

# **Housing Services Race Equality Policy**

## **DRAFT**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

Derby City Council Housing Services and Derby Homes fully support and act in accordance with Derby City Council's corporate racial equality policy. As of April 2002 the Housing Management Service will be provided by an arms length organisation known as Derby Homes. Derby Homes will maintain a close working relationship with the retained services (Housing Options Centre, Strategy and Development and Renewal and Grants). Together, we abide by, and are fully committed to, the relevant statutory requirements concerned with eliminating racism and promoting equality of opportunity for all racial groups in Derby, namely:

- the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice in Rented Housing
- Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality – A Guide for Public Authorities

We have adopted the Macpherson Inquiry definition of racism and incorporated this into all relevant documents.

### **Scope of Policy**

We are committed to demonstrating racial equality in all areas including:

- marketing and publicity
- vacancy advertising and recruitment procedures
- promotion of services to minority ethnic groups
- career development
- training
- employee relations
- service delivery
- consultation
- partnership working

### **Derby Homes**

Derby Homes has specific commitments to ensuring equality of opportunity for minority ethnic groups through the following measures:

## **Racial Harassment**

All complaints of racial harassment are taken seriously and investigated thoroughly ensuring the prescribed procedural time limits are adhered to strictly. Firm action is taken against perpetrators of racial harassment in accordance with the Tenants Racial Harassment Procedure. Support and advice is given to victims including use of Care Link. Our priorities are to improve victim and witness protection. Derby Homes liaises with the Council's Equalities Unit to agree action to be taken in cases of racial harassment. Derby Homes has in post a specialist Racial Harassment Officer based within the Tenancy Team. Derby Homes employees work closely with staff from other agencies as part of the multi-agency approach to combat racial harassment.

The conditions of tenancy are used to the best advantage to ensure that swift and effective action (including prosecutions) is taken against perpetrators of racial harassment. Appropriate publicity is used to ensure potential perpetrators and victims alike are aware of the firm action that is taken by Derby Homes to combat racial harassment and the help that is given to victims. All frontline employees receive training on the racial harassment procedure. A partnership approach is taken in this area of work and the Derby Homes Area Manager (Local Services) has chaired the Derby and South Derbyshire Partnership Against Racial Harassment for over two years.

## **Consultation with tenants**

Derby Homes' main vehicle for consulting with its tenants is the Derby Association of Community Panels (DACP) and the network of community panels. All of the community panels in Derby are required to adopt a constitution which includes a commitment to equal opportunities and the DACP regularly holds its own Equalities Forum. Derby Homes staff will work with the DACP to help recruit people from minority ethnic groups to community panels and help the DACP build closer links with community groups that represent minority ethnic groups.

Consultation also takes place via the Housing Equalities Forum and the Derby Housing Minority Ethnic Group. The Tenant Participation Compact outlines the commitment of Derby Homes to involve all tenants in decision making processes.

## **Ethnic monitoring**

Ethnic monitoring is being developed in the following areas to ensure equality of opportunity:

- Attendance at training courses
- Tenant racial harassment cases
- Emergency alarms take up from Care Link
- New lettings and transfers

- Where and in what type of property people are re-housed (including importance of re-housing asylum seekers and a policy of encouraging BME groups to rent properties in new areas)
- Ethnicity of complainants on the service provided
- City wide customer satisfaction surveys
- Repairs satisfaction surveys
- Anti-social behaviour and notices seeking possession
- The ethnic mix on council estates
- Homefinder

Where it is found that minority ethnic groups may be suffering disadvantage in any particular service area, we will investigate and rectify to meet their needs.

## **Communications**

Derby Homes is committed to providing an interpretation service for office interviews and home visits where the customer's first language is not English. We endeavour to use Language Line and liaise with the Equalities Unit to assist with overcoming language barriers. Derby Homes will produce translations of documents in community languages on request and Derby Homes public documents will include help statements specifying that information is available in the three main community languages. Nominated Derby Homes staff are available to interpret at any given time. Corporate interpretation and translation guidelines are adhered to.

## **Staff Training**

All Derby Homes employees receive training on equalities issues. The ethnicity of staff attending training courses is monitored. This training is enhanced by the provision of extra training to local office and frontline staff on the following issues:

- The need for accurate ethnic record keeping in all of our services
- Dealing with tenant racial harassment complaints
- Dealing with complaints of racial discrimination against Derby Homes by service users
- Meeting the needs of minority ethnic people who also suffer discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, disability, gender re-assignment, sexuality or because they are living with HIV/AIDS
- Legal obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Cultural awareness
- Asylum seekers

## **Workforce**

Derby Homes monitors its workforce yearly and uses the findings to help ensure that minority ethnic communities are reflected in the workforce. We ensure that all applicants receive fair treatment in the recruitment and selection process. This is in accordance with Derby Homes' equal opportunities policy and minority ethnic candidates will continue to be encouraged to apply for jobs by adopting good practice, through positive action initiatives and by ensuring that prospective applicants are aware of Derby Homes' commitment to equal opportunities.

Section 38 of the Race Relations Act 1976 allows an employer to provide training to minority ethnic staff in any area where they are under represented. Derby Homes staff who are from minority ethnic backgrounds are offered the opportunity to work shadow staff on Principal Officer grade or above. Mentoring schemes have also been established. These initiatives will be monitored and we are currently working towards a target of recruiting 11% of our workforce from BME groups.

A Housing Equalities Advisor is in post to give advice, develop appropriate policies, monitor arrangements for eliminating racial discrimination and promotion of equal opportunities and good race relations between different racial groups in Derby. Implementation of policy is monitored and liaison takes place with Derby City Council's Equalities Unit.

## **Strategy and Development**

Housing needs surveys are used to review the needs of minority ethnic groups in Derby and to help develop policies and procedures aimed at meeting these needs. Housing associations and other housing providers in the city are encouraged to adopt policies and provide appropriate accommodation to meet these needs. In producing new policies to meet the needs of minority ethnic groups, the Strategy and Development Unit will liaise with appropriate outside agencies, for example, the Housing Corporation, specialist black and minority ethnic housing associations and community organisations. Support is given to Hallmark Housing Association to assist with addressing the needs of BME groups.

## **Renewal and Grants Section**

The Renewal and Grants Division assists minority ethnic communities through its area based housing renewal programme. As well as its base at the Council House the Division also runs the Pear Tree Home Improvement Centre where an informal translation service is available for office interviews and home visits. There is ethnic monitoring of grant applications as well as customer satisfaction and residents surveys. These help identify the needs of

minority ethnic communities and assist in improving service delivery to these groups.

## **Housing Options Centre**

The Housing Options Centre aims to meet the needs of minority ethnic communities by working closely with housing associations and private sector landlords to allocate properties that meet the housing requirements of minority ethnic groups. A translation service is available for office interviews and home visits and all key documents about Housing Options can be made available in other languages. The Housing Options Centre has a racial harassment procedure in place which includes making referrals to the City Council's Equalities Unit and to Derby Racial Equality Council. All incidents of racial harassment are monitored including those relating to asylum seekers. An Asylum Seekers Project Officer has also been appointed. Staff from the Housing Options Centre provide general housing advice surgeries to the community at the Pear Tree Home Improvement Centre. The Housing Options Centre carries out ethnic monitoring of homelessness cases and nominations to housing associations. Additionally there is ethnic monitoring of all allocations in relation to City Council stock and Registered Social Landlord accommodation. All housing applicants who are not council tenants will be offered advice and support.

## **Derby City Council Equalities Codes and Procedures**

Derby Homes has adopted the Derby City Council Codes and Procedures on Equalities as listed below:

- Equality Policy
- Dignity at Work Procedure
- Brief Guide to Equalities Legislation
- Religious Beliefs and Cultures
- Interpretation and Translation Guide.

These will be revised and amended to meet the specific requirements of Derby Homes.

### **Agreed and Signed:**

**Phil Davies**

**Acting Director, Housing Services .....**

**Mark Menzies**

**Assistant Director, Private Sector Housing .....**