



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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## 1.0 Introduction

### Purpose

1.1 Our vision of improving lives through providing sustainable homes and places is fully inclusive. This policy outlines our commitment to achieving, sustaining, and improving equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in everything we do and details how EDI considerations are embedded within our culture, processes, and procedures to ensure that we deliver our vision in line with our commitments and are compliant with all applicable legislation and regulation.

### Related Policies and Procedures

1.2 This EDI policy informs all our procurement, customer-focused activity and recruitment and employment policies and procedures. In particular, it has a fundamental interrelationship with the Customer Voice – Involvement and Engagement Policy, through which the diverse views our customers and communities are sought and valued, building relationships, respect, and trust, whilst facilitating continuous and, where appropriate, amplified conversations. EDI is also central to our Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy, as set out at section seven of this policy.

1.3 The policy is underpinned by the Equality Impact Assessment Procedure and supported by an annual EDI action plan.

## 2.0 EDI in Legislation, Regulation and Good Practice

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals in the workplace and in wider society, advancing equality of opportunity for all. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of the following protected characteristics:

- age;
- disability;
- gender re-assignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation

### The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

2.2 While we are not a public body, we are required to comply with PSED, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, in the provision, allocation, and management of social housing. The PSED requires us to give due regard to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

### The Social Housing Regulation Act and Regulatory Standards

2.3 The Charter for Social Housing Residents emphasised the importance of treating all tenants fairly and with respect and this will be enshrined within legislation following the enactment of the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill. The Act will introduce a range of measures to give tenants greater powers, improve access to swift and fair redress, and enhance the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).

2.4 The RSH's existing Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Consumer Standard requires us, both in providing services and communicating with tenants, to:

- treat all our tenants with fairness and respect; and
- demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

2.5 The Act will empower the RSH to strengthen the Consumer Standards and proactively regulate them, and EDI will be central to these strengthened standards.

### The National Housing Federation (NHF)'s Code of Governance 2020

2.6 We have adopted the NHF's Code of Governance 2020 and will seek to comply with Principle 1.3 of the Code, which sets out provisions in relation to EDI, including:

- the Board will have a clear and active commitment to achieve equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion in all our activities, as well as in its own composition;
- we will have in place policies and statements which meaningfully demonstrate our commitment and set priorities and objectives for the organisation to achieve;
- the Board will seek regular assurance about how these commitments and objectives are being delivered in practice and will track progress against the priorities it has set;

and

- we will publish annually information about our work to deliver our commitments and objectives, and the progress we have made.

### The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)'s Professional Standards

2.7 The CIH's Professional Standards clearly set out the behaviours, attitudes, values, and skills critical to providing inclusive and high-quality landlord services. These standards are fully reflected in our employee competency framework and role profiles.

### 3.0 Our EDI Commitments

3.1 As a place shaper, we will:

- value and celebrate the diversity of our communities;
- promote tolerance, fairness, and social cohesion; and
- encourage and support our tenants and all local residents to thrive

3.2 As a commissioner and provider of services, we will:

- ensure that EDI is a fundamental underpinning principle of all services;
- ensure that we fully understand the needs of our communities and customers;
- ensure that a diverse customer voice informs our key decisions;
- ensure that our services are personalised to customer needs wherever practicable;
- ensure that our services can be easily accessed by all customers;
- provide clear, accessible information about our services;
- ensure that all those delivering our services understand their EDI responsibilities;
- ensure that all customers are treated fairly, and with dignity and respect;
- work with partners to support tenants where needed to sustain their tenancies; and
- respond promptly and effectively to feedback to ensure continuous improvement

3.3 As a recruiter and employer, we will:

- ensure that our recruitment and employment practices are fair and transparent;
- endeavour to recruit Board members and a workforce that reflect the diversity of the communities we serve;
- communicate clearly and openly with our employees;
- ensure our employees are role models for professional standards and our values;
- provide appropriate training on EDI to Board members and employees;
- ensure fair access to all learning and development opportunities;

- ensure that our employees are protected from discrimination, harassment or victimisation as far as is reasonably possible to do so; and
- respond promptly and effectively to feedback to ensure continuous improvement

### 4.0 Our Strategic Objectives

4.1 Our commitments are fully embedded within our business strategy, Plan A, its delivery plans and supporting policies and procedures, with appropriate equality impact assessments undertaken wherever relevant. The key equality objectives and targeted outcomes from the six chapters of Plan A 2022/25 are set out below.

#### Transforming Customer Experience and Digital Services

4.2 This strategy uses customer voice and feedback to improve access to services and shape them to ensure they are fit for the future and meet diverse customer aspirations.

#### Planet A

4.3 This strategy provides opportunities for all tenants to live more sustainably in their homes and ensure that energy efficiency solutions are targeted to and benefit those most in need.

#### Supporting Sustainable Places

4.4 This strategy amplifies the customer voice in local communities, ensuring that the diverse needs and aspirations of individual residents, and groups with shared protected characteristics and are reflected in place-based initiatives and projects.

#### Supporting Sustainable Tenancies

4.5 This strategy ensures that customer insight is used to provide personalised, targeted support to promote tenant wellbeing and sustain tenancies.

#### Providing Quality Sustainable Homes

4.6 This strategy ensures that health and safety checks, asset solutions programmes and energy efficiency improvements are designed and delivered in line with the needs and choices of our diverse customer base.

#### Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes

4.7 This strategy ensures that the design and build of affordable homes is informed by the diverse needs and, wherever appropriate, the informed choices of our customers.

## 5.0 Our Values

5.1 Our values of trust, respect, innovation and working together are fully aligned with the ethos of the CSHR and the CiH's Professional Standards and will ensure our employees deliver Plan A in a fair and equitable way.

## 6.0 Responsibilities

6.1 Board members are role models for EDI behaviours and values and hold Executive Management Team and Senior Leadership Team to account creating an inclusive culture that delivers equitable outcomes for all.

6.2 Managers are responsible for designing and delivering inclusive and equitable services and for managing their teams in ways that break down barriers and are informed by a diverse range of views.

6.3 Employees are responsible for working towards creating positive outcomes for all customers, personalising service delivery wherever required.

6.4 All Board members, members of Executive Management and Senior Leadership Teams, managers and employees are collectively responsible for maintaining a culture free from inappropriate, offensive, or discriminatory behaviour and promoting a positive image of social housing, free from negative stereotyping and stigma.

## 7.0 Complaints

7.1 To ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, requests arising via the complaints process for reasonable adjustments to policies and processes that support fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and other customers will be supported and complaints investigators will be trained and developed to manage such requests sensitively and effectively.

7.2 Any restrictions placed on customer contact due to unacceptable behaviour will be appropriate to their needs and be reasonable and proportionate, considering protected characteristics where appropriate.

7.3 Any feedback or complaint relating to discrimination or unfair treatment in service delivery will be handled in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Customer Complaints and Feedback.

7.4 Any feedback or complaint relating to discrimination or unfair treatment during employment will be handled in accordance with the Dignity at Work or Grievance Procedure.

## 8.0 Monitoring and Review

8.1 This effectiveness of this policy will be monitored via an annual EDI report considered by the Housing and Communities Committee. This report summarises our EDI targets and the work that has been undertaken and outcomes achieved in the previous year, and sets out areas for improvement in an EDI action plan for the coming year.

8.2 This policy will be reviewed no less than every three years. There will be an automatic review of this policy if there is any change to statutory or regulatory provisions, or if other best practice information becomes available that will affect or enhance the policy.

End of Policy