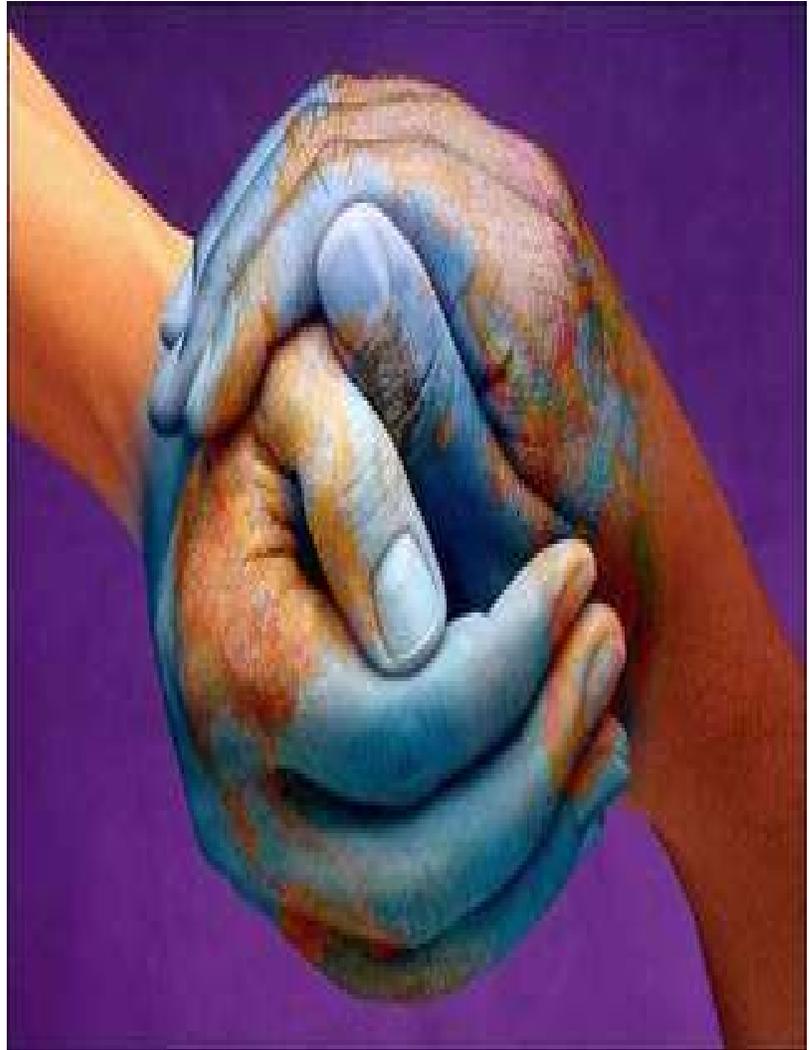


# The Wrekin

## Housing Trust

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**Strategy**  
**2009 - 2012**

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## **Our Commitment**

The Wrekin Housing Trust is committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all in the services that we deliver and the way that we deliver those services ensuring that we recognise differences. We are committed to ensuring equality for all our employees and applicants for employment.

As a provider of social housing we acknowledge that the quality of life for many people has been undermined by discrimination and disadvantage. We are committed to responding to social diversity in today's society and will strive to reflect this in our own organisational culture.

The services we provide and the staff that promote and deliver them must reflect the needs of the different communities that we serve, to ensure that we sustain a healthy, growing business. It is important that we develop our reputation for being an organisation of choice that delivers on equality and diversity issues in all aspects of our work.

Telford & Wrekin is a multi-cultural area. We value and celebrate the diversity that exists within our neighbourhoods. Working with our partners we want to ensure that everyone can fully participate in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the area.

The Wrekin Housing Trust is committed to opposing and eliminating all forms of direct and indirect discrimination on all grounds including gender, marital status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexuality, religion and belief, age or any other unjustifiable criteria. We recognise that discrimination creates barriers to achieving equality for all people.

We are committed to working with the local communities and our workforce to develop and deliver high quality services that meet the needs of all our customers and potential customers.

## **Our Objectives**

The Trust's overall vision is to "provide, manage, maintain and improve affordable high quality homes in pleasant and safe neighbourhoods to

meet local needs and, in doing so, contribute to the general well being of individuals in the community.”

In order to translate this vision into reality we have set six strategic objectives for 2008-2011. These are:

- To achieve high standards of service delivery that focuses on service users and our diverse communities
- To maintain a sound financial base
- To be a good employer
- To diversify and expand
- To adopt the highest standards of probity and integrity
- To contribute positively to the creation of cohesive neighbourhoods, promoting a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities

The involvement of residents and stakeholders and their ability to influence and improve the management of the organisation and the services they receive is vital in order to achieve the broader aims of the Trust.

Our diversity strategy is a key contribution to the achievement of our vision.

## **Our Intent**

The Wrekin Housing Trust upholds a set of clearly defined values. Our motto is Pride in our homes; the five letters of PRIDE represent 5 specific values.

- Passion
- Real world
- Identity
- Doing
- Enjoyment

We are a group of positive people, who have respect for customers & colleagues. We acknowledge that we work in a demanding environment where customers have real individual needs. We realise in partnership with our local communities and other local stakeholders we can work together

to create thriving, vibrant, sustainable communities that will improve everyone's quality of life.

Our commitments to our customers are one's of respect and treating people as individuals, as such we are committed to removing discrimination, victimisation and harassment in all of its forms; actively promoting quality and equity in service delivery and employment practices.

We will provide services that are accessible according to need and provide equal and appropriate opportunities in employment and recruitment. We will achieve this by adhering to the following principles:

- Treating everyone fairly and with care and respect
- Delivering services to the community with pride, passion and professionalism
- Being approachable, positive and transparent
- Being honest and accountable
- Listening and responding to customers, communities and employees
- Challenging discrimination in all it's forms

When we review our policies and look to make future plans, we will

- Design our services to meet the needs of all the communities in our neighbourhoods
- Ensure that our procedures, plans and policies do not discriminate against particular groups, we will achieve this by carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.

## **The Strategic Context**

Telford and Wrekin is a unique area. As a new town built in the 1960s, Telford is still growing; in fact we are among the top 20 fastest population growth points in England (at the 2001 Census). The population was 158,325, a growth of 11.9%, or 16,825, since 1991. By 2006 this had grown to 164,600 and by 2026 this is projected to reach 206,600.

The area has been broadly successful over the last four decades in becoming a major focus for industry and commerce, high technology and leisure. There are, however, areas of deprivation and poverty. We are the

113th most deprived borough in England. Much of this deprivation is concentrated in South Telford New Town estates such as Sutton Hill, Brookside and Woodside built in the 1960's and 1970's, which now have substantial and growing regeneration needs.

To meet the needs of the West Midlands spatial strategy the borough will need to deliver 26,500 new homes over the next 18 years. The challenging requirement is to ensure that one third of these homes are affordable housing.

The key demographics of our local communities and residents are as follows:

### **Gender**

As in the national population, there are more women than men within Telford & Wrekin:

- 85% of working-age men are economically active (working and earning), which is slightly higher than the Great Britain rate (83%)
- 77% of women are economically active, again, slightly more than the Great Britain rate of 73%

In terms of economic inactivity (no paid work) in Telford and Wrekin:

- 15% of males and 23% of females do not work, and of these, 82% of men and 86% of women do not want a job

Overall earnings are lower in Telford and Wrekin than within Great Britain. Men and women in Telford and Wrekin are falling behind in terms of the national wage and female workers are even more affected by this trend.

In relation to our residents more are female than male, 61% female, and 39% male.

The introduction of our choice-based letting scheme 'chooseyourhome' (CYH) has seen over 13,000 potential customers register, of those registered 39% are male and 61% are female.

### **Age**

The 2001 Census found that there were 19,628 people aged 65+ resident in the Borough, representing 12% of the population. The proportion has not changed over 10 years, though the numbers had increased.

At present Telford has a comparatively young community. However, over the next five years, the number of people over 65 in the Borough is expected to increase by some 4,200 (24%). The greatest change will be in the number of residents aged 90+, which will increase from 600 to 900, a 50% increase. Many of these residents are likely to depend on care and support services, so demand for such services will grow.

In relation to our tenants a high proportion are over 60, in fact overall this equates to 41%. In our general needs housing stock, 31.5% of tenants are over 60, and 6.7% (789) are over 80.

In supported housing, 34.5% of our tenants are over 80, out of a total of 1,412 supported tenants.

Different areas do have their own specific profile. For example:

- Newport has 45% of tenants aged over 60
- Woodside has 17% of tenants over 60
- Donnington Wood has 65% under 40
- Hadley has 27% over 40

## **Disability**

The 2001 Census showed that there were 19,403 adults with a disability in Telford & Wrekin, including 17,269 with a physical or sensory impairment as their main disability. The proportion of people with a long-term limiting illness had increased from 12.2% in 1991 to 18% in 2001.

More up-to-date local details on disability are not available. However, the Disability Rights Commission (2006) estimated that 19% of adults between the ages of 16 and 64 have a disability, which would equate to 20,085 disabled adults in Telford.

In relation to our tenants our STATUS 2008 survey showed us that:

- 60% of respondents said someone in their household had a long-standing illness or disability
- Of these 11% said their household included a wheelchair user

Examining our New Lettings for April 2006 – March 2007 told us that 23.7% of new lettings included someone with a disability, of whom 4.7% used a wheelchair.

Since the introduction of our choice-based letting scheme (CYH), 20.7% of our new lets have had major adaptations at the property due to the tenant's disability.

## **Ethnicity**

According to the 2001 census, 5.2% of the local population were of a Black Minority Ethnic origin (BME). This section of the population was made up of three main groupings: Indian, African-Caribbean and Pakistani.

This represents a relatively small proportion of the population as a whole but BME communities are particularly concentrated across two wards. According to the 2001 Census, ethnic minorities make up more than 23% of the population in the College Ward and over 14% in the Hadley and Leegomery ward.

The Pakistani community of Punjab and Mirpuri origins live mainly in the College Ward. An estimated 400 Pakistani families live in four adjoining streets in Wellington but they are also resident in other parts of Telford and Wrekin. The African Caribbean community is more widely dispersed within the College and Hadley & Leegomery Wards, as well as on the housing estates of South Telford – Brookside, Woodside, Stirchley and Madeley.

The Borough's BME population is lower than the national average of 9%. In comparison with the West Midlands regional BME population of 11.2%, the borough is over 50% lower. Nationally and locally, the minority population is much younger on average than the White British population.

The above figures are based on the 2001 Census and it must be acknowledged that the BME population has increased.

The arrival of economic migrant workers from the new EU accession states in the last 3 years places new and complex demands on local services.

In relation to our tenants the ethnicity profile is that 4.5% are from a BME community. As with the local profile there are variations across the wards. Within Newport and Woodside BME communities make up less than 2.8% of the population. Whilst in Wellington, Hadley and College BME communities make up more than 10% of our tenants in that area.

Our largest BME community is the group defined as White Other with over 30% of this community living in the Oakengates area. Our next largest BME group is the Pakistani community, which is concentrated between the areas of Wellington and College.

## Future Actions

Contained within this strategy are our revised policies in respect of Equality & Diversity in Employment Policy and Equality & Diversity in Service Delivery Policy.

Our Equality & Diversity in Employment Policy outlines our aims in respect of:

- Employment
- Recruitment and Selection
- Training & Development
- Pay & Terms and Conditions

And highlights how we will monitor our activities to ensure that we meet our aims.

Our Equality & Diversity in Service Delivery Policy outlines our aims in respect of ensuring our services are sensitive and responsive to the needs of our tenants and highlights how we will monitor our activities to ensure that we meet our aims.

Our other activities and actions related to Diversity are contained within our Equality Schemes action plans and diversity operational plan which are available to view on our Internet site.

The Government published a single Equality Bill for Great Britain on 27th April 2009. This will bring disability, sex, race and other grounds of discrimination within one piece of legislation. Royal Assent is expected in spring 2010; most of the Bill is expected to come into force in autumn 2010. However, the Government envisages that some parts will be delayed until Spring 2011 and beyond.

In light of this and as part of our review of our Equalities schemes we will be investigating the option of a single equalities scheme encompassing all the strands of diversity.

## **Equality & Diversity in Employment Policy**

### **Introduction**

As a provider of social housing the Wrekin Housing Trust acknowledges that the quality of life for many people has been undermined by discrimination and disadvantage. We are committed to responding to social diversity in today's society and will strive to reflect this in our own organisational culture.

We recognise that different communities and neighbourhoods have different needs and our aim is to ensure that these needs are met. We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in all areas of our business, striving to make Telford & Wrekin an even better place to live and work.

Integral to the culture of our organisation is a commitment to valuing diversity, treating people with dignity and respect, eliminating discrimination and contributing positively to the creation of cohesive neighbourhoods, promoting a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities.

### **Policy statement**

The Wrekin Housing Trust is committed to ensuring equality for all our employees and applicants for employment.

We believe that success is a result of our employee's quality and experience. Therefore we are committed to ensuring our employment practices and procedures maximise the uniqueness and potential of all employees recognising our differences and allowing individuals to grow and develop their talents.

The staff that promote and deliver our services must reflect the needs of the different communities that we serve, ensuring that we sustain a healthy, growing business. It is important that we develop our reputation for being an organisation of choice that delivers on equality and diversity issues in all aspects of our work.

The Trust operates an Equality & Diversity in Employment Policy, which actively embraces opportunities legislation and upholds our commitments of respect and treating people as individuals.

We work within the requirements of all current legislation and we

implement the provisions of regulatory codes of practice in housing and employment.

We will ensure that no individual receives less favourable treatment and are committed to opposing and eliminating all forms of direct and indirect discrimination on all grounds including gender, marital status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexuality, religion and belief, age or any other unjustifiable criteria.

These principles apply to recruitment and selection, learning and development, promotion, pay and benefits and to all terms and conditions of employment.

### **Our Aims**

The aims of the Equality & Diversity Policy are:-

#### **Employment**

- Provide a safe and accessible working environment which respects the culture and identity of individuals
- Ensure a culture and working environment free from harassment and discrimination
- Provide an open environment where all employees have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

#### **Recruitment & Selection**

- We will ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are conducted on an equitable basis so that all potential employees are recruited on the basis of merit and ability and all promotions of employees are undertaken equitably and on the basis of merit and individuals being treated fairly
- We aspire to a diverse workforce to reflect the diverse communities that we serve, ensuring that we provide a quality service, responsive to the needs of our customers
- We will undertake positive action to ensure that groups which are underrepresented within the organisation are encouraged to apply for jobs
- Disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria of a job that they have applied for will be guaranteed an interview for that role. The Trust has been accredited with the 'Positive about Disabled People' symbol which recognises our commitment to good practice in employing people who have a disability.

## **Training and Development**

- All employees will have equitable access to training and development activities
- All employees will have an individual Personal Development Plan (PDP) designed to promote their opportunities enabling them to reach their full potential and maximise their career advancement.

## **Pay and Terms and Conditions of Employment**

- Our pay and terms and conditions structure is based on the principle of providing equality of pay and reward for all employees
- Our pay and terms and conditions review mechanisms are designed to ensure that any enhancements are based on objective criteria, free from discrimination and have due regard to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value.

## **Standards and Monitoring**

In order to meet the above aims we will:

- Ensure that full records of those seeking and obtaining employment with The Trust are kept, monitored and reported on a regular basis to inform progress and action in achieving the Policy's aims
- Require all employees to undergo relevant training before taking part in recruitment & selection
- Ensure that the principles of this policy are embedded in the HR strategy and all policies and procedures are regularly monitored and reviewed
- Provide diversity training and disability awareness training to all employees to ensure that our commitment to diversity and equality is known and understood. Our commitment to diversity will be highlighted to all new employees through induction training
- Work with external groups and advisory bodies to keep up to date on equalities legislation and to be aware of best practice
- Work with local community groups to highlight the work of the Trust and to ensure that we are seen as an employer of choice.

To ensure that this policy and associated procedures are effective, we will continue to monitor employee information, ensuring patterns or trends are identified and resolved. We will benchmark our performance as an Organisation to ensure continuous improvement.

We will:

- Undertake diversity monitoring for all employees and applicants for employment
- Provide regular management information, broken down into diversity categories to be reviewed by EMG and the Board.

This policy covers all employees, contractors and sub-contractors.

Any employee who believes they have been discriminated against should raise the matter under the Grievance Procedure, or where appropriate, the Bullying and Harassment Procedure, or by using the Whistle-Blowing Policy.

We expect all employees, board members and tenant representatives of the Wrekin Housing Trust to promote the spirit of our Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy and not to discriminate against anyone whilst undertaking duties on behalf of the Trust.

We will not tolerate any acts that breach this policy and all cases of such behaviour, or alleged behaviour, will be taken seriously, be fully investigated and, if proven, may be subject to our disciplinary procedures.

## Equality & Diversity in Service Delivery Policy

### **Introduction**

As a provider of social housing the Wrekin Housing Trust acknowledges that the quality of life for many people has been undermined by discrimination and disadvantage. We are committed to responding to social diversity in today's society and will strive to reflect this in our own organisational culture.

We recognise that different communities and neighbourhoods have different needs and our aim is to ensure that these needs are met. We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in all areas of our business, striving to make Telford & Wrekin an even better place to live and work.

The services we provide and the staff that promote and deliver them must reflect the needs of the different communities that we serve, ensuring that we sustain a healthy, growing business. It is important that we develop our reputation for being an organisation of choice that delivers on equality and diversity issues in all aspects of our work.

Integral to the culture of our organisation is a commitment to valuing diversity, treating people with dignity and respect, eliminating discrimination and contributing positively to the creation of cohesive neighbourhoods, promoting a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities.

### **Policy statement**

The Wrekin Housing Trust is committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all in the services that we deliver and the way that we deliver those services ensuring that we recognise differences.

The Wrekin Housing Trust is committed to equality of opportunity in the delivery of its housing and services. We value the contribution of individuals and communities and are committed to opposing and eliminating all forms of direct and indirect discrimination on all grounds including gender, marital status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, sexuality, religion and belief, age or any other unjustifiable criteria.

### **Our aims**

We aim to ensure our services are sensitive and responsive to the needs of our tenants by:

- Promoting and fostering equality of opportunity in the delivery of all our services and promoting good relations between people in our diverse communities and neighbourhoods
- Designing services to meet the needs of our customers ensuring that the needs of our diverse communities are identified and taken into account in the planning and delivery of our services.
- Positive action to further equality of opportunity amongst those applying for and receiving our services
- Ensure that the way we communicate and provide information is accessible and is in languages and/or formats that they can be understand tenants and future customers
- Remove or alter physical barriers to access to provide an accessible service to all
- Actively contribute to partnership working through the Local Strategic partnership achieving the vision a cohesive community in Telford & Wrekin
- Encouraging the participation of the local community in developing and reviewing service provision to ensure that it is meeting their needs and requirements work towards increasing the representation of tenants from hard to reach groups in our customer involvement activities
- Regular monitoring of all our systems and procedures to review our progress in promoting equality & diversity
- Providing a diverse workforce with the knowledge, skills and commitment to meet the needs of customers
- Ensuring that the membership of our Board and its committees adequately reflects the local community

### **Standards and Monitoring**

In order to meet the above aims we will:

- Fulfil all of our statutory duties and comply with legislation on equality, diversity and discrimination. We will comply with all codes of practice and guidance on discrimination, diversity and equality published by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG), the Charities Commission, and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Implement the actions laid out in our diversity operational plan and associated equality schemes and action plans

- Implement Equality Impact Assessments as part of our policy and service review timetable
- We will regularly undertake research determining housing need of the diverse communities within the areas we operate
- We will monitor services and satisfaction so we can identify discriminatory practices or outcomes across all service areas
- We will regularly review the results of monitoring and report on performance and modify systems, processes and working practices accordingly

We expect all employees, board members and tenant representatives of the Wrekin Housing Trust to promote the spirit of our Equality and Diversity in Service Delivery Policy and to not to discriminate against anyone whilst undertaking duties on behalf of the Trust.

We will not tolerate any acts that breach this policy and all cases of such behaviour, or alleged behaviour, will be taken seriously, be fully investigated and, if proven, may be subject to our disciplinary procedures.

This policy relates to our activities as a provider of housing and other services. It also applies to services provided on our behalf by contractors and consultants.

## The Statutory Framework to Equality & Diversity

This policy operates in line with statutory requirements of which we have to consider three key areas:

### Direct Legislation

There is a wide range of legislation related to equality. The Legislation is updated or added to by European Directives; the framework in which we apply the policy includes the following legislation:

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amendments 1986)
- Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendments 2000, 2003)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment 2003)
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment 2003)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Employment Equality Regulations 2003
- Single Equalities Bill (draft and consultative document)
- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- European Council Directive 2000/78/EC UK legislation: Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 03, Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 03,
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Employment Act 2002

### Indirect Legislation

This is legislation that is not directly concerned with equality but contains requirements that ensure equality within their remit. When applying the policy we operate in the framework of the following legislation:

- Housing Association Act 1985
- Housing Acts 1988, 1996 and 2004
- Protection from Eviction Act 1977
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 1998

## Codes of Conduct/Good Practice Guides

There are several organisations that provide good practice guidance that is non statutory. For example:

- Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) – now part of Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) - now part of Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Disability Rights Commission (DRC) - now part of Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)
- Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
- Housing Corporation
- Tenant Services Authority (TSA)
- Homes & Communities Agency (HCA)
- National Housing Federation

## **Discrimination**

The legislation is concerned with the avoidance of discrimination and providing an environment where diversity is encouraged. The following are definitions of the different types of discrimination:

- **Direct Discrimination**

Treating an individual or group less favourably than you would treat anyone else in the same circumstances.

- **Indirect Discrimination**

This is when a condition or requirement is applied that means that some individuals or groups are unable to comply, even when the condition is applied equally to everyone.

- **Victimisation**

It is unlawful under equality legislation to victimise an individual because they have made a complaint of discrimination or supported someone else who has.

- **Harassment**

Harassment involves any unwanted, unwelcome or unreturned behaviour, which is considered objectionable and/or offensive on equality grounds.

- **Racial Harassment**

‘Any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person’.

- **Institutional Racism**

‘The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people’

**Links with other strategies plans and policies**

Diversity is at the core of the culture of the Trust and we have consistently delivered diversity objectives through our existing strategies and plans, namely;

- Operational and Service Improvement Plans
- Asset Management Strategy and Action Plans
- Community Cohesion Strategy
- Youth Inclusion Strategy
- Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy
- Resident Involvement Strategy
- Hate Crime & Harassment Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policies and Plans
- Aids & Adaptations Policy & Procedures
- Strategies for Supporting Vulnerable Service Users
- Strategic Business Plan
- Continuous Improvement plan
- Harassment Policy

## **Implementation**

We have in place a strategic framework, which provides leadership by the Executive Team.

We will review, monitor and evaluate all policies, procedures and practices both in services and employment from an equalities and diversity perspective to ensure that they conform to this policy. We will do this by undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments as an integral part of all policy reviews.

In service delivery we will review our services from an equalities perspective. Reviews will include monitoring and consultation with our customers. We will consider the uptake of our services and the quality of our services in order to ensure they meet the diverse needs of our customers.

In employment we will ensure that our recruitment policy is adhered to. Our aim is that our workforce reflects the community we serve. We will monitor the composition of job applicants and existing workforce with regard to ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, religion & belief and age in order to ensure there is no discrimination. We will use targets to redress any imbalance in composition.

## **Communication**

A copy of our Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy statement will be given to all job applicants.

A copy of our Equality and Diversity in Employment Policy statement and our Equality and Diversity in Service Delivery Policy statement with a summary of individual's responsibilities will be given to all employees.

The Equality and Diversity Policy will be included with tender information for perspective contractors as part of the tender documentation.

Complaints of discrimination and non adherence to either the employment or service delivery policy will be taken seriously, members of staff who breach, abuse or ignore these policies and there objectives will face disciplinary action.

## **Responsibilities**

The Wrekin Housing Trust Board has corporate responsibility for ensuring that equalities underpin all aspects of our work.

The Chief Executive and the Directors are responsible for delivering, monitoring and reviewing the policy.

Managers are responsible for progressing the policy and ensuring that their staff actively implement the policy and mainstream its provisions.

All employees are responsible for ensuring that they understand the benefits of valuing diversity, that they have read the policy and that they are implementing the policy.

## **Review**

In light of changing legislation and the changes the policy will make to our organisation we expect to review and update the policy on a 3 year cycle.