

Equality, diversity and inclusion policy

1. The current equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy was agreed by the Board in September 2021.
2. The Board agreed to review the policy after completion of EDI training earlier this year (the policy review was originally timetabled for July 2022).
3. The current policy is attached at appendix one. The action plan within the policy has been updated to reflect the outputs from the training.
4. The board is asked to discuss the policy one year on from its original adoption and agree any areas for change.

Tom Woodman
Chief Executive

Appendix one: Equality, diversity and inclusion policy (agreed September 2021)

Purpose

This policy sets out our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in our work as an employer and provider of housing. Cornerstone aim to respect and value differences and recognise that diversity enriches our communities.

We aim to create an open, fair and respectful culture, where differences are embraced, and where everyone is able to be themselves at home and work.

This policy sets out how we comply with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements. It also reinforces our commitment to embedding and celebrating equality and diversity as an employer and service provider.

Scope

This policy sets out our responsibilities in relation to the protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

In addition, although not part of legislation, we consider that people excluded due to their actual or perceived social position, neurodiversity, background or social/financial disadvantage and rural isolation are also communities and individuals that require specific attention.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, we will give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relationships

We will adhere to the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard that requires us to understand and respond to the diverse needs of our customers. As part of this we will:

- treat all customers with fairness and respect;
- demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our customers, including in relation to the equality strands and customers with additional support needs; and demonstrate how we respond to customers' needs in the way we provide services and communicate with customers

Local context

The National Housing Federation (NHF) uses the Office of National Statistics annual population survey to make the following estimates for the Cornerstone operational area (based on stock location)

- 50.6% female, 49.4% male
- 22% have a disability
- 2.5% gay/lesbian

The NHF uses the 2011 census for ethnicity; 94.1% of the population in Cornerstone operating area is white, 3.5% Asian, 2.5% other ethnic minority.

Objectives

Our policy objectives are to:

- create an inclusive culture where people are treated with dignity, inequalities are challenged and we anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances to enable individuals and communities to achieve their potential
- foster good relations within the communities we serve
- deliver fair, inclusive and accessible services
- communicate effectively, understanding and meeting the needs of all our customers
- our people reflect the communities we serve, wherever possible
- develop and promote evidence of our EDI impact.

Responsibility

The Board and Executive Team lead on creating an inclusive culture. The responsibility for ensuring appropriate consideration of EDI lies with all staff, board members, contractors, involved customers and partners.

Policy implementation

We will implement this policy by:

- reporting our progress on EDI with an annual review by the board
- carrying out an equality impact assessment of our public services (housing and allocation) every 3 years
- reporting our gender pay gap annually
- effective use of data to understand the people who work with us and live in our homes, whilst ensuring we comply with data protection law
- effectively identifying and promptly challenging prejudice, discrimination, bullying and harassment
- providing accessible services and communication
- providing reasonable adaptations for staff to work for us, customers to be involved and for membership of the board

- provision of aids and adaptations via our policy
- providing our people with a range of e-learning and EDI resources
- ensuring contractors and suppliers have an appropriate equality and diversity policy, or commit to comply with our policy
- encouraging diversity in our workforce, board membership and involved customers (we are recognised as a 'Mindful Employer')
- encouraging customer involvement and facilitating consultation
- encourage employment applications from all sections of the community.
- make reasonable adjustments
- challenge unconscious bias
- provide a safe space to explore issues
- listen, learn and adapt as things change.

Monitoring and review

The Board is responsible for ensuring EDI compliance and monitoring is appropriate and effective.

Relevant EDI data is collected in accordance with data protection regulation and our policy. It is used to assess our compliance with EDI law and good practice and relates to:

- staff, volunteers and job applicants
- board members and applicants
- involved customers
- customers, residents and referrals/applicants
- customer satisfaction.

EDI policy action plan (revised September 2022)

Completed

- complete resident and staff profile to understand current position and to inform metrics for future years
- add diversity impact assessment on board reports and corporate plan projects
- board training
- training for improvements team working in people's homes for the first time
- participating in community diversity events (St Thomas International)
- celebrate key dates e.g. pride, black history month and share experiences)
- gender pay gap assessment as part of benchmarking our reward package

September 2022 – March 2023

- communicate EDI policy (staff, customers and stakeholders)
- work with performance panel on enhancing the policy and action plan
- work with wider management team on enhancing the policy and action plan
- further staff training
- review recruitment practices to ensure inclusivity
- review documents for inclusive language
- develop EDI targets as part of other strategies (customer services, asset management, development etc)

March 2023 – March 2024

- set up staff EDI group
- involve Performance Panel in talking to other customers about diversity priorities and outcomes
- self-assessment (potential sign up to housing diversity network)
- consider a Cornerstone diversity event
- further projects to reflect work done with Performance Panel and Management Team
- further board training
- annual EDI review by Board September 2023.

Definitions

Equality

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and no less favourably regardless of their protected characteristics. Equality is not about treating everyone the same, but about making sure that people are given equal access to opportunities. It is the *opportunity* that is equal, not the route or the outcome of the opportunity.

Diversity

Diversity is what makes us different. Age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, national background and life experiences, and more are examples of our differences. Celebrating diversity acknowledges and respects differences within and between groups of people.

Inclusion

Inclusion harnesses and celebrates our diversity to the benefit and greater good of the organisation, those who work in it and the wider industry. It's about bringing diversity into action, allowing everyone to feel included and where people are proud to pull together to create environments of mutual respect.

Belonging

Belonging is about feeling part of a bigger group. Just because someone is included in our organisation, doesn't mean they feel they belong. People feel that they belong when they are seen and valued for who they are, their true and unique self, which helps them, and people around them, to thrive.

Discrimination

Discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of one or more aspects of their identity, or because of stereotyped assumptions and usually results in fewer opportunities for them. Under the Equality Act 2010 people are protected from the following form of discrimination:

- direct - Direct discrimination is when you're treated differently and worse than someone else for certain reasons. The Equality Act says you've been treated less favourably.
- Indirect - Indirect discrimination is when there's a practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way, but it has a worse effect on some people than others. The Equality Act says it puts you at a particular disadvantage.
- harassment (see below)
- victimisation (see below)

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination.

Unwanted behaviour could be:

- spoken or written words or abuse
- offensive emails, tweets or comments on social networking sites
- images and graffiti
- physical gestures
- facial expressions
- jokes

You don't need to have previously objected to something for it to be unwanted.

Victimisation

Victimisation is when someone treats you badly or subjects you to a detriment because you complain about discrimination or help someone who has been the victim of discrimination. Because the Equality Act 2010 recognises you may be worried about complaining, you have extra legal protection when you complain about discrimination.