



Equal Opportunities

The Council is required by law, to promote equality and social justice throughout all our services. The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty thereby eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Where our housing service is concerned, we will ensure that equality matters are integrated within all our policies and practices.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires that we:

“act in a manner which encourages equal opportunities and in particular the observance of the requirements of the law for the time being related to equal opportunities” (Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, Section 39).

We are committed to the promotion of communities that are popular and inclusive by creating an environment where people can live and work free from any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The Scottish Housing Regulator has published specific equality requirements that social landlords must meet.

We use this framework so that:

“Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services” (Scottish Social Housing Charter, 2017).

This leaflet provides you with general information about what this means for our tenants and service users.

The Council is generally referred to as “we” throughout this leaflet. Tenants are normally referred to as “you”.

Equal Opportunity Defined

Equal opportunity is defined by the Scotland Act 1998 and covers all of the grounds on which discrimination may occur. The Equality Act 2010 introduces 9 protected characteristics which housing providers must ensure are used to proactively remove discrimination and promote equality. These are:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender reassignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

In line with the law, we will not unfairly or unlawfully discriminate against people on any of these grounds.

Legal Requirements

Our legal requirements in respect of age, disability and race for example, requires us to ensure our services are accessible. This includes having information published in plain language and in alternative formats such as in large print, audio-format or Braille. Interpreters and signers can be used too, as appropriate, to ensure that our services are accessible to all service users.

Orkney Islands Council Policy and Practices

We have a detailed Council policy that covers all of our services, including that of Housing Services.

In line with this policy, we are committed to “mainstream”, that is, incorporate equality into all areas of our service provision. We will continually review the way our services are delivered to make sure that our practices are not discriminatory in their effects.

Should discrimination occur, we will take immediate action to stop the discrimination. We view discrimination as being totally unacceptable and, if necessary, legal action will be taken to deal with it.

In order to tackle discrimination, we have set up a comprehensive monitoring system. For example, we monitor types of complaints received and actions taken to resolve these complaints. Again, we monitor house lets to ensure that the way we let houses is not discriminatory.

Positive Action

We actively promote positive action. Positive action involves encouraging groups that are under-represented in housing to take advantage of opportunities for training and employment. This might involve liaising with groups representative of race equality matters, for instance, to promote employment opportunities in housing for people from black and minority ethnic communities.

Equality Action Plan

We have developed an equality action plan to ensure that we continue to improve our processes in relation to equalities. Part of this requires improved monitoring of equality data in line with the Scottish Housing Regulator's requirements. We are committed to meeting these requirements.

Information and Advice

We offer advice and information about a broad range of equality matters. For more information you should contact Housing Services.

Useful contacts in the area of equal opportunities are as follows:

Housing Services

- Address: Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856873535.
- Email: housing@orkney.gov.uk.

Citizen's Advice Bureau

- Address: Anchor Buildings, Bridge Street, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856875266.

Equalities and Human Rights Commission

- Address: The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street, Glasgow, G2 8DU.
- Telephone: 08088000082.
- Email: scotland@equalityhumanrights.com.
- Website: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/commission-scotland>.

Orkney Disability Forum

- Address: 1 Mackays Buildings, Junction Road, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856870340.
- Email: info@odforkney.com.

The Talking Newspaper

- Address: Orkney Library, 44 Junction Road, Kirkwall.
- Telephone: 01856873166.

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