

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY STATEMENT



FIRST HOUSING

Aid & Support Services

STATEMENT OF POLICY

First Housing Aid & Support Services (FHASS) recognises fully that we live in a society where discrimination still operates to the disadvantage of many groups in society.

FHASS believes that all persons should have equal rights to recognition of their human dignity, and to have equal opportunities to be educated, to work, receive services and to participate in society.

FHASS is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities within the workplace through the way we manage the organisation and provide services to the community. In order to express this commitment, we will develop, promote and maintain policies that will be conducive to the principles of fairness and equality in the workplace.

The objective of this policy is that no person should suffer or experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or lack of opportunities on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or philosophical beliefs, health status, HIV status, age, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or trade union membership, class, responsibility for dependents, physical attributes, ex-offender status as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, lack of formal qualifications where such qualifications are not formally required, or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of this policy.

This policy will influence and affect every aspect of activities carried out by FHASS as an employer through promotional work, educational services, casework and other functions linked to the organisation, as determined by the management committee.

In the provision of services and the employment of staff, FHASS is committed to promoting equal opportunities for everyone. Throughout our activities, we will treat all people equally whether they are:

- Seeking or using our services.
- Applying for a job or already employed by us.
- Trainee workers and students on work experience or placements.
- Volunteer workers.

Legal Obligations

This policy has included in line with legislation governing equal opportunities in Northern Ireland; Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (as amended), Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 (as amended), Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended), Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (as amended), Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (as amended), Equality (Disability, etc.) (Northern Ireland) Order 2000, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003, Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998

Policy Implementation and Accountability

The Board of First Housing has specific accountability and responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. This role has been delegated to Senior Staff who make up our Quality Group. FHASS expect all our

employees to abide by the policy and help create an environment of equality for all.

In order to implement this policy we shall:

- Ensure that adequate resources are made available to fulfill the objectives of the policy
- Communicate the policy to employees, job applicants, volunteers, service users and relevant others.
- Incorporate specific and appropriate duties in respect of implementing the equal opportunities policy into job descriptions and work objectives of all staff.
- Ensure that those who are involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in nondiscriminatory selection techniques.
- Incorporate equal opportunity notices into general communications practices.

Conduct and General Standards of Behaviour

Within First Housing Aid & Support Services we expect all staff and volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional and considerate manner at all times. FHASS will not tolerate behaviour such as:

- making threats
- physical violence
- shouting
- swearing at others
- persistent rudeness
- isolating, ignoring or refusing to work with certain people
- telling offensive jokes or name calling
- Displaying offensive material such as pornography or sexist / racist cartoons, or the distribution of such material via email / text message or any other format.
- Any other forms of harassment or victimisation.

The items on the above list of unacceptable behaviours are considered to be disciplinary offences within FHASS and may lead to disciplinary action being taken. FHASS does, however, encourage staff to resolve misunderstandings and problems informally wherever possible, depending on the circumstances. However, whether dealt with informally or formally, it is important for staff who may have caused offence to understand that it is no defence to say that they did not intend to do so, or to blame individuals for being over sensitive. It is the **impact of the behaviour**, rather than **the intent**, that counts, and that should shape the solution found both to the immediate problem and to preventing further similar problems in the future.

Complaints of discrimination

First Housing Aid & Support Services will treat seriously all complaints of unlawful discrimination on any forbidden grounds made by employees, trustees, service users or other third parties and will take action where appropriate.

All complaints will be investigated in accordance with the organisation's grievance, complaints or disciplinary procedure, as appropriate and the complainant will be informed of the outcome in line with these procedures.

We will also monitor the number and outcomes of complaints of discrimination made by staff, volunteers, clients and other third parties to ensure that we continuously improve on our service.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equal opportunities policy. We will endeavor through appropriate training to ensure that employees, making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.

Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.

Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with our equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.

We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.

All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do their job.

Short-listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person.

Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.

Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff. **(Please Note A further Extract on Equal Opportunities is contained within First Housing Employee Handbook Page 55).**

Equal Opportunity Monitoring

We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy.

Monitoring may involve:-

- The collection and classification of information regarding the race in terms of ethnic/national origin and sex of all applications and current employees;
- The examination by ethnic/national origin and sex of the distribution of employees and the success rate of the applicants; and
- Recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions.

- The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.

This Policy has been updated and amended November 2017 and has been approved by the First Housing Board of Directors

Authorised by:

Kevin Wright (Name)

Chief Officer (Position)

This Policy should be read in association with other related Policies

Code of Conduct / Professional and Personal Boundaries Policy

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Staff Training and Development Policy

Harassment Policy

First Housing Complaints Policy

First Housing Employee Handbook

