



Single Equality Scheme

Foreword

Waverley Housing is committed to supporting diversity, delivering equality of opportunity and recognising the human rights of everyone we work with. As the provider of housing services within the Borders and an employer of 41 staff we are acutely aware of our responsibility for promoting equality and diversity principles and practice.

Our Single Equality Scheme 2011–2014 sets out the framework within which we will deliver these commitments and how we will play our part in making Waverley Housing a leading equality organisation. Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Diversity means recognising and valuing differences between people. Human rights is about treating all human beings fairly, respectfully, equally, in a dignified manner and recognising their autonomy. We will ensure that equality, diversity and human rights are a primary consideration in the delivery of our services.

This Single Equality Scheme sets out our values, strategic objectives and outlines the legal framework, to explain how we will meet our statutory duties detailed in the Single Equality Act (2010).

As Chair and Chief Executive we are determined to provide an environment in which everyone feels respected and valued. This aim will be underpinned by a framework of actions intended to mainstream equality in all of the services we provide. We intend to provide the leadership and support that is needed to ensure success.

Chair *Margaret Spalding*

Acting Chief Executive *Margie Ross*

Date *4.4.11*

1. Introduction

This Single Equality Scheme has been developed in consultation with staff, partner agencies and people who use our services. The action plan with measurable actions will provide evidence for real improvement to services taking into account the needs and wishes of local people and our staff.

Waverley Housing Board has made a strategic commitment to adopting a Single Equality Scheme (SES) approach, which includes actions on age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation in addition to Race, Gender & Disability. Strategic leadership will come from the Chief Executive with responsibility for implementation being held within the appropriate sections as outlined in the action plan. Appendix 1 provides some helpful definitions.

The corporate values influencing the Single Equality Scheme action plan are:

Equality

We will treat everyone fairly and with respect, meeting the diverse needs of our stakeholders

Excellence

We will strive for excellence in the provision of all our services.

Engagement

We will communicate effectively, sharing information and responding to the needs of all our stakeholders with integrity and transparency

Environment

We will co-operate with our stakeholders to build strong communities.

The principles underpinning our Single Equality Scheme include:

- recognising that inequalities are rarely experienced in isolation, but are often linked and require a holistic approach in tackling them, and
- ensuring that monitoring implementation and progress reporting are streamlined and part of an integrated cycle of improvement.

We will deliver the equality, diversity and human rights agenda by:

- clearly defining roles and responsibilities for our Board, Remuneration Committee, area partners, managers and staff
- ensuring implementation of the equality, diversity and human rights agenda in our work programmes through Equality Impact Assessment
- continuing to monitor the equality, diversity and human rights agenda through our established governance arrangements, and
- evaluating our services and plans against the principles of fairness, respect, dignity, equality and autonomy.

Waverley Housing operates across a wide, sparsely populated rural area in the south of Scotland with a population of 112,640 (2009). Our houses are dispersed over a number of towns, villages and small settlements, with the main towns being Hawick, Galashiels, Jedburgh, Kelso and Selkirk.

Waverley Housing is committed to providing housing and housing services in a way that treats everyone equally and is working to eliminate discrimination against the people who we work with regardless of their gender, disability or race.

The Single Equality Scheme for Waverley Housing describes our objectives which will help us to advance the equality aims by:

- protecting the human rights of our key stakeholders including everyone who works for us
- creating a fair organisation where everyone can participate
- valuing and respecting the contribution that can be offered by our diverse workforce and local population(s)
- maintaining a culture where people from all backgrounds can work together positively.

Our aim is that the equality and diversity principles underpin everything we do and are at the heart of our day to day business. Waverley Housing will work with our Tenants, Suppliers, other RSL's and bodies such as Scottish Borders Council and voluntary organisations, the Regulator and our funders to ensure good practice is adopted throughout the housing sector.

In respect of this duty our main priorities are:

- increase the involvement of Service Users
- build the capacity, knowledge, understanding and commitment of all Waverley Housing staff in order to establish Waverley Housing as an exemplar organisation on equality and diversity
- improve Waverley Housing data to understand more of the issues our existing and future tenants face so we can better address disadvantage and inequality amongst our Service Users, review progress and measure success.
- ensure the Board is fully committed to and engaged with the scheme

2. The Evidence Base

Service User Involvement

Waverley Tenants Organisation (WTO) was constituted on 24 October 2005 and registered with Waverley Housing on 1 January 2006.

On an ongoing basis, we recognise tenant feedback from several sources, including settlement visits, repairs satisfaction surveys, Newsletters, questionnaire/comments, complaint resolution satisfaction, and via our website.

Waverley Housing also carries out satisfaction surveys for various aspects of its service, on a day-to-day basis and in addition, periodically conducts comprehensive Tenant Satisfaction Surveys.

Tenant Newsletters keep tenants informed on a regular basis.

Borders Housing Network (BHN) comprises the 4 Borders-based Registered Social Landlords, Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association, Scottish Borders Housing Association as well as Waverley Housing. BHN is responsible for 'wider role' activity in the Borders and contributes to a range of community initiatives involving young people and other vulnerable or marginalised people. The network, along with Scottish Borders Council, has responded jointly to various consultations, most recently the new Housing Bill.

Other initiatives include:

Unified Health Assessments
Scottish Borders Tenant Participation Forum
Anti-social Behaviour Strategy and Core Working Groups
Homelessness
Area Regeneration

Build Capacity, Knowledge, Understanding and Commitment

We will:

- communicate effectively with our staff through meetings and newsletters;
- ensure we have the appropriate skills and knowledge within the organisation to enable continual development of the delivery of our services;
- continue to develop the skills and knowledge of our staff, to encourage good performance;
- review staff conditions in line with family friendly policies
- continue to develop the skills and knowledge of our Board members

Improve Waverley Housing Data

Our success is influenced by factors operating in our internal and external environment, understanding the 'big picture'. To continue to be successful we not only need to understand existing factors but also forecast change, so that we can take advantage of change within the environments in which we operate.

To enable the organisation to focus upon key priorities, a SWOT analysis was undertaken to better understand those internal and external factors having most impact (see Appendix II). We involved key stakeholders in this process, as well as Board members and management.

We are aware that as many of our tenants are growing older, a wider range of care needs will be required. Diversely, we are seeing an increase in young single person households, which in some cases, may require a higher degree of support. (See Appendix III).

To address these issues we are reviewing our IT services to improve efficiency in data and maintenance management as well as communications. Improving and integrating our IT systems will create a more efficient asset management system.

To improve our knowledge of our assets we commissioned a 100% stock condition survey which will give baseline detail of all our houses and will ensure they meet the required standards by 2015.

We are reviewing the information we have on staff skills and other Human Resource information requirements.

Ensure the Board is Fully Committed to and Engaged with the Scheme

The Board is very conscious of the need for good governance and development and has a corporate governance review ongoing to ensure good practice and transparency of decision making is the norm.

Board development is of the utmost importance and regular 'away day' sessions are held for strategic planning and future developments. External professional assistance and facilitators are used for their knowledge of the external environment and developing trends or political knowledge.

The Board is developing an appraisal system for Board members and equality and diversity will form part of this review.

The Board has a range of professional advisors on legal, housing and other matters and is an associate member of Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH) and receives regular publications and updates.

3. Consultation and Engagement

Our normal consultation processes shall be used to seek the views of our tenants. We will publish a draft on our website and consult with members of Waverley Tenants Organisation (WTO) via our Tenant Focus Groups.

Through regular staff briefing sessions and appropriate training we will raise awareness and ensure our staff are fully committed to the concept of equality and diversity for all. Staff consultation will provide us with valuable feedback on the promotion of equality and diversity principles and practice.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

Currently we risk assess all of our policies and proposals prior to submission to the Board for approval. Whilst the risk assessment highlights equality and other factors we will extend the analysis to include a full equality impact assessment.

We will recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Scottish Borders and our local population (see Appendix IV).

We will ensure our equality, diversity and human rights agenda is embraced by our contractors and those we work with.

We will ensure our buildings and information are accessible and compliant with regulations.

5. Equality Proofing and Mainstreaming

We will train staff in equality, diversity and human rights to ensure that everyone who works with us is equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognise and correctly deal with discrimination

We will do this by:

- developing our workforce through equal access to training opportunities
- expanding the current equality and diversity awareness training to include human rights and training on new legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, and
- ensuring that staff undertake training on Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) as an equality mainstreaming tool.

6. Procurement and Partnerships

As a member of the Borders Regional Procurement Partnership (BRPP) we have committed to work with the other partners on procurement methods for their development, regeneration and planned maintenance programmes. The aim of joint working is to achieve greater cost efficiency in tendering of works, professional services and supply of services, and promote continuous improvement and certainty of supply and outputs.

Waverley Housing has an Asset Management Plan, which was reviewed in January 2011. This is based on stated principles and sets out strategic priorities. It links with other Policies and Plans and concentrates to a large extent on planned maintenance of Waverley's housing stock and procurement of related goods and services. The Plan emphasises the importance of assessing available options and setting high and consistent standards for works carried out.

In relation to property acquisition, Scottish Borders is moving towards the effective establishment of a lead developer model with Eildon Housing Association, working closely with the other RSLs, taking responsibility for the development across the Borders geography. This will enable the negotiation of favourable borrowing arrangements with additional funds available for land banking, as in line with the Scottish Government procurement priorities. Berwickshire Housing Association, Eildon Housing Association and Waverley Housing have introduced "Borders Choice Homes". BCH covers the Scottish Borders area and aims to make applying for a house easier. Registration is simple and gives choice to applicants.

7. Reporting Reviewing and Monitoring Progress

Progress, in all aspects of the action plan will be reviewed through regular reports to our Governance Committees, namely Remuneration, Property and Audit and Internal Control.

The action plan will be updated annually by the Remuneration Committee.

Any barriers to implementation and the reasons will be reported via the Committees to the Board.

A review of the Single Equality Scheme will take place every 3 years.

8. Publishing the Scheme

- The Single Equality Scheme will be available on the company website (www.waverley-housing.co.uk) and will contain information on whom to contact if anyone wishes to leave comments or provide feedback.
- Annual progress reports will be made available on line
- The Single Equality Scheme will be made available in other formats on request
- The Single Equality Scheme will be distributed to all staff and the public.

9. Responsibilities

Board members have overall responsibility for approval of the Single Equality Scheme which must comply with all relevant legislation.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the proper application and monitoring of the Single Equality Scheme.

Definitions

To assist with clarity the following definitions are provided:

Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is mostly backed by legislation designed to address unfair discrimination and resulting inequalities based on membership of a particular group.

Diversity is the recognition and valuing difference in its broadest sense. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognise, respect, value and harness difference for the benefits of patients, carers, members of the public and members of staff. (Fair For All - Scottish Executive Health Department)

Gender refers to roles, attitudes and values and behaviours given to women and men by society. These characteristics can vary depending on which society we live in. For example, traditionally, a gender role would suggest that women should look after children, while men continue to go to work.

Sex refers to how we are born, the biological and physical differences between men and women. People are born male and female; learn to be boys and girls, and grow into men and women.

(Gender Equality Duty - Guidance for NHS Scotland Fair for All Gender 2007)

Transgender or transsexual is a recognised medical condition where an individual believes he or she was born in a body of the wrong sex.

Gender reassignment is the process undertaken under medical supervision of reassigning a person's sex by changing physical, social or other characteristics. Real life test refers to the transition period in gender reassignment during which the individual must live and work in the new sex. (Equal Opportunities Commission March 2006)

SWOT ANALYSIS

Internal	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small and integrated organisation allows us to be responsive and dynamic • Strong financial management of the organisation • Good relationship with key partners (eg our funders, the Council, other RSLs) • Reputation of meeting partners' deadlines • Clear programme in place to develop our Board • Highly effective management team • Committed & skilled staff • In-house trades • Good employment terms and conditions • Employ local people (stakeholder) • Easy to work with (stakeholder) • Businesslike approach (stakeholder) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Medium" level engagement with Regulator • Major organisational changes over past 5 years have had an impact on staff energy and confidence • Some relatively new staff in key positions still learning the job • Being a small organisation, we are very reliant on key individuals • Workload means staff are focused on delivering the business rather than also planning the business • Overall size does not create economies of scale • Current level of tenant participation (stakeholder) • Lack of profile (stakeholder) • Could share/publicise what we do well (stakeholder)
External	
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to develop the Borders Housing Network into a stronger partnership (or even a separate vehicle to share services) • Take a more active role in wider role activities • Use the registered tenants organisation to help us develop our services • Succession planning eg management development training would support and develop managers • Use technological developments to improve service quality and access • Market test the in-house trades to identify future structure & potential • Involving tenants in setting local outcomes in the Social Housing Charter (stakeholder) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political Change • Housing Benefit Reform • High management costs compared to benchmark • Difficulty in recruiting key posts • Joint working can take considerable time and effort • Changes in legislation/regulation and impact of compliance and/or implementation • Currently risk losing reputation for being innovative • Economic climate affecting our ability to achieve SHQS (stakeholder)

CUSTOMER PROFILE

1.1 The Borders population in 2008 was 112,430¹. This is broken down as follows:

Age Bands	%
0 – 14	16.6
15 – 29	14.7
30 – 44	19.6
45 – 59	22.1
60 – 74	18.0
75 +	8.8

- 1.2 The projected population change from 2006 to 2031 is 15.6%², compared with 5.0% for the whole of Scotland.
- 1.3 It is estimated that 41%³ of all RSL and Private Sector tenants are on Housing Benefit. Waverley has 35% of tenants accessing Housing Benefit. 27% are on full housing benefit and 8% on partial benefit.
- 1.4 The Scottish Borders has a similar composition to other areas, but there is a lower proportion of younger age groups (0-14 and 15–29). In addition, there are slightly higher proportions of older age groups in the Scottish Borders than in the neighbouring local authorities and for Scotland as a whole. The General Register Office estimates that the trend for an ageing population will increase in the Scottish Borders.
- 1.5 Whilst unemployment is relatively low, the area has a low-wage economy. The average weekly wage for 2005-06 was £379.70⁴, this is £16.50 less than the Scottish average of £396.2, and significantly lower than Edinburgh average (£455.20)

¹ Source: Scottish Borders Council – Scottish Borders in Figures 2010

² Source: Scottish Borders Council – Local Housing Strategy 2007

³ Source: Scottish Borders Council – Local Housing Strategy 2007

⁴ Source: Scottish Borders Council – Local Housing Strategy 2007

LEGISLATIVE, POLICY & REGULATORY FORCES

Planning Act 2006
Homelessness targets 2012
SHQS targets 2015
Housing Bill
Companies Act
Building regulations
Climate Change Act Green agenda/sustainability
Changing regulatory regime
Efficiencies agenda
Financial viability testing
Impact of potential political change
Changes to HB regime/welfare to work
Single outcome agreements
SORP 2010
VAT changes
Older person's strategy
Borders Housing Network

MARKET FORCES

Recession
Housing supply & demand
Reduced house building
Rising aspirations
Reduced Government funding
Business foreclosures
Potential council house building
Reduced affordability
Rising unemployment
Borders rail
Potential out-migration
Access to finance difficult
Potential return of inflation
Increasing energy prices
Reducing construction industry
Impact of any political change

INTERNAL FORCES

New funder
Staff & board changes
Succession planning issues
New staffing posts created
Office accommodation
Are IT systems fit for purpose?
Are office premises fit for purpose?
Partnership working
Revised training plans in place
Increasing wider role activity
Increasing estate management activity
WTO increasingly active
Gas servicing policy & contractor
Clearer picture of SHQS requirements
Increasing workload
Increasing compliance & self – assessment activity
Implications of BCH single agency agreement
Need for branding/ good PR
Some pockets of stock difficult to let

WAVERLEY HOUSING'S BUSINESS PLAN



CUSTOMER FORCES

Ageing Population
More single-person households
Increasing homelessness
Increasing unemployment
Increasingly difficult to match need with available supply
Increasing range of care needs
Increasingly diverse population
Increasing levels of fuel poverty
Reduced affordability
Desire for rent payment choices
Increasing use of internet
Levels and ways of participation changing
Increasing antisocial behaviour
New customers via wider role activities
Changing aspiration/satisfaction levels
Customers often shared with other service providers
Customers not just tenants, e.g. owner occupiers.