

THREE BOROUGHES HOUSING CO-OP

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy Statement

In line with the Tenants Guarantee produced by the Housing Corporation and the Model Fully Mutual Co-op Rules provided by the National Federation of Housing Co-operatives, **Three Boroughs Housing Co-op** wishes to be known as an equal opportunities housing co-operative.

We recognise that in society, groups or individuals are discriminated against or treated with injustice on the basis of Race, Ethnic Origin, Nationality, Gender, Sexuality, Marital status, Disability, Age, Class, Religious Belief, Previous convictions, Responsibility for Dependents.

We further recognise that there is both direct discrimination and there are practices which have discriminatory effects (e.g. indirect discrimination, victimisation etc)

The aim of our equal opportunities is to develop and implement policies to ensure that no-one receives less favourable treatment on the basis of the above grounds. In an effort to ensure the effective implementation of such a policy, guidance is taken from the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Race Relations Act 1976.

We are therefore committed to the provision of housing services which enables open and fair access, aimed at those in housing need. In order to achieve this we must seek equality of opportunity and treatment of all persons both in provision of housing services and in the employment of staff to provide these services.

In an attempt to redress the imbalance of provision given discrimination and the barriers to housing faced by disadvantaged groups, we endeavour to actively implement our equal opportunities policy in every aspect of the running of this organisation. This shall be done in the following ways:

1. This co-op aims to have a membership that broadly reflects the multi-racial composition of the boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark and Greenwich that it works in.
2. We shall review and update our policies and practices to ensure that they are in line with equal opportunities. This

means that our policy must be flexible to ensure we cover all groups that face discrimination.

3. We shall actively inform and educate all members as well as campaign within the co-op in order to promote good practice in equal opportunities in line with any current legislation. This means organising training.
4. In carrying out its Equal Opportunity Policy, the co-op will actively assist disadvantaged groups to benefit from its services. In practice, this means making our Lettings and Allocations Policy public and accessible to those in greatest housing need. This may necessitate liaison with local community groups, translation of material, advertising vacancies in the press and encourage applications widely from disadvantaged groups by promoting positive images and targeting provision which reflects the needs of these groups.
5. In order to ensure fair access to the co-op, it will record and monitor existing and prospective members colour, race, and national origin. These records will be kept confidentially and should not affect accessibility to the co-op. In particular, to encourage any discriminated group that is underrepresented within the co-op to apply for membership, prioritise them for interview, and reserve spaces in the co-op for them. (This should not affect voids.)
6. Make signing our E.O.P on our application form a requirement for membership. Discrimination of harassment outlined above will be grounds for expulsion and this should be a clause in the tenancy agreement. This should be backed up by clear procedures for action, especially in cases of harassment where all efforts must be made to respect the wishes of the victim and to act without delay to evict the perpetrator.
7. The co-op should ensure that discriminated groups participate equally in the running of the organisation and that their views are represented in every aspect of co-op policy. For example, they must be involved in New Members, New Workers interview panels, Delegates to meetings, Courses etc., and be represented in every management structure of the co-op.
8. The co-op recognises the need for discriminated groups to organise a more supportive way of living by designating certain houses/units as Black/Women/Gay only.
9. The co-op shall monitor allocation of its stock to ensure there is no discrimination. This shall apply to permanent and shortlife stock. (In relation to quality).
10. The transfers policy must seek to be sensitive to the needs of the members who have faced discrimination.
11. Interviews and application forms should be standard to ensure fair E.O.P. Records should be kept at every stage of entry to the co-op to ensure fair allocations and lettings policies. There

should be a system for appeal and clear criteria set for assessing 'need' which avoids bias.

12. The housing co-op should seek to make its permanent accommodation wheelchair accessible.
13. In ensuring active E.O.P., there should be consultation and monitoring at every stage particularly when targeting provision to ensure it reflects the needs of a particular group.
14. As an employer, the co-op will actively seek to employ staff from discriminated groups. Selection procedures and criteria will ensure that individuals are selected and promoted on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. These procedures will be monitored and regularly reviewed, where necessary, the co-op will provide staff with special training facilities to enable them to compete or qualify for a different position within the co-op.
15. Try to ensure that contractors and other agencies working for the co-op are equal opportunities employers and observe the trade union rights. We also strive to monitor them to ensure that these policies are applied within their workforces.