



WILLOW TREE

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Version:	v3
Responsibility for the Policy	Head of Corporate Services
Date approved by Executive	October 2022
Date approved by Board (if applicable)	May 2023
Date due for review:	May 2026

1. Statement of Intent

WTHP Housing Partnership (WTHP) believes equality, diversity and respect for people with different backgrounds or social circumstances are core values for the organisation.

All employees and directors understand that WTHP operates in a multi-cultural and diverse society. WTHP acknowledges its statutory and moral obligations to ensure equality of opportunity to all groups.

2. Policy Objectives

2.1 Policy Objectives

This policy is the golden thread that runs through the WTHP's approach to all its activities. WTHP will;

- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- Monitor performance across a range of outputs to ensure in all areas we are representative of our communities and do not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against under-represented groups.
- Expect all staff members to challenge discrimination and inappropriate behaviour, wherever they come across it.
- Prohibit all conduct that displays direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination by association, discrimination based on perception, harassment, and victimisation because of or related to a protected characteristic.
- Where necessary take positive action, as permitted by legislation, to help disadvantaged and/or underrepresented groups to access housing or compete for jobs and the provision of services on a genuine basis of equality.
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, residents, stakeholders, , suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

The responsibility for the policy lies with the Board, which takes seriously the requirements of legislation and the regulatory code. Day to day responsibility for implementation lies with The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team. Each member of staff has a responsibility to ensure they comply with this policy.

A copy of the policy will be included in the induction pack for new staff and Board members.

2.2 Staff

When representing WTHP, staff should

- ensure that they always present the best of themselves at work and in supporting colleagues so that WTHP encourages an engaged, welcoming and committed workplace which realises the potential of all involved;
- understand the policies surrounding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the capacity of their role and how they affect not only themselves but their fellow colleagues;
- be receptive and open to differences and where appropriate challenge their own thinking to ensure they do not fall foul of making assumptions about colleagues, residents, stakeholders who may be different to themselves.
- understand the full breadth of the negative impact discrimination of any kind can have on the organisation, colleagues, residents and stakeholders.
- follow the appropriate channels to challenge behaviours that are not inclusive; and
- ensure that the Company's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is embedded into working practices so that staff can represent WTHP in the correct light

2.3 Housing Services

In the provision of housing services, WTHP will seek to eliminate discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all.

WTHP will foster a culture of inclusiveness, encouraging education and greater understanding of difference where there is ignorance to promote tolerance and understanding.

WTHP will seek to involve its tenants in service delivery and will ensure all tenants have an equal opportunity to access involvement. Satisfaction will be monitored to highlight any issues with underrepresented groups.

2.4 Governance

The composition and operation of The Board will aim to reflect WTHP's commitment to Equality and Diversity and the communities in which we operate. Adoption of this policy will be a criterion for formal recognition for any resident or tenant group.

Equality implication will be a standard section in Board reports in order that the impact of policy change can be considered.

2.5 Harassment

Effective action will be taken to combat victimisation and harassment and WTHP will take a victim centred approach. WTHP will provide support to residents and staff in line with its policies on bullying and harassment.

2.6 Allocation of housing

WTHP will ensure its allocation of housing is made through a system that aims to produce an objective assessment of housing need and to prevent prejudice or discrimination being practised. WTHP will consult with our Local Authority partners over the operation and outcomes of allocation schemes and monitor the outcome of our lettings.

2.7 Procurement

WTHP requires all contractors and other agencies it hires to have an equality and diversity policy similar to this policy or to adopt this policy, no matter the size of contract.

Where unlawful discrimination is discovered, WTHP will review the contract and may terminate it.

2.8 Recruitment

WTHP will ensure that it has access to the widest labour market and secures the best employees and Board Members for its needs. All vacancies will be advertised in an open and transparent manner and will include a statement on our equalities approach.

Selection criteria (job description and employee specification) will be kept under review to ensure that they comply with current best practice and enable opportunities to be offered to all sections of the community.

More than one person must be involved in the selection process, and all should have received training in recruitment skills and equality and diversity awareness. WTHP will do all it can to encourage a diverse workforce and Board. Recruitment to all jobs and roles will be strictly on merit, having ensured a level playing field for any applicants in the recruitment process.

Wherever appropriate, lawful exemptions (occupational requirements) will be used to recruit suitably qualified people to cater for the special needs of particular groups.

Wherever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary/unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged and/or underrepresented groups.

2.9 Employment

WTHP's aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our stakeholders, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. WTHP will;

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time.
- Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.
- Make reasonable adjustments in the workplace for any member of staff with a disability.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under this equality and diversity policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow colleagues, stakeholders and the public.

3. Performance Standards

3.1 WTHP will measure performance in respect of race, gender, disability and sexuality in the following areas;

- a) Board recruitment
- b) Staff recruitment
- c) Allocations
- d) Procurement

4. Reference Documents

There is a wide variety of legislation and regulation in respect of equality and diversity, including;

- Equality Act 2010
- Equality Duty 2011
- Human Rights Act 1998
- HCA Regulatory Framework 2015
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Public Sector Equality Duty

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

There is a wide variety of policies that have a direct impact on equality and diversity, including but not limited to;

- Recruitment Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Pay and Reward Strategy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Redundancy and Redeployment policy
- Allocations Policy
- Procurement policy

When setting policy, the Willow Tree Housing Partnership will ensure a golden thread of best practice runs through all aspects of its operations in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion. It will seek to minimise adverse environmental impacts arising as a consequence of its work. This approach and all policies will be reviewed on their anniversary date or as new guidance or legislation is introduced, whichever occurs sooner.