



Equality & Diversity

Policy Statement

Issue No: 1

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Responsibility: Management Committee

Central House
62-64 Bounces Road
London
N9 8JS



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 St Andrews Community Housing Association Ltd. ("SACHA") is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for all current and potential residents, involved residents, staff and job applicants, Board Members and Members of SACHA and for all those seeking to make applications for accommodation and/or appointments to these posts. It also aims to create environments in which all members of its communities (residents, involved residents, staff, Board members, Members of SACHA, partners, contractors, visitors and others) are able to achieve their full potentials in atmospheres that are free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment. These concepts are embedded in SACHA's culture and practices and form an important strand of its ethos.
- 1.2 In meeting its role as a service provider and employer, SACHA ensures that it treats people fairly and does not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation ("the Protected Characteristics") or any other reason which causes a person to be treated with injustice.
- 1.3 SACHA is an evolving organisation and recognises that it may still have areas where development and improvement is required. Where errors are made these will be addressed and practices reviewed to prevent re-occurrence.
- 1.4 This Policy, and others if requested, are available in different formats, such as large print.
- 1.5 This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 This Policy and accompanying procedures outline the values and practices of SACHA with regard to its commitment to and implementation of equality and diversity in the work place and in the delivery of its services to its residents.
- 2.2 It assists SACHA in meeting its duties as a housing provider and in delivering an excellent service to its residents.
- 2.3 SACHA complies with relevant legislation, regulation and codes of practice. In particular, this Policy has been devised with reference to the following:
 - Equality Act 2010.
 - Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Framework.
 - Equality and Human Rights Commission – Employment Statutory Code of Practice.



3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy sets out what SACHA wishes to convey in regards to equality and diversity and how in broad terms it intends to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity.
- 3.2 This Policy applies to all Board members, Members of SACHA, staff (regardless of level or grade), involved residents, consultants, contractors, casual workers and agency staff as well as to all members of SACHA's communities. All are expected to be aware of and conform to this Policy and to display standards of behaviour that treat all people with respect and dignity at all times.
- 3.3 SACHA operates a zero tolerance approach to any form of discrimination and will be pro-active in its approach to ensuring that all systems and services fully reflect its Policy.
- 3.5 SACHA's approach to equality and diversity covers all aspects of its activities and is integral to the provision of its services. Key business areas include:
- **Policy and Practice:** ensuring that equality and diversity good practice and values are embedded in all of our key policies and procedures to ensure fairness and equality for all.
 - **Recruitment and Selection of Staff, Board Members and Members of SACHA:** ensuring that no job or Board/SACHA Membership post applicant suffers discrimination because of any of the protected characteristics by regularly reviewing recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that individuals are treated on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities. Further steps will be taken to ensure that SACHA's vacancies are advertised to a diverse labour market/group and where relevant, to particular groups that The SACHA has identified as disadvantaged or underrepresented in SACHA's staff, or Board/SACHA Membership.
 - **Staffing, Employment, Board Membership and Membership of SACHA:** ensuring that SACHA's arrangements for staffing, Board Membership and Membership of SACHA adequately reflect the diversity within its communities and that all staff, Board Members and Members of SACHA understand and are committed to equality and diversity principles and practices.
 - **Training:** ensuring that all staff, especially those involved in management, recruitment, lettings, service delivery and/or resident involvement, are trained on how to manage equality and diversity issues in the workplace and to ensure that such training is regularly updated and that staff are kept up-to-date with legal developments. Also ensuring that all Board members are trained to an extent that it is appropriate to their governance function and responsibilities.
 - **Referrals and Lettings:** providing fair access to our services and preventing discrimination.
 - **Service Delivery:** focussing and reflecting on need and offering a fair and equal service to all.



- **Access to Information, Advice and Services:** removal of barriers through language, literacy, ability or any other matter to ensure fair access for all.
- **Participation and Satisfaction:** seeking, promoting and responding to views of all people and ensuring opinions are gained from adequate representation of all communities within our housing schemes.
- **Responding to Comments, Suggestions and Complaints:** in a fair and systematic way, ensuring that complaints relating to discriminatory behaviour are thoroughly investigated and dealt with promptly.
- **Managing and Recording Incidents:** of discrimination or harassment in a systematic and fair way to learn from them and reduce the likelihood of re-occurrence.
- **Dealing with Harassment and Discriminatory Behaviour (including Domestic Violence):** operating within a zero tolerance approach to challenge unacceptable behaviour and promote an atmosphere of understanding and respect.
- **Asset Management:** ensuring that adaptations are made to properties to improve access for people with disabilities and keeping accurate records of these to which to refer to for future lettings.
- **Procurement:** purchasing and monitoring of external services (contractors, suppliers and consultants) to ensure that they share SACHA's commitment to equality and diversity and adequately reflect the diverse mix that makes up our community.

4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 **Protected Characteristic:** The Equality Act 2010 introduces the concept of protected characteristics. These are groups of people that are protected against discrimination because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
(Adapted from the Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? A summary guide for voluntary and community sector service providers)
- 4.2 **Direct Discrimination:** Occurs when a person is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.
(Adapted from the Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? A summary guide for voluntary and community sector service providers)
- 4.3 **Indirect Discrimination:** Happens when there is a rule, a policy or even a practice that applies to everyone but which particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic.



(Adapted from the Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? A summary guide for voluntary and community sector service providers)

- 4.4 **Harassment:** Unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

(Adapted from the Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? A summary guide for voluntary and community sector service providers)

5.0 Risk Factors

- 5.1 SACHA takes equality and diversity issues seriously and recognises the risks facing staff, Board Members, Members of SACHA, involved residents, residents and The SACHA as a whole and will ensure that there is sufficient awareness, planning, action and monitoring to deal with such issues.

5.2 Risks to our Involved Residents and Residents:

- A lack of awareness, understanding and respect of diversity amongst our client group can lead to conflict within our services. This threatens each person's right to live peacefully and without fear of discrimination and/or harassment.
- Any form of discrimination or harassment can have a damaging and long-term effect on someone's personal development, health and mental well-being.
- Without an understanding of the diverse needs of the residents within our schemes, SACHA would not be adequately meeting our residents' cultural, religious, social and emotional needs, which would affect them in negative ways.
- Barriers would be placed to specific groups of people, resulting in a lack of fair access to services and equal chances to benefit from them.

5.3 Risks to Staff:

- Frontline staff have a particular responsibility in delivering SACHA's equality and diversity commitments.
- We expect colleagues to actively and constructively challenge any form of discriminatory behaviour, regardless of their own personal beliefs.
- Failure to do so could result in staff being discriminatory in their practice, therefore being liable to disciplinary action. It is therefore imperative that colleagues are adequately trained and aware of equality and diversity issues and good practice.

5.4 Risks to Board Members:

- Board Members have a particular responsibility in agreeing SACHA's equality and diversity strategies and policies and in monitoring their implementation.



- We expect Board Members to actively and constructively challenge any form of discriminatory behaviour, regardless of their own personal beliefs.
- Failure to do so could result in Board Members being discriminatory in their practice, and therefore, being liable to disciplinary or other appropriate action. It is therefore imperative that Board members are adequately trained and aware of equality and diversity issues and good practice.

5.5 Risks to Members of SACHA:

- Members of SACHA have a particular responsibility in ensuring that those who are appointed to SACHA's Board fully support and are able, with suitable training, if necessary, to monitor, review and oversee the implementation of SACHA's strong approach to equality and diversity.
- We expect Members of SACHA to actively and constructively challenge any form of discriminatory behaviour, regardless of their own personal beliefs.
- Failure to do so could result in persons or others associated with the organisation being discriminatory in their practice, and therefore, being liable to disciplinary or other appropriate action. It is, therefore, imperative that Members of SACHA are selected and appointed by the Board on the basis that they are fully able to perform this function.

5.6 Risks to SACHA:

- As a housing provider SACHA has statutory, regulatory and legal duties to meet in its equality and diversity agenda. Failure to do so could result in very damaging outcomes for SACHA. For example:
 - Allegations of discrimination could be damaging to our reputation.
 - Failing to meet regulatory and legal requirements could result in loss of contracts and/or funding, which would ultimately lead to the closure of schemes.

6.0 Breaches of the Policy

- 6.1 If you believe that you have been discriminated against or have been the subject of harassment, you are encouraged to raise the matter with us.
- 6.2 Allegations regarding potential breaches of this Policy will be treated in confidence and fully investigated.
- 6.3 People who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result.
- 6.4 Any person or body associated with SACHA who is found to have committed an act of discrimination or harassment will be subject to disciplinary or other appropriate action. SACHA will take a strict approach to serious breaches of this policy.



7.0 Participation Statement

- 7.1 SACHA is committed to involving its residents and key stakeholders in how it manages and improves its direct services. Before this Policy is reviewed we will endeavour to consult and involve our residents and key stakeholders and consider their views. Where possible and where relevant, we will make the necessary changes based on the comments and suggestions that we receive. SACHA will also provide feedback to all to let them know how their views have influenced any changes in Policy or procedure.

8.0 Commitment to Review

- 8.1 SACHA is committed to continuously improving its practice in the direct work that it does with its residents. We are a learning Group and where we identify that our policies or procedures could be improved, we will change them.
- 8.2 We value and respond to feedback from our residents, partner agencies and all other stakeholders, particularly in relation to good practice. This Policy and any supporting documents will be fully reviewed annually or sooner where any changing legislation has an impact.
- 8.3 We will also complete a periodic (at least annual) review of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policies and plans. We will complete an Equality Impact Assessment at the point of review.