

SUMMARY EQUALITY SCHEME



1. The Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association Limited (known in its Equality Scheme as 'the Association') is registered as a housing association under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 and also as an industrial and provident society under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts (Northern Ireland) 1969 and 1976.
2. The Association is regulated and partly funded by the Department for Social Development. The principal objects are to promote and sustain the concept of affordable social housing through equity sharing and to assist in the rebuilding and revitalising of neighbourhoods and sustainable communities in Northern Ireland.
3. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the Act') requires the Association in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
 - Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - Between men and women generally;
 - Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - Between persons with dependants and persons without.
4. It must also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.
5. The Association's Equality Scheme, approved by the Equality Commission in September 2005, sets out how it proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998).

The Association is committed to fulfilling the obligations set out under the statutory equality duties.

Its Equality Scheme will endeavour to

- (1) Implement effective internal arrangements to ensure compliance with Section 75 duties.**

These arrangements will include:

- Regular monitoring by senior management of progress in implementing the Scheme;



- The integration of objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties into the Association's strategic and operational plans.
- Relevant personal objectives for those staff directly engaged in the implementation of the Scheme;
- a commitment to the statutory duties will be included in all job descriptions; and
- the submission of an annual Review of Progress to the Equality Commission.

(2) Undertake full and meaningful consultation on the Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Scheme, equality impact assessments and monitoring arrangements.

The Association will conduct all consultations in a timely, open and inclusive way in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles as detailed in its 'Guide to Statutory Duties'. It will work with representative groups and individuals from the Section 75 categories to identify how best to obtain their views. Systems will be in place to ensure that timely information can be made available, on request, in accessible formats.

(3) Review all existing and proposed Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association policies to determine whether there are any equality of opportunity implications.

The Association will consider the impact of each policy on equality of opportunity in terms of the Section 75 categories to decide whether any policies should be subject to an equality impact assessment. It will review all of its policies and the progress will be reported in the Annual Report sent to the Equality Commission and also made available to consultees.

(4) To conduct Equality Impact Assessments on policies having a significant impact on equality of opportunity.

Any policies, which have a significant impact on equality of opportunity, will be prioritised for equality impact assessment. All impact assessments will be carried out in accordance with the Equality Commission's "Guide to the Statutory Duties" and will be subject to consultation.

(5) Establish a system to monitor the impact of policies on relevant Section 75 groups.

The Association will establish a system and review it annually. Should a process of monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, it will ensure that the policy is revised.



(6) Make accessible all information provided to the public to ensure equality of opportunity.

The Association is committed to providing accessible information to ensure equality of opportunity. Consideration will be given on how to provide information in a timely manner to all groups.

(7) Develop an effective communication and training programme for staff.

The Association will ensure that all staff are made aware of and understand the new equality obligations. It will provide focused training to those staff involved in specialised tasks. All training will be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups.

(8) Review the Scheme within five years.

The Association will evaluate how effective it has been in meeting its Section 75 obligations. It will conduct a review of the Scheme and forward a copy to the Equality Commission while also making it available to the public.

TIMETABLE

Appendix 5 to the Association's Equality Scheme provides an Action Plan for implementing the Scheme, which includes target dates for each task.

COMPLAINTS

Any complaint on the grounds that the Association has failed to comply with its Scheme should be addressed to:

David McCallum
Director of Operations
Northern Ireland Co-Ownership Housing Association Limited
Murray House
Murray Street
BELFAST
BT1 6DN
Tel: 028 90327276
Fax: 028 90330720
Email dmccallum@co-ownership.org

**AVAILABILITY OF EQUALITY SCHEME**

The full Scheme can be obtained from Co-Ownership Housing's website at:
www.co-ownership.org

or from Mrs Jeannette Foley at

Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association Limited

Murray House

Murray Street

Belfast

BT1 6DN

Tel: 028 90327276

Fax: 028 90330720

Email jfoley@co-ownership.org

The Scheme can be made available in alternative formats upon request.