



Bexley Churches Housing Association Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Bexley Churches Housing Association [BECHA] is committed to equal opportunities and the elimination of discrimination within the association.
- 1.2 BECHA recognises the diversity of all individuals
- 1.3 BECHA aims to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origins, sex, sexual orientation or perceived sexuality, marital status, disability, membership or non-membership of trade union, "spent convictions" of ex-offenders, class, age, politics, religion or belief, physical or mental disability.
- 1.4 BECHA recognises that there is discrimination in society but is committed to ensuring its policies and procedures exclude and oppose discriminatory practices wherever possible, providing equal treatment for everyone who has dealings with the association.
- 1.5 BECHA will take disciplinary action against staff where there is evidence of racial discrimination, abuse or harassment, and appropriate legal action where there is this evidence that tenants are causing this behaviour.
- 1.6 The Chief Executive of BECHA has responsibility for implementing all equality of opportunity and related policies. The post of Chief Executive is currently held by Steve Kemp.
- 1.7 This policy links with and should be read in conjunction with all other policies within the Association, in particular, the Age Discrimination, Harassment and Anti Social Behaviour policies.

2. Employment

- 2.1 BECHA has a legal duty not to discriminate intentionally or otherwise in all its employment policies.
- 2.2 BECHA has adopted the Criminal Records Bureau Code of Practice and therefore will not discriminate against anybody on the basis of any criminal conviction or criminal record.
- 2.3 The Association aims to ensure that no job applicant is disadvantaged by questions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable in relation to the job.
- 2.4 Selection criteria and procedures are chosen to ensure individuals are selected and treated on the basis of their merits, skills, potential and abilities.
- 2.5 All applicants will be informed that:
 - BECHA is endeavouring to be an equal opportunities employer

- BECHA is willing to accommodate applicants with special needs wherever possible.

2.6 A variety of recruitment sources that are suitable for the job being advertised will be used to ensure as wide an audience as possible is reached.

2.7 A person specification will be drawn up, outlining only the essential requirements and minimum relevant qualifications. Interviewees will be asked the same/similar questions, based on this person specification and will be judged solely on merit. Interviewers will remain impartial, and not allow their own attitudes, beliefs or prejudices to unfairly influence the decision.

2.8 We will communicate clearly to all staff the equal opportunities policy, the disciplinary and grievance procedures and the name and role of the manager responsible.

2.9 We will ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities under all current prevailing legislation and the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy.

3. Housing

3.1 BECHA is a local organisation serving a multi cultural community. It is committed to ensuring that no individual or group has less favourable access to its resources.

3.2 Letting information will be collected and monitored to ensure that allocation patterns reflect the local population. Appropriate action will be taken if this is not the case, such as the use of specialist agencies for referrals.

3.3 There will be on-going liaison with local specialist groups in order to ensure diversity is maintained.

3.4 At all times when communicating with tenants and clients, BECHA will use clear non-jargonistic language and will arrange translation or interpretation services as necessary.

3.5 BECHA recognises that applicants are individuals with individual needs and where special housing needs are identified BECHA will endeavour to access, or support tenants to access, aids and adaptations wherever possible to ensure people with disabilities are not disadvantaged. Where this may not be possible, BECHA will at all times try to respond flexibly and creatively to people's individual needs.

4. Harassment

4.1 [See also the Harassment and Anti-Social Behaviour policies, where more detail is provided]. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated by the association. BECHA will take a victim centred approach to harassment and give victims every possible support in any action they wish to take.

4.2 There is a clause in the tenancy agreement, which makes harassment of any kind a breach of the conditions of tenancy. BECHA will make it clear to perpetrators of harassment that legal action will be taken if the behaviour persists.

5. HIV and AIDS

5.1 BECHA wishes to ensure its equal opportunities policies are put into practice when dealing with applicants, tenants, staff or committee members who have developed HIV or AIDS. Every support will be given to anyone who experiences harassment or discrimination as a result of his or her HIV status.

6. Disability

6.1 BECHA is committed to supporting any of its tenants who have developed a disability, in helping to secure more appropriate accommodation, wherever possible. It is recognised that most of the association's stock is old and may not be suitable for adaptation but the association will ensure all new developments, or refurbished properties are developed to, or capable of being adapted to, mobility standards.

7. Goods and Services

7.1 BECHA expects all contractors and consultants to be aware of equal opportunity issues and treat all tenants with respect, offering an equal service to all. The association will take action against any contractor or consultant who discriminates or harasses any of its tenants or staff.

8. CRE Code of Practice

8.1 The Housing Corporation has endorsed the code and expects associations to do the same. BECHA is committed to the values expressed by the CRE Code of Practice and will aim to put the recommendations into practice.

9. Board Membership

9.1 BECHA aims to ensure its Board, staff, contractors, and tenants are representative of the community it serves. As the controlling body it is important for the Board to reflect the local population in terms of gender, race and disability and it will strive to achieve and maintain this balance.

10. Monitoring and Review

10.1 We will monitor all allegations, which include a racial element, to double check that they have been responded to accurately, fairly and according to this policy.

10.2 We will monitor recruitment, work allocation, discipline and dismissal procedures to identify any racially uneven statistical patterns that require further investigation.

10.3 We will review this policy at least annually, ensuring that any changes in legislation or working practices are incorporated.