

Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2009-10

The 700 Club aims to provide an inclusive environment which values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff, volunteers and service users are respected to assist them in reaching their full potential.

The 700 Club is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in access to our housing and support services. We aim to ensure that the accommodation we provide is safe, accessible, welcoming and attractive to all groups. We strive to ensure that our services do not exclude or discourage the participation of any groups. We aim to accommodate anyone who may be in need of our services.

To achieve this, the 700 Club will:

	Aim	Action
1	Despite the introduction of the Key Point of Access (KPA) gateway by the Darlington Local Authority, we will continue to ensure that our lettings, access to services and exits are made on a fair and non-discriminatory basis to the best of our ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal opportunity and diversity policy and procedures are being followed and data monitored • Internal and external training for workforce
2	Continue to have open and fair letting policies which give priority to applicants according to the severity of their housing needs and ensure that the 700 Club accommodation/services are appropriate for their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive interviews and risk of harm and needs assessments conducted
3	Keep records which monitor age, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability and sexual orientation of existing residents and applicants for housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 6 strands of diversity included in the data collection and recorded
4	Although at present, access to our services funded by the Supporting People Programme must happen via a referral from the KPA team, we are determined to continue to take active steps to increase access for people who may be disadvantaged for whatever reason, including offering to conduct interviews in a more convenient place, such as current accommodation of the potential service user	<p>Continue to conduct the activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute widely information about the 700 Club, the accommodation and services we provide, including to Asian, Polish and travellers communities, gay and transsexual communities, physically and sensory disabled communities and any other known/established communities out there • Continue to offer information in a range of formats, including sign language, translation, Braille etc if requested • Look for further ways to improve physical access to our premises
5	Continue to take seriously and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures in place,

	investigate urgently any claim of discrimination or harassment	<p>keep ensuring that they are followed and regularly updated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce trained and understands the approach
6	Continue to make contacts and build up links with all sections of the community and actively encourage diverse groups to benefit from our housing and support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop working relationships and collaborations with a range of teams and agencies to ensure the 700 Club access a range of communities, including through the BME project worker who is assessing the needs of minority communities in respect of smoking, alcohol and housing. • Recruit volunteers from minority communities who may also act as a link to services • Open day invitations • Distribute information about services provided widely • Link with BME networks, agencies and organisations, such as BECON (Black Minority Ethnic Community Organisations Network)
7	Continue to explain to any applicant, tenant or referral agency our services, selection and relevant policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey both verbally and in writing
8	Avoid restrictions on access to housing which are seen as unnecessary, irrelevant to housing need or contrary to the principles of equal opportunities to the best of our abilities. (note, we may have limited control over the access to our services funded by the Supporting People Programme after they introduced the KPA scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have removed exclusion criteria from all our services and using a comprehensive assessment approach (including risk of harm assessment) instead for every applicant to identify how their needs can be best supported
9	Actively publicise our housing and support services provision and make information about the 700 Club accessible to all sectors of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A BME project worker to link in with minority communities and explain about the services • Utilise the existing volunteer base to spread the information about the services • Recruit volunteers from minority communities who may also act as a link to services • Continue collaboration with a range of agencies • Open day • Give presentations and talks to ensure a wide spectrum of individuals and agencies that

		<p>represent or get in contact with diverse communities do know what the 700 Club could offer to people in need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute information about services provided widely • Newsletter and website • Publicise through local and regional BME networks, agencies and organisations, such as BECON (Black Minority Ethnic Community Organisations Network)
10	<p>Make every effort to attract people from all groups, either to work or volunteer for us or to be housed and supported by us</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs (both paid and voluntary) advertised widely, including using different networks, CVS, GAD, DAD, BECON, colleges etc • Link with local and regional BME networks, agencies and organisations, such as BECON (Black Minority Ethnic Community Organisations Network) • Through work of the BME project worker establish grass root links in a variety of communities • Make efforts to recruit volunteers from a range of communities
11	<p>Ensure that our services are relevant, attractive and accessible to all who need to use them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going effort to stay needs-focused as an organisation • A range of opportunities for feedback, consultation and involvement offered to service users, staff, volunteers, partner agencies and other stakeholders to ensure services are appropriate, relevant and shaped by the people who understand the need • Feedback, views and suggestions encouraged and actively sought • All feedback, proposals and suggestions considered and taken forward if relevant and feasible. • Summary of the feedback analysis shared with respondents

12	Raise awareness about homelessness and the issues that surround homelessness in order to improve accessibility to statutory and other third sector services and so improve life chances and positive outcomes for members of this socially excluded group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore possibility of securing funding for a new wave of Homelessness Awareness Training • Use informal and formal methods of raising awareness utilising staff, volunteers, service users and board members so they take active roles in that process.
----	---	---

We, at the 700 Club, feel that it is extremely difficult and unhelpful to set up any percentages or number targets in relation to the equality and diversity agenda for a number of reasons. In addition, with the introduction of the Key Point of Access scheme this year by the Local Authority that at present affects all our services funded by the Supporting People Programme, we fear that we may not have as much control as we had in the past to ensure complete fairness and transparency, despite all our efforts. Nevertheless, we are completely committed to the subject so our targets for now and for the future are:

- To maintain and review our policies, working practices and accessibility annually
- To keep on improving our policies, working practices and our accessibility by actively involving stakeholders at all levels