



Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

KARIN HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document sets out the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy of Karin. It explains why equality and diversity are important to us, the basic principles we will follow, our equality and diversity policy and how we intend to implement, monitor and review it.
- 1.2. The Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy covers both the work we do with our users and the procedures that govern projects that we manage on behalf of our delivery partners. Throughout this policy the term 'staff' applies to paid staff, trainees on work placement, interpreters, volunteers and the members of the Board of Trustees/Directors of Karin and our partner organisations.
- 1.3. This Policy sets out how Karin intends to meet its obligations under the following legislation:
 - The Race Relations Act 1976
 - The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
 - The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Act 1999
 - The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005
 - The Equal Pay Act 1970
 - The Human Rights Act 1998
 - The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003,
 - The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
 - The Age Discrimination Legislation 2006.
- 2.1.4 Karin provides services mainly to disadvantaged people from diverse communities and believes that all our clients should be treated with understanding and respect. Our clients have the right to both appropriate accesses to our services and equitable treatment by our staff.
- 2.1.6 At the heart of what we do is the recognition of the oppression many of our clients face in particular asylum seekers and refugees because of their race, ethnic origin, religion or belief, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, and a commitment to combating it. We live and work in a society where racism forms part of the daily experience of black people and people from minority ethnic groups. For women, gay men and lesbians, bisexuals, older people and people with disabilities, these equality and diversity issues are also particularly acute.

- 2.1.7 This policy is an important public statement of Karin's intent so that our staff and users can be clear about their rights and responsibilities and so that there are clear criteria against which our performance can be judged. However, we recognise that the creation of a genuine equality and diversity culture is a continuous process. We have to strive constantly to achieve it.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Equality and diversity are an integral part of Karin's objects, beliefs and strategic objectives.
- 3.2 Karin will uphold equality and diversity:
- (a) in service delivery, by providing appropriate, sensitive and impartial services and being accessible to all especially those from communities that suffer particular disadvantage in accessing training and work;
 - (a) by fostering a co-operative working environment which is free from harassment or victimisation and which promotes good relations among partners, to create the conditions for the partnership to realise its full potential;
 - (b) by employing and providing opportunities for disadvantaged groups in particular refugees and other ethnic minorities and in so doing develop a multi-cultural partnership which reflects the diversity of our clients and society;
 - (c) by promoting the values contained in the Policy in our relationships with other Partnerships and organisations.
 - (d) in employment, by ensuring that no job applicant, employee, volunteer or trainee is unfairly discriminated against on the basis of their gender, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, age, physical or mental capabilities, marital status, sexual preference, social background, sexuality, or organisation role
- 3.3 In implementing these principles, Karin will ensure that it meets all the necessary legal requirements and strive to set standards of good practice that others will follow.

EMPLOYMENT

4 Recruitment of staff

- 4.1. A written job description and person specification shall be prepared in

respect of every vacancy that arises and every new post that is created. It shall be checked and agreed by the staff and honorary officers for direct and indirect discrimination, including culture-bound assumptions and ageism before the recruitment procedures commence. Applicants should be made aware that general life experience and voluntary as well as paid work are valued.

- 4.2. All jobs must be advertised externally and as widely as possible. In addition to whatever channels the organisation may choose to utilise, the vacant post must also be advertised in minority press. Adverts should clearly state the minimum requirements for the post.
- 4.3. At both the short-listing and the appointment stage, brief notes shall be made on each application indicating clearly why the applicant has or has not been short-listed or appointed. A form will be drafted for this purpose.
- 4.4. No interview, for any post should be conducted by a panel of fewer than three representatives or more than five members of the executive committee. All interview panels must include women and shall be suitably representative of the various ethnic groups within the membership of the organisation. Members of staff will be involved at all stages of the selection process in an advisory role. Whenever possible, an external assessor shall be invited to join the panel in a non-voting capacity.
- 4.5. An open invitation will be given to short-listed applicants with a disability to discuss their specific needs and requirements. [Organisation] will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the specific needs of disabled employees are met.
- 4.6. During each interview, notes should be taken and at the end of the interview a form should be completed for each candidate, assessing their response to the topics and themes raised. These should be reviewed at the end of the interview process by the panel to see that each candidate has been treated fairly.
- 4.7. Questions on the following topics are forbidden in an interview. Any candidate who is asked these questions has the right to refuse to answer. It is the responsibility of the Chair, or any other member of the panel to stop such questions being asked:
 - marital status
 - sexual orientation
 - occupation of partner
 - number of children/domestic arrangements (it should be made clear that the organisation aims to be flexible to individual requirements)

- 4.8. An equal opportunity section should be included on the application form. The equal opportunities policy and the purpose of monitoring should be clearly explained.

5. Training

- 5.1 New staff should be inducted into the staff development and training policy and made aware of training opportunities available to them, and be positively encouraged to take them up. All reasonable facilities will be offered to staff to take study leave.

6 Support

- 6.1 All workers should have access to support. If a worker feels isolated, provision should be made for support from other parts of [organisation] or outside the organisation. If groups of women, black or minority ethnic workers, or lesbian or gay workers, for example want to set up a support group, this should be encouraged.

7 Discipline and grievance procedures

- 7.1 It will be made clear to all employees that discrimination, abuse or harassment on the grounds of race, gender, disability or sexuality—if proven—is a dismissible offence.

8 The scope of this policy

- 8.1. This policy applies to:
- all staff employed by [organisation] irrespective of funding agent.
 - all aspects of promotional, educational, and campaigning functions of [organisation]
 - members and affiliate organisations. [Organisation] would expect its membership to concur with and actively promote these objectives.

9 Implementation

- 9.1 Employment procedures and practices will be undertaken strictly in accordance with the all relevant legislation:
- 9.2 In order to implement this equal opportunities policy, [organisation] accepts that it needs to ensure that all members and staff involved in selection and recruitment within the organisation are given adequate and appropriate training in:
- interview techniques
 - codes of practice
 - disciplinary and grievance procedures as contained in the

[organisation] staff manual.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY & DIVERSITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

10 Karin Housing Association's commitment

10.1. Karin is committed to ensuring equality of access to all its services. The executive committee will take action to provide genuine equality of opportunity to counter past discrimination and to monitor the outcome. The executive committee will aim to ensure that no sector of the community shall be

- denied access or receive a poor service on the grounds of age, race, gender, disability, being a lesbian or gay man, marital status, ethnicity or religious belief.
- The executive committee will aim to ensure that all its services will be provided in line with this anti discrimination policy. In order to promote equality of access the executive will aim to ensure the following:
 - that services are based on consultation with those who receive the services and positive steps are taken to include excluded groups in decision making.
 - that all services are flexible and responsive to the changing needs in the community.
 - that information on services is widely available and where necessary targeted to ensure maximum awareness of provisions.
 - that systems are developed to audit and monitor service delivery and consumer satisfaction.
 - that an accessible complaints procedure will be developed to ensure against discrimination in service allocation and delivery.
 - that positive action programmes will be developed to target the needs usually excluded groups.
 - that in advertising and publicity ***** will be presented as an organisation committed to promoting equality of access to employment and services.

11 Access to Housing & Advice Service

Our Access to Housing policy explains our lettings process

We undertake to:

- Review regularly the criteria for assessing housing applicants to ensure there are no criteria which discriminate directly or indirectly against

those covered by our equal opportunities policy and which cannot be objectively justified by reference to housing need.

- Ensure that staff engaged in the lettings process has received adequate training and are implementing our policy correctly.
- Ensure that adequate guidelines for the assessment of applications are available for staff which minimises the use of discretions.
- Provide information in translation or alternative formats on request.
- Ensure that home visits and other procedures do not make subjective judgements about lifestyle, domestic standard, culture or “suitability” of applicants.
- Provide advice, information, guidelines to the service users in housing and other social related issues.
- Ensure that assumptions are not made about applicants’ area preferences.
- Ensure that decisions to select applicants from specific access channels are made by more than one individual, the reasons documented and subject to scrutiny.
- Ensure that applicant suffering from racial harassment, domestic violence or harassment due to disability or sexual orientation is given high priority by our assessment procedures.
- Maintain a comprehensive ethnic record keeping and monitoring system and consider other systems as necessary.
- Set targets against which performance can be measured and report the results to Regional Committees and the Boards of Management regularly.

12 Housing Management and Maintenance

We seek to deliver our housing management and maintenance service free from discrimination.

We undertake to:

- Fully investigate any complaint alleging unfavourable treatment by us which the complainant believes has resulted from his/her membership of a group covered by our equal opportunities policy.
- Implement ‘best practice’ policies and procedures in respect of racial harassment and domestic violence which are ‘victim centred’.
- Ensure that recognised Tenants and Residents Associations adopt an equal opportunities policy and operate in a non discriminatory manner.

13 Development

We are committed to operating within area development strategies in partnership with local authorities, the Housing Corporation and other agencies.

We undertake to:

- Investigate the housing need, including the ethnic mix, in our areas of operation, and take account of this in our development strategies.
- Seek, where practicable, to take account of and promote the specific housing needs of those covered by our equal opportunities policy, and in particular ethnic minority groups and disabled people in respect of dwelling mix, location and design.

14 *Contractors and Consultants*

We require minimum equal opportunities standards from our approved contractors and consultants and seek to encourage approved contractors to adopt good equal opportunities practise.

We undertake to:

- Require contractors/consultants with 20 or more direct employees to operate an equal opportunities policy.
- Ensure that contractors/consultants with less than 20 direct employees provide a written undertaking to comply with the statutory codes of practice in employment produced by the CRE and EOC.
- Ensure that contractors and consultants comply with our equal opportunities policy when carrying out work for the association.
- Ensure that contractors and consultants are not discriminated against or treated less favourably in contravention of our equal opportunities policy.

15 *Policy Implementation Procedures*

15.1. Karin projects' Board member will ensure the policy, procedures and action plan are understood, supported and promoted by all partners and is applied to all activities.

15.2. Karin will ensure the Equality and Diversity Policy is understood and followed by their staff and implemented in their projects consistently.

15.3. Karin will ensure open and honest discussion of equality and diversity issues involved and create an environment where all staff and clients feel encouraged to air their views; express their concerns; learn from each other's experience and treat different perspectives and values with respect.

16 *Monitoring and Review of the Policy*

16.1. Karin will monitor the implementation of its Equality and Diversity Policy as part of the project monitoring process and report regularly to and advise the Partnership Board.

16.2. Karin's Board will review the Equality and Diversity Policy annually.

16.3. The Karin's Board will oversee implementation of the policy and approve further action(s) to promote equality and celebrate diversity.

17 Information

17.1 This document shall be circulated to all employees, volunteers and job applicants.

Person Responsible for the review of this policy:

Ibrahim Mohamoud

Date of this review:

21st October 2008

Date Board approved:

21st October 2008

Date next review is due:

21st October 2011