

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Responsible Executive:	Zaiba Qureshi, Chief Executive Officer		
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1. Introduction and rationale to policy

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, whether it be psychological, emotional, physical or sexual and whether from a partner, ex-partner, family member or other persons.'

Our organisation is made up of approximately 85 staff, between 20-25 volunteers at any given time including Board members, and around 960 customers. 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. We are pleased to already hold an Accredited Award for Equality and Diversity from Housing Diversity Network which reflects our dedication to these values.

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

2. Policy Statement (including Scope and Aims)

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 case - 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 Care – it's about knowing and understanding our customers and tailoring our services to meet their diverse needs.

Diverse workforce – 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.

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.

Our EDI policy is in place to ensure we meet our moral, social and legal obligations and that we see equality as a fundamental part of everything we do.

We will:

- Apply a fair and consistent approach to all we do
- 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 EDI principles wherever possible.
- Challenge discrimination & prejudice when encountered

2.1 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.

This policy meets the requirement of the regulatory framework which requires registered housing providers to respond to the needs of diverse residents. Registered providers are required: to treat all residents and customers with fairness and respect including protected characteristics and those with additional support needs.

3. Location of this policy

[Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy May 2018.pdf](#)

4. Definitions

Gender Reassignment - The process of transitioning from one gender to another

5. Policy

The ED&I policy relates to HfW Housing's Board, workforce, customers, partners, representatives, customers and people living in the HfW locality.

HfW believe that every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. In line with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010, HfW will oppose all forms of discrimination and unfair treatment related to the nine protected characteristics.

The ED&I Policy encompasses all aspects of HfW role as an employer, service provider and local stakeholder. HfW will promote equality, diversity and fair treatment for all by:

a) As 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, Inclusion and Diversity 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

b) As a service provider

- Analysing the impact on equality 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 our customers in a way that is clear, accessible and easy to read or understand
- Continue to run a customer-focused service, reflecting the diverse needs of our clients.
- Regularly monitoring and reviewing 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.

c) As 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

6. Governance

HfW's Board and Chief Executive will hold overall responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy. All Sub-Committees and the Customers' Panel will also share responsibility for mainstreaming equality issues.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (EDIWG) is an established working group to monitor the effectiveness of this policy, ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and oversee best practice in this area.

The Executive Team (ET) and Senior Management Team (SMT) are directly 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 senior and line 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 SMT will take a lead role, HfW believe that it is everyone's responsibility to promote equality. We therefore expect all of 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. Forms/Appendices

- Appendix 1: Protected Characteristics – Equality Act 2010

8. References

Equality Act 2010
The Public sector Equality Duty

9. Further information

For further information contact the Chief Executive Officer, Zaiba Qureshi, zaiba.qureshi@h4w.co.uk, Tel: (PA to CEO, Corinne Toghill) tel: 020 7501 6121, 07525 903341

10. Review of this Policy

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (EDIWG) will review this policy every 3 years to ensure that it complies with any changes in good practice, legislation or regulation.

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 s/he has 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	The process of transitioning from one gender to another
4. Marriage and civil partnership	<p>In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. [1] This will also be true in Scotland when the relevant legislation is brought into force. [2]</p> <p>Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).</p> <p>[1] Section 1, Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.</p> <p>[2] Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014.</p>
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 woman unfavourably because she is 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.