

United Residents Housing

YOUR URH

Single Equality Scheme

April 2011

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1. Foreword

We are pleased to introduce United Residents Housing's (URH) first Single Equality Scheme. Our Scheme sets out the equality actions we plan to deliver over the next four years. The scheme will promote equality; eliminate discrimination and promote good community relations in all that we do. It will clearly show how we will meet our equality duties, as set out by the Equality Act 2010, for race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion and / or belief. Additionally, our scheme goes beyond the legislative requirements to consider socio-economic factors such as poverty.

Moving to a single scheme will enable us to enhance policies; improve services and meet the diverse needs and aspirations of our customers and staff. The scheme is based upon the principles of human rights: freedom, respect, equality and diversity.

The progress we have made since the introduction of the separate schemes and action plans for race, gender, and disability is one which we are proud of. In particular, a recent Audit Commission inspection found that "the knowledge of the diversity of residents is strong, improving and is being used to shape services". The successful delivery of our 2009 to 2011 action plans has provided clarity and a foundation for our direction of travel for the next four years.

We pledge to tackle inequality and social exclusion to ensure that no one is discriminated against because of their race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion and / or belief as well as socio-economic status. We want our residents to be proud of the community in which they live. We want to continue to provide robust and responsive services and ensure that our services are accessible, resilient and meet the needs of all our residents.

CEO
John Brewster

Chair of URH Board
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2. Introduction

Why we have developed a single equality scheme

This is the first Single Equality Scheme (SES) for URH. This scheme will be a framework for embedding equality and diversity in all that we do. This means as a provider of services, an employer, a partner and procurer of goods.

Our SES allows for an integrated approach which promotes equality of opportunity the tackling of discrimination so no resident is disadvantaged. URH tenants face multiple disadvantage and our SES is designed to assist these communities to thrive in an environment of inclusion rather than exclusion. We are committed, through our resident and community involvement to develop, maintain and sustain cohesive and thriving communities.

As an organisation delivering services for the public we are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. This Act brings together nine pieces of major legislation and is due to come into force fully by October 2011. The public sector equality duty extends and streamlines our previous equality duties for gender, race and disability to also cover age, religion and / or belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

Our Single Equality Scheme will be supported by a Single Equality Action Plan, which will detail how the scheme will be delivered. The action plan has incorporated all the outstanding commitments from our previous race, disability and gender equality schemes. Additionally, 'socio-economic disadvantage will underpin our SES given the role that it has in furthering inequality. By implementing our scheme we will be able to:

- bring together our existing action plans to form a simpler integrated framework
- strengthen how we use the equality duties to tackle multiple discrimination
- give our staff the confidence to provide responsive and accessible services that meet the needs of our residents
- improve our knowledge of our residents and improve how we use resident profiling information
- ensure equality is embedded within the organisation and driven through leadership, procurement and partnership, and
- build upon and improve how we engage and involve diverse groups of residents

How we developed our single equality scheme

We have consulted with our residents, our partners and local organisations in developing this scheme. We have used staff and residents' surveys to inform the scheme as well as feedback from focus groups and mystery shopping exercises. We have taken on board the recommendations of our November 2010 Audit Commission inspection, and have taken evidence gathered from equality impact assessments and our continuing work with the Social Housing Equality Framework to feed into our action plan.

The SES has been developed alongside our business planning processes to ensure that URH continues to embed equalities and diversity as a business as usual activity. This will help us

to make sure that our Board members and all our staff consider and reflect on actions to ensure equality.

And what we mean by equality

The 2007 Equality Review defines equality as follows.

‘An equal society protects and promotes equality, real freedom and opportunity to live in a way people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.

‘An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and moves barriers that limit what people can do and be.’

This definition recognises that:

- equality is an issue for us all;
- we don’t all start from the same place; and
- to create a fairer society, we need to recognise different needs.

For URH this means we make a commitment to equality by ensuring that our policies, procedures and practices do not discriminate against staff, residents or other people we come into contact with. Equality is about treating people fairly and without discrimination regardless of who they are. It is about recognising that inequality is often caused by circumstances not of an individuals own making and taking positive action to address this.

3. About Us

United Residents Housing is a unique arms length management organisation operating in the London Borough of Lambeth. It brings together for four tenant management organisations (TMO)¹: Blenheim Gardens RMO; Loughborough EMB; Roupell Park RMC and Waltham RMO. URH operates within the Brixton area of the London Borough of Lambeth and is the smaller of the two ALMO's operating in the Borough.

We manage 2,495 council homes with the TMOs. Our core function is to provide housing management services, including repairs and maintenance, to approximately 1,904 tenants, 502 leaseholder and 89 freeholders. We have recently been awarded two stars (out of a possible three) and with promising prospects from the Audit Commission. Our approach to equality and diversity is very much part of everything we do.

Services provided by URH:

- Tenancy and Estate Management
- Repairs Service
- Customer Care
- Parking Enforcement
- Estate Cleaning
- Caretaking
- Ground Maintenance
- Revenue Management
- Leasehold Services
- Capital / Decent Homes Standard improvements

Our mission

To deliver modern homes, excellent services and better neighbourhoods which our residents are proud of and play an active part in shaping.

Our objectives

- Delivering the highest standards of service within tight resources
- Achieving Decent Homes and Decent Estates
- Providing continually improving services to our member TMOs, delivering locally controlled services that meet resident needs and aspirations
- Be recognised as a national example of best practice in resident empowerment and influence

¹ A Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) or resident-led organisation is where council tenants, leaseholders and freeholders take on the responsibility of managing their own homes.

We are building on the themes of our Equality and Diversity Strategy. Our overarching themes of:

- Combating discrimination and embracing diversity in our workforce
- Providing excellent services accessible to all
- Learning from complaints and when things go wrong
- Working in partnership with residents
- Knowing our community – equality mapping
- Working with our partners

are translated into demonstrable actions adding leadership and governance as a driver for delivery. We believe that the overall objectives of our Single Equality Scheme reflect the above and at the heart of our scheme our strategic equality objectives are to:

- Demonstrate clear and consistent leadership
- Develop a workplace culture that utilises staff skills and talents and represents the community that we serve
- Improve customer satisfaction across all groups via responsive and accessible services
- Plan our community involvement programmes to meet resident needs
- Improve our equality evidence base

This means the following.

- Extending a programme of work to build up evidence about equality locally so we can fill gaps in our knowledge.
 - Developing effective systems for gathering information and carrying out work each year to keep our inequality evidence up to date.
 - To fulfil our long standing obligations of knowing and understanding our customer base and their differing needs
- Improve the financial capability of our residents

4. Staff and Resident Profile

United Residents Housing is one of two Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) which manages properties through its partners, Lambeth Council. As an organisation within Lambeth we recognise that we are in one of the most diverse places in the country.

Race and ethnic background

Many of Lambeth's residents do not speak English as a first language (DfES Oct 2003). The Lambeth annual pupil survey (2010) found that there were 142 languages spoken across the borough. Around two in five Lambeth residents (38%) are from ethnic minority groups with a significant proportion of black Caribbean residents. Around six in ten residents have a white ethnic background with a significant Portuguese and eastern European communities concentrated in particular parts of the borough.

The Majority of URH's residents are black (47%), 37.5% are white, 2% are Asian, 3.6% are Vietnamese, Chinese or of another race and 1.8% are mixed- race. (Tenancy and Diversity Weekly digest update 23rd January 2011). The employees of URH represent the diversity of the community they work in with 56% being black, 27% white, 1% asian, 6% mixed-race and 5% identify themselves as another race. (Staff profile information as at August 2010)

Disability

There are approximately 29,200 people of working age who are disabled in Lambeth, (Annual Population Survey, 2009). Around 27% of Lambeth's school children are recorded at some time in their school career as having Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Significantly, 19% of URH's residents have informed us that they have a disability. Whilst 52% of the main board has told us that they have a disability, only 1% of staff disclosed a disability (profiling information as at August 2010).

Gender and gender reassignment

The gender split in Lambeth is 51% male and 49% female which is similar to inner London and the country (both around 50-50). The split for URH residents is approximately 55% male and 44% female and nearly 1% other gender (likely to include residents who identify as transgender). The split for the workforce is 82% male, 17% female and nearly 1% other gender.

There are currently no records of residents who have undergone gender reassignment but we are asking residents as part of our collection of data. We appreciate this information is sensitive and respect that residents may not wish to answer. However, in the interest of inclusion URH believes that it is important to include this question. 1% of URH employees have identified as being of another gender identity.

Pregnancy and Maternity

There were 15 pregnancies among our residents at August 2010. We are aware of staff pregnancies as they arise but had no record of any employee pregnancies as at August 2010.

Marriage and Civil partnerships

This information is not currently collated so there are not any cumulative records of marriages and civil partnerships for staff or residents. However, this information is recorded on an individual basis for residents and staff.

Age

Lambeth has a young age profile, with a large proportion of young working age people. A third of Lambeth residents born in the Republic of Ireland and in Jamaica are of pensionable age (34% and 31% respectively).

URH has a fairly young profile with a third of its residents being below the age of 25 and just over a tenth of the residents are pensionable age. The majority of our staff (55%) are aged between 36 and 50 years old, 21% over 50 and 7% under 25.

Religion or belief

There is a range of diversity in religious beliefs in Lambeth with 71% who identify themselves as religious. Three in five (60%) classify themselves as Christian, one in twenty as Muslim (5%) and 8% report belonging to another faith or religion. In inner London, 55% classify themselves as Christian, 1 in 10 as Muslim (10.4%) and 5% belonging to another faith or religion.

Most residents of URH identify as being of the Christian faith (52.8%), 7.8% identify as Muslim and 2.93% belonging to another faith or religion. For URH employees, just under half (48%) say they are Christian, 4% are Muslim and 4% say they are Agnostic.

Sexual orientation

The 2009 Lambeth residents' survey found that 3% of residents reported themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Less than 1% of our residents identify as being lesbian, gay or bisexual. For URH staff, 2% identified as being lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Socio-Economic

Lambeth is the fifth most deprived borough in London and the 19th most deprived in England (The 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation). There is a persistent cohort of economically inactive people who are not able to travel far for work. This group tends to experience high levels of social exclusion, poor education, poor employment prospects and poor health. It is estimated that 33.8% of children under the age of 16 years live in poverty; that is children living in families dependent on out of work benefits (LAA child poverty baseline 2007 data)

The majority of URH's stock is located in the Coldharbour ward of Lambeth. Coldharbour is by far the most deprived part of the borough. Unemployment is high, income is lower than the

borough average and the proportion of households in deprived areas is more than double the Lambeth average. Approximately 20% of URH residents are employed either full time or part time, 29% are retired, 21.89% are unemployed and 14.63% preferred not to disclose their economic status (As at August 2010).

5. Legislative Framework

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 updates, simplifies and strengthens previous legislation the Act consolidates the nine pieces of major legislation relating to discrimination and inequality. This piece of cross-cutting legislation provides a framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Act makes the law easier to understand and therefore easier for organisations to comply with. Provisions of the Equality Act are being brought into force at different times. This phased approach is to allow time for those affected by the new legislation time to prepare. Most provisions came into force on 1 October 2010 and the Government is still considering some provisions such as dual discrimination. However, the provisions will streamline all the current equality groups of discrimination law which are race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marriage, civil partnership and age. Our duties have now been widened and strengthen and retain the previous provisions for disabled people so we will still continue to:

- take measures that take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating them more favourably than others
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people, and
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life

Based upon the known demographic of our residents and the nature of our services, we will consider socio-economic factors as best practice and support our residents as far as we are able through our work on financial inclusion.

Public sector equality duty

The Equality Act places a legal duty on the public sector and those carrying out public functions and will come into force on 6th April 2011. The aim of the duty is to embed equality considerations into the day to day work of public authorities. The duty requires us to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and all other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity which may mean treating a disabled people more favourably to encourage their participation in public life
- foster good relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding of all equality groups. This could include having a cultural day or an awareness campaign focusing on a certain group.

The public sector equality duty applies to the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender re-assignment
- pregnancy and maternity

- race
- religion and / or belief
- gender
- sexual orientation.

There is greater emphasis placed on the outcomes for public sector organisations and they must clearly show how they set out how they intend to achieve the outcomes. The public sector equality duty requires us to demonstrate how we are doing this through publishing:

- analysis of the equality impact of our policies
- information that demonstrates compliance with the duty
- data underpinning our decisions and objectives
- details of any consultation / engagement undertaken and
- equality objectives and how these will be monitored.

6. National Framework

Diversity Key Line of Enquiry

The Audit Commission have provided a clear framework in which to assess services. Diversity is a cross cutting theme across all the key lines of enquiry and there is also a specific Diversity Key Line of Enquiry. In our last inspection, the Audit Commission assessed us against six key areas in the Diversity Key Line of Enquiry. These include:

- Corporate culture and governance
- Access and customer care
- Service user involvement
- Partnerships
- Harassment and domestic violence, and
- Legislation.

In November 2010, URH was assessed as providing a 'good', two-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. They found that our strengths significantly outweighed our weaknesses for diversity.

As an organisation we have carried out a self-assessment against Equality Framework for Local Government. Moving forward we are adopting the complementary framework, Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF) as this is more aligned to our business as a provider of housing services.

Social Housing Equality Framework

The design of our SES has incorporated the requirements of the Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF). The SHEF is a performance and improvement tool which enables organisations to place equality and diversity at the centre of policy and practice at all levels. It is a framework specifically developed for arms length management organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations. Using the SHEF, we will build on our equality and diversity achievements.

The SHEF explains the steps we need to take to identify and remove barriers to ensure fair and equal treatment in services and employment. It provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to dealing with equality issues and ensures that good equality practices are mainstreamed. The SHEF will also allow URH to avoid duplication of work as it embodies the 'COUNT' principles – **count once and use numerous times**. It has three levels of achievement: developing, achieving and excellent. The SHEF will be an important tool to help us to deliver our public sector equality duty.

Our goal is to meet the achieving level of the SHEF by April 2012. This will involve a full assessment of our policies, practice and consulting with customers, staff and our partners by peers from the statutory sector.

Commission of Racial Equality Code of Practice for Racial Equality in Housing

URH complies with the former CRE's Code of Practice for racial equality in Housing.

The code helps URH to:

- understand and meet their legal obligations under the Race Relations Act (superseded by the Equality Act 2010);
- develop and put into practice effective policies, that prevent discrimination eliminate racial discrimination or harassment, and promote equal opportunities and good race relations;
- ensure residents are treated equally and that their needs taken into account wherever possible, and reflected in the services the organisation provides;
- improve satisfaction with the services they provide;
- reduce the risk of legal liability, costly and time-consuming disputes, and potential damage to an organisation's reputation; and
- build a reputation of an organisation that does what it says, and provides a fair and useful service for everyone in the area it serves.

We have worked to deliver the action plan of the Race Equality Scheme. We are using our profiling information to shape and improve our services to residents of all groups including BME.

7. Governance arrangements

The ultimate responsibility for implementing this scheme is with the Chief Executive, URH Board and TMO boards and involves all employees. The URH Board comprises of resident Board members (8), Council Board members (3) and Independent Board members (3). Resident Board members are nominated by their respective TMO Board on an annual basis. Council Board members are also nominated by the Council annually. URH has established a specialised Performance Sub-Group to support the Board of Management. Each of the TMOs also has their own annually elected resident-controlled Boards. TMO Boards are independent organisations, with a range of constitutional structures including Estate Management Board (Loughborough), Resident Management Organisation (Blenheim Gardens and Waltham) and Resident Management Co-operative (Roupell).

In developing this Single Equality Scheme URH will continue to ensure clear and consistent leadership to promote equal opportunities and diversity. By working with residents, Estate Directors, the URH Board and TMO Boards who will ensure its action plan is implemented, reviewed, monitored and is systematically updated.

The Chief Executive and Estate Directors are responsible for actively supporting and assisting the equalities work by monitoring the company's performance, agreeing necessary action and maintaining a commitment to the company's equalities work.

URH recognises that the Board and the four TMO Boards have overall responsibility for championing and reviewing this Single Equality Scheme. The Board will receive 6 monthly reports on the progress against the action plan.

The Management Teams and staff across URH will be responsible for delivering the actions set out in the action plans and will be held to account by the Board.

Contractors, consultants and agents, including the Residents' Panel, are responsible for operating this Single Equality Scheme in the delivery of services to URH residents.

Human Resources are responsible for all compliance with equality duties in relation to employment and leading on equality issues to ensure fairness and consistency.

8. Our Approach / Arrangements

Assessing Impact

We use Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to assess our services, policies, functions and employment practices to identify any affect or likely affect of our practices on different equality groups. An EIA allows us to identify action to minimise any negative effects and maximise opportunities for promoting equality. We carry out an EIA on existing, changing, new or proposed service, function, strategy, policy or project. Our three year programme focuses on current and proposed policies and functions. Through our TMO Boards, our customer groups, our staff and the Equality and Diversity Steering Group we ensure service-users input into our assessment processes. The outcomes of our EIAs are incorporated into our improvement plans and within our SES action plan.

Involving our residents and staff

Being a resident-led organisation, resident involvement is integral to how URH operates. Residents are involved through the URH board and the TMO boards where the more strategic and policy focused involvement happens. We involve residents in shaping our services in both formal and informal ways. We use a variety of inclusive consultation techniques including community events, estate walkabouts, mystery shopping, surveys, written documents, focus groups as well as face-to-face meetings to consult and involve our residents.

We are proactive in reaching out to all the groups in our community. See appendix 1 for a full list of activities we are involved with across our four estates and corporately.

Our employees are also involved in the shaping of services. We regularly seek their input through focus groups, staff surveys, staff conferences and team meetings.

Gathering and using data to shape our services

For URH to more effectively understand and meet the differing needs of all its customers and residents we are committed to collecting information about our customers which we will use to help us learn more about our customers, how our services affect them and help to identify ways we can make improvements to these services. We collect equality information for our residents and staff on the protected characteristics of race, gender, disability, age, religion and / or belief and sexual orientation. We also collect data on languages spoken, transgender status, household relationship and employment status to take into account the specific needs of our residents. For our board members and staff we collect data on race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and / or belief and monitor on transgender identity.

The collection and analysis of this information is used to set local priorities and targets to improve services and bridge any identified equality gaps. We will continue to use resident data to:

- monitor the diversity of our residents

- meet specific needs of our residents by ensuring our staff and contractors are able to respond to an identified resident need
- inform our EIAs
- review our services and policies so they are more relevant to our residents
- monitor the diversity of groups that do not use keys services
- monitor satisfaction among identified groups in relation to key service areas including repairs and maintenance, rent collection and complaints

We collect equality data on employees and board members on race, gender, disability, age, religion and / or belief and sexual orientation. We use this data to monitor the diversity of our staff and strive to make the workforce representative of our customers at all levels of the organisation. Equality data of staff and board members allows us to monitor whether all staff are accessing the same opportunities such as new vacancies, promotion and training. We monitor grievances that staff have and staff going through disciplinary action by equality groups. By monitoring our practices by equality groups we are able to reflect on findings and inform our policies and services. The data collected is also used as evidence for our equality impact assessments.

Employment

Our Human Resources policies clearly demonstrate our commitment to equal opportunities. Our recruitment processes are open and transparent. Our processes ensure that every staff member recruited is selected on the basis of merit and ability. As an employer we work hard to create a working environment that is free from bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination. We confront and challenge discrimination where and whenever it arises. All our staff are fully supported to reach their full potential through our induction processes, career development, training and promotion opportunities. Our work-life balance policies demonstrate our commitment to maximise employment and career development opportunities for all.

We will make reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offer, where appropriate, additional support to staff. Wherever possible, we will support staff who become disabled or ill during their employment and provide all necessary support to ensure continuation of employment. We will also support staff that have caring responsibilities to ensure continuation of employment. We have been recognised for our success to date in achieving this objective by being awarded a “Two Ticks – Positive about Disabled People Employer” by Job Centre Plus. We have also been accredited by Stonewall as a positive employer for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Training

We recognise the importance of ensuring fair and equal access for all to relevant training and development. As such we have established a variety of Equality and Diversity training opportunities for staff and where relevant board members:

- All new staff attend a the staff induction training which addresses and promotes equality and diversity in all that we do
- Equality and diversity training is mandatory for all staff and Board members

- Equality impact assessment training for managers and lead officers responsible for carrying out equality impact assessments
- Recruitment and selection training which promotes equality and diversity in recruitment is mandatory for all managers and where relevant board members and
- Temporary staff and contractors are entitled to attend mandatory, health and safety and job related training.

Accessibility for all

We aim to ensure that our services are accessible to everyone, including how we provide information. We provide access to our services in a range of ways:

- Our website is fully accessible incorporating BrowseAloud, resizable text, language translation pages and the Plain English Internet Crystal Mark
- Information is available in a variety of formats such as audio tape, large print and Braille
- We can access an interpretation service for those customers who have difficulties communicating in English or are hearing impaired, we advertise the availability of this service
- Our written communications and main documents all have a translation panel so customers can request alternative formats such as large print or translation into community language
- All our offices have induction loops at customer access points
- Our offices are fully accessible to those with mobility issues, following works being carried out as a result of our Disabled Access Building Audit
- We are aware of how our customers prefer to be communicated with and offer a range of communication such as text messaging, emails and face-to-face visits

Working with our partners

We recognise how important working in partnership with a wide range of organisations is for us. We value our partnerships with both the statutory and voluntary sectors and believe this is integral to improving our services to residents by promoting equality, diversity and advancing community cohesion.

We work in partnership with a number of organisations within the borough including the council, the local police authority and primary care trust and others to ensure that we seek better ways of working together to meet the needs and aspirations of the whole community we all serve. See appendix 1 for our partnership and community development activity.

Procurement

Some of our services are provided by external organisations. As a significant purchaser of services within the local area we will use our influence to promote equality and diversity throughout our procurement activity, from specification to contract management. Equality in procurement is about more than ensuring contractors are appointed fairly but also that contractors practice equality in service delivery and in employment. We work with our contractors to ensure that procured services are delivered in a non-discriminatory way which promotes equality of opportunity for all our residents, staff and local businesses.

We will continue to monitor contractor performance against equalities targets set out within the contract specification and conditions through our contract management process. At the end of all contracts, and before re-tendering, we will review the success of the contract's equality objectives to establish whether they were achieved. We will ensure all services delivered are in accordance with this Single Equality Scheme and Equality and Diversity Strategy.

We will also ensure that all contracts with a value of more than £25,000 have an EIA conducted. This will ensure that any adverse impact on our residents or staff is mitigated and any opportunities to promote equality are capitalised on and embedded within our policies, services and functions. This process encourages potential contractors to show how they will ensure equality is embedded in the service they will deliver on our behalf. This will also ensure that the contracts we let are compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

9. Taking Action

We are committed to meeting and exceeding our equality targets set out in our action plan. We believe we have developed measurable and realistic targets that will deliver tangible improvements for residents and staff. Our action plan is based on compliance with legislation, knowing our residents and staff, providing effective, resilient and efficient services and best practice. It is informed by our gap analysis of frameworks, such as the SHEF, and the recommendations from our recent Audit Commission inspection. The action plan also incorporates the outstanding targets from our previous Race, Gender and Disability Schemes. The action plan is focused on our equality priorities for the next four years:

- Improve the financial capability of our residents
- Improve customer satisfaction across all groups
- Plan our community involvement programmes to meet resident needs
- Develop a workplace culture that utilises staff skills and talents and represents the community that we serve
- Improve our equality evidence base

Our action plan sets out our targets for the next 4 years and will be incorporated into our service plans. The targets will also be incorporated into our staff appraisals to ensure equality and diversity is embedded throughout the organisation and to ensure that all members of staff take responsibility in delivering excellent equality practices. We will deliver our action plan within existing staff resources, our day to day service delivery, staff training and resident involvement.

10. Publishing, Reporting and Monitoring

It is essential that we understand our residents so that we can ensure that our services and facilities are accessible and responsive to diverse need. We are aware through our extensive profiling data on our tenants that we can provide much a more tailored and responsive service. Monitoring is an important way of assessing how our policies and services affect our customer base. We will adopt the Council's good practice guide on monitoring and we will continue to meet and expand upon our legal duty to monitor equality, taking into consideration issues associated with human rights and privacy. By publishing information we are open to scrutiny from our residents and therefore making our resilient services accountable.

Our aim is that everyone, customer and staff can understand the scheme. We will do this by:

- producing the scheme in plain English
- making this scheme available in a range of formats including large print, Braille and audio on request
- providing the scheme in other languages on request
- providing a British Sign Language interpreter when requested
- providing hard copies in the Neighbourhood Offices and providing access on our website
- regularly updating the dedicated page on our website about equality and diversity where we will publish this scheme and equality impact assessments.

The action plan will be monitored by the URH board. They will receive bi-annual reports on the progress against this action plan. We will review the action plan and reporting on an annual basis to ensure it is up to date and aligned with our service planning process. We will also review it annually to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our residents and staff. The scheme will be reviewed every four years.

11. Feedback and complaints

At URH we value your feedback whether it is a compliment or complaint. Your feedback can help us to tackle inequalities and to improve our services to meet diverse customer needs more effectively. You may give us your feedback by contacting us in one of the following ways:

In writing to: United Residents Housing
The Loughborough Centre
105 Angell Road
London
SW9 7PD

By phone: 020 7733 9929

By email: enquiries@urh.gov.uk

You may also visit us in person at one of our Neighbourhood Offices.

12. Definitions

Our commitment to **equality** ensures that policies, procedures and practices within URH do not discriminate against staff, residents or other people we come into contact with. Equality is about treating people fairly and without discrimination regardless of who they are. It is about recognising that inequality is often caused by circumstances not of an individual's own making and taking positive action to address this.

Respecting **diversity** ensures that all people are valued as individuals and are able to maximise their potential and contribution to URH and to their community. This means that we recognise that different people have different needs. It recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach, which can make the way we work more effective, more efficient and more innovative.

Direct Discrimination occurs when an individual is dealt with less favourably *explicitly* on the grounds of their race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender reassignment status, relationship status, caring responsibility, sexual orientation, age, physical, sensory or learning disability, mental health, religion and belief, medical status (e.g. HIV), employment status, physical appearance, unrelated criminal convictions or union activities.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when a requirement or condition, which although applying equally to people of all groups, is applied in a such a way that at least a significant minority of a particular group are considerably disadvantaged on this basis. For example, dress codes have sometimes been held to discriminate indirectly against people on the basis of their gender or religious belief.

Victimisation in the context of equality and diversity occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because that person has asserted their rights under legislation, for example The Equality Act 2010, or acted as a whistleblower on such activity.

Harassment relates to repeated, unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact which is found objectionable and offensive and which might threaten an employee or resident or create an intimidating or uncomfortable environment. Harassment does not need to be based on the characteristics of an individual, but can be sexual, racial, directed against people with disabilities or indeed related to any characteristic exhibited by an individual or group of people.

Positive Action refers to measures taken to assist participants and groups who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of confidence, knowledge and achievement that is comparable with their peers. These measures would normally take the form of additional training, positive recruitment amongst certain groups and making public a commitment to redressing any imbalance in participation and challenge historical barriers. An example might be explicitly welcoming applications from a particular group which are currently underrepresented in a particular area of work.

Appendix 1

One of the objectives of our Single Equality Scheme is to plan our community involvement to meet resident needs. This means that we seek to increase the opportunities for under-represented communities to be involved in policy development and in decisions that affect them. A starting point for this is to map the level of economic, engagement and networking opportunities open to different communities, either provided directly by the council or in partnership with other statutory agencies. Below is a list of our activities in the community.

TMO	Activity
URH	Series of seminars run in Partnership with NHS/PCT on bowel cancer, sexual health Waterloo Jobs Club London Mutual Credit Union Law Centre Clapham Park Community Project, Welfare and Debt Advice Service
Loughborough	Green champions on the Loughborough Estate as part of the Loughborough Green project Invisible Foods walks Development of Neighbourhood watch schemes Tackling Gun Crime project English as a second language classes Ebony Horse Club Over 50's Group Muslim Groups Brixton Low carbon Zone
RouPELL	Young people homework club (Faith run) Support to Quaker Friends and Gospel Tabernacle Internet café Sure start maternity and paternity classes Elderly residents coffee mornings Youth representation on the board Young People's programme of activity
Blenheim	Blenheim football team Clapham Youth project (Sure start maternity and paternity classes As well as activities for OAP and youths on estate, educational activities, development of estate team leaders). Senior youth working for CYC is now a co-opted governance board member Windmill festival sponsors Virtual panel in operation Residents developed dog charter, estate cleaning charter, parking policy and resident involvement policy Operates Neighbourhood watch scheme Offers a Good neighbourhood agreement scheme Resident void inspectors introduced Manager is ASB panel member Manager is SNT panel member

	<p>Timed menu of involvement</p> <p>Waterloo Jobs Club</p> <p>4 General meetings each year plus 1 AGM</p> <p>¼ parking meeting with contractors where all estate residents are invited</p> <p>Elderly residents coffee mornings</p> <p>Offers annual work placements to both Lambeth and Lewisham college</p> <p>Organic gardens club</p> <p>Edible garden club</p> <p>Support to St Saviours Church and faith chapel church on the estate</p> <p>After school club will commence in Sept</p> <p>Family drop in sessions to commence in Sept</p> <p>DIY classes to commence in Sept</p> <p>Finance sub committee is open to all residents</p>
Waltham	<p>One o'clock club</p> <p>Local volunteers working in the offices to gain experience in the workplace</p> <p>Youth Consultation programme</p> <p>Working with Artist Community</p>