

# Manor House Development Trust (MHDT) Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy

## 1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 MHDT is committed to equality of opportunity in the delivery of its services and in the employment of staff. MHDT's organisational policies and practices will reflect the needs and experiences of the community it serves. Adherence to the Equal Opportunities & Diversity Policy is a condition of service for all staff, contractors, consultants and Board Members. MHDT will ensure that its commitment to Equal Opportunities and Diversity is observed in every area of its organisation and operation of its policies and procedures. This specifically includes the conduct of tendering procedures and selection of contractors.
- 1.2 MHDT recognises and acknowledges the responsibilities placed upon it by statute and will observe those responsibilities in an open manner both as an employer and as a provider and manager of services.
- 1.3 MHDT is unreservedly opposed to all forms of direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic or national origin, colour, religious belief, sexuality/gender reassignment, marital/civil partnership status, responsibilities for dependants, disability, social and cultural background, age, economic status, offending background or against those living with HIV or AIDS. MHDT will monitor its services against such categories and actively work to eliminate and prevent any form of discrimination.
- 1.4 MHDT will provide our workforce with the knowledge, skills and commitment to effectively and sensitively serve all members of the community with which it works. MHDT will investigate and respond appropriately to discrimination wherever it occurs in the course of dealing with staff, contractors, consultants, Board Members and the community and will endeavour to rectify the practices and procedures, which have led to the discrimination, as quickly as possible.
- 1.5 MHDT will monitor and review the organisation's progress in promoting Equal Opportunities, which includes all systems and procedures to ensure adherence to the policy. Monitoring systems and procedures will include service provision including those provided by contractors, recruitment and selection, the use of contractors and consultants and all other systems and procedures which are integral to MHDT's commitment to this policy. Information collected will be used to:



Highlight possible inequalities; investigate the underlying causes; remove any unfairness or disadvantage; make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

- 1.6 MHDT will not use monitoring information provided to discriminate against individual service users or members of staff. Discrimination is more likely to take place and be more difficult to prove when monitoring information is not kept. Equality and Diversity monitoring provide important information which will identify trends and make improvements in all areas of its activities.
- 1.7 Any data provided to MHDT will be treated confidentially and used for compiling anonymous statistics. The exception to this is data provided by MHDT employees who self classify themselves with a disability. This data only will be checked against any existing data provided by that employee and such employees may be contacted by the appropriate officer to proactively consider the need for any reasonable adjustment in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 1.8 Through these means MHDT will ensure that all services are accessible to those who need or receive them. In developing service provision, MHDT will aim to ensure that not only does it deliver high quality services, but also that those services are sensitive and responsive to the many and varying needs of its service users.

## **2. Recruitment of Ex-Offenders**

- 2.1 As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking service to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, MHDT complies fully with the Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a DBS check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.
- 2.2 MHDT is committed to the fair treatment of its staff, potential staff or users of its services, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, physical/mental disability.
- 2.3 A copy of this policy will be given to DBS applicants at the outset of any recruitment processes.
- 2.4 We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience.



- 2.5 A DBS check is only requested after a thorough risk assessment has indicated that one is both proportionate and relevant to the position concerned. For those positions where a DBS check is required, all application forms, job adverts and recruitment briefs will contain a statement that a DBS check will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position.
- 2.6 Where a DBS check is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within MHDT and we guarantee that this information will only be seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.
- 2.7 Unless the nature of the position allows MHDT to ask questions about your entire criminal record, we only ask about 'unspent' convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 2.8 We ensure that all those in MHDT who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- 2.9 At interview, or in a separate discussion, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.
- 2.10 We make every subject of a DBS check aware of the existence of the Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.
- 2.11 We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a DBS check with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

### **3. Service Provision**

- 3.1 MHDT will work in partnership with the London Borough of Hackney, Hackney Homes and the wider community in Manor House and Hackney to identify the many and varied needs of service users and potential service users. This will include collating information about population



trends in the Borough, the composition of different groups within the community, and the specific service needs of those groups.

- 3.2 This information will enable MHDT to develop service provision to respond to those needs. MHDT will consult local community groups and residents of the Manor House Development Trust operational area as it develops and reviews its services.

#### **4. Service Delivery**

- 4.1 MHDT will strive to ensure that its policies and procedures for providing services do not discriminate against any of the groups or individuals mentioned in this policy. In particular, MHDT will ensure that no individual or group is placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions that have a disproportionately adverse effect on that individual or group.
- 4.2 MHDT will ensure that all application forms, leaflets and other information sources relating to the provision of accommodation and other housing services are accessible to all members of the community. Particular attention will be given to the need for written translations, information in Braille or on audio-tape, interpreters and home visits.

#### **5. Access to Services**

- 5.1 MHDT aims to ensure that as far as possible all its buildings and offices are physically accessible to all service users and staff, including those with disabilities. MHDT will make information available to service users about the accessibility of its buildings.
- 5.2 The provision of information in translation, Braille and on audiotape will ensure that it is available to all members of the community. MHDT will ensure that such information is written in plain language. In addition, MHDT will seek to employ staff who speak the languages of the key minority groups in the community within which it works.

#### **6. Service Standards**

- 6.1 MHDT will publish information about its service provision and performance standards, so that all service users are aware of the availability of services, and of the standards they can expect in the delivery of those services.

#### **7. Employment**

- 7.1 MHDT will conduct an annual staff survey which will include questions on



the equality aspects of recruitment and selection, training and development, and appraisals.

## **8. Working with Contractors**

- 8.1 MHDT requires contractors and consultants as far as reasonably practicable to adopt Equal Opportunities policies and practices in compliance with statutory provisions and will monitor the progress of business partners involved in the provision of housing services. Performance against Equal Opportunities targets will be considered when new contracts are awarded.
- 8.2 Contractors and consultants are expected to operate to a customer care code, which will require them to treat all service users with courtesy and respect, and not to discriminate against particular individuals or groups of service users. Consideration will be given to the operation of Equal Opportunities practices by firms of contractors and consultants themselves, in the employment of their staff.

