

**confederation
of
co-operative housing**

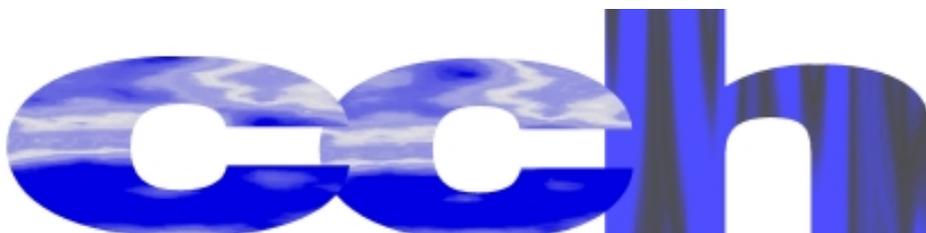
unit 19
41 old birley st.
hulme
manchester
M15 5RF
t: 0161 232 1588
f: 0161 226 7307
e: info@cch-uk.org
w: www.cch-uk.org

equal opportunities

**model
policies
&
procedures**

introduction

- These policies and procedures are for co-ops managed by management committee



equal opportunities policy

statement of intent

- 1 The co-op wishes it to be known that it is an equal opportunities housing co-operative. Equality of opportunity is about people. Consequently, our aim is to develop a community in which people can have personal dignity and realise their potential. This means that:-
- 2 In the provision of housing services, the co-op will seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all persons.
- 3 No person or group of persons applying for housing, or for contracts with the co-op will be treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons because of their sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious belief, physical or mental disability, age, class, appearance, responsibility for dependants, unrelated or spent criminal convictions, being HIV positive or any other matter which causes any person to be treated with injustice.
- 4 In carrying out its responsibilities and in all other activities, the co-op will operate fair and anti-discriminatory policies and procedures.

objectives of this policy

The co-op aims to ensure:

- that it is representative, democratic and accountable
- equality of opportunity in consultation with its members and in encouraging participation
- that it promotes and encourages active membership by all individuals and sections of the community
- positive steps are taken to tackle, stop and avoid any discrimination

- a fair, appropriate and high quality service is provided to all tenants
- that it creates and maintains the reputation for being a good equal opportunities organisation.

The co-op recognises that tackling discrimination and disadvantage is an immense task and that work in this area will develop over time. It is intended that no groups of people will be excluded. This policy is all-embracing in that it upholds the principle of equal opportunities for all sectors of society.

1 legislative and other requirements

1.2 The co-op is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and access to all of its services. In doing so it will have regard to the following list of relevant equal opportunities legislation:

- Race Relations Act 1976
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

1.2 The co-op will achieve these aims by:

- ensuring that its policies and procedures comply with good equal opportunities practices
- promoting the co-op's aim to be an equal opportunities organisation
- ensuring that there is equality of opportunity in housing provision
- removing all barriers to effective consultation and providing opportunities, including equal access to training to promote participation
- monitoring and reviewing equal opportunities practices.

2 achieving equal opportunities objectives

2.1 PROCEDURES FOR ENSURING THE CO-OP IS REPRESENTATIVE, DEMOCRATIC AND ACCOUNTABLE

- All tenants of the co-op will be required to be members of the co-op. In addition to that requirement, other residents over the age of 18 will be eligible for membership of the co-op, subject to the discretion of the named tenant(s)
- On admission to membership, all members will be given a members handbook which summarises the co-op's policies and procedures. In particular, it contains information about:
 - how members may stand for election to the management committee of the co-op, and how and when they have the opportunity to elect the management committee
 - how members may become involved in particular functions of the co-op
 - details about the frequency of meetings of the co-op and the procedure by which members can call a Special General Meeting
 - the requirement for all of the co-op's activities to be governed by good equal opportunities practices. The equal opportunities policy is included.

2.2 PROCEDURES FOR PROMOTING AND ENCOURAGING ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CO-OP

- Information about the co-op and the positive benefits of membership are promoted in the members handbook given to all new tenants, and in the publicity supplied to prospective applicants
- The tenancy agreement states that the co-op expects its members to abide by co-op policies, particularly its Equal Opportunities

policy

- The co-op has a nominations agreement with the local Council, a part of which involves them distributing publicity leaflets supplied by the co-op to promote the benefits of co-op membership
- The co-op aims to hold meetings at times and places that are convenient for members, taking account of their specific requirements and any language or other communication difficulties
- All members are expected to adhere to an agreed code of conduct which governs behaviour at meetings.

2.3 OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CO-OP AND ITS ACTIVITIES

- The co-op holds regular monthly General Meetings, and an Annual General Meeting at a local venue to which all members are encouraged to attend by means of appropriate notification, by providing assistance with childcare, transport etc. and meeting other special needs where appropriate
- Minutes of all General Meetings will be sent to all members
- The co-op will ensure that it consults with all its members through General Meetings, and through occasional surveys on particular issues

2.4 THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE & EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES OBLIGATIONS

- The Annual General Meeting and elections to the management committee will be notified to all members in advance by individual invitation
- Training is offered to and encouraged for new members. News of any training courses are publicised and the development needs of individual members are met where these are identified

- All members are instructed to declare any relevant interests and to abide by a Code of Conduct which governs behaviour at meetings
- All members are expected to operate in a non-discriminatory manner and the co-op as a whole has a duty to tackle discrimination within the organisation

2.5 HOW BREACHES OF POLICY WILL BE HANDLED

- Any member or officer who harasses, abuses or victimises another person for any of the reasons listed in 1.3 will be dealt with according to the complaints & disputes policy
- All members are expected to adhere to an agreed Code of Conduct which concerns behaviour at meetings and the treatment of confidential information. Any serious breach of the Code of Conduct will be treated as grounds for suspension of membership of the management committee
- Complaints received from any member regarding the conduct of individual members will be investigated by the Chair or Secretary of the co-op who will recommend any necessary action to the appropriate meeting
- Should the complaint be against the Chair or Secretary, the complaint will be investigated by any other 2 members of the co-op
- Harassment of neighbours will be treated as a ground for expulsion from membership of the management committee. It will also be dealt with as a breach of tenancy.

2.6 ACHIEVING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OBJECTIVES IN SERVICE DELIVERY

The co-op will ensure that all organisations it works with are aware of the co-op's Equal Opportunities Policy, and are expected to abide by it, and have one of their own.

ALLOCATIONS SERVICE

The co-op is committed to Equal Opportunities in the provision of its housing service, and will ensure that its allocations policies and procedures are fair, equitable and non-discriminatory, and open to all regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, age, marital status, HIV / AIDS status and disability.

It will do this by:

- interviewing applicants for housing nominated by the Local Council
- considering whether the co-op's membership reflects the ethnic composition of the area in which it operates
- ensuring consideration is given to the needs of disabled people and for those whose first language is not English in the allocations process
- maintaining confidentiality at all times
- ensuring that the interview process is seen as positive by all applicants, enabling them to make an informed choice about co-op membership
- ensuring the interviewing process is fair and equitable to all prospective tenants
- regular monitoring and review of the service

REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The co-op aims to provide an efficient and cost effective repairs service to all tenants.

The co-op will ensure that all contractors on its contractor list are aware of the co-op's Equal Opportunities Policy, and are expected to abide by it, and have one of their own. The co-op will review the performance of contractors, noting any particular concerns raised by tenants to Repair Sub-Committee members or through the completed Tenant Satisfaction Slips.

TENANCY MANAGEMENT

The co-op will monitor the types of complaints to determine the nature of the complaints and their outcomes.

The co-op will deal with complaints and harassment through its complaints and disputes policy. The co-op aims to ensure that it offers a comprehensive tenancy management service to all members.

3 anti discrimination policies

3.1 RACISM

The co-op will not discriminate against any individual or have policies which operate in such a way as to be indirectly discriminatory, against any person which means that that person is unable, or finds it disproportionately difficult, to obtain access to housing because of their racial origin. The co-op will ensure that all written publicity materials are made available in each language spoken within the community.

The co-op will not discriminate against any person because of their racial origin in the delivery of housing services. Where necessary, the co-op will ensure that all written materials are made available in tenants' first language.

The co-op will develop and regularly update a Black & Minority Ethnic strategy to ensure that:

- Black & Minority Ethnic people can gain access to the co-op's housing
- There are no barriers to Black & Minority Ethnic members exercising their democratic co-operative rights and get involved in the running of the co-op
- Black & Minority Ethnic tenants are not discriminated against in the provision of housing services.

3.2 GENDER

The co-op will seek to eliminate discrimination against women in the allocation of housing, the provision of housing services, and in the selection of officers. The co-op will not tolerate comments and casual remarks about the physical appearance of women members, officers and staff, and will seek to increase awareness among members and officers about the nature of sexist beliefs and behaviour. The co-op will take appropriate measures to provide security for women members and officers. In the transfer procedure, the co-op shall take into account the needs of any woman or women who suffer domestic violence.

3.3 SEXUALITY

The co-op recognises that lesbians and gay men suffer discrimination when trying to find housing. No member or applicant will receive less favourable treatment or be placed at a disadvantage because of their sexuality. All procedures involving allocations shall take account of the specific needs of lesbians and gay men, including the formation of all lesbian and all gay households. In holding and monitoring records on members, the co-op will be sensitive to the need for individuals to define and categorise their own sexuality.

3.4 DISABILITY

The co-op recognises that disabled people have special housing needs and will do what it can to provide housing suitable for disabled person's needs. The co-op will make any reasonable and practical adaptation to a property to meet the needs of a disabled member. The co-op will ensure that all meetings of the co-op are accessible to disabled persons. The co-op will liaise with the Local Council to ensure that all information on applying to the co-op is available in formats such as braille, large print and cassette, and will ensure that records of meetings and other proceedings of the co-op are made available in formats such as braille, large print and cassette, where necessary.

3.5 AGE

A person under the legal age of majority cannot be given a tenancy, but apart from that, the co-op will not treat any person less favourably because of their age.

3.6 HIV/AIDS

The co-op will seek to inform and educate members, officers and contractors about HIV and AIDS with the aim of promoting awareness, and will not tolerate harassment, abuse or victimisation of any person because of their HIV/AIDS status. Members and potential members will not be required to reveal their HIV/AIDS status, but if a person chooses to reveal such information then this will remain strictly confidential, and no written records will be kept nor information disclosed to third parties.

If a member or employee reveals that they are affected by HIV then the co-op will make every effort to provide adequate support and refer the member to other caring agencies.

3.7 RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The co-op respects the diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs and will not discriminate on the basis of a person's religious or spiritual beliefs. The co-op will also not discriminate indirectly on the basis of religious beliefs, and will take steps to ensure that all members can take part in the running of the co-op regardless of their religious beliefs.

4 monitoring the equal opportunities policy

4.1 The co-op will undertake monitoring in key areas to evaluate the effectiveness of its equal opportunities practice. Key areas of monitoring will include:

4.2 ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES

Co-op membership – ensuring that all sections of the community are able to gain access to the co-op's waiting list. A comparison will be made to ensure that the membership of the co-op broadly reflects the ethnic composition of its area of operations.

Co-op Committee – the co-op will consider regularly whether all members are getting equal access to active participation within the Co-op and will measure how representative committees are of the membership of the Co-op.

4.3 PRACTICES IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Allocations – the co-op will monitor which groups of people are being nominated to the co-op, which groups are applying and being rehoused.

Tenancy Management – the co-op will monitor what types of complaints (including those involving harassment) are being made, by whom and their outcomes.

4.4 PARTICIPATION & CONSULTATION

The co-op will ensure that all members are being consulted and given the opportunity to participate fully in the co-op.

4.5 A report on this performance information will form a part of the co-op's Annual Report, which will be made available to all members at the Annual General Meeting.