

Equality and Diversity Policy



1 Purpose

This policy has a number of functions:

- It is a clear and public statement of Bron Afon Community Housing Limited's commitment to equality and diversity.
- It sets out what Bron Afon hopes to achieve and identifies a number of actions we will undertake during the first year after transfer to demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity.

2 Scope of Policy

This policy relates to the services and activities of Bron Afon as a provider of services and as an employer; including services performed on the organisation's behalf by third parties.

It is intended to cover anyone who comes into contact with Bron Afon and to ensure that Bron Afon "respects and values diversity and promotes equality of opportunity" (as reflected in Bron Afon's Values).

3 Legal Framework

We will work within all current and relevant legislation and statutory Codes of Practice. This is not an exhaustive list, but includes:

- Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing (Wales) 2006
- Employment Equality (Religious Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Welsh Language Act 1993
- Race Relations Act 1976
- The Equal Pay Act 1970 and 1983
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

4 Definition of terms

Equality and diversity:

- Recognising, respecting and celebrating differences.
- Means providing quality services and fair opportunities for all.
- Involves taking proactive steps to address imbalances.

5 Policy Statement

Bron Afon will ensure that equality and diversity considerations are taken into account in everything we do. This includes our planning process, setting of policy objectives, assessing the impact of our policies, designing and monitoring service delivery and reviewing our performance.

Within Torfaen, some people are disadvantaged because they lack the basic skills required to access and use services and read information. Our approach to equality issues will extend to this type of disadvantage in addition to disadvantage that may arise because of factors such as age, race, sex, or disability.

5.1 Corporate Commitment

The Chief Executive has responsibility for developing the organisational culture in which this policy can operate effectively and for ensuring it is implemented.

Board Members and staff must have a clear understanding of Bron Afon's commitment to equality and diversity and their role in delivering it. To achieve this we will:

- Promote our equality and diversity policy both internally and externally.
- Ensure our commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in our key corporate documents.
- Consider equality and diversity as an integral part of our business planning and risk management processes.

5.2 Governance

Our Board and Membership Committee is representative of the communities we serve. The Board provides leadership and direction in relation to equality and diversity and drives ongoing improvement. To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that our Board and Membership Committee recruitment processes are transparent, fair and equitable.
- Promote Board Membership and Bron Afon membership opportunities as widely as possible and in ways likely to attract interest from a diverse range of people.
- Address equality and diversity training as part of the induction of new Board Members and as part of training for existing Board Members and the Membership Committee.
- Provide regular, accurate and clear information to the Board on our performance in relation to equality and diversity.

5.3 Lettings

Bron Afon aims to have an allocations policy and procedure that is fair and transparent and work towards achieving balanced and sustainable communities. To achieve this we will:

- Actively promote our services to organisations representing or working with minority or hard to reach groups or those who have more difficulty accessing services for any reason.
- Work co-operatively with our partners to ensure the best use of homes in respect of making adaptations to our properties.

5.4 Service delivery

Our aim is to understand the needs and preferences of our communities in

order to develop and deliver appropriate services that are accessible to all tenants, leaseholders and other residents and potential tenants and leaseholders. To achieve this we will:

- Present written information in plain English and use other methods to present information where appropriate.
- Offer information about our services in accessible formats (for example, large print, Braille or audiotape) and in community languages.
- Explore offering services aimed at increasing accessibility (for example Language Line for telephone, face-to-face or written communication for where English is not the first language or individuals have difficulties with reading; use of induction loops in reception and interview areas of our offices, accessible surgeries and arrange home visits where necessary).
- Ensuring that all our offices are fully accessible.

5.5 Feedback from tenants and residents

We aim to ensure that all tenants and residents and other users of our services are receiving high quality services and will monitor this by:

- Carrying out regular analysis of satisfaction levels between different groups of users of our services for key service areas.
- Consulting users of our services to identify reasons for disparity in satisfaction between specific groups and seek to address identified problems.

5.6 Employment

Bron Afon expects its staff to play an active role in developing approaches to improve performance on equality and diversity. We will do this by:

- Using recruitment processes aimed at ensuring, as far as is possible, that job advertisements are seen by the local community.
- Ensuring, wherever reasonably practicable, that there is suitable workplace access for staff with disabilities along with a programme of improvement, including the provision of adapted or special equipment to ensure that existing arrangements are improved where necessary.
- Develop a programme of increasing basic skills within our workforce
- Developing vigorous bullying and harassment at work policies.
- Developing a Worklife Balance policy and procedure for employees.

5.7 Working with other organisations

In providing and developing our services, we will work with a wide range of organisations and representative groups. This will enable us to develop this policy through sharing experiences and examples of good practice on equality.

5.8 Involving tenants and Communities

Bron Afon offers tenants and residents different ways of becoming involved in working with us, allowing them to choose the level and type of involvement that best suits them. Our Community Involvement Strategy sets out the steps we will take in relation to equality, during the first year after transfer, to make

our commitment to involvement a reality and build on the work already done.

5.9 Contractors and Consultants

We aim to do business with companies actively working to promote equality and diversity in employment and service delivery. To achieve this we will:

- Work towards the establishment of clear standards and targets to be met by the contractors and consultants we do business with.
- Expect contractors and consultants to demonstrate a similar equality policy.
- Expect companies who come into contact with our customers to offer the highest standards of service and deal effectively with any breach of these standards.
- Include equality issues within our procurement processes, so far as the law permits us to do so.

6 Equality & diversity

As outlined in this policy.

7 Community involvement

Our arrangements for involvement give members of Bron Afon an active role in shaping the future of Bron Afon and its services. This makes it particularly important that our active membership is as representative as possible of those using our services or wishing to do so.

8 Financial implications

There will be cost implications for a number of activities set out in this policy, but not yet costed. We will need to establish an appropriate budget for producing information in accessible formats.

Equality and Diversity Action Plan April 2008 to March 2009

Action	By when?	Lead officer Responsibility	Measurable Outcomes	Progress/Position
Corporate commitment				
Publish the Equality and Diversity Policy externally and internally.	April 2008	Communications Officer	Positively promote and raise awareness through Housing Offices, Website, Staff and Tenants Handbook and Newsletters.	
Ensure equality and diversity issues are incorporated in key corporate documents.	December 2008	Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Carry out impact assessments for policy development and reviews. ○ All policies incorporate a review date. 	Ongoing
Ensure equality and diversity is integral to the business planning and risk management processes.	Ongoing	Chief Executive	Carry out impact assessments where changes to existing services or new services are proposed.	Ongoing
Governance				
Ensure Board and Membership Committee recruitment processes are transparent, fair and equitable.	Ongoing	Chief Executive	Monitor and analyse by race, gender, disability and age - applications, rejections, and acceptances.	Ongoing
Widely promote Board membership opportunities and in ways to attract interest from a diverse range of people.	Ongoing	Chief Executive	Monitor and analyse by race, gender, disability and age – applications, source of advert.	Ongoing
Provide induction training for existing and new Board members.	July 2008	Learning and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain register of attendance by Board Members. ○ Analyse training evaluation forms. 	Ongoing
Lettings				
Promote services to organisations representing or working with minority or hard to reach groups.	January 2008	To be determined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain register of organisations. ○ Analyse/report on effectiveness of joint working in promoting lettings service and improving our understanding of culture and needs. 	

Action	By when?	Lead officer Responsibility	Measurable Outcomes	Progress/Position
Work with partners to ensure best use of homes in respect of making adaptations to our properties.	Ongoing	Specialist Housing Manager	Record and analyse by race, gender, disability and age - number of enquiries, aids and/or adaptations provided.	
Service delivery				
Present written information in plain English and other methods where appropriate.	Ongoing	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Record number of attendances at plain English training sessions. ○ Analyse effectiveness of training through evaluation forms and service reviews/audits. 	
Offer information about services in accessible formats and community languages.	December 2008	Director of Community Housing/ Communications Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop work started on tenant profiles to enable us to provide information to tenants in formats they use and to tailor our service for particular needs. ○ The information requirements of our tenants are available on the housing management system. Tenants will receive information in the format they want and will benefit staff and contractors. 	Accessible formats can be produced on request
Explore offering services aimed at increasing accessibility.	January 2009	Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have a website which meets accessibility requirements. ○ Have access to a translation/ interpreting service which is well advertised. ○ Produce monitoring reports every 3 months to identify usage. ○ Undertake the Visibly Better Accreditation Scheme (RNIB Cymru). 	Registered with Language Line

Action	By when?	Lead officer Responsibility	Measurable Outcomes	Progress/Position
Work towards ensuring offices are fully accessible.	April 2009	Director of Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Make our buildings accessible or make reasonable adjustments. ○ Have induction loops at access points. ○ Carry out/analyse customer surveys to ascertain feedback about accessibility. 	
Identify good practice on Welsh Language policies for organisations with similar user profile/size taking into account advice/guidance from Welsh Language Board.	December 2008	Director of Community Involvement and Investment	Development of a Welsh Language Scheme incorporating list of staff who are welsh speaking, monitoring of compliance with scheme e.g. production of bilingual information, availability of translation services.	Draft Scheme produced
Service user satisfaction				
Carry out regular analysis of satisfaction levels between different groups of service users for service areas.	April 2009	Management Information Officer	Ensure equalities considerations are built into work on resident and customer satisfaction and follow a consistent style allowing comparative data to be collected.	
Consult service users to identify reasons for disparity in satisfaction between specific groups and seek to address problems.	April 2009	Community Involvement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Analyse satisfaction surveys, provide feedback to tenants. ○ Report on satisfaction levels in the Annual Report to Tenants. 	
Employment				
Target job opportunities within under represented groups amongst the workforce.	April 2008	HR Manager	Set organisational targets for employment of ME communities of staff at all levels to reflect the communities we serve.	
Ensure there is suitable workplace access for staff with disabilities with programmes of improvement.	April 2008	HR Manager	Monitor and report the number of improvements carried out for staff.	

Action	By when?	Lead officer Responsibility	Measurable Outcomes	Progress/Position
Develop bullying and harassment at work policy.	June 2008	HR Manager	Policy to include monitoring/reporting the number of incidents, type and outcome.	
Develop Worklife Balance policy.	December 2009	HR Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual staff survey to incorporate core questions on work life. ○ Analyse staff feedback to identify the effectiveness of the Policy. 	
Working with other organisations				
Positively engage with a wide range of organisations and representative groups.	December 2008	Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Draw up agreements with relevant agencies. ○ Monitor/report effectiveness of joint working to improve relationships within community. 	
Involving tenants and communities				
Implement steps as set out in the Community Involvement Strategy.	June 2009	Community Involvement Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of measures identified in the Strategy to evaluate its success. ○ Reporting to Board every year on delivery of Strategy. 	
Contractors, Consultants and Suppliers				
Establish and monitor standards and targets to be met by contractors, consultants and suppliers.	December 2008	Head of Partnering & Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The selection of contractors/suppliers will be evaluated for compliance with our Equality and Diversity Policy. ○ Review performance of contractors, consultants and suppliers in dealing with breaches of the Policy. 	