

Equality, diversity & inclusion Policy

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1 Policy information

Date of issue	February 2021
Replacing/Updating	Replacing Equality & Diversity Policy
Review Date	February 2024
Drafted by	HR & OD Manager
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Responsible Director	Executive Director of Culture & Communications
Equality Analysis Date	10 February 2022
Circulation List	Available electronically on SharePoint

2 Policy Statement

This policy sets out how South Liverpool Homes (SLH) is committed to supporting and promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Our organisation and the support we give to our colleagues and customers will be impartial, neutral, and universal. This commitment is embraced by our Board and informs all our activities.

EDI requires a strong commitment and concerted action to build an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, diversity is valued, and where everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice or discrimination. Every colleague therefore has a responsibility for making SLH an inclusive environment where all customers and colleagues feel welcome and able to be their authentic selves.

This policy applies to everyone who receives a service from us, is employed by us or volunteers their services. We will also seek to ensure that anyone who works on our behalf demonstrates a clear commitment to ED&I.

3 Policy aims

Our work to embed equality, diversity and inclusion is anchored in the duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

We aim to:

- Prevent discrimination, eliminate prejudice, promote inclusion and celebrate diversity within the organisation.
- Treat all people fairly and with respect taking account of the diverse nature of their culture and background.

This includes: our people, those with whom we interact (e.g., service users and customers) and other stakeholders

- Consider and embed equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.
- Make colleagues aware of their responsibilities, and know how and where to seek support to actively uphold and champion equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ensure that we attract and retain people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences at all levels within the organisation
- Actively promote our services and opportunities to a wide range of diverse communities from all backgrounds to ensure we can reach as many people as we reasonably can.
- Ensure robust diversity-related data collection to better understand our customers and colleagues

It is an expectation that all colleagues, including those who may be working on behalf of SLH, will behave in an acceptable manner, treating others with courtesy, respect and consideration and conducting themselves professionally when interacting with customers, colleagues, and the wider community.

Unacceptable behaviour including bullying, harassment and victimisation or discrimination including but not limited to the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 will not be tolerated and any allegations will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately under the relevant procedures.

4 Equality, diversity & inclusion policy

4.1 Our standards

As an organisation committed to achieving inclusivity, our services will take a person-centred approach, with diversity considerations incorporated into processes and delivery to ensure they are accessible to all. This will prevent discrimination and protect the dignity of our customers and colleagues. We expect all our colleagues will use appropriately inclusive language and behave in a way that will uphold the dignity of colleagues, customers, and stakeholders.

4.2 Monitoring

We aim to provide an inclusive environment for all. Completing EDI monitoring information will help us to achieve this, as well as helping us meet our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between diverse groups.

We ask customers, colleagues, and job applicants about their personal characteristics so that we can:

- build a picture of our diversity profile
- evaluate how our policies and processes affect diverse groups of colleagues
- identify and resource the services we need to best support our colleagues and customers

Whilst we actively seek to improve the proportion of our customers and colleagues who provide responses to our EDI monitoring questions, we also recognise that some may not want to provide this personal information. We respect that decision and value all who disclose this information and those who do not.

4.3 Our service commitments

We are committed to working towards the reduction and elimination of any disadvantage that particular groups within the communities we serve may experience. We will seek to achieve this by:

- Ensuring access to our services for vulnerable and disabled persons and providing specialist support services to disadvantaged groups where

possible through specialist teams and establishing links with referring agencies.

- Marketing our homes using a variety of mechanisms, assessing, and analysing housing need through a fair and consistent process.
- Ensuring all our written and digital communications follow accessibility guidelines and communication accessibility standards. Providing information in alternative formats on request such as signing and other translation services to ensure that all sections of the community can gain access to our services.
- Responding to local and community needs in the allocation of our homes and applying a local lettings scheme to create sustainable communities and provide support to certain customer groups through priority allocations.
- Closely monitoring and reporting on the allocation of our homes to ensure equity in the allocation process.
- Monitoring and reporting on customer satisfaction levels on a regular basis with a view to improving services.
- Regularly consulting with all customers and residents on the services they receive through informal and formal involvement. Encouraging them to participate in the decision-making process.
- Customer Profiling which enables us to keep up to date with the diversity profile of our customers enabling us to respond accordingly. Whilst we are keen to encourage the collection of this information, we recognise that the decision to disclose this sensitive information is a personal and individual decision. Customers are reassured that disclosure of this information is voluntary and is subject to the strictest levels of confidence and security and in compliance with GDPR legislation and the Information Security Policy.
- Supporting our customers to maintain independence through the implementation of our Adaptations Policy which aims to provide support and alterations to their home enabling them to live in environment which is suitable for their needs.

4.4 Meeting housing needs

We will liaise with local government and statutory agencies to share their assessment of the housing needs of local communities, especially those groups facing discrimination so that these are recognised and prioritised. We will regularly review how we can contribute to meeting these needs by using our existing stock or working in partnership with specialist agencies where we feel they are better equipped than ourselves to meet the needs.

In developing new homes, we will ensure that the design of homes meets the cultural and other needs of the households we are going to be rehousing. In developing new homes, we will ensure that we follow guidance for people with disabilities e.g., that all ground floor accommodation is accessible to people in wheelchairs and is developed to lifetime home standards.

4.5 Access to housing

As a housing association we will support the local community by providing safe and affordable homes to vulnerable groups and those on low income. We will promote fair access to housing by monitoring the allocation of our homes, including the quality of accommodation, to ensure that discrimination does not occur. Ensuring that our priority system for assessing the rehousing needs of our own customers reflects equality principles.

We will ensure that tenant involvement and participation activities promote the full and active involvement of all groups of customers and residents, and we will actively challenge customers and residents voicing or demonstrating discriminatory views or behaviours.

4.6 Managing tenancies

We will ensure that we consult all residents effectively (especially those facing discrimination), individually through a range of different mechanisms such as surveys, focus groups and forums such as Scrutiny Panel to ensure that the housing service meets their needs. Any customer who feels they have been unfairly treated in any way has a right to use the Customer Feedback Policy. We will ensure that this procedure is accessible to all, and feedback about the service given proper consideration.

SLH tenants are expected to adhere to this policy and the terms set out within their tenancy agreement by ensuring their behaviour respects our commitment to promoting community cohesion and the needs and cultures of all people within their community. We will not tolerate harassment of residents and will take the strongest possible action against perpetrators. We will be proactive in co-operating with other agencies in dealing with all forms of harassment taking an active role in city-wide actions and initiatives to prevent all forms of discrimination, including being an active member of the Hate Crime Joint Agency Group and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference which forms wider strategic partnership working between agencies in relation to hate crime and domestic abuse.

We will seek to ensure that our housing service responds sensitively to the needs of vulnerable residents and will provide a Tenancy Sustainability support service to those in need and where possible, extra services will be provided in response to the needs of vulnerable residents through our safeguarding procedures and partnership work with other organisations and agencies.

4.7 Recruitment & employment

SLH will actively seek to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all current and potential colleagues. We will conduct and monitor our recruitment in an open and accountable way and according to equal opportunities practices, regularly reviewing the results of the monitoring to ensure fairness is evident at all stages. Further details can be found in our Recruitment &

Selection Policy. Applicants for employment concerned about the application of the policy should consult the Human Resources Team.

We will ensure that selection for employment, career development opportunities, access to benefits, facilities and services are fair and equitable and based solely on merit. Where reasonable we will make tailored adjustments to accommodate the needs of our colleagues, including those seeking to join SLH.

We will seek to deal with any under representation of particular groups among colleagues, including under representation at Manager, Director and Board level, and make full use of positive action provisions permissible within legislation.

We will create a working environment that values difference and is free from prohibited discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment. We will strive to prevent harassment of colleagues by other colleagues or residents and if and when it occurs take swift action to stop it. Any individual who experiences or witnesses' discrimination or harassment will be encouraged to report it, with all complaints taken seriously and thoroughly investigated and dealt with in a sensitive and effective manner through the appropriate procedures. Any colleague who is subject to harassment, bullying or discrimination is encouraged to refer to the Dignity at Work Policy and seek guidance from a member of the Human Resources Team.

We will commit to providing and supporting opportunities for our colleagues to have their voices heard. This includes opportunities to network with one another, and feedback on organisation practices. For example, external surveys, internal surveys, Staff Care Forum and Everyone Counts (EDI Forum).

4.8 Training

We will train colleagues to ensure everyone has a continued awareness and understanding of equalities and diversity issues, as well as training to meet the specific needs of their post. We will also regularly review the distribution of training opportunities to ensure that all colleagues are being treated fairly and have equal opportunities for personal and professional development.

4.9 Use of contractors and partner agencies

We will ensure that our selection of consultants and contractors is fair and non-discriminatory. We will only use contractors, consultants and agents who have an equality and diversity policy, which is aligned with our own policies and values. In the absence of one, as part of working arrangements, we will ask them to adopt ours.

4.10 SLH Board

We will work to ensure that our Board is fully representative of the local community by having an open and accountable recruitment process and using positive action to recruit members from underrepresented groups.

Board members will receive appropriate training and be regularly briefed on equalities issues and receive regular monitoring reports on key areas of activity, both on service delivery and employment.

4.11 Responsibilities

All colleagues have responsibility for ensuring that this policy is put into practice. We expect a personal commitment from all colleagues in making it effective, and in setting an exemplary standard for others to follow. Additional and specific responsibilities apply to those who manage colleagues and to those who participate in recruitment, training and development.

The Board have corporate responsibility for ensuring that this policy underpins all aspects of SLH's work. The Executive Management Team have responsibility for developing the organisational culture in which this policy can operate effectively, and for ensuring that it is implemented.

The Director of Culture & Communications is responsible for the operation, monitoring and review of this Policy in relation to recruitment, employment and training

5 Policy Review Considerations

This policy will be delivered and monitored in conjunction with the EDI Action Plan to increase the awareness and education of our staff, tenants, partners, contractors and within the communities, we serve.

This can be measured by-

- Feedback of tenants' views
- Levels of hate crime, both reported and resolved
- Achievement of external accreditations

We publicly promote our commitment to championing the equality and diversity agenda and to collaborate with individuals and groups that we consider disadvantaged and will rigorously pursue all issues of harassment of both colleagues and residents in a prompt and sensitive manner.

6 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken in the development of this policy.

7 Policy Assessment

Equality and diversity is a cross-cutting theme that has relevance to all SLH's activities and needs to be reflected in all aspects of our employment and service delivery.

This policy document is designed to be robust, comprehensive and relevant to the needs of colleagues and tenants. It summarises SLH's approach to the equality and diversity agenda, to ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements and to meet our moral obligations to work towards a just and tolerant society.

It will be subject to regular review to ensure it remains up to date. As part of the policy review, SLH's risk map has been updated. Through this policy and its effective management, we assess the risk presented as low

8 Customer Influence

In reviewing this policy, we engaged with Scrutiny Panel, a group of tenants who ensure that the services we provide are effective, efficient and represent good value for money. The results of this feedback informed any amendments to the policy.

9 Statutory and Legislative Framework

We will operate this policy and all other policies and practices relating to it, in line with the legislation that is in force at any time such as the policy.

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Modern Slavery Act 2015

10 Associated Policies

- Adoption
- Adaptations
- Adult Safeguarding
- Allocations
- ASB
- Capability
- Customer Feedback
- Data Protection
- Flexible Working
- Grievance
- Health, Safety & Wellbeing
- Information Security
- Maternity
- Professional Boundaries
- Recruitment & Selection
- Safeguarding Children
- Shared Parental Leave
- Sickness Absence
- Work and Life Balance