing is committed to ensuring that its employees are trained in equality and diversity, and that managers are aware of their obligations under the Equality Act 2010. PA Housing subscribes to an independent service that allows employees to have their levels of knowledge and awareness measured and learnt anonymously in the Executive and Board level.

7.2 Relevant protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. For example, this means an employer can be responsible if they know an employee has been harassed on marriage or civil partnership grounds. For example, where an employee selects a “no hats or headgear” rule in the dress code and may face disciplinary action as a result. Unless the employer can objectively justify using the rule, this unfair discrimination would be unlawful discrimination.

7.3 Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated unfavourably or is disadvantaged or subjected to detriment because they have made or supported a complaint of discrimination or have given evidence under the Equality Act 2010, or the Bullying and Harassment policy, or because they are suspected of doing so. (An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint E.g. when an employee requests to work flexibly and their manager rejects their request because the employee supported another employee in a complaint of discrimination.)

7.4 Third party harassment occurs when an employee is harassed by someone who does not work for PA Housing, such as a customer and/ or client contractor or someone from another organisation. The employee will normally be legally responsible if they knew or had reason to believe the another organisation had harassed an employee for two or more occasions, even by different applicants each time. The company may be able to take reasonable steps to protect the employee from further harassment.

to identify any areas of weakness and so that positive action can be taken where and when required.

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9. Complaints of discrimination

9.1 PA Housing takes all complaints of discrimination very seriously and will take appropriate action against those concerned. This covers all behaviour, including remarks and insinuations, verbal and non-verbal, which causes offence.

9.2 Any employee who is subject to bullying, harassment or discrimination should refer to the Bullying and Harassment policy. This shows the steps that can be taken. By doing so, the employee can obtain external confidential help through HR, and there is an independent whistleblowing service called “In Touch” that protects the identity of the whistleblower.

9.3 If a concern (arising through an employment agency) concerning discrimination has been outlined in a complaint then PA Housing will deal with their complaint with their employer.

10. People strategy and corporate social responsibility

10.1 PA Housing aims to be an employer of choice and through its People strategy aims to ensure its workforce is able to make a valuable contribution to its objectives, whilst ensuring that their health and wellbeing is supported.

10.2 PA Housing will continue to make use of provisions within the Equality Act to adopt positive action in ensuring board members, employees to participate in local voluntary initiatives and providing necessary support and direction; involving their behaviour is appropriate to this policy and that.

11. Who is responsible?

11.1 All employees have a responsibility to guard against any form of discrimination and avoid action which goes against the spirit of the policy. Employees at all levels must ensure that there is no discrimination in their decision or behaviour. They must

- report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices
- not induce, or attempt to induce, others to practice unlawful discrimination
- co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equality of opportunity
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11.2 Each employee is responsible for:

- not harass, abuse or intimidate others.
- not inducing, or attempting to induce, others to practice unlawful discrimination
- not discriminating against customers or other employees.
- notifying their line manager of any concerns with regard to the conduct of other employees, customers, the public, or the company.

11.3 PA Housing will not tolerate any form of behaviour from its employees which breaches this policy. Any such breaches will be investigated and dealt with as appropriate, whether it be a criminal or civil offence such as discrimination on protected grounds, including bullying and harassment. In severe cases, employees may be dismissed for gross misconduct. Disciplinary action may include dismissal without notice.

12.2 PA Housing is committed to making effective use of the data it collects. This involves employees and customers to identify trends and establish the services where it collects from employees and customers to identify trends and establish the services where it collects from employees and customers the spirit of this policy. Employees at all levels must ensure that there is no discrimination in their decision or behaviour.

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13. Foster good relations

13.1 PA Housing prides itself in being a gay friendly organisation. It will continue to promote equality within the LGBTQ+ employee and customer communities in learning and development, newsletter articles, support of regional LGBTQ+ activities such as taking part in Pride events and applying a zero tolerance to homophobic bullying, harassment or discrimination. This is in addition to its stance on tackling homophobic hate incidents and hate crime. PA Housing recognises the “rainbow flag” as a powerful emblem within the LGBTQ+ community and beyond, and will endeavour to display it in its reception areas and on the maps and promotion in public and commercial materials.

13.2 PA Housing is proud to be trusted as an LGBTQ+ specialist housing provider and the policy statement in Appendix B entitled “PA Housing – a modern BME housing specialist” sets out how our heritage as an LGBTQ+ organisation is relevant today.

13.3 PA Housing is committed to working with voluntary and community support groups in a variety of diverse communities within the areas it operates. Within, it does exist in statutory services associated with housing and supporting the policy on services and community mental health teams, fostering relations with local community groups and the “third sector” has never been more relevant and necessary.
4. Our procurement practices will ensure contractors and suppliers demonstrate through monitoring and action a genuine commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity.

5. A zero tolerance approach towards hate incidents and disruptive behaviour are to be supported and signposted to the most appropriate agencies.

6. To improve our performance in ensuring customer-facing staff and contractors communicate in different languages and groups.

7. Victims and survivors of domestic abuse and serious antisocial behaviour are to be supported and signposted to the most appropriate agencies.

8. Customers representing the widest range of protected characteristics are encouraged to become involved in policy and procedures.

9. We will increase awareness of diversity-related safeguarding issues including extremism and radicalisation, child grooming, and related topics.

10. We will develop working relations with more “third sector” organisations and groups.

APPENDIX B

Asra Housing Association (one of the founding organisations of PA Housing) originated as a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) housing association, and of PA Housing, has moved on. To most older Asian people, the thought of living in specialist accommodation still provides a useful role in society. We will continue to invest in existing specialist accommodation when necessary and will act in the interests of these communities and groups.

We will do much more than comply with legislation and will strive to be a pace-setter for high standards in demonstrating equality and diversity in the housing sector.

Partnering on BME issues. When we partner other organisations with a BME agenda to help them achieve their objectives. E.g. over recent years we have assisted Apna Ghar HA (who champion the needs of disabled BME people) to develop new homes. PA Housing is also a member of a Housing Diversity Networks and BME National.

We have changed slightly over the years but we are as committed today as we ever were about challenging racism, discrimination and try to make a difference in tackling disadvantage in society. We are proud that part of our origins was as a BME housing association and that PA Housing reflects the diverse communities that it serves.

We will focus on the following ten aims:

1. To continue to encourage everyone to challenge stereotyping and discrimination practices within our offices and online.

2. Employees are to continue to receive the latest best practice and training on equality, diversity and inclusion.

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