



ORE VALLEY GROUP

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

This policy is a Group Policy and as such is adopted by the following Subsidiary Companies: Fife HARCA Ltd., Ore Valley Enterprises Ltd, and Cardenden Heat and Power Ltd.

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ORE VALLEY GROUP

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Introduction

Ore Valley Housing Association is the parent company of the Ore Valley Group, which has 3 subsidiary companies, namely Ore Valley Enterprises, Fife HARCA and Cardenden Heat and Power (CHAP).

The Ore Valley Group will seek to prevent and eliminate discrimination, both direct and indirect, and to promote equality of opportunity in its provision of housing, services or employment, regardless of Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex and Sexual Orientation under the Equalities Act 2010; or trade union membership.

This policy should be cross referenced with the Policies below in order to ensure compliance with the relevant standards and good practice:

- Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Tenant Participation
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Complaints and Comments Policy and Procedure
- Smoking at Work Policy
- Staff Training Policy
- Approval of Contractor / Consultants Procedure
- Personal Relationships at Work
- Openness and Confidentiality Policy

Racial Discrimination

The Ore Valley Group will comply with the Race Relations Act 1976 (and any subsequent amendments) and the Codes of Practice published by the Commission of Racial Equality.

Sexual Discrimination

The Ore Valley Group will comply with the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, (and any subsequent amendments) and the codes of conduct published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Disability Discrimination

The Ore Valley Group will comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (and any subsequent amendments) and the codes of conduct published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Sexual Orientation

The Ore Valley Group will comply with the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the future Gender Equality Duty, contained within the Equalities Act, due to come into effect April 2007, (and any

subsequent amendments). Also to comply with the codes of conduct published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Religion or Belief

The Ore Valley Group will comply with the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, (and any subsequent amendments) published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Age Discrimination

The Ore Valley Group will comply with the Employment Equality (Age Discrimination) Regulations 2006, (and any subsequent amendments) published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

General

All Governing Body members and staff will receive training to ensure that they understand the requirements of the law and good practice in this regard.

This policy will be brought to the attention of all contractors, consultants and agents working with the Group who will be required to have an equal opportunity policy on their dealings with the Group to comply with the law and not to act in a discriminatory way.

The Ore Valley Group's CEO will be responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented and for ensuring that the Group implements all procedures and strategies within an equalities framework, following different legislative requirements around the 9 protected characteristics outlined in the Equalities Act 2010. The CEO is also responsible for monitoring its application and for reporting to Governing bodies on its effectiveness as required.

A copy of this policy is available on request from Ore Valley Housing Association.

A statement on Ore Valley Housing Associations approach to Equal Opportunities in relation to housing applicants is contained in the Information Guide of the Fife Housing Register application form. A statement on the approach to Equal Opportunities in relation to recruitment will be provided in every pack sent out to job applicants.

As part of its monitoring procedures, the Group will seek to collect and collate information on application and outcome, by ethnic group, for those seeking housing, or employment and also on present tenants, staff members and Boards. This information will be regularly reviewed in the context of census information for the local area(s). Action will be taken by way of setting appropriate targets and amending procedures, practices and assessment criteria as necessary or by adopting Positive Action measures as prescribed in the Act.

If an incident of discrimination is found or is alleged, then procedures below should be followed.

The Association will in partnership with Fife Constabulary, Social Work and Racial Equality Council, take action to combat racial harassment where this is discovered, to pursue perpetrators and to ensure that appropriate support is available for victims. All reports of harassment and any action will be recorded and monitored, having care to protect confidentiality. Ore Valley Housing Association's tenancy agreement and Tenants Guide, expressly prohibits racial harassment, and the Association will take appropriate action which could include action to evict. The Association's allocations policy will also give due priority to victims of extreme racial harassment.

Equal Opportunities Complaints Procedure

General

When a report of Discrimination is received, it is important that all reports are treated seriously regardless of personal opinions or the nature of the complaint. This Procedure links into the Complaints / Comments Procedure.

Confidentiality

It is essential that the confidentiality of the complainant is respected as far as possible. Names should only be divulged where absolutely necessary and where the complainant has been advised that this will be done.

Anonymous complaints will not usually be dealt with although these should be kept on file in order to monitor whether more than one is made about the same problem.

What Can Clients use This Procedure For?

This Procedure is designed to assist anyone who feels that they have experienced discrimination whilst being employed by, Contracted to or receiving a service from the Ore Valley Group.

Informal Complaints Procedure

It is hoped that many incidents can be resolved informally; however the complainant can use the formal complaints procedure at any time.

In order to try and resolve a problem informally the complainant should write or talk to a member of staff, to advise what the problem is. This should be done as soon as possible after the event has taken place.

The staff member will advise how long it should take for the problem to be sorted out and hopefully the matter being resolved.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they will be offered the opportunity to speak to a senior member of staff, who will then investigate and inform the complainant in writing of the outcome and action taken within 14 days.

Formal Complaints Procedure

If a problem has not been resolved informally, or if the complainant wishes to use the formal complaints procedure from the start, the complainant should make their formal complaint in writing or by using the complaint form and passing it to the correct member of staff.

- Alleged Discrimination involving the Service Delivered – Kerry McLeod, Depute CEO.
- Alleged Discrimination involving Staff Members – Andrew Saunders, CEO.
- Alleged Discrimination involving the CEO - Chair of the Board.for OVHA

The matter will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.

It is essential that accurate records are kept of all details of the complaint and all action taken regarding this, therefore any telephone conversations or interviews should be recorded in writing by the member of staff and the complainant should be asked to sign this, to confirm that it is a true and accurate record.

If the complainant finds it difficult to make or progress the complaint due to disability or literacy problems, the Depute CEO will assist with the complaints process.

Following the investigation, a response will be provided to the complainant within 28 days of receipt. The complainant will always be advised of any delay in the progress if the investigation.

Copies of all correspondence, notes of all discussions regarding the complaint should be passed to the Depute CEO for recording and monitoring. All correspondence relating to a complaint should be filed on 1.7 within the main filing system.

If the complainant is not happy with the response, they will be able to exercise their Right to Appeal.

The Appeals Procedure

Appeals against any decision made by the Ore Valley Group staff can be made by following the procedure outlined below:

A letter should be submitted to the CEO requesting that the matter be referred to the Board. The CEO will respond to this letter within 3 working days.

The complainant can request to attend the Board meeting with a representative if the complainant wishes.

A brief note will be prepared by the CEO, to allow the Board to consider the complaint. A copy of this briefing note will be sent to the complainant 5 days prior to it being issued to Board Members. This allows the complainant time to comment on the information contained in the briefing note.

The CEO will write to the complainant within 3 working days following the meeting, to let them know the decision.