OWCH (OLDER WOMEN’S CO-HOUSING) GROUP

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

DEFINITION OF TERMS AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

OWCH (Older Women’s co-housing) Group is a group or society of women who are actively interested in being part of a co-housing community. To become a member every individual must go through the membership process.

OWCH (Barnet) Ltd is a fully mutual company set up to manage our legal and financial affairs. Every individual who takes a flat in the Union Street development will become a member of this company.

Both OWCH and OWCH (Barnet) Ltd. are committed to equality, diversity and anti-discrimination in all their policies and practices. Membership of the OWCH Group requires that individual members actively support equality and diversity and conform to the Group’s policy. The Limited Company will ensure that it meets its legal obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and any other existing or future relevant laws.

MISSION

• Our objective is to establish and maintain a mutually supportive housing environment for women over 50 years of age.
• We will ensure that any woman over 50 years applying for membership of the OWCH Group and who meets our conditions for membership and for housing will not be treated unfairly on grounds of colour, race, ethnic identity, nationality, language, disability, health status, sexual orientation, culture, educational background, social class, religion or personal belief.
• We understand the need to be mindful of, and patient with, the changing realities of ageing as it affects our members and of the consequent development of various sorts of disabilities and differences, which will require us to behave thoughtfully, respectfully and non-patronisingly towards each other.
• We recognize that unfair discrimination exists against certain groups in society and also recognize that such discrimination will not be overcome by goodwill alone. We strive by monitoring and training to become anti-discriminatory and inclusive of communities and groups that have become marginalized in society.
• We review our commitment to these principles and procedures at regular intervals as a group and annually as individual members.

SCOPE

We take positive action to promote equality of opportunity and the involvement of all members in our activities, and in the way in which these activities are designed, delivered and managed. We undertake to offer appropriate outreach activities.
We strive to create an organisational environment where there is scope for debate and dialogue and a culture of anti-discriminatory practices.

PUBLIC IMAGE
This policy is incorporated into the OWCH Group’s policies and is available on the public website. Most of the OWCH Group’s written communication is via email and the website. We will assist anyone with a disability to make use of this method of communication.

We endeavour to ensure that any publicity or promotional materials that we produce do not play on stereotypes or prejudices and strive to promote positive, non-discriminatory messages.

Similarly, our housing environment will be free of discriminatory and oppressive imagery and culture.

PRACTICE
Equality and diversity - recruitment and membership
We make positive efforts to welcome women from the widest community so that our membership reflects the diversity of the community in which we live. We aim to work with minority groups to identify and, where possible, meet their needs.

Each new and existing member of the OWCH Group shall be required to affirm her commitment to and demonstrate her understanding of the Group’s Equality and Diversity principles both on the initial membership interview form, and thereafter annually in November.

Equality and diversity recruitment monitoring
To help fulfil our commitment to Equality and Diversity, we monitor confidential records to collect data on ethnic/racial origin and on any disability of those joining the OWCH Group.

Equality and diversity training
In order to ensure that the OWCH Group policy on Equality and Diversity is upheld and maintained we aim to hold workshops on one or more aspects of Equality and Diversity at regular intervals.

Participation
It is a condition of membership that all members participate in the OWCH Group’s affairs and have equal access to its services and facilities.

We take positive steps to further these aims, including:
- Ensuring that all new members are welcomed and introduced to the proceedings by a designated member (Buddy) whose role it is to maintain contact with them;
- Providing clear notices of all Group meetings to all members and interested parties;
- Ensuring that all members are able to participate freely in the Group’s democratic procedures;
- Making sure that the website is up to date with all relevant information.