



**GREENSQUARE GROUP
GENDER EQUALITY
SCHEME**

MARCH 2008

Introduction

GreenSquare Group is made up of two Registered Social Landlords: Westlea Housing, and Oxford Citizens Housing Association (OCHA). These two organisations own and manage all the social housing properties in the group. They are firmly committed to promoting gender equality and to fulfilling our duties to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex; and
- promote equality of opportunity between women and men in all of our functions.

In order to deliver this, we have specific duties to publish this gender equality scheme, setting out our gender equality objectives, and to:

- address the causes of any gender pay gap;
- gather and use information on how our policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in our delivery of services;
- consult stakeholders in setting our gender equality objectives;
- assess the impact of our current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality;
- implement the actions set out in our scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so; and
- report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

Gender equality refers to equality between men and women, but also transgender people.

Gender: there are two aspects to gender. The first is gender identity, which is how a person thinks about and experiences their own gender; and the second is gender role, which is the way that the person lives in society and interacts with others, based on their gender identity. It is not as clear cut as someone's anatomical sex, and is not necessarily a "one or the other" choice. Some people have a gender identity that is neither clearly female nor clearly male.

For the purpose of the law, however, people can only be male or female. The overwhelming majority of people have a gender that accords with their anatomical sex.

Transgender: this is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex. The term includes (but is not limited to) transsexual people and people who cross-dress. Many transgender people can identify as female-to-male (FtM) or male-to-female (MtF). Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically. Some people have not, and never intend to, undergo gender reassignment.

What do we know about gender?

Our residents

Westlea include a question on gender in their annual tenant survey. This shows that:

	Main tenant	Partner/spouse*
Male	38%	40%
Female	62%	60%

*35% of people who answered the main tenant question indicated the gender of their partner or spouse.

This indicates that Westlea have a lot more females living in their properties, either as the main tenant or as a partner.

In terms of satisfaction, 84% of Westlea's tenants were satisfied with the overall service that they provide. Men were slightly more satisfied at 85%, than women at 84%. We can see from this that there is not much difference in satisfaction.

OCHA included a question on gender in their 2003 tenant survey, although not their more recent one in 2006. This showed that:

	Main tenant	Partner/spouse*
Male	28%	66%
Female	72%	34%

*36% of people who answered the main tenant question indicated the gender of their partner or spouse.

At OCHA, overall satisfaction was 73%. Again, men were more satisfied, although by a bigger margin at 76% in comparison to 72% for women.

Neither organisation have asked whether tenants are transgender up until now; although Westlea have included the question in their 2008 tenant survey. The results will be analysed when complete.

Resident consultation

We have not carried out extensive consultation into gender equality, as none of the preliminary evidence showed that there were major issues for GreenSquare.

We consulted Westlea's main residents' group, and asked whether they thought:

- That there are areas within Westlea where people are disadvantaged because they are male, female or transgender?
- That there is anything that we can do to make sure that men, women and transgender people are treated equally?
- That there was any specific further consultation we should do on this subject?

Of the fourteen responses received, no-one thought that there were areas where people are disadvantaged because of their gender. Few people had any suggestions about how things could be improved. The suggestions made were:

- To promote good practice
- To promote training programmes for everyone in the organisation and to make sure everyone attends so that everyone has consistent and up to date information

The group did not feel that a specific consultation exercise was needed on this.

The OCHA Residents' Panel also discussed the Gender Equality Scheme at their meeting in February 2008. They did not identify any further issues or areas for investigation. They noted that the scheme also covers transgender people and the need to be clear about how we define this.

Impact assessments

We need to look at what we do to make sure it does not have a negative effect on men, women or transgender people and that we are not missing a chance to make a positive difference. This means that we need to carry out assessments (known as 'impact assessments') of our:

- plans, policies and procedures;
- projects;
- practices (the way we do things); and
- decisions

that have a major effect on our residents.

We have developed a way of carrying out impact assessments. It asks staff to think about the positive and negative effects of what they are doing. If there are negative effects, we must put an action plan in place to put them right. If we cannot do this, we must rethink what we are planning to do. We can also consult other organisations to find other ways to do things.

We will carry out impact assessments as part of our programme of reviewing policies, projects and services.

Service areas

We have looked at key areas of our business with staff and managers, to decide if there are any areas where a particular gender may be disadvantaged.

Access to housing

We allocate our homes based on need. Westlea currently run the housing needs register on behalf of the local council, and can therefore allocate their properties directly to people in housing need. At OCHA, allocations are usually made through choice based lettings schemes run by the local authorities. The exception is in West Oxfordshire where the council uses a common waiting list and OCHA receives nominations.

Neither organisation makes decisions about housing need based directly on gender. However, gender does have an effect, as households with children are given higher priority. As many applicants are single parents, this does advantage women, as they are more likely to be the parent who looks after the children in the case of relationship breakdowns. Pregnant women are also given higher priority. This situation does lead to a negative impact on single men. However, these decisions are based on the need of the children.

Westlea analysed their lettings over the last year (excluding lettings to couples) and the results showed that generally the majority of lettings are to female applicants:

- 16-19 years old: 95% (of these, 50% to women with children)
- 20-44 years old: 69% (of these, 84% to women with children)
- 45-64 years old: 46% (of these, 26% to women with children)
- 65-74 years old: 57%
- 75+ years old: 83%

This shows that far fewer single men between 16-19 are being housed. However, these figures exclude supported housing, which does provide more housing for homeless young men. This is an area to look at in the future.

There is also an issue about whether we take account of men who have children to visit at the weekends, and this is an issue that need to be examined.

In both organisations, joint tenancies can be issued to couples (married, cohabiting or same-sex) or to two family members. There are situations where joint tenancies would not be issued, but these would not impact differently on people of different genders.

Westlea won't be managing the waiting list for much longer, which will affect the amount of influence that they are able to have on who a property is let to, as they will have to work within a regional choice based letting scheme.

Anti-social behaviour and harassment

Westlea are purchasing REACT software to help improve anti-social behaviour monitoring. OCHA are investigating whether it would be useful to also purchase this software. When this is in place, we should be able to analyse the following information by gender:

- Resident satisfaction with how we deal with anti-social behaviour
- Evictions applied for/executed
- Anti-social behaviour orders issued
- Injunctions issued
- Notices seeking possession for nuisance issued
- Suspended possession orders for nuisance issued
- Acceptable behaviour contracts in force
- Number of mediation cases

There may be an issue in defining the gender of the victims and perpetrators, as often they are couples, so judgement in deciding who is the “main” contact will be needed.

Some of the issues identified are:

- Sometimes lone women are targeted as victims of ASB and harassment, especially where they have young children, as they are perceived to be vulnerable.
- Where a family with children are involved, it can make it harder to tackle the problem. It may stop people accepting a transfer because they don't want to move their children to another school. This may have a negative impact on single parents, who are more likely to be women. We need to look at a wider range of solutions in these cases.
- Our harassment policies do not specifically mention that we will not tolerate harassment of transgender people.

Customer care and communications

Both organisations produce corporate literature in “plain English” and which is non-gender specific (using words such as “resident” and “you” rather than “he” and “she.”

OCHA's tenant survey 2003 showed that significantly more women contacted the office by telephone than men. The telephone was still the most popular contact method for men, but they had visited the office more than women. Both organisations try to offer a wide range of contact methods (post, email, telephone, text, website, home visits, office visits) to accommodate the range of customer contact needs.

Complaints

Westlea looked at the number of complaints received in terms of gender. This again raised the issue that often complaints are made by couples, so this has been taken account of in the figures.

Complainant	Number of complaints	Stage two	Stage three	Ombudsman	Upheld	Ongoing
Male	13 (31%)	2		2	4 (44%)	4
Female	19 (45%)	2			11 (69%)	3
Couple (equal contact)	5 (12%)	1			4 (100%)	1
Couple (male main contact)	3 (7%)	1			1 (100%)	2
Couple (female main contact)	2 (5%)		1		1 (100%)	1
TOTAL	42	6	1	2	21	11

We can see from this that more complaints are made by women; and also that Westlea uphold more complaints made by women than men. This may have contributed to the fact that only men have taken their complaint on to the Housing Ombudsman. They also upheld 100% of complaints made by couples. It is hard to make any judgement about this without detailed analysis of the nature of the complaints.

In terms of satisfaction with complaints handling, of nine forms returned in the quarter ending December 2007, six were returned by women, two by men, and one by a couple. For both the men and women 50% were satisfied and 50% were not. The couple were satisfied. Obviously these figures are not robust enough to rely on, but we are currently working on improving the response rate to this survey, and will continue to monitor the situation.

OCHA are planning to start monitoring complaints by gender.

Domestic violence and refuges

Domestic violence is an issue that affects both men and women, although reports from men are rare. However, both organisations' policy and leaflets clearly state that we recognise it as an issue for both genders and that we can offer help and support to anyone who reports a problem. The key is to get more people to report the problem to us, whether male or female, and prevent it being something that people are scared or ashamed to report.

OCHA runs a refuge in partnership with Oxfordshire Women's Aid. Westlea also run two refuges. These are for women only, and there is no evidence of demand for a male refuge; although this will need to be regularly reviewed. Male victims could be put forward for temporary accommodation instead. Each case will be judged individually, for example if there are children involved. Westlea would refer male or female domestic violence victims to Splitz, a partner agency specialising in family support. Their floating support workers can also help to tackle domestic violence issues and help people access alternative accommodation.

Housing and support

At the moment, Westlea have four units for single homeless men. These are let through 100% nominations from the local authority; but there is not high demand for them. A 15 unit hostel with separate accommodation for men and women is planned for 2009. This would be direct access (i.e. self-referral).

They also offer teenage parent accommodation in West Wiltshire. It tends to focus on single mothers, but it may be possible to offer accommodation for young men as well.

Westlea are aware of one transgender resident living in a sheltered schemes, but have never become aware of any issues between this resident and others at the scheme.

At OCHA, Housing Needs Assessments (HNA) are carried out on single people where the information suggests they will need support, if they are going to be housed in certain schemes or at any new build site . It is possible that a single male may be more likely to be assessed than a single female, and the wording of the procedure will be strengthened to ensure all single people are assessed.

The housing needs assessment may lead to a decision that a particular offer is unsuitable for someone. There is a clear audit trail supporting this decision. If OCHA declines to accept someone because of the outcome of the HNA this is agreed with the local authority.

Repairs

Westlea offer an in-house repairs service. At the moment, they cannot break down repairs jobs completed by gender. This will, however, be possible with their new ICT system.

Repairs satisfaction data can be analysed by gender (for sole tenants only). Between May and September 2007:

- In terms of overall satisfaction with the repair, all the men were satisfied and 89% of the women were satisfied.
- All men were satisfied with how the works staff cleared up after the job, and 90% of women.
- Everyone who responded was happy with the politeness of the works staff.

Westlea employ very few female works staff at the moment. There is one female painter/decorator, and the gas contractors, Ultrawarm, employ one female gas engineer.

This does raise an issue about how to handle a customer request that male works staff did not come to their home – for example because of their religion, or because they have suffered from domestic violence. Currently, the repairs

team would explore options to deal with a situation such as this – for example, if the resident could have a friend present, if they wouldn't mind leaving us a key to do the work while they were out, or if a female housing officer accompanied the workman.

Repairs appointments can be booked around childcare arrangements, for example avoiding the school run. Details like this are added to the notes field of job tickets.

In terms of priorities, any jobs that relate to home security are all done as emergencies, regardless of whether the customer is male or female.

Resident involvement

Both Westlea and OCHA arrange meetings at a variety of times and in accessible venues, to try to enable as many residents as possible to attend around work and caring commitments. Both also pay care costs (for children or adults) to allow people to attend.

OCHA include information on gender in their resident involvement impact assessments where possible, for example recording the gender of residents involved in formal groups and other events.

Westlea have analysed their database of residents who have been involved during the last 12 months, and this shows that 66% were women and 34% were men. However, this imbalance evens out within the District Forum, where the membership is 47% male and 53% female. This is good in the sense of being more equal, but may point to the fact that men find it easier to access the higher level and more influential involvement methods. We need to consider how we can make sure women are empowered to do this. On the other hand, 80% of the elected officers of the District Forum are female.

It is important that certain groups don't become dominated by a particular gender. For example, Westlea are establishing a lone parents forum. They need to think about how to target lone dads and make sure this doesn't become a mother and baby group. OCHA recognise that their repairs and maintenance group could become quite male-dominated and wherever possible ask contractors to be represented by a man and a woman.

Employment

An *Inside Housing* survey of the 50 largest housing associations in February 2008, showed that only 16% of Chief Executives are women, 37% of senior management and 51% of middle management.

GreenSquare has a male Chief Executive. Of the senior management team (Directors and Heads of Service), 38% are female and 62% male. This therefore fits the general pattern within the housing association sector, but is certainly something that could be improved.

At Westlea, 46% of staff are male and 54% are female. At OCHA, 30% are male and 70% are female. We will need to analyse this again once the assimilation process is complete, to take account of the new parent company. It is likely that Westlea employ more men because of their in-house trade staff, who are almost all male. Housing staff in both organisations still tend to be female. Therefore there is work to do in attracting the under-represented gender to these sections. It is worth noting that three out of four surveyors in OCHA are female in a mainly male profession.

We need to complete an assessment to check whether there is a gender pay gap between men and women across the organisation. However, there is work we need to do first in terms of converging terms and conditions across GreenSquare, in order to create a “level playing field” to make this assessment.

Board

An *Inside Housing* survey of the 50 largest housing associations in February 2008, showed that 30% of Board members are women.

Within the GreenSquare Group, the boards have the following gender balance for non-executive members:

Board	Male	Female
GreenSquare	6	2
	75%	25%
Westlea	5	6 (+1 female co-optee)
	45%	55%
OCHA	5	5 (+1 female co-optee)
	50%	50%
Oakus	4	1
	80%	20%
OVERALL*	18	13
	58%	42%

* The total figure only counts members who sit on more than one board once (there are three such members).

These figures do not include vacancies: one at GreenSquare and two at OCHA.

OCHA currently has the most even gender distribution. Westlea’s Board has the most women, and Oakus’ the least. Overall, the boards are still male-dominated; but the proportion of women is above the sector average.

The two vacancies at OCHA are for resident board members. They are being recruited from the full resident population and all residents will have a vote. The General Membership Committee (GMC) which appoints board members will produce a shortlist which is voted on by all residents.

Action plan

Action	By	By when
Both organisations		
Make sure that harassment policies specifically cover gender (including transgender) harassment; and research and publicise transgender helplines for this issues.	Mark Lake (Westlea) Phil Hardy (OCHA)	June 2008
Make sure all surveys include a monitoring question to ask whether the respondent is male, female or transgender	Clare Chambers/ Clare Leal	From now
Make sure that housing management systems include fields for male, female and transgender	Westlea GLOW team David Berrill - OCHA	June 2008 June 2008
Add statement to complaints policy to state that we will try to arrange meetings at a time and place convenient for everyone and try to accommodate issues such as childcare	Andrew Smith	April 2008
Promote to staff and residents that residents can specifically ask to meet with a male or female staff member if required.	Housing teams	Immediate
Review domestic violence monitoring to make the gender of the person reporting the violence clear and indicate whether it is in a heterosexual or same-sex relationship or within a family situation	Alex Pointing (Westlea) Karina Adie/Jo Branston (OCHA)	December 08 (Westlea)
Examine how to attract more men to work in the housing and customer service teams	Head of HR	April 2010
Make sure that we are delivering equal pay for men and women across the organisation through a gender pay assessment	Head of HR	March 2010
Westlea		
Implement REACT anti-social behaviour software and use this to complete more detailed analysis of cases by gender	Mark Lake/ Anna Kelly	June 2008
Put domestic violence leaflet on website	Nick Taylor	Immediate
Find out whether there is any restriction on the teenage parent accommodation in West Wiltshire that means it cannot be used to house males.	Mark Lake	April 2008
Review gender issues and monitoring in relation to vulnerable applicants policy	Jo Smith	September 2008
Analyse supported housing lettings by gender	Sue Peerman	December 2008

Update gender (and other equality and diversity) data for all residents	Clare Chambers	December 2008 ?
Think through ways to get men involved in the lone parents forum	Sarah Offord	Ongoing
Use new housing management system to log men with visiting children and lone fathers	GLOW team	December 2008
Examine how to increase the number of female workers in the DLO	HR	April 2010
OCHA		
Investigate the purchase of specialist anti-social behaviour monitoring software	Phil Hardy	June 2008
Analyse recent anti-social behaviour cases by gender, including more qualitative analysis of whether we react differently to male or female victims or perpetrators in terms of measures taken or support provided.	Phil Hardy	Dependent on software purchase
Start monitoring complaints by gender	Clare Leal/MIC	April 2008
Look at gender issues and preferences as part of review of consultation and feedback methods.	Wendy Spray	September 2009
Make a stronger reference to the fact that men can experience domestic violence in leaflet	Karina Adie	June 2008
Strengthen the procedure so that all single people receive a Housing Needs Assessment, plus everyone who is to be offered housing on a new site or on one of a list of sites agreed by the Voids and Allocation Team Leader.	Ian Gilders	April 2008
Review information on people refused after a housing needs assessment and report in E&D report each year.	Ian Gilders	June 2008
Add a vulnerability code to the housing management system for residents who would prefer to be visited by a female only (identifying the need for this through Housing Needs Assessments and support plans)	Clare Leal	Done
Include question on gender in next tenant survey	Clare Leal	December 2008
Review gender balance in Citizens and compare this with the gender balance among our residents	Communications Officer/Wendy Spray	October 2008