



Name of Strategy: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STRATEGY (2009-12)

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“Indifference to the equality and diversity agenda is not an option for MHP staff.”
Bill Payne, CEO, MHP

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FOREWORD BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Our vision at Metropolitan Housing Partnership (MHP) is to combat poverty, social injustice and inequality through the provision of good quality affordable homes, care and support, community investment and housing services. So equality and diversity are at the very heart of our objectives and values.

Indeed, we owe our existence as an organisation, to the struggle for greater equality in the housing market. When Lady Molly Huggins established the Metropolitan Coloured People's Association in the 1950s to provide homes for immigrants from the West Indies, she gave us an inheritance of addressing inequality of which we are rightly proud.

Since the 1950s we have continued to address equality and diversity in the provision of our services and in our role of employer, and we have had a broad range of notable success stories. Our work supporting black, Asian and minority women and their families fleeing domestic violence has won accreditation for Hadhari Nari Women's Project in the Midlands. Similarly, the excellent work of our Refugee Support has been recognised as best practice across the sector. As an employer, we were the first housing association to make it onto Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index and we have managed to retain a very respectable place in the 'top 100' despite increasing competition and tougher criteria.

Building on our successes, it is essential that we continue to embed equality and diversity into everything that we do. Our aim is to ensure the fair and dignified treatment of all current and potential residents; service users; employees; partners and members of the public. This strategy sets out what our aims are in respect of equality and diversity and explains how we will achieve those aims.

There is a clear business case for addressing equality and diversity issues. In a rapidly changing world, it is most important to us that we recognise and respond to the changing diversity profiles of all sections of our communities. This means monitoring and analysing need to allow us to provide services that meet the individual requirements of our diverse customers.

It is equally important that we are able to demonstrate that as an employer we will address any discrimination that is experienced by our employees. This will build on our reputation as an employer of choice for all sections of the communities that we serve.

Therefore, the need for considering equality and diversity is not an optional extra – but is critical to our performance as a landlord, service provider and employer.

I firmly believe that as fairness and equality are at the heart of what we strive for at MHP, indifference to the diversity agenda is not an option.

Bill Payne, CEO

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The history of Metropolitan Housing Partnership (MHP) is inextricably linked to the pursuit of equality and respect for diversity. Lady Molly Huggins, wife of the Governor of Jamaica, established the Metropolitan Coloured People's Association in the 1950s to provide good quality, affordable accommodation for immigrants from the West Indies. This was in response to the direct discrimination that people faced at that time, particularly in their search for a place to live.
- 1.2 The Metropolitan Housing Trust (MHT) was formally established in 1963 and has evolved into a Partnership of member organisations. As MHP has grown, its original aim of combating inequality and poverty by providing good quality low cost housing has remained.
- 1.3 The Partnership is itself diverse, and incorporates traditional housing provision, support and care services for those who are vulnerable and assistance for refugees and those seeking asylum.
- 1.4 In the main, MHP's stock can be geographically categorised into three regional areas: London and the South East, The Eastern Region and The Midlands. The Partnership also provides care and support services across all of these regions and South Yorkshire. The stock numbers (as at 31st March 2008) in each of these regions are given below.
 - London and the South East: In the London/South East region, MHP has a total of 17,465 residential units - 14,020 of which are rented accommodation and 3,445 shared ownership or leasehold properties. These are primarily provided by MHP's London businesses, Metropolitan Housing Trust and Clapham Park Homes (a regeneration scheme situated in the London Borough of Lambeth).
 - The Eastern region: MHP has a total of 2702 residential units in the Eastern region. These consist of 2079 general needs rented homes and 623 with additional care and support. These are provided by Granta Housing Society (referred to hereafter as Granta).
 - The Midlands: MHP residential stock in the Midlands region totals 10,343 properties - 9,409 rented units and 934 shared ownership or leasehold properties. These are provided by Spirita.
- 1.5 In 2007 MHP conducted an exercise to collate the profile of its residents. The collation exercise was carried out for the MHT London, Spirita, Granta and Clapham Park Homes. A summary of the information is as follows:

For MHT London:

- 64% tenants were female
- 61% of tenants were between 30 and 60

- Black people were the largest ethnic grouping at 29%, followed by White British and White Other at 28% and 19% respectively
- 58% of tenants identified themselves as Christian, with Muslims being the next largest religious group of 12%. 14% of tenants identified themselves as having no religion
- 83% tenants identified themselves as heterosexual, with 1% identifying themselves as gay or lesbian. 16% of tenants declined to answer this question
- 13% of tenants identified themselves as having a disability

For Spirita:

- 61% tenants were female
- 59% tenants were between 30 and 60
- White British were the largest ethnic group at 76%, followed by White Other 12%
- 73% of tenants identified themselves as Christian, followed by Muslims at 2%. 17% of tenants identified themselves as having no religion
- 85% of tenants identified themselves as heterosexual, with 1% identifying themselves as gay or lesbian
- 21% of tenants identified themselves as having a disability

For Granta:

- 56% of tenants were female
- 46% of tenants were between 30 and 60
- White British were the largest ethnic group at 87%, followed by White Other at 4% and Black at 2%
- 56% of tenants identified themselves as Christian. 32.3% identified themselves as having no religion
- 81% of tenants identified themselves as being heterosexual, with 1% identifying themselves as being gay or lesbian
- 9% tenants identified themselves as having a disability, although Granta believe the 39% figure stated in the 2006 STATUS survey to be more accurate

For Clapham Park Homes:

- 63% of tenants were female
- 68% of tenants were between 30 and 60
- Black people were the largest ethnic grouping at 29% White British were 26% and 15% White Other (predominantly made up of Spanish and Portuguese residents)
- 75% identified themselves as heterosexual with 1.5% as gay or lesbian
- 68% identified themselves as Christian
- 8% identified themselves as Muslim
- 10% identified themselves as having no religion
- 10.5% of tenants considered themselves to have a disability

- 1.6 Support and care services for the more vulnerable members of communities, such as the elderly, the disabled, and refugees and asylum seekers are provided by Metropolitan Support Trust (MST) and its specialist arm, Refugee Support. In March 2009, Metropolitan Support Trust (MST) reported on the profile of its service users. A summary of the information reported is as follows:

For MST

- 50.5% of service users were female
- 45% of service users are 45 years or above, the next highest number (32%) are between 18 to 35 years
- White – British were the largest ethnic group at 42% with Black or Black British - African next largest ethnic grouping at 24%.
- 40% of service users identified themselves as Christian

For Refugee Support

- 62% of service users were male
- 47.64% of service users under 30 years old
- 50.34% of service users identified themselves as Black Or Black British – African

- 1.7 The 2006 STATUS survey (a sample survey of general needs tenants and sheltered residents from MHT London, CPH, Spirita and Granta) gave a breakdown of the differing income levels of its tenants. Most are in receipt of state benefits. Only a little over a third (35%) of principal tenants said that they were working (23% full-time, 9% part-time, 3% self-employed). As many as 8% said they were unemployed. Just under a quarter of tenants (24%) said they were retired.
- 1.8 In addition, the survey recorded 29% of tenants that were either permanently sick or disabled (15%) or at home/looking after family (14%). Over three-quarters of households (77%) said that they relied on state benefits (child benefit excluded) for all or part of their incomes; 56% said they were wholly dependent on benefits and 21% said that they received part of their income from benefits.
- 1.9 It is, therefore, clear that MHP's service users are a diverse body of families and individuals with very different needs and aspirations. This Equality and Diversity Strategy will set out how MHP intends to address those diverse needs whilst ensuring that in *all* of its actions it aspires to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This strategy sets out the actions that MHP will take to ensure that its overall aim of addressing poverty and inequality is achieved. It is intended to address equality and diversity issues in their widest context including covering all MHP's legal and regulatory obligations.

- 2.2 This Strategy is intended to cover anyone who comes into contact with MHP whether as a customer, board member, staff member, stakeholder or partner (either potential or current) and to ensure that all are treated with dignity and respect.
- 2.3 This strategy ensures that no one who comes into contact with MHP receives less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of their age, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 In 2005 MHP developed and adopted its current Equality and Diversity Strategy (2005 – 2008). This Strategy highlighted the issues to be addressed by MHP across each of the six strands of diversity; namely race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion or belief. With the accompanying action plan, this Strategy successfully ensured that MHP was able to demonstrate improvements in its service provision and its performance as an employer, with relation to equality and diversity.
- 3.2 However, changes in legislative requirements and in the regulatory environment meant that the Equality and Diversity Strategy required revisiting, to ensure that it remains as relevant as ever.

These recent developments have included:

- The Equality Act (2006) which established the Equality and Human Rights Commission (October 2007) (replacing the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission) and outlawed discrimination on goods and services on the grounds of religion and belief (subject to certain exemptions)
 - The revised Housing Corporation Good Practice Note 8 (November 2007) set out the regulator's expectations in respect of equality and diversity
 - The recent launch of the Homes and Communities Agency and Tenant Services Authority (December 2008) reinforcing the need for associations to demonstrate improved service provision
 - The Equality Bill which aims to consolidate existing anti-discrimination legislation and clarify the role of organisations in addressing discrimination in service delivery and employment
- 3.3 This Strategy will set out how MHP will comply with the above requirements and will improve its performance, ensuring continuous improvements in service provision. It will build on the progress made towards the aims of the 2005-2008 Strategy and on the targets set out in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan.

4.0 Vision and objectives

4.1 MHP's over-arching aims, as set out in its Equality and Diversity Policy (2008) are as follows:

- MHP will aspire to surpass its statutory and regulatory responsibilities to promote equality of opportunity in all of its activities
- MHP will ensure that it is in a position to pro-actively respond to changes both nationally and locally to ensure that its services meet the diverse needs of its service users and the neighbourhoods where they live
- MHP is committed to the concept and practice of equality of opportunity and combating discrimination, direct or indirect, through its policies and procedures, provision of services, board membership, MHP structure and employment practices
- MHP is committed to maintaining an organisational spirit, ethos and culture which values people from all sections of the community and the contribution each individual can make to its work and in delivering services which meet individual needs

4.2 Flowing from this Policy, MHP's strategic equality and diversity objectives are to:

- continue to embed equality and diversity in everything that it does
- demonstrate compliance with, and aspire to surpass, current and future statutory and regulatory requirements
- ensure that all its policies, procedures and services are free from direct and indirect discrimination
- adopt meaningful, but challenging targets and monitor progress against them
- be an exemplar employer, with equality of opportunity central to the recruitment and development of staff
- adapt service provision to meet the identified needs of service users and their communities
- provide opportunities for all service users to participate in the decisions which affect the delivery of services they receive
- respond to changes in the housing and social care sectors and in the environment in which MHP operates
- communicate and celebrate success

4.3 Progress against these Partnership-wide objectives will be measured and evidenced in the MHP Equality and Diversity Action Plan, attached as Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

5.0 Milestones

5.1 *What does a diverse organisation look like?*

By 2012 MHP will...

- have inclusive service provision and employment practices
- have made demonstrable progress on addressing poverty, inequality and discrimination
- deliver services that are capable of being tailored to meet the diverse needs of our residents and services users
- report high resident and service user satisfaction
- surpass regulatory and statutory requirements
- have supported sustainable and cohesive communities that respond to the circumstances of local people
- be recognised as the equality and diversity standard-bearer
- be able to evidence that all residents and service users have influenced and shaped policy and operations
- be an exemplar employer, as reported by its staff

6.0 The Business case

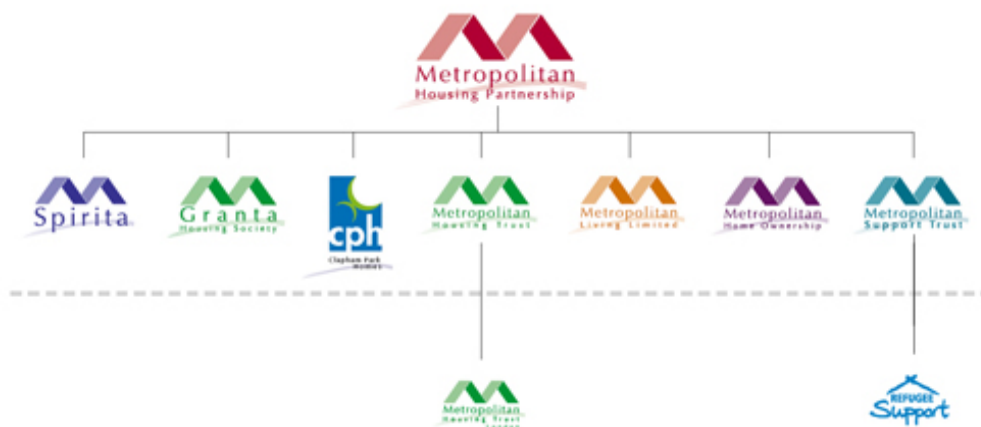
- 6.1 MHP asserts that there is a strong business case for monitoring and improving all aspects of equality and diversity performance. Equality and diversity are essential components in achieving excellent customer satisfaction and a competitive advantage.
- 6.2 Having a clear understanding the diverse needs of customers is essential if MHP is to successfully target service provision to meet demonstrable needs. In addition, targeting service provision to meet an identified, rather than an *assumed* need, will drive down costs and promote efficiency. The provision of aids and adaptations, or translated documentation, for example, will only be undertaken where there is evidence that a need exists.
- 6.3 Being an employer of choice is very important to MHP. The ability to recruit and retain the best staff from all sections of society is crucial in an environment where employers are competing for a finite resource. Ensuring that MHP has the reputation of a progressive employer that addresses discrimination and promotes equality will help to attract the best employees. MHP believes that with a diverse workforce it will be better placed to understand the needs of all its customers. By understanding their needs MHP will increasingly be able to explore the opportunities to provide them with the best and most appropriate homes and services.
- 6.4 Moreover, surpassing legal and regulatory requirements to avoid discrimination and to promote fairness and consistency will help to ensure that MHP does not spend valuable resources on reacting to the attention of the regulators or on responding to legal action.
- 6.5 Finally, addressing the poverty, inequality and discrimination will promote sustainable communities and benefit society as a whole.

7.0 Partnership structure

7.1 In recent years, MHP has grown considerably, regarding it as an opportunity to provide homes and services for more people in need. MHP intends to do more and to build on the successes of the past, which have brought it to its current position of:

- having six main member organisations, these being Metropolitan Housing Trust London, Metropolitan Home Ownership, Spirita, Metropolitan Support Trust, Granta Housing Society, and Clapham Park Homes
- operating in more than 75 Local Authorities throughout London, the Midlands, the East of England and South Yorkshire.

Partnership structure



8.0 Accountability

8.1 **MHP's Board** acknowledges and accepts that it has corporate responsibility for ensuring that this Strategy underpins all aspects of MHP's work. The Board nominates one of its members to act as Equality and Diversity Champion who attends the regular Diversity Network meetings on its behalf.

8.2 **MHP's Chief Executive**, through delegated powers, has responsibility for ensuring this Policy is implemented effectively. MHP's Chief Executive will report annually to MHP's Board on its implementation.

8.3 **The Director of Policy and Performance** is responsible to MHP's Chief Executive for the detailed operation, monitoring and review of the Strategy.

8.4 All members of **MHP Strategic Management Team (SMT)** are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the Policy and its subsequent actions are implemented in their particular areas of responsibility throughout MHP.

- 8.5 **The Diversity Strategy Manager** is responsible for developing and supporting the implementation of the Strategy, ensuring compliance with equalities legislation and regulatory requirements.
- 8.6 **The Boards of Member Organisations** will monitor the progress of their own organisations against local equality and diversity action plans and will hold Managing Directors and their respective BMTs to account to ensure targets are met.
- 8.7 **The Directors** are responsible for ensuring the implementation and full compliance with the Strategy within their respective areas of responsibility, including:
- developing local E&D action plans ensuring targets are meaningful and have most impact locally
 - collecting diversity information and providing it to the Diversity Network in the required format
 - communicating developments in equality and diversity to employees, residents and service users as appropriate
 - fulfilling their reporting commitment to committees, boards and the Diversity Network including updating local equality and diversity action plans
 - ensuring that individual business plans incorporate adequate resources to progress this Equality and Diversity Strategy
- 8.8 **Diversity Champions** are responsible for overseeing the implementation of Partnerships actions locally. Diversity champions will invite, encourage and inspire organisational excellence.
- 8.9 **All staff members** of MHP have a responsibility to ensure that this Strategy is put into practice. MHP expects a personal commitment from everyone in making it effective and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow.
- 9.0 The Diversity Network and the Diversity Champions**
- 9.1 The Diversity Network will bring together Diversity Champions from across MHP, including; member organisations; the Board; the National Residents Group; the Service User Strategy Group; partnership services, staff groups and the Chief Executive. The Network will set standards across the Partnership, act as a forum for sharing good practice and identify key themes for action. It will hold the CEO and Strategic Management Team to account on reaching equality and diversity targets. The Network will also provide feedback to the Chair of the MHP board on the CEO's leadership on equality and diversity issues which will inform their personal appraisal.
- 9.2 Diversity Champions will ensure that equality and diversity implications for MHP are addressed, and will stand up for equality and diversity. Diversity Champions will influence those with both single focus and cross-cutting agendas to come together to ensure cohesion and consistency in approach.

They will not refrain from tackling difficult or sensitive issues and will be willing to speak out in the appropriate forums if they find that MHP, its employees, partners or stakeholders are hindering progress on equality and diversity.

10.0 The Consultation process

10.1 MHP recognises that all relevant stakeholders should have the opportunity to shape and develop the diversity agenda. This Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan has been subject to consultation with internal and external stakeholders. In developing this Strategy, the Diversity Strategy Manager has consulted with the National Residents' Group, the Service User Strategy Group, the MHP Strategic Management Team, national Staff Groups (e.g. Disability Staff Forum, Metro), the Diversity Network and Diversity Champions. All service users, staff and other stakeholders have had the opportunity to comment on the proposals via the MHP internet webpage and its internal intranet site.

10.2 However, this Strategy and the accompanying partnership action plan are working documents and MHP will continue to ensure the active participation and involvement of stakeholders throughout its life.

11.0 Governance

11.1 MHP is clear that all its board members must have the appropriate experience, skills and understanding to undertake their duties. This is the primary consideration in respect of governance. MHP will also aim to ensure that the composition of its governing board and those of its member organisations, reflect and understand the communities in which they work.

11.2 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- aim to recruit, train and retain boards that are representative of all the communities they serve. The recruitment process will be open and transparent and will ensure that prospective board members have an appropriate understanding of equality and diversity considerations
- all board members will receive on-going training to ensure that they are aware of their particular responsibilities in respect of equality and diversity and have an excellent understanding of the issues involved

12.0 Resident and service user involvement

12.1 MHP recognises that engaging with residents and service users offers the most effective means of adapting services to their needs and requirements.

12.2 One of MHP's core principles of involvement is that it will demonstrate its commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity and will make sure that all involvement opportunities are fair, inclusive and accessible to all residents and service users.

12.3 MHP's Resident Involvement Strategy (2008/11) sets out the methodology for working with residents to deliver excellent housing services. Metropolitan Support Trust has adopted a 2008-11 Service User Involvement Strategy which states its commitment to involving service users at every level of the organisation. These documents set out 'menus' of consultation to allow all residents and service users to submit their views on MHP's service provision and influence decisions.

12.4 In addition, the newly established regulatory body in the public housing sector, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), has placed increased emphasis on raising standards of services for tenants as the key objective for social landlords.

12.5 Therefore, MHP will continue to introduce innovative methods to ensure that it engages effectively with all its residents and service users, both current and potential, those with disabilities and caring responsibilities and from all communities that it serves.

12.6 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- continue to employ mechanisms that provide support packages and innovative opportunities for our customers to influence how services are managed, provided and improved leading to more involvement of all its residents and service users, including those from traditionally 'hard to reach' groups
- recruit, train and retain Boards that are representative of all the communities they serve
- review, analyse and report on the impact of MHP's Resident and Service User Involvement strategies
- ensure the governing boards obtain views and opinion from a wide range of diverse customers and communities
- evaluate the success of its engagement framework

13.0 Identifying need

13.1 MHP's demographic profiling exercise has made excellent progress in understanding the diverse needs of its service users. This has improved effectiveness and efficiency by allowing services to be targeted at identified needs.

13.2 MHP recognises that it does not yet have the fullest possible picture of all of its residents and service users. This may seem like a difficult task to complete given that a number of service users are reluctant to answer some of the questions put to them. Nevertheless, MHP's aim is to continue its work on gathering client information in order to facilitate the further improvement of services.

13.3 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- take all reasonable measures at its disposal to ensure that progress is made towards the best understanding the diverse needs of the communities and individuals that it serves
- increase the percentage of customer profile information across all six strands and demonstrate the use of customer profile on a regular basis to ensure tailored services are delivered
- make the best use of complaints feedback and resident satisfaction surveys to identify areas of service delivery that could be improved
- examine the drivers for satisfaction – in particular for groups that are identified to have differing levels of satisfaction with MHP services

14.0 Housing services

- 14.1 MHP will continue to provide housing for those in need and ensure that all communities and individuals have equal access to its services. MHP is committed to ensuring that all housing services are free from direct or indirect discrimination.
- 14.2 MHP will seek to ensure that advertising of its properties reaches all sections of the community. MHP will seek to ensure that no community is placed at a disadvantage with regard to knowing about its services or accessing them.
- 14.3 MHP continues to be committed to meeting the needs of people with a disability or special need. MHP will adopt service standards for responding to requests for aids and adaptations, and will monitor its performance in this area. Where its properties are already fitted with aids or are adapted, MHP will ensure that it has an up-to-date record of this to ensure that they are allocated to those who need them. Where appropriate, MHP will remove and recycle aids and adaptations to reduce waste and improve efficiency. MHP will work with the relevant local agencies to ensure that grant applications for aids and adaptations are processed as promptly and effectively as possible. This may include establishing protocols with local authorities on the use of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 14.4 MHP welcomes the establishment of the TSA with its renewed focus on delivering excellent housing services to meet the needs of residents and service users. It will review all MHP policies and procedures that impact on service delivery to ensure that it is employing best practice and that they are in accordance with guidance from the relevant agencies.
- 14.5 *To achieve this MHP will:*
- assess its housing services to ensure that all member organisations surpass the regulatory and statutory requirements placed upon them
 - ensure that housing policies and procedures are in accordance with the latest guidance from the appropriate agencies (e.g. Tenant Services Authority) and with best practice. MHP will work with the TSA to ensure that the development of our housing services is driven by the needs and aspirations of residents

- ensure its Aids and Adaptations Policy and budget is managed to its maximum to deliver the most effective provision to those in need
- review policies and procedures aimed at supporting victims of domestic violence and harassment to ensure that they are in accordance with the latest guidance and best practice and are driven by the needs of service users
- work with MHP's Community Investment Team. Member organisations will deliver local projects to improve life chances locally and support the development of local community cohesion

15.0 Support and Care Services

- 15.1 In addition to its role as a housing provider, MHP has developed services that support the more vulnerable members of communities, such as the elderly, the disabled, and refugees and asylum seekers. MHP's support and care business, Metropolitan Support Trust (MST) provides specialist services to help people live independent lives. MST supports over 8,000 service users across London, East and West Midlands, and Yorkshire and Humberside. MST puts service users at the heart of what it does, adapting and designing services to meet a diverse range of need to help them maximise their independence, access services and improve their quality of life. MST employees approximately 700 staff and works in 33 Local Authorities around the UK.
- 15.2 As a subsidiary of MST, Refugee Support provides support, housing and specialist services to refugees and asylum seekers. Services offered by Refugee Support include:
- supported housing for 195 single adult refugees in eight London boroughs
 - floating support for 240 families and single people in London, the Midlands and Humberside
 - housing and support for over 1600 asylum seekers under contract from the Home Office;
 - housing for unaccompanied young people aged 16-21 in London
 - the country's first dedicated 'refugee foyer', linking housing with education, training and employment services in Sheffield
 - a learning and education scheme that has extended career opportunities to 180 refugees across Derby, Nottingham and Leicester.
- 15.3 Both Granta and Spiritia also provide support and care services to their residents and others in both accommodation based, and floating support services. Staff work with service users to maximise their independence and integrate them into the community, ranging from sheltered accommodation to hostels for homeless rough sleepers and specialist care for women fleeing domestic violence.
- 15.4 MHP delivers a wide range of services for its residents and service users. The diversity of the Partnership enables it to deliver services to those who are refugees or asylum seekers, the elderly, those with mental ill health, young people, victims of domestic violence, those with learning disabilities and others who need support in their homes.

15.5 MHP recognises that some communities have differing needs based on their background and experiences, but they often share the same aspiration to actively take part in their community. MHP wants to provide a foundation for people and their families, assisting those who are vulnerable in developing and consolidating a stake in local communities.

15.6 MHP is proud of its history of strong partnerships, and will continue to work closely with the statutory and voluntary sectors to help to deliver individually tailored services.

15.7 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- set out a programme to equality impact assess its care and support policies and procedures to ensure that they do not discriminate against or disadvantage service users on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, sexuality or faith
- review its procedures to ensure that it surpasses the relevant regulatory and statutory requirements
- maintain comprehensive monitoring systems that record diversity information to ensure continuity in the provision of high quality support services to all individuals and communities
- continue to employ mechanisms that provide innovative opportunities for Service Users to influence how services are managed, provided and improved leading to more involvement of all its Service Users, including those from traditionally 'hard to reach' groups

16.0 Development and regeneration of homes

16.1 MHP's vision is to develop strong, sustainable and diverse communities.

16.2 MHP acknowledges that the provision of mixed tenure affordable accommodation is key to enable communities to thrive and be sustainable. Therefore, through MHP's development services, it will work to meet the growing demand for new homes which match the requirement of its diverse communities.

16.3 MHP will build high-quality homes and will be an active partner in renewal and regeneration activities within the areas it operates. MHP will work to support local housing strategies and consult local communities.

16.4 Through MHP's home ownership business (Metropolitan Home Ownership) it will continue to offer affordable housing choices for low and moderately paid working households.

16.5 MHP recognises that the appreciation of diversity and creating tolerant, culturally diverse communities where people of all backgrounds can and are encouraged to develop is a key component in promoting a safe and prosperous environment, where people have an equal stake in their communities.

16.6 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- create a Housing Development programme to enhance MHP's existing stock and localities and deliver new homes of the right size and type to meet need and aspirations and achieve sustainable communities
- consult with all appropriate stakeholders during each stage of development and regeneration activities
- work with partner agencies such as local authorities or other housing associations to ensure that the diverse needs of the local communities are addressed in plans for development and regeneration
- work with representative organisations in order to engage with experts working with local communities.

17.0 Community investment

17.1 MHP believes in making a commitment to reducing isolation and inequalities within the communities in which it operates. Each member organisation's community investment activity is based upon meeting local needs. In addition, MHP has specific 'flagship programmes' which operate across all member organisations and seek to address inequalities in all communities.

17.2 MHP recognises the importance of addressing equality and diversity in community investment activities. Activities are undertaken where there are concentrations of tenancies and services to vulnerable service users. However, it is recognised that, in future, more emphasis needs to be placed on evidencing local needs

18.0 Procurement, partnerships, contractors and consultants

18.1 MHP acknowledges the forthcoming Equality Act and its implications regarding procurement and contracting activities.

18.2 MHP expects its contractors, consultants and suppliers to provide services of a consistently high standard to all its customers, no matter what their race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or age.

18.3 The procurement function of MHP provides an excellent opportunity to not only deliver high-quality services, but to also exert a positive influence in helping to develop inclusive, sustainable communities.

18.4 MHP will ensure that the contractors, suppliers and consultants it employs recognise the importance of equality and diversity as one of its corporate objectives. MHP will require them to ensure that those delivering services on its behalf or undertaking work for MHP operate in accordance with MHP's vision and values.

18.5 It is also important that MHP develops effective partnerships with community organisations and other significant public bodies who may be able to contribute to its equality and diversity agenda.

18.6 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- develop relationships with key local partners, in order to ensure that it is aware of the changes in the communities and neighbourhoods
- work with its main contractors to ensure that they understand and make a commitment to equality and diversity in accordance with MHP's approach, including providing training for their operatives on the diverse needs of MHP's residents service users
- continue to work with local partners on supporting the victims of harassment, ASB and domestic violence

19.0 Communications

19.1 MHP wants all of its service users to be able to understand the information it provides. Therefore, it is committed to communicating with all its service users in a format which they can understand where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. This may be by means of translation, interpretation or alternative formats, such as pictorial documentation. Member organisations will also consider the option of providing or supporting classes for those for whom English is a second language where there is a demonstrable need in their local areas.

19.2 MHP will also communicate its success in the field of equality and diversity as a way of continuing to embed these themes in everything it does.

19.3 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- review its Translation, Interpretation and Alternative Format policy and procedure in consultation with staff, service users and the disability support staff forum
- Roll-out the Translation, Interpretation and Alternative format policy and procedure across the Partnership to ensure a consistent approach by member organisations
- use its in-house and external publications, website and intranet site, emails and the Diversity Network to publicise its successes

19.4 MST will retain its own Translation, Interpretation and Alternative Format policy and procedure, in order to ensure that it meets the specific regulatory and statutory requirements within which it operates.

20.0 Sustainability

20.1 MHP believes in offering its customers a better deal in society and that a decent home is just the first step. Alongside this, MHP is aware that there is a natural synergy with sustainability as MHP invests in the long term interests of residents, service users, homes and communities.

19.2 For MHP, sustainability is about working in ways and making choices that make the best use of the resources it has now without compromising its ability to meet future needs. It is about ensuring staff, residents and service users are treated fairly and that MHP contributes to maintaining a diverse society, economy and environment.

20.0 Employment and development of staff

20.1 MHP recognises the strong business case for being recognised as an exemplar employer by all sections of the community. In an increasingly diverse labour market, employers must become inclusive in order to be competitive.

20.2 MHP wishes to attract, retain and develop highly skilled and motivated people, who share its vision on equality and diversity. This will assist MHP in providing a high standard of service which is responsive to the diverse individual and community needs.

20.3 MHP will continue to promote understanding and awareness of equality and diversity issues through its Organisational Development Service.

20.4 MHP is committed to developing a positive working environment and has adopted procedures to ensure that staff do not experience bullying, harassment and discrimination. It has developed a policy on supporting staff who are victims of domestic violence and is proud to have been recognised as a progressive employer with a ranking in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index of employers.

20.5 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- review its statement on equal opportunities in the employment and development of staff to ensure compliance with the latest guidance and best practice
- monitor its recruitment, selection and training of staff to ensure that procedures do not discriminate against anyone and that the workforce reflects the communities in which it works
- set out a programme of equality impact assessments for its human resources policies and procedures to ensure that MHP is not directly or indirectly discriminating against any particular group
- continue to include equality and diversity training as a mandatory part of the MHP induction process and to provide specialised equality and diversity training for managers
- consider measures, such as flexible working, that might encourage the best applicants from under represented groups to apply for vacant positions
- consider how to offer career development opportunities for under represented staff groups to address any anomalies in the workplace
- undertake regular staff satisfaction surveys to identify issues across the six strands of diversity that are important to employees

- ensure comprehensive awareness of the policy to support members of staff who have been or are victims of domestic violence
- ensure continued recognition by external agencies (e.g. Stonewall, The Times Top 100 index) as an employer of choice

21.0 Staff support groups

21.1 MHP recognises that its staff body should be representative of the communities that it serves. In order to make the most of the diverse experiences of employees to influence how it provides services, MHP has encouraged the establishment of national representative staff groups with various levels of success.

21.2 The Metro staff group, representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual staff, has been an excellent example of how such forums can help to inform MHP policy and to suggest ways of improving the working lives of employees. Metro has also been instrumental in MHP achieving the recognition of being highly placed on Stonewall's Workplace Employment Index. Similarly, the Disability Staff Forum is well established and continues to highlight areas where MHP could make positive changes and remove barriers to staff with a disability. For a variety of reasons, however, the BME and Women's staff group have enjoyed less regular meetings and attendance.

21.3 *To achieve this MHP will:*

- continue to provide support to all its staff groups and ensure that all reasonable efforts are made to provide staff with a useful forum for support and consultation on Partnership policy and procedure

22.0 Single Equality Scheme

22.1 As a social landlord, MHP is required to develop action plans demonstrating its commitment to equality of opportunity and setting out how it will seek to eliminate discrimination and harassment and promote good relations in the areas of race, disability and gender. In response to this requirement, MHP has adopted a Race Equality Action Plan (incorporated into the Equality and Diversity Strategy 2005-08), a Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan (2007) and a Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan (2008).

22.2 However, in order to respond to the recent developments in equality legislation and the forthcoming Equality Act, MHP will set out its equality schemes and action plans in a Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan. This Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan will set out how MHP intends to deliver its statutory duties for race, disability and gender equality whilst addressing the broader equality agenda. It will consolidate its commitment to equality and diversity previously set out in the Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes and Action Plans.

23.0 Equality Impact Assessments

- 23.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a way of assessing and consulting on the effect that a proposed policy, procedure or other function is likely to have on service users depending on factors such as age, gender, disability, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It also helps MHP to assess the needs of its households and communities.
- 23.2 MHP has developed its own EIA procedure to assess policies, projects, service reviews and strategies to determine the negative or positive impacts on its customers and staff. Once identified, any negative impacts will be mitigated to ensure that no negative discrimination will take place.
- 23.3 MHP will undertake a program of EIAs at both at a Partnership and local service level.

24.0 Targets and the monitoring and review process

- 24.1 Member organisations will develop and adopt their own equality and diversity action plans in response to local needs, but in accordance with the Partnership-wide E&D Policy and targets.
- 24.2 The Managing Directors and Diversity Champions of member organisations ensure that reports on progress are regularly presented to their respective Boards, which have a role in monitoring performance on E&D issues.

25.0 Communicating the strategy

- 25.1 This Equality and Diversity Strategy will be communicated to all staff, residents, service users, partners and other stakeholders. This will involve the following methods of communication:
- Promotion on the Partnership internet site
 - Promotion on the Partnership intranet site
 - Reference to it in the customers' 'Welcome Pack'
 - Publicity in resident and service user newsletters
 - Publicity in staff newsletters
 - Inclusion in existing Partnership project work - such as the Knowledgebase project
 - Inclusion on the agenda of team meetings by managers (guidance to be provided by the Diversity Strategy Manager)
 - Diversity Road show and 'lunch and learn' sessions
- 25.2 In addition to these methods of communication, the Diversity Network and its Champions will ensure that the objectives of the Strategy remain a priority for MHP's Strategic Management Team and the local Business Management Teams.

26.0 Arrangements for reviewing the strategy

26.1 The on-going work on the measures and targets contained in the Equality and Diversity Action Plan will be monitored through the structures set out in the Accountability section of this strategy. The Diversity Network will have particular responsibility for ensuring that progress is achieved.

26.2 MHP will review and report on progress on an annual basis and will incorporate new objectives following a review of progress and further consultation with stakeholders in order to ensure that the Action Plan is a relevant document throughout its life.

27.0 Appendices

- Action plan for implementation of the strategy
- Consultation list

Appendix 1: ACTION PLAN

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
1	Aim: MHP will aspire to surpass statutory and regulatory responsibilities to promote equality of opportunity in all our activities.							
1.1	Objective: Demonstrate compliance with, and aspire to surpass, current and future statutory and regulatory requirements							
1.1.1	4.2	31	35,40	C1.5	Demonstrate statutory compliance to six core strands of equality, CRE Code of Practice	Implement actions to meet all six core strands of equality within the equality action plans and CRE positional statement.	Diversity Strategy Manager Managing Directors of Member orgs	March 2010
1.1.2	4.2	31			Demonstrate regulatory compliance with Housing Corporation 2.7 and achieve excellence in 70% of areas across KLOE 31	Produce SACS (Housing Corp compliance statement) and undertake KLOE 31 self assessments.	Diversity Strategy Manager	March 2010
1.1.3	4.2	31		C1.5	Demonstrate compliance to Health and Social Care Act, Supporting People QA Framework; Commission for Social Care Inspection and Border and Immigration legislation	Implement actions to achieve top quartile/ level A standards across all areas	Managing Directors of Member Orgs	March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
1.2	Objective: Adopt meaningful, but challenging targets and monitor progress against them							
1.2.1	8				Develop overall and local E&D Action Plans ensuring targets are meaningful and have most impact locally	Produce a Partnership 2009 Strategy and action plan. Member Orgs to produce local action plans	Diversity Strategy Manager Managing Directors of member orgs	April 2009 – June 2009
1.2.2	8				Develop MHP equality and diversity measures and targets to demonstrate progress on achieving objectives.	Incorporate targets into local E&D action plans	Diversity Strategy Manager Managing Directors of member orgs	April 2009 -June 2009
1.2.3	8				Single Equality Scheme	Develop Single Equality Scheme and ensure its adoption by MHP	Diversity Strategy Manager	April 2010- March 2011

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
	8				Measure impact of Partnership wide and local action plans	Regularly review progress against MHP and local Action Plans	Diversity Strategy Manager Diversity Champions - Member Orgs	January 2010 – March 2012

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
2	Aim: MHP will ensure that it is in a position to respond to changes both nationally and locally to ensure that our services meet the diverse needs of our customers and the neighbourhoods where they live.							
2.1	Objective: Adapt service provision to meet the identified needs of service users and their communities							
2.1.1	4	31.2.1 31.3.3		C1.5	Increase the percentage of customer profile information across all six strands	Develop action plan to increase percentage Implement effective local surveys	Diversity Strategy Manager Managing Directors of member orgs	April 2009 - March 2010
2.1.2	4	31.3.3			Demonstrate the use of customer profiles to provide tailored services and ensure efficient targeting of resources	monitor use of customer profile to tailor services and drive efficiency	Managing Directors of member orgs	April 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
2.1.3	4	31		C1.5, s1.1, s1.2, s2.2, s3.1	Develop strategic approach to DDA compliance and the use of communication and accessibility support and services	Implement action plan to achieve DDA/Access Audit compliance and consistent use of communication and accessibility support services	Head of Facilities / Health and Safety	April 2009 - July 2009
2.1.4	18				Work with contractors to ensure they understand and demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity in accordance with MHP's approach, including providing training for their operatives on the diverse needs of MHP's customers.	Main contractors to be audited for E&D compliance and adherence to MHP's ethos	Diversity Strategy Manager	September 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
2.1.5	14	31.5		C1.5, C1.4	Actively and effectively tackle harassment and domestic violence wherever it occurs	<p>Review MHP's Harassment and Domestic Violence Policies to ensure appropriate responses and implementation of best practice.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of service provision in respect of DV and harassment.</p>	<p>Diversity Strategy Manager</p> <p>Managing Directors of Member Orgs</p>	<p>Domestic Violence -Sept 2009 Harassment - March 2010</p> <p>On-going</p>
2.2	Aim: Objective: Respond to changes in the housing and social care sectors and in the environment in which MHP operates							
2.2.1	17	3.3			Take all reasonable measures at its disposal to ensure that progress is made towards the best understanding the diverse needs of the communities and individuals that it serves.	Develop relationships with key groups / partnership on local level	<p>Managing Directors of member orgs</p> <p>Diversity Champions - Member Orgs</p>	March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
2.2.2	17	31.4			Delivery/implementation of projects to enhance community cohesion/financial inclusion are successful	Report / evaluation on each project	Community Investment Team Managing Directors of member orgs	April 2009 - March 2010
2.2.3	4	31.4			Impact of the Housing and Communities Agency and the Tenant Services Authority is acknowledged and the changes implemented	Report on changes arising from impact of TSA / HCA	Diversity Strategy Manager Diversity Champions - Member Orgs	On-going
2.2.4		31.4			Develop relationships with key local partners, in order to ensure that it is aware of the changes in the communities and neighbourhoods.	Diversity Champions/Staff attendance at key networking events	Managing Directors of member orgs Diversity Champions - Member Orgs	On-going - Monthly / March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
3	Aim: MHP is committed to the concept and practice of equality of opportunity and combating discrimination, direct or indirect, through our policies and procedures, provision of services, board membership, MHP structure and employment practices.							
3.1	Objective: Ensure all its policies, procedures and services are free from direct and indirect discrimination.							
3.1.1	23	31			Establish a programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)	Produce EIA programme for Policy & Performance Partnership Services to agree and adopt EIA programmes. Member orgs to agree and adopt EIA programmes	Diversity Strategy Manager Heads of Central Services Managing Directors of Member orgs	April 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
3.2	Objective: Continue to embed equality and diversity in everything that it does.							
3.2.1	19				Embed MHP's Translation, Interpretation and Alternative format policy and procedure across the Partnership to ensure a consistent approach by member organisations.	Promote, publicise on web/intranet/email and conduct staff briefings	Diversity Strategy Manager	April 2009 - March 2010
3.2.2	4				Diversity Champions and the Diversity Network are established and active across the Partnership and within each member org	Deliver series of briefing on the role of the Champions Role/membership of the Diversity Network agreed	Diversity Strategy Manager	April 2009/ On-going / March 2010
3.2.3	20			C 1.5	Continue to develop and deliver MHP's Diversity Training to staff and other stakeholders (e.g. MRG Members and Board Members)	Ongoing review and a development of training sessions and strategy	Head of Organisational Development MHP Company Secretary	April 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
4	Aim: MHP are committed to maintaining an organisational spirit, ethos and culture which values people from all sections of the community and the contribution each individual can make to our work and in delivering services which meet individual needs.							
4.1	Objective: Be an exemplar employer, with equality of opportunity central to the recruitment and development of staff							
4.1.1	20				Set out MHP's position on equality and diversity in its role as employer	Develop and adopt and equal opportunity employment statement	HR Director	April 2009 - March 2010
4.1.2	20				Compliance with CRE Code of Practice for Employment	Undertake self-assessment against CRE Code of Practice for Employment	HR Director	April 2009 - March 2010
4.1.3	20			C1.5	Aspire to achieve a diverse staff profile at all levels across MHP	Positive action to target under representation across the organisation	HR Director	April 2009 - March 2010
4.1.4	20				Achieve the highest rating for a Social Housing provider within the Stonewall index and the 100 best employers - Sunday Times	Annual submission	Diversity Strategy Manager HR Director Chair of Metro	April 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
4.1.5	20	5.4			Continue to support and develop staff networks	Provide appropriate resources and support to the Chair of each group	Diversity Strategy Manager	April 2009 - March 2010
4.2	Objective: Provide opportunities for all residents and service users to be involved and influence service delivery and participate in decision making processes							
4.2.1	12				Provide support packages and innovative opportunities for our Residents and Service users to influence how services are managed, provided and improved leading to more involvement of all its residents and service users, including those from traditionally 'hard to reach' groups.	Deliver Resident Involvement Strategy Action Plan (2008-11)	Resident Involvement Manager	April 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
4.2.2	12				Review, analyse and report on the impact of MHP's Resident and Service User Involvement strategies.	Review, analyse and report on impact on customer involvement	Resident Involvement Manager	April 2009 - March 2010
4.2.3	11				Recruit, train and retain Boards members that reflect and understand the communities they serve.	Develop an action plan to ensure all Boards all able to demonstrate their representation / membership is becoming more diverse	MHP Company Secretary	April 2009 - March 2010

	MHP E&D Strategy Ref.	Kloe No.	CSCI NMS Ref	QAF ref.	Strategic Action	Action	Led by (name, job title, business unit)	Timeframe (start and end dates)
4.3	Objective: Communicate and celebrate success							
4.3.1	4				Update diversity intranet web pages with latest information / best practice	Input minutes form Diversity Network, Staff Groups, good news and best practice onto WebPages	Diversity Champions - Member Orgs	On-going - Monthly / March 2010
4.3.2	4				Develop e-bulletins to ensure E&D remains topical	Produce e-bulletins	Diversity Strategy Manager	April 2009 - March 2010
4.3.3	4				Annual review and report to celebrate good news stories	Produce annual review	Diversity Strategy Manager	January 2010 - March 2010

Appendix 2: Consultation list

The following were consulted in the development of this strategy:

- All service users (via Internet)
- MHP National Residents Group
- MST Service User Strategy Group
- MHP Board members
- Member Organisation Board Members
- Local Resident and Service User Groups
- All staff of MHP and member organisations
- Diversity Champions
- Diversity Network
- MHP Strategic Management Team
- Staff groups