

ANNUAL REPORT ON EQUALITY & DIVERSITY 2009/10

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on HFI's performance in the area of diversity in 2009/10.

2 Background

- 2.1 This report contains an overview of performance against HFI's Equality and Diversity Strategy and includes details of the following:
- Our progress in meeting the "excellence" standard of the revamped Equalities framework.
 - HFI's performance on mapping information on our residents.
 - Improving our services for disabled customers.
 - Review of the Equality Impact assessment process.
 - Governance and HR issues.
- 2.2 The report will assess HFI's overall performance in terms of service delivery, organisational governance and staffing, all of which are critical areas assessed by the audit commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (the EHRC who are responsible for the Equality Framework).
- 2.3 The purpose of the report is both to recognise area's of excellence but also pinpoint weaknesses where further work is needed in 2010/11

3 The Equalities Framework

- 3.1 In April 2009, the Government phased out the Equality Standard and introduced a new accreditation for excellence in equalities called the "Equalities framework".
- 3.2 The Equalities Framework encompasses a broader definition of equality and encourages authorities not only to consider the needs of those who enjoy legal protection against discrimination but also to work with other groups who may face disadvantage (i.e. Looked after children, white working class boys).
- 3.3 Although simplified, the headline objectives of the Equalities standard remain but a new priority of "knowing your communities" has been identified. This stresses the need for mapping and the use of equality data. This will tie in to HFI's agenda of mapping and more effectively targeting its services to residents by developing an improved CRM system.
- 3.4 The new system will reduce to these 3 categories; Emerging, Achieving and Excellent. However, those who currently hold Level 4 of the

Equalities standard such as LBI (and consequently HFI) will be recognised in a “Moving to excellence” classification. This was intended to recognise the achievements of those authorities who had already taken steps towards meeting the highest accreditation rating.

3.5 A new guidance intended for use by ALMO's has now been produced by Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDEA).

3.6 LBI has set a target of meeting the Excellence standard by March 2011. HFI is well placed to meet this target within this timescale and internal assessments show this as being already attainable. The likely key areas for this are;

- More challenging expectations in the area of HR.
- Embedding recent changes in legislation resulting from the Single Equalities Bill.

4 Working with our disabled tenants.

4.1 Improving services for our disabled tenants has been a priority for HFI

4.2 In 2007, we formed the Disability Panel. This consisted of a group of 12 disabled residents representing six different impairment groups whose role was to both comment on their own customer experiences and impact assess new HFI policies

4.3 With the help of the Panel, HFI worked on the following during 2009/10;

- Our programme of improvements carried out by HFI to LBIs community centres means that they are all now accessible to our disabled customers and comply with DDA standards.
- 200 of our staff received training on disability awareness whilst many of our staff received training on dealing with deaf customers.
- Our Complaints policy was reviewed and incorporated views from our disabled customers.
- We attended the annual “Hands Up” event, a successful event held between the deaf community, LBI and other stakeholders.
- The reporting of emergencies for the deaf was made easier so that urgent repairs could be received via e-mail and text.
- We supported a small local project that supported work placements for disabled residents.
- The Disability Panel was included in the formal consultation that we undertook around the tenancy conditions.

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- We reviewed our practices to ensure that all new door-entry installations allowed for the provision of video entry-phone for deaf and deafened tenants.
- 4.4 The levels of recorded information that we hold on our disabled tenants is still too low. An information sharing project with LBI social services has been delayed but will be used to up the quality of information that we hold.

5 Equality Impact Assessments 2009/10

5.1 During 2009/10, HFI delivered a programme of Equality Impact Assessments. The areas looked at included:

- Workplace bullying and harassment procedures;
- Repairs procurement;
- Succession and Assignment of tenancy;
- Equality and Diversity Strategy.

5.2 In 2010/11, HFI's programme of Equality Impact Assessments will include:

- Attendance management procedures;
- Discretionary Repairs policy;
- Anti-Social Behaviour policy and procedure;
- Dealing with aggressive customer's procedure.

5.3 The use of mystery shopping, the Readers Panel and the Disability Panel are intended to involve customers increasingly in assessing the impact of customer services on their life's and it is this information that HFI sees as crucial in developing policies and procedures that reflect the needs of residents. We are also currently in the process of developing a Resident Inspection programme that will involve residents in the thorough scrutiny of services.

5.4 The new Equalities Act is likely to require amendments to be made to the current EIA process. However, the full implications of the Act are unlikely to be known before the end of the year, as changes may still be made due to the change in Government.

6 Resident Involvement

6.1 We recognise the need to ensure that we are collecting views from a wide cross section of our tenants and during the year have used the following methods to achieve this:

- Over 850 people are now signed up to our Resident Involvement Register. We have targeted specific groups whose views may be under-represented through this forum.

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- We have held events and surgeries with Community groups who may represent residents who do not usually involve themselves or comment on our services.
- We continue to monitor the diversity of HFI tenants and resident associations and will carry out a further evaluation of this from April 2011.
- We involved stakeholder groups in the review of Equalities and Diversity that took place in 2009 culminating in the Board agreeing a new strategy in December.
- Over 40 Residents from the register have now been trained in mystery shopping and regular 'shops' are taking place at all of our customer access points whether by phone or in person
- The Reader's Panel set up early in the year meets quarterly and has 12 members. Its role is to review customer information for readability, appropriateness and accessibility. Members of the Readers Panel were sourced from the Disability Panel and the Register to ensure that views reflect all parts of the HFI community.
- We provide an extensive youth programme on our estates providing services to up to 1000 youngsters and we use this as a means to engage. We have carried out surveys of young people asking them what they think of services we have provided. We accept that at this stage of their lives many young people choose not to get actively involved but believe it is important that we seek to promote an understanding of our role.
- HFI carried out a summer consultation with a view to ensuring that the views of residents were considered in our business planning process. We used events such as the Summer fun-days to seek views from over 270 residents and actively sought opinion from young families who often do not have time to contribute.

7 Compliance with external standards.

7.1 We continue to comply with housing standards first set by the Commission for Racial Equality and latterly maintained by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. HFI submitted the following for consideration in 2007:

- Evidence that it met the CRE Code of Practice for Social Housing;
- Further paperwork surrounding achieving the CRE standard for tackling racial harassment and the Code of practice for Social Landlords.

7.2 To date there has been no change in these standards made by the HFI who will react positively to any new requirements requested by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

8 Collecting diversity data and tailoring our services.

8.1 Compiling comprehensive customer information remains a priority for HFI and during 2009/10 a target of holding 73% of information on our customers across language, ethnicity, age, gender and disability was achieved.

8.2 A variety of means was used to collect this information such as;

- Using survey information.
- Ensuring all new tenants filled in a diversity data form.
- Tenants interviewed in area offices for routine appointments being asked to complete a form.
- Staff are collecting this information from residents undergoing decent homes work.

8.3 The collection of detailed information about our customers needs has enabled HFI to increase the tailoring of services to customer's examples of this being:

- We use diversity data information to determine the access of vulnerable tenants to additional repairs.
- Sending information on youth activities to all HFI tenants with young children.
- Targeting those from Single Parent families who may benefit from EBICO.
- Translating letters for those who are listed on the system as requiring interpretation.

8.4 We recognise that we need to improve further on how we tailor our services to the needs of our customers. The introduction of a new customer relationship system in 2010/11 will enable this making it easier to access resident details when providing a service.

9 Procurement

9.1 The introduction of the Single Equalities Bill was intended to bring new requirements with regards to diversity in procurement that built upon CRE standards. It is as yet unclear whether these provisions are going to be maintained by the incoming government.

9.2 The procurement of the repairs contract and the setting up of a collaborative contract for the delivery of the capital programme has assisted HFI in obtaining a more constructive approach from our partners in addressing equalities issues. Although the use of BME /SME and local labour cannot be set as requirements within the tender process, bidders were expected to indicate their strategy for involving these groups in the contract if they were successful. A range of PIs to be set for monitoring the performance of the successful bidder will measure success in these areas.

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- 9.3 A planned “meet the successful bidder” day will be arranged on award of the repairs and capital contracts to enable BME and SME companies an opportunity to develop a link with the main contractors with a view to possible future sub contracting. The event, to be organised by the incoming contractor will be widely advertised in an effort to capture as many companies as possible.
- 9.4 Our rules requiring advertisement for all contracts over £80k ensure that prospective suppliers and contractors have an opportunity to submit expressions of interest. In addition our involvement with ICAM² and LBI Head of Business & Town Centres ensures that local businesses are alerted to forthcoming projects. ICAM² is a partnership between Camden & Islington Councils which aims to help increase the opportunities for local companies to tender and win business from local procurement projects. Where feasible, we also encourage lead officers to package the work such that it does not preclude smaller providers from bidding. For example, the Framework for New Build consultants produced a number of expressions of interest from smaller companies as a result of splitting the project into various lots.
- 9.5 In 2010/11, we will continue to monitor our Contractors to ensure that they are meeting commitments that have been made. We will follow up a survey that we carried out in 2008/9 to assure ourselves that newly appointed framework contractors are demonstrating commitment to diversity issues. .

10 Governance

- 10.1 In 2009/10 the governance arrangements for managing diversity were as follows:
- All Staff and Board directors are fully trained on diversity and training requirements are routinely updated. For instance, in 2009/10 Board directors will be offered Disability Equality training.
 - The Board sets HFI’s objectives and agrees the Equality & Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.
 - The Board agrees a revised Equality strategy every three years.
 - The Board has assigned Claudia Webbe as the portfolio holder for Equality and Diversity.
 - The Board receives an annual review of Equalities detailing progress in this area.
 - The Board delegates to the Chief Executive the responsibility for delivering the strategy operationally.

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- The Chief Executive chairs the bi-monthly Equalities and Diversity Forum, a group made up of staff and managers from each of HFI's four divisions.
- SMT considers six monthly reports on performance.
- The Staff Diversity Forum discusses human resources issues affecting HFI staff across the diversity strands.
- The Head of Performance and Service Development and the Service Development Manager are assigned key roles in progressing strategic equality issues and Service Development Advisers and Service Development Officers spend significant amounts of time in delivering the strategy.
- A system of action planning in key areas such as the Equalities Standard, the CRE standard and the KLOE s is maintained by the Service Development Team and monitored by the Senior Management Team.

11 Human Resources and Training

11.1 In January 2010 an analysis of the diversity strands amongst managers on grades of PO5/6 and above was provided to the HR Committee; the key findings are listed below:

- Of 18 posts graded PO9 and above 4 were women (22%) This has remained static since 2009.
- Of 16 posts graded PO7/8, 4 were women as against 3 or 20% reported in 2009.
- Of 34 posts graded PO7 and above 24% were women, this being an increase from the 21% reported in 2009.
- Of 38 posts on PO5 and PO6 12 were women, 32% as compared 36% in 2009.

Under PO5 was as follows;

- 290 out of 684 (42%) were women. This has stayed at the same level since 2009.

In terms of ethnicity:

- Of the 18 posts on PO9 or above, 14 are non BME, 1 is Indian, 1 Black Caribbean, 1 from any other background and 1 from any other mixed background.
- Of the 54 posts between PO5 and PO9, 29 are non BME, 5 are White Irish, 1 is Turkish Cypriot, 1 is Mixed White and Black Caribbean, 3 are Black Caribbean, 1 is Black African, 2 Asian Indian and 1 from Any other Mixed Background.

With regards to disability:

- Of the 756 posts in HFI 11% declared that they had a disability, 24% stated they had no disability and 65% did not declare.

- 11.2 In terms of training, all new staff continued to receive online Diversity training. Nearly 200 frontline staff received disability equality training and deaf and deafened awareness training was also delivered. The disability equality training is being rolled out over three years to ensure that all 600 frontline staff are included.

12 Communications and Customer Information

- 12.1 In 2009, HFI have;

- Promoted and supported a range of community activities including area fun-days, the Snapshot event for young people at the Emirates, youth activities and HFI worklessness projects.
- Trained a team of 40 HFI Residents to become mystery shoppers and carrying out a number of mystery shopping exercises.
- Making sure that all HFI documentation meets the RNIB standard.
- Monitoring and feeding back on HFIs performance against the Service Promise detailing expectations of the service for all of our residents.
- Ensured that key information has been provided in community languages.
- Consulted the Disability Panel and the Readers Panel on the Information we provide to customers.

13 Overall Summary

- 13.1 In summarising the key achievements during 2009/10;

- Our work with the Disability Panel has continued to improve the communication we have with disabled tenants.
- Our internal assessment shows us to be in a strong position to assist the Council in achieving the excellence level of the Equalities framework assessment in March 2011.
- There has been a further improvement in the collection of diversity data with 73% of information now being held.
- We have made progress in our strategy towards encouraging diversity in procurement.
- This year's Equality Impact Assessment programme was completed.

- 13.2 In terms of challenges:

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- HFI needs to continue to raise the level of tenant information that we hold. The levels of information on vulnerable people are still not high enough.
- We need to ensure that once the information is collected that we use it regularly.
- HFI must be ready to adapt to any changes brought about by the new Equalities Bill.

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