

**Vicinity Group**

**Gender Equality Action Plans**

**2008-10**

## **Vicinity Group – Gender Equality Action Plans**

### **Introduction / Background**

Vicinity Group's response to the Gender Equality requirements set out by the Housing Corporation has involved the development of a number of action plans. These action plans include one for each subsidiary organisation within the Group. The reason for the development of separate action plans was to enable each subsidiary to reflect their own local circumstances and areas for improvement for their tenant services. These plans were developed through a project team with representatives from each subsidiary who acted as lead officers for their association. This joint work aimed to ensure there was consistency in the development and layout of the action plans and to facilitate the sharing of good practice across the Group.

The result is a number of action plans are now in place for LHT (which includes Rodney Housing division, Atrium and Jigsaw), BBCHA, Cobalt Housing and Group. Staff across the subsidiaries have commented on the plans, together with an external consultant with expertise in transgender issues, and all action plans have been approved by the relevant Boards, which all have tenant members. The Group action plan encompasses the 'employer and employee responsibilities' aspect of Gender Equality across Vicinity Group.

### **Group action plan in context**

The Group action plan was developed following analysis of a number of key sources of data about the people who work for Vicinity Group including Human Resources (HR) pay and conditions information and staff survey results.

Vicinity Group employs 465 staff (as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007). Of these staff:

- 101 are managerial or professional bands (includes band 9 and above)
- 59% of managers across the Group are women
- 364 are operational staff
- 70% of operational staff are women
- The majority of part-time employees are women (84 of the 91 part-time staff employed across the Group)

It is not known how many staff would describe themselves as transgender because this is not currently recorded. This issue is addressed in the Group action plan.

There are a whole range of benefits provided to staff across the Group including flexi-time, flexible working arrangements, a childcare voucher scheme and sick dependants' leave. Analysis of the take-up of these benefits across the Group has shown a lack of take up of some of these benefits. There is a need to publicise these benefits more widely to staff, particularly for new staff joining the Group. This is also addressed via the Group Action Plan.

The staff survey results recorded in 2006 across the Group are positive and staff are generally happy working for Vicinity Group. Within the context of these positive results there were some differences between men and women in terms of how they felt about working within the Group, when the results were analysed by gender. Generally across the Group men were consistently more positive about working for the organisation than women. Results showed that men were more positive than women about the total benefits package offered to them, also opportunities for career development and senior managers being approachable.

The analysis of the staff survey for each subsidiary by gender demonstrated some local differences in satisfaction rates, again within the context of overall high levels of staff satisfaction. For example men who work in Cobalt Housing were markedly less positive than women about a number of factors including career progression, meeting work requirements without having to work excessive hours and having sufficient opportunity to build their skills for the future. In LHT the results showed that men were consistently more positive than women about having the opportunity to build their skills for the future and being able to speak their mind. At this stage it is difficult to explain why these variations in results have been recorded within each subsidiary but they will be investigated further via the next staff survey due in 2008 and through the work to establish a staff forum.

### **Tenant Services**

The development of each subsidiary's action plan involved analysis of information held on the Group's management information system 'Orchard', a desk top review of policies and procedures by managers within each association and an analysis of tenant satisfaction data recorded in 2007.

The profile of tenants living in Vicinity Group homes demonstrates that the majority of households are headed up by women (the percentage of lead tenants who are women are 57% for LHT, 54% for Atrium, 64% for Cobalt and 72% for BBCHA).

Results from our recent tenants survey conducted in 2007 showed that broadly satisfaction rates between men and women were comparable across the Group. There were some small variations within each association's results and these differences have been considered in each association's action plan. For example Cobalt Housing's male tenants were more satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live but for BBCHA it was women who were more satisfied than men. Results for LHT tenants showed no major differences in satisfaction between men and women.

No data on satisfaction rates amongst transgender people is recorded by any association within the Group, and this will be considered in the action plans. In addition, it is worth noting that we do not currently ask either tenants or staff whether they would identify themselves as transgender. This will also be considered in the Action Plans, and we will take advice on this matter, to ensure if we do ask that question, we ask it in a sensitive and appropriate way.

Following the desk top review of policies and procedures in place for front line services across the Group a number of key actions have been developed by each association in terms of specific responses to men, women and transgender people. In particular actions have been identified in relation to monitoring cases by gender for anti-social behaviour, harassment and allocations work. The main gap identified by all the subsidiaries was the need to develop a better understanding of transgender issues and ensuring that links are made with relevant agencies who can offer support to staff and tenants.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

The co-ordination of the various actions plans for this and other Equality and Diversity activity are managed via Vicinity Group's Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

Each action plan will be monitored by their Board every 6 months. The focus will be on tracking progress and recording tangible outputs achieved. The plans will be reviewed annually for the next three years and progress will be reported to tenants annually via tenants' newsletters and the website.

**Gender Equality Action Plan 2008 – Liverpool Housing Trust**



	<b>Function</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Team or Lead Officer</b>	<b>Output/Measure</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
1	Board  Policy and Research	Ensure our Business Plan and Board demonstrate our commitment to diverse communities and individuals, including men, women and transgender.	Dave Lambert/Tom Harrison  Claire Wilde  Sue Westwater  Sue Westwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure LHT/ Rodney’s Boards receive Diversity training which covers gender issues.</li> <li>• Ensure the make-up of Board members reflects the community that LHT serves, particularly in relation to gender.</li> <li>• Report on E&amp;D to LHT’s Board and Senior Management Team six-monthly to help decide whether LHT is delivering on diversity, including gender.</li> <li>• Establish key performance indicators in relation to Equality and Diversity (including gender).</li> <li>• Take account of gender equality during Business Planning process.</li> </ul>	08/09  Ongoing  June 08/ Nov 08  Oct 08  Mar 09
2	Policy and Research	Deliver the outputs outlined in the Gender Equality Action Plan.	Claire Wilde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure actions integrated into Service Quality Team or Team action plans.</li> <li>• Review Action Plan annually and check it reflects good practice and statutory guidance.</li> <li>• Report outputs six monthly to LHT Board.</li> <li>• Produce report annually to our customers.</li> </ul>	April 08  April 09  June/ Nov 08 April 09
3	Policy and Research	Carry out equality impact assessments on our policies	Claire Wilde	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with other Group members to produce an improved EIA toolkit and deliver staff training.</li> </ul>	July 2008

		and procedures (which will include gender considerations).	All Managers Policy lead officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider extending EIA requirement to strategies and plans.</li> <li>Ensure all new policies have had an EIA carried out.</li> </ul>	July 2008 From July 2008
4	All services  Policy and Research  Housing Services	Raise staff awareness of gender issues, and train them on policies and procedures in relation to what adjustments we can make to meet needs of different genders	Policy lead officers All managers  Claire Wilde  Diane Evans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train staff on new policies and procedures, taking account of our existing service standards.</li> <li>Ensure our publications include positive images that reflect our work and communities we work in, including gender and transgender.</li> <li>Provide a list of relevant agencies to staff to enable them to assist customers of different genders.</li> <li>Equality and Diversity to be included as agenda item at team listenings once a year.</li> <li>Customer care training follow up work to take account of gender equality action plan.</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Ongoing  Sept 08  Ongoing  08/09
5	HR  Policy and Research	Ensure all staff receive Equality and Diversity Training, including gender and transgender.	Jayne Chadwick Claire Wilde Claire Wilde Colin Gibson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure both new staff and refresher E &amp; D training courses are delivered and evaluated and include gender issues, including transgender ones.</li> <li>Investigate gender issues from staff survey results 2006.</li> <li>Carry out staff survey and analyse by gender, including transgender</li> <li>Set up workplace forum as opportunity to address and discuss staff concerns</li> </ul>	Ongoing  June 08  Oct 08  2008
6	Housing Services  Policy and Research	Find out the needs of our existing and potential customers and target services appropriately.	Claire Wilde/ Andy Barrett Lynn Bundu  Claire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use tenancy audit visit information to profile tenants and make recommendations for tailoring services.</li> <li>Rodney housing division to carry out tenancy audit visits to all tenants.</li> <li>Consider adding transgender as category in tenancy audit</li> </ul>	Spring 08  2008-09  October 08

			<p>Wilde/Andy Barrett Claire Wilde</p> <p>All managers</p> <p>Andy Barrett</p>	<p>exercise and creating UDC for it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider any gender-related findings of Councils' Housing Needs Analyses in the areas we work in (Liverpool, Halton, Wirral, Sefton, Knowsley, West Lancs, Warrington).</li> <li>• Continue to analyse satisfaction surveys by gender and report findings to staff.</li> <li>• Consider adding transgender as category in all surveys</li> <li>• Ensure Tenant Survey 2009 is analysed by gender, including transgender, and actions identified where relevant.</li> <li>• Ensure staff are trained on the appropriate response to staff/tenants who have been through gender reassignment and their legal rights in relation to confidentiality.</li> <li>• Develop partnerships with agencies who support and understand the needs of men, women and transgender people, and communicate to staff.</li> <li>• Implement recommendations from UDC review.</li> </ul>	<p>2008/09</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>April 08</p> <p>Feb 09</p> <p>2008</p> <p>2008</p> <p>2008</p>
7	<p>All services</p> <p>Housing Services</p>	Analyse information about customers accessing services to ensure we do not unfairly discriminate against them.	<p>All managers</p> <p>Diane Evans</p> <p>Sandra O'Neill</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor who accesses or receives a service to see if some genders are under/over represented compared to our tenant profile and act on any findings.</li> <li>• Monitor complaints by gender to identify any trends of dissatisfaction.</li> <li>• Ensure all gender groups are able to access the adaptations service.</li> <li>• Ensure allocations policy and transfer policy do not</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>April 08</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

			Angela Ball	discriminate against one particular gender e.g. applicants/tenants who are not the sole carer.	08/09
8	Housing Services	Involve our customers in developing and improving services.	Jo Phillips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor participation by disability, age, race, gender.</li> <li>• Consider monitoring participation by religion, sexuality, and transgender</li> <li>• Explore additional methods of promoting involvement to all genders.</li> <li>• Increase diversity of involved residents.</li> <li>• Ensure we contact both men and women to comment on services and areas for improvement, including transgender if we are aware.</li> <li>• Feedback consultation findings and report differences by gender.</li> <li>• Promote how men, women and transgender people have contributed to service development.</li> </ul>	Ongoing April 08 08-09 08-09 08-09 08-09 08-09
9	Housing Services	Tell our customers how we are delivering our services to meet the needs of our community and individuals.	Diane Evans All managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all literature to customers in light of Gender Equality Duty.</li> <li>• Communicate what support is available to tenants in response to their identified needs through e.g. Customer Charter, leaflets, newsletter, and advice from staff.</li> </ul>	December 08 Ongoing
10	Housing Services Policy and Research	Work with our partners to eradicate hate crime and anti-social behaviour.	Claire Wilde Andy Barrett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage reporting of gender and transphobic hate crime.</li> <li>• Monitor and analyse incidents of anti-social behaviour and hate crime by gender and transgender.</li> <li>• Explore appropriate support for hate crime victims (men, women and transgender people), and monitor and quality check the support provided.</li> </ul>	08-09 08-09 08-09

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure responses to transgender people are equitable with other genders.</li> <li>• Assess satisfaction with how we have dealt with cases by gender, including transgender.</li> </ul>	08-09 08-09
11	Policy and Research	Work to eradicate domestic violence	Claire Wilde/Andy Barrett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review LHT's current procedure for domestic violence to ensure it includes domestic violence against men.</li> <li>• Ensure the profile of domestic violence is raised amongst tenants and staff.</li> <li>• Assess satisfaction with how we have dealt with cases by gender, including transgender.</li> </ul>	08-09
12	Regeneration Housing Services	Work towards improving social inclusion resulting in greater community cohesion.	All managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight the positive actions and events that occur due to a diverse range of people contributing.</li> <li>• Support projects that help reduce the number of residents and specific groups suffering from social exclusion, especially transgender people.</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing
13	Property Services	Work in partnership with our contractors/service providers to ensure that their services reflect the needs of our communities and individuals.	Corinne McCarthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all repair contractors have an E&amp;D policy that includes gender and transgender, or sign up to ours.</li> <li>• Include E &amp; D at breakfast sessions with key contractors.</li> <li>• Develop robust recruitment procedure for contractors.</li> <li>• Conduct a Tenant audit of contractor attitude and behaviour in relation to E &amp; D including gender.</li> </ul>	June 08 Ongoing Sept 08 2008-09
14	Housing Services	Work towards providing access to our services and offices reflecting our customers' needs, and where this is not possible provide	Diane Evans Claire Wilde/all managers	<p>Consider if there are any access issues around gender during:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reception services review</li> <li>• Customer charter review</li> <li>• Tenant survey analysis</li> </ul>	2008 08/09 Ongoing

		alternatives e.g. home visits.	Policy lead officers	and make appropriate changes to policies and procedures.	
15	Development	Exploring the feasibility to reflect 'Life Time Homes' standards within our New build programme.	Brendan Gleeson	Await national good practice guidance (expected 2008) and consider our position.	2008