

'CHANGING MINDS' REPORT TACKLES BME JOBS INEQUALITY

New report launches Good Practice guidelines for housing sector employers

EDINBURGH, 07 April 2008 - A new hard-hitting report has been launched urging housing employers in Scotland to adopt 'Good Practice Guidelines' to tackle the under-representation of people of black and minority ethnic (BME) origin in the workforce.

The report, 'Changing Minds: Attitudes to BME Employment', found widespread under-representation of people of BME origin across Scottish housing associations and recommends 10 'Good Practice Guidelines' to bring about positive change.

The report has been published jointly by the Equal Opportunities Team (a joint venture by Trust, Hanover Scotland and Bield Housing Associations), the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA).

It is now available to all employers seeking to follow good practice on equality issues. The 10 'Good Practice Guidelines' include advice on challenging stereotypes, introducing cultural awareness training, and ensuring the process for shortlisting job candidates is fair and transparent.

Housing Equal Opportunities Manager Rohini Sharma-Joshi said: "Despite legislation and the good intentions of employers, our report reveals an acute need for fundamental changes in organisational culture and behaviour if we are to achieve a level playing field for BME people.

She added: "Our 'Good Practice Guidelines' provide a blueprint for action. We urge employers to adopt them as a vital step towards ending discrimination and towards creating a workforce which more accurately represents its users. Scotland is becoming increasingly multi-cultural and employers need to adopt these guidelines to ensure they adapt accordingly."

The report found that more than 40 housing associations in Scotland do not employ a single person of BME origin, while in Glasgow, where more than five percent of households are of BME origin, just 1.2% of housing associations employ BME staff.

It drew on research from a series of Job Fairs held in Scotland's major cities from 2004 to 2007 and designed to encourage BME people into the housing sector and also a highly successful 'Job Opportunities Project' in Lothians which arranged work placements for people of BME origin.

Tim Pogson of the Chartered Institute of Housing said: "The report is not only a thought-provoking piece of research but a wake-up call to employers on equality issues. It provides a practical guide on issues such as job advertisements, interview techniques, training and how to identify barriers to employment for BME people."

Jacqui Watt, Chief Executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations said: "There is no room in the affordable housing sector for any kind of discrimination. The SFHA supports its members to ensure discrimination is no longer an issue as we work towards our goal of building more desperately-needed affordable houses throughout Scotland.
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Watt added: "We welcome any positive steps to achieve equality in the workplace such as the Good Practice Guidelines. We will also continue to work with organisations offering research and practical advice to eliminate the under-representation of BME people in the workplace."

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Copies of the report “Changing Minds: Attitudes to BME Employment” are available on the following websites:

www.equalityscotland.com
www.cihscotland.org
www.sfha.co.uk

About the jointly-funded Equal Opportunities Programme:

Trust, Hanover (Scotland) and Bield Housing Associations set up a joint Equal Opportunities Programme seven years ago. The Edinburgh-based team, which is headed by Housing Equal Opportunities Manager Rohini Sharma Joshi, has won numerous awards for its pioneering work to encourage and promote increased participation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in the housing sector. It has also made wider contributions to integrate BME people through the creation of multi-lingual aids to overcome language barriers such as the launch of a ‘Happy to Translate’ logo which is used by organisations including the police and the National Health Service.

For more information on the Equal Opportunities Programme or the three housing associations which fund it see the following websites:

Equality Scotland www.equalityscotland.com
Trust Housing Association www.trustha.org.uk
Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association www.hsha.org.uk
Bield Housing Association www.bield.co.uk

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