

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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Responsible Executive:	Chief Executive Officer		
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Version No.	1		
Frequency of Review	This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or more frequently if required to ensure that it complies with any changes in good practice, legislation or regulation		
File path			
Related Policies	• Code of Conduct • Recruitment and Selection • Working with Transgender Customers/Employees		
Appendices	• Appendix 1: Protected Characteristics – Equality Act 2010 • Appendix 2: Legislation		

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1. Introduction

Housing for Women (HfW) is committed to playing an active role in promoting equality, diversity & inclusion, and challenging discrimination in all its forms. We will work with our staff, customers, and partners to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, and to promote a culture of tolerance and respect in our workplaces and our local communities.

Our charitable objects state that: 'The Association is established for the relief of poverty of women (working, retired or otherwise currently out of work) by the provision of accommodation or in such other ways as the Board thinks fit including (but not limited to) providing support and advice to women and their children fleeing domestic violence or abuse. We recognise that advancing equality, valuing diversity and embedding inclusion are essential to delivering safe, fair and high-quality housing services, meeting our regulatory obligations, and fulfilling our charitable purpose.

HfW recognises that creating an environment which champions diversity is another way we can empower both our workforce and our customers, in accordance with our charitable objectives.

HfW takes pride in being based in London. We value the benefits of a diverse society and are committed to the principles of equality, fairness, and respect.

Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Policy supports our organisational objectives in relation to equality and diversity.

2. Why is Equality, Diversity & Inclusion important?

At Housing for Women, we are firmly committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion that will help us to be a better employer and service provider.

- **Moral and social responsibility**- the principles of equality and diversity are about social justice, fairness, human rights, equal access to opportunities and are simply the right thing to do.
- **Customer** Resident experience – it's about knowing and understanding our customers and tailoring our services to meet their diverse needs.
- **Workforce effectiveness** – a workplace that embraces diversity is more likely to help us to attract and retain talented people and reduce turnover.
- **Competitive edge** – diverse teams bring different ideas, innovation and creativity and will help us to better understand the needs of our customers and communities.
- **Reputation** – inclusive work environments encourage loyalty and teamwork; and enhance our reputation as an employer and a housing provider.
- **Legal obligations** – we want to meet and exceed our legal responsibilities to minimise any impact to our reputation, financial cost or adverse impact on our workforce, customers or communities.
- **Regulatory obligations** - as a provider of social housing, we work in a regulated sector. Our Regulator specifies the requirements of housing associations through its Standards framework. Registered providers are required: to treat all residents and customers with fairness and respect including protected characteristics and those with additional support needs.
- **Risk management** – we recognise there are risks associated with noncompliance. These risks include the effect on our reputation, financial implications, and the impact on those involved.

3. Scope and Aim

This policy applies to:

- Residents and service users
- Employees, workers and volunteers
- Board members
- Contractors, consultants and partners

We will:

- Apply a fair, transparent and consistent approach in all activities.
- Ensure that our workforce, contractors, and customers are not treated less favourably than anyone else based on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act of 2010.
- Ensure our workforce reflects the diverse needs of our local community through the services they provide.
- Ensure we recruit from the widest possible talent pool.
- Ensure we create a workforce which reflects our customer base/local area.
- Expect our visitors, customers, and suppliers not to discriminate against our workforce, and to invoke our own ED&I principles wherever possible.
- Challenge discrimination & prejudice when encountered.

4. Policy

HfW believes that every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. We will embed EDI throughout our role as:

a) *An employer*

- Embedding equality and diversity across all areas of the organisation.
- Providing a safe and accessible working environment where all employees are treated with dignity and respect.
- Adopting a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying or harassment (including racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic incidents)
- Ensuring that our workforce, Board Members, and representatives undergo regular Equality, Diversity & Inclusion training, and that it is delivered in a way that is appropriate to their role.
- Engaging and involving our workforce, customers and all relevant stakeholders in the development of our equality strategy and objectives.
- To ensure our recruitment practices remain inclusive of everyone, we will seek to increase the diversity of our applicant pool. We recognise that this will help us to gain a competitive edge, by enhancing our reputation and increasing our access to talent.
- Promoting opportunities for employment, training and development to local people and under-represented groups, and by doing so creating a workforce that reflects our diverse

communities.

- Monitoring employee satisfaction and taking action to address any concerns .
- Monitor workforce diversity and pay gaps, using data to drive improvement

b) A housing and service provider

- Assessing the impact of our policies and procedures, and in the services that we provide
- Ensuring that services, offices, facilities and venues we provide or use are, as far as reasonably possible, accessible to all
- Promoting our commitment to equality, inclusion, and diversity through internal and external communications
- Communicating with customers clearly and accessibly
- Continue to run a customer-focused service, reflecting the diverse needs of our clients.
- Regularly monitor and review our performance, and the performance of our representatives, to ensure satisfaction with our services from all individuals and protected groups
- Ensuring that our procurement and tendering processes are fair and accessible, and that we support locally based businesses and social enterprises
- Ensuring our contractors, consultants and agents have an equality and diversity policy, which is broadly consistent with our own aims.
- Ensure complaints and feedback processes are accessible and aligned with the Social Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

c) A community stakeholder

- Aim to prevent and respond to incidents of anti-social behaviour, hate crime and domestic abuse; and to promote good relations between all people in our local communities.
- Supporting victims of crime and abuse in a way that is sensitive and appropriate to their needs.
- Working with local statutory, voluntary and community groups to promote equality and support vulnerable people
- Ensuring good governance of Housing for Women through the effective implementation of this policy and compliance with equality legislation
- Sharing best practice with other social housing organisations to continually improve our approach.
- Communicating with customers and the wider community about the actions we take to promote equality and challenge discrimination

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy reflects our obligations, but not limited to:

- Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty as it applies to social housing)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Regulator of Social Housing – Consumer Standards (including tenancy, transparency, fairness and engagement)

6. Governance

HfW's Board and Chief Executive will hold overall responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy. The People and Customer Committee and any Customer Panels will also share responsibility for mainstreaming equality issues. Oversight of EDI performance is carried out through regular reporting

The Executive team together with the Management Team will monitor the effectiveness of this policy, ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, and oversee best practice in this area.

The Executive team together with the Management Team are also responsible for ensuring that the services delivered by their teams are in accordance with this policy, and that employees are provided with all necessary training, support and direction to fulfil its aims.

All managers are also responsible for ensuring that HfW's workforce are treated with dignity and respect in the workplace. This includes when working with colleagues, partners, customers and other members of the public.

Whilst the Board, ET and MT will take a lead role, HfW believe that it is everyone's responsibility to promote equality. We therefore expect all our workforce and partners to assume responsibility to promote equality and help tackle all forms of discrimination in the workplace, and in the local community.

Every HfW Board Member, employee and representative will be responsible for their own behaviour in accordance with this policy. They should also be actively involved in challenging inappropriate behaviour where it occurs.

7. Monitoring, Data and Privacy

We will collect and use equality data lawfully and proportionately to:

- Understand the diversity of our residents and workforce
- Assess the impact of our policies and services
- Improve outcomes and reduce inequalities

Provision of equality data is voluntary. All data will be handled confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation and HfW policies.

8. Breaches of this Policy

Breaches may result in disciplinary action, contract management action, or other appropriate remedies depending on the circumstances.

9. Appendices

- Appendix 1: Protected Characteristics – Equality Act 2010
- Appendix 2: Legislation

10. Further Information

For further information contact the Governance Manager - Theodora Ugo,
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Appendix 1

Protected Characteristics – Equality Act 2010

1. Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g., 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g., 18 - 30 year olds).
2. Disability	A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
3. Gender reassignment	A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.
4. Marriage and civil partnership	The main difference between the two legal relationships is that a marriage is formed by vows and can be performed in a religious ceremony before signing a marriage certificate, whereas a civil partnership is formed by signing a civil partnership certificate. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
5. Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a person unfavourably because they are breastfeeding
6. Race	Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
7. Religion and Belief	Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g., Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
8. Sex	A man or a woman.
9. Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Appendix 2

Legislation

As an employer and housing provider, we seek to ensure that people have equal access to services and employment opportunities.

As a social housing provider, we have certain responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity. The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination unlawful in relation to nine 'protected characteristics' namely:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender
4. Religion/belief
5. Race
6. Gender re-assignment
7. Marriage (civil/same sex)
8. Sexual orientation
9. Pregnancy/maternity

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires Housing Associations delivering public services to give 'due regard' to the need:

- To eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- To advance equality of opportunity
- To foster good relations (tackling prejudice and promoting understanding)

Housing for Women is not a public body but is required to comply with the duty in the provision, allocation and management of social housing.