

Buckland Newton Community Property Trust (BNCPT)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Statement of Intent

BNCPT is committed to the principles of equal opportunities and to maintaining, developing and supporting policies, which translate this commitment into practice. The aim of the Equal Opportunities Policy is to ensure that no individual is treated less favourably in employment or in the opportunity to be offered housing or during any subsequent residency under the scheme, on grounds of their race, religion, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, social class, origin or any other grounds which cannot be shown to be justifiable within the context of the policy.

BNCPT recognises its responsibilities under the Equal Pay Act 1970 and its Amendment Act 1983, the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendments Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Human Rights Act 1998 and aims to fulfil its commitments by recognising the abilities and needs of every individual and by acknowledging the right to dignity and respect of everyone.

BNCPT recognises the importance of equal opportunity to organisational effectiveness and its place in its policies and procedures, which should be reviewed together with the Equal Opportunities Policy.

Definitions

BNCPT is opposed to discrimination, victimisation, harassment and bullying, defined as follows:

In this policy, “**discrimination**” includes both direct discrimination (which occurs when a person or group is treated less favourably than others) and indirect discrimination (which occurs when a provision, criterion or practice is imposed which, although it might be applied equally to all, adversely affects a particular individual or group and cannot be justified on non-discriminatory grounds).

“**Victimisation**” refers to discrimination because a person has asserted his or her rights under relevant legislation or under this policy or has assisted another to assert these rights.

“**Harassment**” refers to a whole range of behaviour which is unacceptable to the recipient and which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for employment or service. This may be personal harassment (any unsolicited unwelcome offensive act, expression or derogatory statement based on any personal characteristic outlined in the introduction above, sexist harassment (any unwanted sexual comments, look, actions), racist harassment (any unwelcome terms, comments, actions or behaviour which members of a racial, cultural or religious sect find abusive or offensive) or harassment based on disability (any unwelcome terms, actions or behaviour which are found objectionable). Harassment based on gender, race or disability constitute acts of discrimination in terms of legislation, but all harassment on any of the grounds listed above will be seen as contrary to this Policy and will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The BNCPT Board of Trustees recognises and accepts that it is the ultimate authority for implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy. The Policy will apply to everyone connected to the organisation.

Responsibility for the day-to-day implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Policy rests with the Chairman and Board of Trustees. However, every Trustee, member, resident and employee has a personal responsibility to accept, adhere to and promote the Policy at all times and co-operate with measures taken to implement the Policy.

All Trustees and employees, residents, volunteers and members will be provided with a copy of the Policy.

MONITORING

The Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Board of Trustees in order to assess its effectiveness and for any amendments needed to reflect new legislation/good practice issues.

SELECTION OF RESIDENTS

Qualification

The requirements needed to qualify for the affordable housing scheme shall be identified before any selection procedures commence. The initial requirements will only relate to the need to live in the area and will not discriminate on any grounds covered by this policy.

Publicising Housing Vacancies

Should it prove necessary to advertise any housing vacancy under the scheme, the method shall not deter applications from any persons with disabilities.

Applications for Residency under the Scheme

Applications initially shall only require such information as is required to qualify for re-housing under the scheme.

Rejected Applications

As complaints of discrimination can be made against BNCPT, a brief note of the reasons for rejecting applicants shall be retained for at least three months.

Selection

Trustees and any others involved in interviewing potential residents must be made aware of their responsibilities under the relevant legislation and Buckland Newton CPT Limited's Equal Opportunities Policy. Short-listing and interviewing of would be residents will be the responsibility of more than one person in order to ensure that each applicant receive impartial consideration delete.

Members of the selection panel shall ensure equal treatment by:

- asking comparable questions of all applicants
- ensuring questions relate only to the requirements of qualifying for re-housing

Monitoring

The Board of Trustees shall oversee the collection of information considered necessary for effective monitoring and will ensure confidentiality. Applicants shall be entitled to decline to provide relevant information and shall be advised of that entitlement. The presentation of all

information of a personal, confidential nature will, as far as possible, protect the identity of individual applicants.

EMPLOYMENT

Recruitment of Staff

JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

The duties of the job and the requirements of the person to perform it shall be identified before recruitment begins. The job shall be defined to fulfil the needs intended and the educational qualifications, work experience and personal attributes shall be those that are essential for the performance of the post. These shall be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain valid.

Unnecessary requirements that mean a person with disabilities could not apply for the post should not be included, and nor must requirements that could lead to an accusation of discrimination or indirect discrimination. The setting of any requirement will not discriminate on any grounds covered by this policy. (Delete which applies to all persons but is such that a considerably smaller proportion of a particular sex or ethnic group can meet the requirement, unless that requirement can be shown to be essential for the performance of the post.)

PUBLICISING VACANCIES

The Delete (method of) advertising of vacancies should conform with this policy and not discriminate on any grounds covered by this policy. Delete (shall not deter applications from any group or people with disabilities. Recruitment shall not be based on the recommendations of existing employees in the area of the vacancy. Where under-representation has been identified, advertisements may encourage applicants from the under-represented group whilst making it clear that selection) Recruitment will be solely on suitability for the post.

APPLICATION FORMS

Application forms shall only require information that is essential for the post as determined by the job description and person specification. Information may also be required to determine whether a work permit is necessary.

REJECTED APPLICATIONS

As complaints of discrimination can be made against BNCPT, a brief note of the reasons for rejecting applicants shall be retained for at least three months.

SELECTION

Trustees and any others involved in recruitment must be made aware of their responsibilities under the relevant legislation and BNCPT's Equal Opportunities Policy. Training shall be provided where necessary.

Short-listing and interviewing will normally be the responsibility of more than one person, in order to ensure that each candidate receives impartial consideration. Delete (and that those generalised assumptions, which might lead to discrimination, are avoided).

Selection tests must measure only what is relevant to the post.

Members of the selection panel shall ensure equal treatment by:

- asking comparable questions of all candidates
- making questions relate only to the requirements of the post unless it is essential to assess whether personal circumstances will affect performance of the post

Records will be kept of all interviews and their outcomes for a period of three months.

Monitoring

The Board of Trustees shall oversee the collection of information considered necessary for effective monitoring and will ensure confidentiality. Employees and applicants shall be entitled to decline to provide it and shall be advised of that entitlement. The presentation of all information of a personal, confidential nature will, as far as possible, protect the identity of individual employees or applicants.

Harassment and Bullying

BNCPT recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all employees and to promote a working environment free from harassment or bullying. Where the harassment or bullying relates to any cause listed in the first section of this policy BNCPT will view the issue with the utmost seriousness.

If any employee feels that they are being harassed by anyone associated with BNCPT, they are encouraged to report the situation to the Board of Trustees without fear of reprisal. Harassment in any form contrary to this Policy is viewed as a disciplinary offence that will not be tolerated. (Please see Terms and Conditions of Employment). Trustees and any staff with supervisory responsibility will ensure that all allegations are taken seriously and investigated.

PROCEDURE

If any employee feels they have been or are being subjected to harassment or bullying the following procedure should be used:

1. The matter should be reported as soon as possible to a member of the Board of Trustees.
2. The recipient of the report may ask for the complaint to be confirmed in writing. Full written details should be collected within three weeks of the complaint.
3. When the matter is reported, the employee will be offered the right to nominate a personal support, who will listen, maintain confidentiality and offer assistance during the investigation and any subsequent processes. The support must be someone who is not involved or likely to become involved in the matter.
4. The Board of Trustees will conduct an investigation within two weeks of the receipt of the written details, and the results along with any recommendations on any further action will be passed to the Chairman who will respond formally within one week.
5. At this stage, the Chairman may instigate disciplinary proceedings against the alleged offender or may dismiss the complaint.
6. If the matter proceeds to disciplinary stage, the complainant may need to be interviewed again.
7. If the complaint is dismissed, the complainant has the right to appeal against the decision, and should write to the Chairman within one week of receipt of the decision providing reasons for the appeal. The appeal will be dealt with by the Board of Trustees who will organise a hearing within three weeks of the receipt of the appeal. The complainant will be able to put their case in person and be accompanied.
8. If the appeal is dismissed, the complainant will be notified in writing within three working days. If the appeal is upheld, the complainant will also be notified in writing within three working days, and the outcome may be one of the following:
 - A formal apology
 - Disciplinary action against the perpetrator
 - Amendments to this Policy

9. However, BNCPT acknowledges the right of any employee who is being sexually or racially harassed to take action in the civil courts.

COMPLAINTS UNDER THIS POLICY

General – i.e. complaints relating to the non-enforcement of the Policy

Any complaints should be raised informally with a member of the Board of Trustees when the matter will be considered at a meeting of the full Board of Trustees.

Employment – any job applicant who wishes to complain about BNCPT's recruitment and/or selection procedure in general or about his/her experience applying for a post or interview experience, should write to the Chairman as soon as possible or within one month of an alleged incident. The Chairman will arrange for the complaint to be investigated, involving any staff/Trustees as appropriate, and will give the complainant a written response, including a summary of any action taken, within one month of the complaint.

Employees – any employee who wishes to complain about any aspect of this Policy, other than complaints of harassment relating to gender, race, disability or similar grounds, as it relates to their employment, should follow BNCPT's Grievance Procedure.