

SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME AND ACTION PLAN

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1 Foreword

We are committed to combating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in everything we do as a housing provider and as an employer. And we are determined to go beyond the current legislation that governs what we have to do.

To demonstrate our commitment to be a leader in this field we are launching a new Single Equality Scheme. This ground breaking scheme includes everything we have already done in promoting disability, gender and race equality and it extends this to include age, religion, belief and sexual orientation.

We believe we should aim to apply the same high standards to everything that we do, taking real steps to promote equality across a much wider spectrum. We expect our contractors and business partners to demonstrate the same high standards in promoting equality and diversity issues in all their work with us.

We hope that through this Single Equality Scheme we will champion, inspire, challenge and support our customers and staff so that consideration of equality and diversity issues becomes a way of life for us all.



John Petitt
Chief Executive

2 What is a Single Equality Scheme?

Housing Solutions Group (Maidenhead & District Housing Association) is subject to legislation to promote disability, gender and race equality. We have to comply with legal duties to tackle discrimination and harassment and to promote equality and good relations in everything we do.

We want to go beyond the disability, gender and race equality legislation that currently exists. We are committed to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and promoting good relations on grounds of race, colour, national origin, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief or lack of religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment status, being married or a civil partner, pregnancy or maternity leave, sexual orientation, disability or age.

This Single Equality Scheme is a plan that draws together all the work that we have done previously as part of the Disability, Gender and Race Equality duties and extends this to include age, religion or belief and sexual orientation. We believe we should aim to apply the same high standards to everything that we do, taking practical steps to promote equality.

This could be in our employment practices, how we provide or buy services and how we work in partnership with others so that consideration of equality and diversity issues becomes a way of life for us all.

3 Equality Duties

Below we have listed the requirements of each equality duty. We have given each a reference letter and number so that we can show in our action plan which actions relate to which requirements.

The race equality duty arose as a result of the Macpherson inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the resulting acceptance of the potential for institutional discrimination by public sector organisations.

We have to pay due regard to the following requirements of the **disability equality duty**:

- D1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination*
- D2. Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities*
- D3. Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others*
- D4. Take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating them more favourably than others*
- D5. Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people*
- D6. Encourage participation by disabled people in public life*

We have to pay due regard to the following requirements of the **gender equality duty**:

- G1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination because of gender*
- G2. Eliminate unlawful harassment*
- G3. Promote equality of opportunity between men and women*

The requirements to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment because of gender also include discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender reassignment.

We have to pay due regard to the following requirements of the **race equality duty**:

- R1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination*
- R2. Promote equality of opportunity*
- R3. Promote good relations between people of different racial groups*

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 outlaw discrimination and harassment on grounds of age in workplaces large and small throughout Great Britain, both in the private and public sectors. They cover all aspects of the employment relationship including recruitment, pay, working conditions, training, promotion, dismissal and references.

The Regulations make it unlawful to treat people differently on the grounds of age in employment and vocational training. The law covers perception of age too, so it protects people who are assumed - correctly or incorrectly - to be of a particular age.

The new Equality Bill will contain powers to outlaw unjustifiable age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services.

Employment Equality (Religion & Belief) Regulations 2003:

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 came into effect in the UK in December 2003 and give protection against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in employment and vocational training. The regulations apply to both private and public sectors and cover all aspects of employment including recruitment, pay, working conditions, training, promotion, dismissal and the provision of references.

It covers all religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief, but does not include political beliefs.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003:

Sexual orientation is defined as an orientation towards the same sex, opposite sex and both sexes.

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 came into effect in the UK in December 2003 and give protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment and vocational training. The regulations apply to both private and public sectors and cover all aspects of employment including recruitment, pay, working conditions, training, promotion, dismissal and the provision of references.

From 30th April 2007 new regulations protect people from being discriminated against because of their sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services.

To develop our Single Equality Scheme, we looked at the priorities developed as part of the three previous equality schemes. We also looked at details of our legal requirements and good practice in the new equality areas of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. Several important pieces of legislation have been introduced that tackle inequality these are summarized in appendix 1 followed by proposed new legislation.

4 Community Partnership Equality & Diversity Steering Group

The Group is a member of a Community Partnership. This established a Diversity and Equality Steering Group in 2005 and produced a comprehensive Equality Policy which covers Disability, Gender, Race, Age, Religion and belief and Sexual orientation.

It is designed to meet the statutory duties of public sector organisations and, as such, partner organisations can use the policy as their own equality policy. However, we felt that it was important to develop a Single Equality Scheme and Action plan that reflects the needs and priorities of our staff, residents, board members, contractors, potential tenants and any others likely to be affected by what we do. Therefore the Comprehensive Equality Policy complements our Single Equality Scheme.

The Community Partnership Comprehensive Equality Policy can be downloaded from the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's website.

http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/public/corp_comprehensive_equality_policy.pdf An easy read version of the policy can also be downloaded.

http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/public/corp_simplified_disability_equality_policy.pdf

5 Equality and Diversity structure

We have put in place a structure and processes to actively promote equality of opportunity for all.

- Board champion for Equality and Diversity.
- Executive Director Champion for Equality and Diversity.
- Diversity working group which drives the equalities agenda across the Group and assesses progress against the Diversity Service Improvement Plan.
- Diversity Ambassadors who work with colleagues to shape the equality and diversity agenda, sharing their knowledge and ideas with colleagues.
- The Service Performance section within the Business Improvement Team which provides support to service areas. They also advise of changes in legislation, regulatory requirements and good practice.
- Equality Impact Assessments which are carried out at the policy or service development or review stage.
- All Executive Team and Board reports and all service improvement plans set out the Diversity impact of the service change or initiative.
- Policies and procedures to support staff in implementing the Single Equality Scheme.
- Regular Equality and Diversity training for staff, Board members and MDHA Residents' Association Executive Committee.
- Regular internal and external review of compliance against Equality standards e.g. Disability ticks status, Age Positive status.
- Challenging performance targets across all diversity strands.
- Regular reports to the Executive Team and Board on progress in Equality and Diversity.

6 Housing Solutions Group's purpose

Housing Solutions Group is a not for profit organization, dedicated to providing affordable and supported homes. We also provide homes for key workers such as teachers and firemen.

The Association was formed in 1995 with the transfer of 2,900 homes from the RBWM. A group structure was created in 2000 under Housing Solutions Limited, which now includes Bridgewater Housing, a charitable housing association specialising in sheltered and supported housing, and Furnival Housing, a Slough based housing co-operative. Maidenhead and District Housing Association (MDHA) become the Group parent company in 2007 and changed its name to Housing Solutions Limited. We continue to trade as MDHA to preserve local identity.

All our homes are backed up by a range of housing services, including our own professional team of trades' staff who provide a comprehensive repair and maintenance service. We also build Lifetime Homes and wheelchair standard properties, so that disabled and non-disabled people can live together in sustainable communities.

7 Our vision

The Group's vision is:

- To maximise the provision of affordable housing in Maidenhead and the immediate surrounding areas.

- To deliver excellent services to all of our residents, continually seeking to improve that delivery and to listen to what our residents need and to shape our services accordingly. We will seek to deliver improvements in all housing and asset management services.
- To become a major player in the provision of care homes and extra care homes.

In delivering this vision we will demonstrate the following values:

- **Clear Vision** in our business aims and objectives
- **Social and financial responsibility** in everything we do
- **Integrity and openness** towards tenants, business partners and staff
- **Respect and flexibility** in meeting the changing needs of the people we serve
- **Equality of opportunity** in all our dealings with all residents, staff, partners and stakeholders.

The Single Equality Scheme will help us to ensure that people's needs are effectively addressed in meeting our corporate objectives. You can find more information about our priorities in our business plan.

We have set ourselves a specific Equality and Diversity Vision in recognition of our commitment to driving forward improvements in this area.

8 Equality and Diversity Vision

Our vision is to champion, inspire, challenge and support our customers and staff so that consideration of equality and diversity issues become a way of life for us all.

We will:

- Champion our staff and residents to demonstrate true commitment to equality and diversity;
- Inspire our staff to provide homes and services to meet the needs of all our customers;
- Challenge barriers to equality and diversity;
- Support those who face inequality and discrimination of any kind.

9 Housing Solutions Groups' functions (services)

Housing Solutions Group's main activity is letting and managing homes. This is how we define what we do: (See Appendix 2 for more detailed information)

- we are governed by a Board
- we deliver services
- we are employers
- we procure goods, facilities and services
- we design develop and regenerate properties
- we provide let properties and provide tenancies
- we manage tenancies
- we provide aids and adaptations
- we carry out repairs and improvements to properties
- we provide supported housing
- we involve and consult residents and staff
- we carry out grounds maintenance and cleaning
- we provide information and support
- we handle complaints

In carrying out our functions, we:

- involve and consult people

- monitor and impact assess our work, and
- publish and review our equality scheme

10 Background information

Housing Solutions Group has a housing stock of 3,791 properties in the South East of England (as at 31st March 2007.) Levels of deprivation in RBWM are generally low. The Borough is ranked 323 out of 355 authorities on the deprivation index (where 1 is the highest) and there are no wards in the ten per cent most deprived. Unemployment is also low at 1.5 per cent, compared with the regional average of 1.4 per cent. However, there are pockets of deprivation identified in nine wards.

Diversity strand	Resident	Staff	Comments
Gender	<p>58.1% female 41.9% are male (STATUS 2007) New lettings figures remain consistent with this split.</p>	<p>51% female 49% are male (as at 31st January 2009). This is not reflective of our resident community.</p> <p>Group Board 37% female 63% male This is not reflective of our resident community.</p> <p>Executive Team 25% female 75% male This is not reflective of our resident community.</p> <p>Middle and senior management 41% female 59% male This is not reflective of our resident community.</p>	<p>The number of female employees has increased since April 2008 when 49% of the Group's staff were female.</p> <p>We are taking steps to remove barriers to female employment. We have a strong benefits package, flexible working and encourage secondments and promotions.</p> <p>We promoted mentoring of underrepresented staff through the EDGE forward programme in 2008 and will continue to do so.</p> <p>The frontline trades team has no female representation. We are promoting trades positions through careers fairs and modern apprenticeships.</p>
Age	<p>65% of our residents are between 17 and 64. 34% are 65 years old or older (compared to 44% five years ago).</p> <p>We now house fewer older households, similar numbers of families (25%), but more adult households</p>	<p>97% of our staff are between 17 and 64, with 3% being 65 years old or older</p> <p>We employ staff between the ages of 18 and 69 years. The average age is 42 years and the most common age is 28 yrs.</p>	<p>The resident demographic changes will have a significant impact on satisfaction ratings, as older residents are generally more satisfied.</p> <p>The Group welcomes employees beyond</p>

	<p>(up 8% from 2002, now 36%)</p> <p>The age profile of RBWM is generally in line with national averages, but there is a higher percentage of over 65 year olds (15.3 per cent, compared with the 12.9 per cent across the rest of Berkshire).</p> <p>Therefore the changes our demographics are not reflective of existing data about the local population.</p> <p>We have considerably more working principal tenants (9% higher) and fewer retired tenants (9% lower) than in 2002.</p>		<p>retirement age and promotes this through its Age Positive status. Although our older resident population is reducing we recognise that our staff our not representative of the local community by age and that we need to continue our work in this area.</p> <p>We encourage modern apprenticeships and school work experience as an opportunity to develop younger employees. Our resident population is getting younger so we need to continue our work in this area.</p>
Disability	<p>41% of households have at least one member who has a long-term illness, health problem or disability.</p> <p>Of those tenants who have a disability, 77% state that their disability limits their daily activity.</p> <p>9% of households have at least one member who uses a wheelchair.</p> <p>Unemployment - 10 % permanently sick or disabled</p>	<p>2.84% have declared their disability. (as at 31 January 2009)</p> <p>We have employees that Human Resources know have a condition that would be considered a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act but they have not declared it. Therefore we are unable to include in the Group's statistics.</p> <p>2.1% of the local working age population are permanently sick or disabled. (Census 2001) Therefore the Group's staff are representative of the local working age population.</p> <p>Middle and senior management 5.88% of are disabled. This is higher than our staff population as a whole, but only accounts for a small number of people, therefore</p>	<p>Disability is a key issue for the Group as it has seen a year on year increase in new lettings to disabled residents from 7% in 05/06 to 19% in 07/08. This increase is not reflected in the lettings for Windsor Housing, who house a lower percentage of disabled residents.</p> <p>We are keen to encourage employment of staff with disabilities, particularly as our disabled resident population is much higher and increasing year on year. We continue to promote opportunities through 'Ways into work' and our 'Disability ticks status'.</p> <p>Permanently sick or disabled tenants and wheelchair users are more satisfied with our services.</p>

		if a staff member left it would have a significant impact on the figure.	
Race	<p>88.5% White British 11% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) households. This is largely reflective of the Group's new lettings; however 14% were BME in 07/08.</p> <p>7.6 per cent of the local population are from BME communities.</p> <p>Therefore the Group is housing a larger proportion of BME residents than in the local population</p>	<p>83% White British 11% are BME as at 31st January 2009. This is reflective of our resident community.</p> <p>Board 89% White British 10% are BME</p> <p>Executive Team 100% White British. This is not reflective of our resident community.</p> <p>Middle and senior management 17.64% BME which is higher than the local community.</p>	<p>Research shows that the BME population is increasing. We need to take this into account in any future service developments.</p> <p>We promoted mentoring of underrepresented staff through the EDGE forward programme in 2008 and will continue to do so.</p>
Sexual orientation	<p>89% are heterosexual 0.87% are gay or lesbian 0.41% are bisexual 10% prefer not to say</p>	<p>100% of respondents are Heterosexual.</p> <p>Data is currently only held on 25% of our staff in relation to sexual orientation as this information has recently been added to the recruitment process.</p>	<p>We are carrying out data verification of staff during 2009 which will contribute to this data.</p>
Religion and belief	<p>64% are Christian The next highest religious representation are Muslim 3.13% 23% have no religion</p>	<p>64% of respondents are Christian or Church of England.</p> <p>Data is only held on 16% of our staff in relation to religion as this information has recently been added to the recruitment process.</p>	<p>There are well-established Muslim and Sikh communities in Maidenhead.</p> <p>We are carrying out data verification of staff during 2009 which will contribute to this data.</p>

Transgenderism

We also recognise that some individuals find that the way they look on the outside doesn't fit how they feel on the inside. This may mean that their gender identity, the inner sense of knowing that they are a man or a woman, may not match their sex appearance. Although 'labels' do not do justice to the unique issues facing each individual, the general term used to embrace this is transgenderism.

As yet we have no available information on Trans people either within our Resident population or staff team. We are aware of the need to raise awareness in this area through training and partnership working. We have links with the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Forum and

wish to continue our work in this area. We have developed a hate crime policy to tackle discrimination and harassment and will revise employment policies to ensure that equality issues facing Trans people can be fully considered.

11 Involving people

One of the important aspects of a Single Equality Scheme is that people with an interest should be involved in the development, monitoring and review of the scheme.

To help develop the content for the scheme and provide guidance we setup a steering group of staff, a Board member and a resident. Our previous Disability and Gender equality schemes had been developed with the involvement of male, female and disabled people of different multiple identities, e.g. race, religion, age and sexual orientation. This included residents, current and potential staff, care providers, local authorities, and local disability groups.

We wanted to make sure that we listened to many different individuals, organizations and members of our staff. Their views were important to us, not just in helping to decide what actions we should be taking but also in shaping the longer term outcomes that we should be aiming for. Further details of the consultation carried out can be found in appendix 3.

12 Housing Solutions Group's current position and what we are doing about it

Key issues for Housing Solutions as:

- **a landlord**

Governance and leadership

- Board and Executive Team Diversity champions
- All Board and Executive Team papers set out the Diversity impact of initiatives
- Good BME representation on the Board when compared to the community
- Females are underrepresented on the Board when compared to the community
- The Board are not monitored across the other Diversity strands of age, disability, religion and belief or sexual orientation
- The Board attends training on Equality and Diversity issues, however members need further training in this area
- Diversity reports to Board are not regular and do not cover all service areas
- Executive Team Diversity champion
- Females and BME staff are underrepresented in the Executive Team.
- Females are underrepresented at senior and middle management levels.
- BME and disabled staff are well represented at senior and middle management levels. However these account for small numbers of employees therefore it is an area that we need to continue to promote.
- We encourage under-represented staff to sign up to the EDGE Forward mentoring programme to help them progress in their careers.
- We advertise our jobs and Board positions widely and include many local community groups on our mailing list.
- We include strap lines to encourage recruitment of underrepresented groups where necessary.
- We have worked with the Asian Women's Ellington School project in the past and offered a work placement for a woman returning to work after caring for her children.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We will aim for Board, Executive Team, Senior and middle management to be representative of their customers.
- We will encourage Board members to attend regular equalities and diversity training.
- We will regularly report on Diversity information to Board so they can make informed decisions, based on a clear understanding of performance and the impact on Equality and Diversity.

Service delivery

- Diversity data has been gained from 77% of our resident, to enable us to understand their needs and target our services and resources effectively.
- Elderly or disabled residents are more satisfied and BME residents show similar satisfaction levels to non-BME residents.
- There are lower levels of satisfaction with younger residents (under 35) and mixed male/female households.
- We are now housing more younger working households
- There has been an increase in lettings to BME residents over the past few years. This is reflective of the changing demographics of the UK population.
- Accurate data is not available on the local migrant population.
- We have carried out a resident census. 77% of residents have responded to date.
- Work has already started in addressing dissatisfaction with younger residents through the extension of the customer contact centre opening hours, development of a community website and provision of a mobile office to visit areas in the evening.
- We have started to establish links with Sure Start to target young parents and with the youth services to encourage the involvement of young people in the Group's work.
- We are a member of the Racial Incident Advisory Forum which monitors racial harassment 'hot spots'. Data received to date suggests that there has not been any significant shift in racial discrimination locally. However we recognize that we need to continue to monitor the situation and ensure that we monitor equality of access to and satisfaction with services. We have contacted local authorities to obtain data on migrant populations, but no data is available. We monitor applications for housing through CORE lettings logs to track changes in the migrant population.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We aim to increase our knowledge of the profile of our residents so that we can target resources and services effectively.
- We aim to develop our services further to meet identified cultural needs and raise both staff and resident awareness.
- We aim to build links with migrant communities to ensure that we address their needs.
- We will continue our work with young people to encourage their involvement in our work and address lower satisfaction levels.
- We will continue to monitor access to and satisfaction with services.

We develop and design properties

- We have a large population of residents with disabilities
- We have a high demand for 3 and 4 bedroom properties, this does not seem to correlate to any particular diversity group
- We have a high proportion of single elderly residents
- Where possible we build our properties to lifetime home standards which mean that the home is easily adaptable, to suit people's changing needs.
- We build Care and Extra Care properties which are fully accessible. We have developed a partnership with Bucks County Council and Freemantle to provide Care and Extra Care Homes across Buckinghamshire

- We provide sheltered housing for residents over the age of 55. We are reviewing our elderly services to ensure that they meet the needs of residents within sheltered housing and vulnerable residents within our general needs properties.
- We provide an incentive scheme to residents to downsize their property
- We carry out extensions to properties
- We have a development design working group to ensure that new homes are designed to meet the needs of all residents. The group includes resident membership and is informed by resident feedback through surveys. The working group membership was expanded in 2007 following feedback from residents as part of the development of the Disability and Gender Equality schemes.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We aim to identify future Care and Extra Care partnerships with other local authorities.
- We will continue to monitor satisfaction with properties and respond to changes in demographics.

We provide let properties and provide tenancies

- Allocations, lettings and leasehold policies set out our approach to letting and leasing properties.
- CORE lettings logs are used to monitor lettings for general needs and supported housing. These show that we are housing a high number of residents with disabilities when compared to Windsor Housing.
- Satisfaction with the lettings process and shared owner satisfaction is monitored across all diversity strands to ensure that there is no discrimination.
- All tenancy agreements have a specific clause prohibiting racial or other harassment.
- Resident handbooks and policies set out expectations in more detail.
- Tenancy agreements have not been reviewed to include references to 'civil partner'.
- Lettings policies have not been reviewed to ensure they recognize the rights of same-sex partnerships.

What do we need to do in the future?

- Tenancy agreements are to be reviewed to include references to 'civil partner' in order to make it clear that same sex couples who undergo a civil partnership have the same rights as married couples.
- Lettings policies will be reviewed to ensure they recognize the rights of same-sex partnerships.
- Representation in lettings is monitored against the housing register or census information where appropriate. Where there are inconsistencies we will discuss these with the local authority.

We manage tenancies including any breach e.g. rent arrears, anti-social behaviour

- Access to and delivery of services is monitored through surveys which are analysed by diversity strand to ensure that there is no discrimination.
- Policies and procedures set out the Group's approach to ensure that services are delivered fairly.
- All policies and procedures are assessed for their equality impact through a program of regular review.
- Customer relationship management software has been introduced which will better inform the Group as to who is accessing services and where barriers may exist. This will help us to target groups who are not accessing our services to understand how we can improve.

- Work has been done to increase awareness of cultural issues for the Gypsy Roma Traveler community through the celebration of Gypsy, Roma, Traveler history month as highlighted in the Group's Audit Commission inspection 2008.
- We have adopted anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, racial harassment and hate crime policies to ensure that discrimination and harassment is eliminated.
- We work with partner agencies, such as the RBWM Domestic Abuse Forum, Racial Incident Advisory Forum, Windsor & Maidenhead Community Forum (faith) and Gay Berkshire to address any issues that occur.
- Our offices have been designated a centre for the reporting of incidents of racial harassment and domestic abuse.
- Staff have been trained to handle the reporting of incidents of racial harassment and domestic abuse.
- We work with local partners to promote and support community cohesion. Further information can be found in our Community Cohesion Strategy.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We will develop links with support agencies in all areas where we have properties
- We will continue to train staff to ensure that all forms of harassment and anti-social behavior, including domestic abuse and hate crime are handled quickly and effectively with full support provided to residents
- We will continue to promote our role as a third party reporting centre
- We will continue our work on community cohesion (See the Community Cohesion Strategy for more information)
- We will continue to monitor access to and satisfaction with services, working to remove barriers and target underrepresented groups

We provide aids and adaptations

- We carry out aids and adaptations up to the value of £1000 (minor adaptations,) any adaptations beyond this are usually funded through grant from the local authority and other agencies (major adaptations.) We pay £1000 towards this work.
- We provide decorating services for elderly and disabled residents.
- We allocate housing appropriately to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities using our record of adapted properties. This information is being updated with responses from our Service Information Form.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We recently gained approval to fund an occupational therapist post within the Royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead with the long term aim of reducing waiting times for major adaptations from 13months currently to 5 months in 2010/11.
- We are also aiming to increase the take up of the service from residents who live outside of Maidenhead and reduce timescales.

We carry out repairs and improvements to properties

- We prioritise repairs for vulnerable residents where required and aim to incorporate additional needs into improvement works. For example we offer 'Adapta' kitchens as part of our planned maintenance programme.

We provide supported housing

- We provide supported housing for residents with learning disabilities and sheltered housing for elderly residents.
- We provide a floating support service for RBWM residents where required.
- Supported housing staff have knowledge and expertise in delivering customer service to vulnerable residents who may be elderly, or have physical or mental health issues.

- We have built strong partnerships with Care and support agencies through our work with Project Care and Learning Disabled networks.
- We have developed some key documents in easy read format.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We recognize that increasingly vulnerable residents are living independently in general needs accommodation. As such, all frontline staff need to develop their skills in this area to ensure that we are meeting residents' needs.
- We need to maximize the opportunities to use the expertise of our supported housing and care partners in developing and delivering services.

We involve and consult residents and staff

- Resident's sit on our Boards to oversee the work that we do.
- We have resident representative bodies, Maidenhead & District Housing Association Residents' Association and the Leaseholder Forum.
- We aim for the Group's Board and resident forums or local residents' associations to be representative of the local community. This is encouraged in recruitment, advertising, constitutions, terms of reference or codes of conduct.
- Consultation methods aim to be fully inclusive, with a range of involvement opportunities offered. For example surveys are often carried out by phone to take account of literacy or language needs.
- We advertise provision of reasonable child care expenses and aim to take account of timing, religious or other sensitivities that might make it difficult for some people to attend a meeting at a particular time or place.
- Staff use an involvement monitoring form and guidance when organising activities to remove barriers to involvement.
- Younger residents are underrepresented in our involvement and consultation.
- MDHA Residents' Association has attended some Equality and Diversity training, however members need further training in this area
- MDHA Residents' Association is not fully reflective of the resident community.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We need to ensure that all residents have appropriate opportunities to get involved in participation activities that appeal to them.
- We need to ensure that resident involvement is representative of the resident community.
- We need to ensure that MDHA Residents' Association attend regular equalities and diversity training

We carry out grounds maintenance and cleaning

- We offer gardening services for elderly and disabled residents.
- Grounds maintenance and cleaning services are monitored through satisfaction surveys to ensure that there is no discrimination.

We provide information and support

- A range of leaflets, handbooks and policies can be obtained in community languages, large print, Braille or in audio format on request.
- We have a community website which is fully accessible and our corporate website has read-aloud and an option to increase font sizes.
- Our offices are accessible to people with disabilities following improvement works in 2006. Disabled residents were involved in auditing our premises and suggesting improvements, this has since been followed with an Access Audit.
- Information from our Service Information Form advises us of any literacy or communication

needs of our residents. This supports effective and efficient delivery of services.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We are redesigning the corporate website in partnership with residents to improve customer access and achieve W3C accreditation.
- Training and guidance will be given to all relevant staff to ensure they are sensitive to the diverse communication needs of service users.

We handle complaints

- We monitor satisfaction with complaints by diversity group
- We accept complaints in all format to take account of literacy or other communication needs
- Our complaints leaflet can be obtained in community languages, large print, Braille or in audio format on request.

What do we need to do in the future?

- We need to continue to monitor satisfaction with complaints, but also monitor access to the service by diversity group to ensure there is no discrimination

Key issues for Housing Solutions as:

- **an employer**
- We have Positive about Disability ticks and Age positive status.
- 'Ways into work' placements, modern apprenticeship, secondments and work experience are offered regularly.
- We aim for new appointments and promotions to reflect the same levels of representation at all levels of the organisation, when compared to the local working age population.
- We have adopted policies and procedures in respect of Recruitment and Selection, Induction, an Employee Code of Conduct, Harassment at Work and Grievance.
- An employee assistance programme (EAR) is offered to all employees alongside an extensive benefits package and flexible working.
- Staff satisfaction levels are very high and above benchmark across nearly all areas.
- Equality and Diversity and Disability Awareness training sessions are part of the staff induction process and are refreshed on a 2 year basis.
- We do not currently monitor sexual orientation and religion or belief of existing employees.
- Staff have been given Diversity packs which provide guidance and information to ensure that they are aware of any religious sensitivities that may arise and to give a better understanding of the needs of individuals and the communities they serve
- Human Resources, a Diversity Working group, Diversity Board and Executive champions, Diversity Ambassadors, Diversity page on the intranet and a Joint Consultative Committee ensure that employment issues in relation to diversity are addressed.
- An equal pay audit was completed in 2008
- EDGE Forward mentoring of underrepresented groups is promoted to staff
- Secondments, modern apprenticeships and careers fairs are used to recruit and retain the best staff

What do we need to do in the future?

- We are aspiring to the Sunday Times top 100 employer status as recognition that it is a rewarding place to work.
- A data verification exercise will be carried out in 2009 which will include monitoring of sexual orientation and religion or belief. Prior to this we need to raise staff awareness of the benefits of providing this information and how it will be used.

- Regular equal pay audits need to be completed to ensure that pay and conditions are fair and equitable for all.
- We need to ensure that there are no barriers to staff in joining any service areas or taking on management roles.
- We need to continue to monitor access to and satisfaction with employment and services e.g. training, benefits.
- We need to develop our Equality and Diversity training to ensure that it covers all Diversity strands and meets the needs of attendees.

Key issues for Housing Solutions as:

- **a client**

We procure goods, facilities and services

- We have a procurement strategy which sets out our approach to equality within the procurement of goods, facilities and services.
- We expect all of our contractors to adhere to our Code of Conduct which requires contractors to comply with and sign up to our equal opportunities strategy.
- Where possible, we encourage contractors to support local businesses to maximise the positive impact on communities.
- We aim for the use of contractors, consultants and suppliers to reflect the demographics of the local population.
- We have signed up to the Sovereign Development Consortium 2012 commitments, which include a obligations to diversity in procurement

What do we need to do in the future?

- We need to continue to monitor satisfaction with our contractors services by diversity to ensure there is no discrimination
- We need to continue to monitor our contractors, consultants and suppliers to ensure they reflect the demographics of the local population
- We need to monitor our procurement practices to ensure that they are fair and equitable

Key issues for Housing Solutions as:

- **a partner in the community**

- We have strong links with a number of agencies, particularly those who provide services within RBWM. These include the Community Partnership Equality and Diversity Steering Group, Racial Incident Advisory Forum, Windsor and Maidenhead Community Forum (Religion and belief) and Social Services.
- We celebrate religious festivals such as Eid with local schools and wish to continue this work.
- We support WAMCF in its activities such as the multi-faith football tournament and community cohesion conference; however we feel that we can invest further resources into its success.
- We operate a 'Repair with Care' service on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The service helps elderly and disabled people to carry out repairs and improvements to their homes. It also offers help to secure funding for essential work, advice on what improvements are available, as well as helping to manage the installment of any equipment. The service is available to any home owner or private tenant, living within the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, with a disability or aged 60 or over.
- We provide a Lifeline alarm service for people who want to maintain an independent lifestyle, but can access support if they need it.
- We provide a floating support service

- We run PSHE lessons in local schools on 'citizenship'
- We run community development activities in partnership with local agencies e.g. youth services, police, fire service

What do we need to do in the future?

- We wish to develop our links further with Gay Berkshire, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Forum and agencies who provide services in the other areas where we have properties.
- We will continue to celebrate religious festivals such as Eid with local schools and agencies.
- We will invest further resources into the success of WAMCF.
- We will continue to support local schools to encourage respect and address diversity issues.

13 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA)

What is an Equality Impact Assessment?

Equality Impact Assessments are the process of assessing the impact of existing, or proposed policies or functions (services), in relation to their consequences for equality. It includes looking for opportunities for positive impact that may have been missed, or that could be better exploited. It also includes the detection of actual or potential negative impact.

We will ensure that when assessing impact we not only eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality but also, eliminate harassment, encourage the participation of all diversity groups in public life and promote positive attitudes towards all diversity groups.

How will we use them?

The purpose of equality impact assessments is to achieve improvements for all diversity groups. Therefore, actions are likely to be needed as a result of the assessments. The outcome of such actions will be monitored and reviewed as part of ongoing service improvement plans.

Housing Solutions Group has developed an Equality Impact Assessment form that it uses to assess policies and functions (services) The Equality Impact Assessment form covers: disability, gender, race, age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. Housing Solutions Group will make completed equality impact assessments available upon request to show that it has addressed equality in its policy-making and function (service) provision.

Prioritisation of Equality Impact Assessments

A number of documents have been used in identifying the 'impacts' or effects of our current activities on diversity groups. The documents used include the 2007 tenant STATUS survey, CORE lettings log, Major adaptations register, an employee survey and resident satisfaction surveys.

These documents have been combined with views of staff and residents to determine the priority of carrying out an equality impact assessment on that function (service). See the policy register for the timetable.

Training

Housing Solutions Group will also ensure that those who make policy decision and/or scrutinise and review equality impact assessments will be provided with training and guidance; for example Board members.

14 Information gathering and performance monitoring

Equality and diversity targets which directly relate to identified needs will be monitored through the performance management framework. For example targets include board and staff membership; lettings; the provision of aids and adaptations; the success of resident consultation; response times to allegations of harassment. Targets for the year ahead can be found in appendix 4. The monitoring systems identify the reasons why any targets are not being met and demonstrate the action that we are taking to ensure that targets are achieved.

Our action plan in appendix 5 is based on measurable outcomes which include assessments of tenant satisfaction with what is being done and making sure that methods of doing so take into account the access needs of all. In developing the action plan we have identified the resources needed to implement the changes identified and to achieve the targets.

Regular reports will be provided to the Executive Team and Board who have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Strategy delivers continuous improvement and systems identify performance issues and progress of actions to address them.

We will use a range of up-to date data that we hold, making regular analyses of, for example, applications for services, tenant satisfaction surveys, allocations etc to ensure that we are not discriminating in any way and that we are promoting equality of opportunity. We will use performance data to inform business planning and work towards continual improvement. All information gathering and performance monitoring will be considered in relation to our role as a landlord, employer, client and partner in the community.

We will continue to work with strategic partners to understand the communities we serve and promote good community relations.

15 Single Equality Scheme review

Housing Solutions Group has a staff Equality and Diversity Working Group in place, which have supported the development of the Single Equality Scheme. The working group responds to legislation and good practice relevant to Equality and Diversity.

This group will be involved in monitoring actions against the Single Equality Scheme action plan. The action plan will be monitored and reviewed quarterly to ensure that we remain on target to achieve proposed actions.

A report on the implementation of the Single Equality Scheme and action plan will be published annually. The Single Equality Scheme and action plan will be reviewed and revised every 3 years.

Appendix 1 - Legislation

The following relevant legislation forms a framework for Group's Single Equality Scheme. It is not exhaustive and any new legislation or future amendments may supersede these Acts and Statutory Instruments. Further details can be found on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website. <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

The proposed Equality Bill will place a new Equality Duty on public bodies, which will bring together the three existing duties and extend to gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

The purpose of the Bill and its accompanying package of measures is to strengthen protection, advance equality and de-clutter the law.

Its aims are to:

1. Introduce a new Equality Duty on the public sector
2. End age discrimination
3. Require transparency
4. Extend the scope of positive action
5. Strengthen enforcement

[Disability Discrimination Act 1995 \(PDF 512KB\)](#)

[Disability Discrimination Act 2005 \(PDF 324KB\)](#)

[Employment Equality \(Age\) Regulations 2006 \(PDF 249KB\)](#)

[Employment Equality \(Religion or Belief\) Regulations 2003 \(PDF 132KB\)](#)

[Employment Equality \(Sexual Orientation\) Regulations 2003 \(PDF 128KB\)](#)

[Equality Act 2006 \(PDF 384KB\)](#)

[Equal Pay Act 1970 \(PDF 64KB\)](#)

[Human Rights Act 1998 \(PDF 79KB\)](#)

[Race Relations Act 1976 \(PDF 246KB\)](#) as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

[Sex Discrimination Act 1975 \(PDF 230kb\)](#)

[Sex Discrimination \(Amendment of Legislation\) Regulations 2008](#)

[Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#) as amended by Protocol No. 11

[Council Directive 2000/78/EC](#) of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (PDF 129KB)

Codes of Practice

The former equality commissions had power to issue Codes of Practice containing practical guidance on matters such as promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination in particular fields

[Code of Practice - Sex Discrimination](#)

[Code of Practice on Equal Pay](#)

[Gender Equality Duty - Code of Practice for England and Wales](#)

[Statutory Code of Practice on racial equality in employment](#)

[Statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality](#)

[Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing: England](#)

[The Duty to Promote Disability Equality: Statutory Code of Practice: England and Wales \(PDF 948KB\)](#)

[Code of Practice: Employment and Occupation](#)

[Code of Practice: Rights of Access: services to the public, public authority functions, private clubs and premises \(PDF 880KB\)](#)

There are no statutory Codes in force covering sexual orientation, religion or belief, or age discrimination. However, ACAS has published guidance documents covering each of these areas. The following guides can be found on the ACAS website:

[Age and the Workplace - Putting the Employment Equality \(Age\) Regulations 2006 into practice \(PDF 563KB\)](#)

[Religion or Belief and the Workplace - Putting the Employment Equality \(Religion or Belief\) Regulations 2003 into practice \(PDF 566KB\)](#)

[Sexual Orientation and the Workplace - Putting the Employment Equality \(Sexual Orientation\) Regulations 2003 into practice \(PDF 343KB\)](#)

Appendix 2 - Housing Solutions Groups' functions (services)

Employment: Housing Solutions Group employs full and part-time staff working in the three offices in Maidenhead, Berkshire and in scheme offices. Some of these staff have customer facing roles and some do not. Workplaces can be adapted to suit employees' needs.

Procurement: Housing Solutions Group purchases products and services for various functions within the organisation, including maintenance and development of housing and office facilities.

Development and design: Housing Solutions Group develops a mixture of affordable housing, for rent, shared ownership, key workers, market renting, homes for the elderly and specialist accommodation for people who need support and care to live within the community. Where possible we try to build to Lifetime homes standards.

Tenancies and Lettings: Applicants are asked to read (or have read to them) the terms of their tenancy and sign to agree to these terms. These terms include what is acceptable and not acceptable including anti-social behaviour. Properties are allocated to applicants through Housing Solutions Group's waiting lists, local authority nominations or tenant transfer between properties.

Rent Management/Sustainable tenancies: Housing Solutions Group has an arrears policy for tenants who fail to pay their rent on time. Debt recovery agencies will also be used if necessary.

Aids and Adaptations - residents: Housing Solutions Group covers the cost for some minor home adaptations and offers assistance through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process for major adaptations. The DFG is owned by the Local Authority.

Repairs: Housing Solutions Group carries out repairs on its properties on a case by case basis primarily using its own trades team.

Planned and cyclical maintenance: Housing Solutions Group carries out works to properties as part of major improvement schemes.

Dealing with harassment and anti-social behaviour: Scheme staff, Area Housing Officers, or the Anti-social behaviour Officer, deal with complaints of harassment and anti-social behaviour, identify victims and perpetrators and take appropriate action as specified in the policy and procedure. The Personnel department will deal with any harassment and anti-social behaviour towards staff, other than by tenants, or between staff.

Supported housing: Housing Solutions Group provides homes for the elderly and specialist accommodation for people who need support and care to live within the community.

Shared ownership/Leaseholders: Housing Solutions Group provides homes for people that want to own a share in their home, or who want to purchase a leased property.

Resident involvement: Housing Solutions Group is committed to involving residents in key decisions. 3 residents sit on the Housing Solutions Ltd Board and 2 sit on the Bridgewater Board. MDHA Residents' Association works with Housing Solutions Group providing input to service reviews and policies. Residents also help to improve Housing Solutions Group's services through their involvement in service forums, mystery shopping, focus groups, surveys, estate walkabouts and through complaints. Housing Solutions Group also works towards promoting good relationships on estates through fun days, days out and other involvement activities.

Estate management: Housing Solutions Group provides grounds maintenance and cleaning services on a number of its estates. Area Housing Officers also help to manage the estates where residents live by taking action against abandoned cars, damage and graffiti.

Feedback and complaints: Housing Solutions Group welcomes complaints and compliments relating to staff or levels of service.

Information and support: Various key functions in the organisation provide information in a variety of formats to staff, customers and external agencies and authorities. Staff also provide support to tenants in a range of ways.

Appendix 3 - Consultation and Involvement

Consultation and involvement as part of the development of the previous schemes and this scheme includes:

- A steering group was setup to develop the Single Equality Scheme, with representation from service areas, Executive Team, Board and MDHA Residents' Association.
- Brainstorming sessions at the Executive and all departmental team meetings on Equality and Diversity and how we could improve our approach.
- Surveys to partner agencies to determine the Group's image in relation to Equality and Diversity, our partner's priorities, how we can help to achieve these and any areas of good practice we can learn from.
- 39 disabled residents, 2 disabled staff members, a Care provider, 3 local authorities, RBWM's Access Advisory Forum and the Community Partnership Diversity and Equality Steering Group put forward their experiences of barriers within the Groups' services and ideas for improvement. They were then asked to prioritise the areas for action based on the severity of the barrier and the impact. Consultation was through interviews, surveys and email.
- 2 resident focus groups were held and attendees were asked to think about the differing needs of males, females and transgender people in accessing our services. They were also asked to put forward their experiences of barriers within the Groups' services and ideas for improvement. They were then asked to prioritise the areas for action based on the severity of the barrier and the impact.
- 1 staff focus group was held and attendees were asked to consider the main headings under 'Employment' and to help identify any barriers (real or perceived) that were considered to be gender related. The main employment areas considered and discussed were: Pay, Benefits, Recruitment, Promotion, retention, Leavers and reasons for leaving, Grievances and Disciplinary matters, Learning, Development & Training and Flexible Working.
- Our key contractors attended an Equality and Diversity session on 24th April 2008 to discuss key issues and understand better our aims and objectives in this area. Contractors signed-up to our core aims and objectives and we are working together to agree future priorities and actions as well as improved monitoring processes

Appendix 5 - Housing Solutions Group Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

This Action Plan is divided into 4 sections – **Key issues for Housing Solutions as:**

- **A landlord**
- **An employer**
- **A client**
- **A partner in the community**

Below we have listed the requirements of each equality duty. We have given each a reference letter and number so that we can show in our action plan which actions relate to which requirements.

We have to pay due regard to the following requirements of the **race equality duty:**

R1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination

R2. Promote equality of opportunity

R3. Promote good relations between people of different racial groups

We have to pay due regard to the following requirements of the **disability equality duty:**

D1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination

D2. Eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities

D3. Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and others

D4. Take steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities, even where that involves treating them more favourably than others

D5. Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people

D6. Encourage participation by disabled people in public life

We have to pay due regard to the following requirements of the **gender equality duty:**

G1. Eliminate unlawful sex discrimination (including on the basis of gender reassignment)

G2. Eliminate unlawful harassment (including on the basis of gender reassignment)

G3. Promote equality of opportunity between men and women

Within the action plan we also cover actions to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination and harassment in relation to Age, Sexual orientation and Religion and belief.

Housing Solutions as a Landlord

Outcome	Activity/Action	Timescale	Measure	Responsibility	Equality duty
<i>Access & Customer Care</i>					
We know the profile of our residents and use this information to tailor services	Resident Census to obtain information about our residents	February 2010	Information obtained on 80% of residents	Helen Shepherd	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
	Information analysed and used to inform business planning	April 2009 then ongoing	Satisfaction with services		
	Publish diversity profiles of all areas in which we work and residents within those areas to all staff	April 2010	Diversity profiles created and published		

All residents have equal opportunities to access our offices & services	Regularly review access to our services in consultation with residents	On-going	Satisfaction levels with visiting office and/or calling contact centre at 'upper quartile' levels	Helen Shepherd	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3, R1, G1, D1</i>
	Investigate variations in take-up of services to ensure their method of delivery does not restrict access by diversity group e.g. benefit take up, allocations and lettings	On-going	Investigation complete, customer relationship management software shows equality of access and satisfaction surveys show equality of service provision	Helen Shepherd	
	Investigate variations in representation of lettings with relevant local authorities	March 2010	Investigation complete and recommendations implemented	Dee Chritsou/Jo O'Kane	
	Review range of repair appointment times offered in consultation with residents	February 09	Revised range in place and publicised	John Barnes	
	Regularly review and monitor translation and alternative format services to ensure they are effective and consistent	Annually	Number and cost of translation and alternative formats requested Feedback on services	Helen Shepherd & Diane Kane	

	<p>Review information held about properties to determine if it is relevant to people with disabilities. E.g. access specifications, information about access to transport, local amenities, parking etc</p>	December 2009	Satisfaction with the lettings process	Dee Christou	
	<p>Monitor take up of supported housing by racial group taking action to ensure all racial groups are able to access supported housing services</p>	March 2010	Representation of BME residents in supported housing	Liz Robertson	
	<p>Review tenancy agreements to include references to 'civil partner' in order to make it clear that same sex couples who undergo a civil partnership have the same rights as married couples</p>	March 2010	Tenancy agreements amended	Angela James	
	<p>Review lettings policies to ensure they recognize the rights of same-sex partnerships</p>	March 2010	Lettings policies reviewed and approved	Dee Christou	
	<p>Redesign the corporate website in partnership with residents to improve customer access and achieve W3C accreditation</p>	March 2010	W3C accreditation achieved	Diane Kane	

Where appropriate residents are offered specific services	Identify residents who require/prefer home visits or other services delivered by staff member of same sex (housing officer, repair operative etc)	On-going	Where possible option is offered	Helen Shepherd & all staff	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
	Create a 'disability pack' providing signposting to local disability groups/contacts. Include the pack in the lettings information for new residents.	By December 2009	Pack created and circulated.	Johanna Barrett Disabled residents Fiona Peters	
	Promote local diversity groups/contacts in 'Streets Ahead'	Ongoing	Diversity contacts promoted	Diane Kane	
	Produce guidance (Frequently asked questions) for residents in schemes with care providers so that they are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the care provider	By December 2009	Guidance created and circulated.	Liz Robertson	
Resident satisfaction with services is equal for all diversity groups	Ensure all satisfaction surveys include diversity monitoring & investigate significant variations in results	On-going & 2010 STATUS	Rolling satisfaction surveys & 2010 STATUS survey show narrowing of satisfaction gap by diversity in key areas of service	Diversity working group	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2.</i>
Our complaints service works equally effectively for all diversity groups	Improve the monitoring of our complaints service to help identify any reasons for variations by diversity in progressing complaints	April 2010	Improved monitoring system in place, variations investigated and amendments to process proposed if appropriate	Gerald Kavanagh	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2, R2, D3, G3</i>
Our methods of communication are appropriate for all our residents	Resident census to obtain information on individual's preferred method of communication and that information to be available to all staff and used appropriately	April 2010	Individual preferences for method of communication known for 80% of residents	Debbie Denyer	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
	Publish Service Standards on speed of translations and interpretations	July 2009	Service standards published and reported on	Helen Shepherd	

Service Delivery					
New homes are designed to meet the needs of all residents	<p>When designing or procuring new homes consideration should be given to issues such as disabled access, storage (for pushchairs etc), lighting and security to address needs of male, female and disabled residents</p> <p>Involve residents in planned programmes</p> <p>Carry out Equality impact assessments and report to Board before new development/estate renewal programmes are undertaken</p> <p>Identify future Care and Extra Care partnerships with other local authorities</p>	On-going	<p>New home satisfaction survey – showing equal satisfaction by diversity</p> <p>Evidence is available to support new development investment</p> <p>Equality impact assessments completed</p> <p>Care and Extra Care partnerships established</p>	Jill Caress	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
Existing properties meet the needs of residents	<p>Continue to provide extensions to properties</p> <p>Fund an occupational therapist post within the Royal borough of Windsor and Maidenhead</p> <p>Increase the take up of the service from residents who live outside of Maidenhead</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2010/11</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Extensions provided</p> <p>Reduced waiting times for major adaptations (target 5 months in 2010/11)</p> <p>Take up of service from outside of Maidenhead</p>	<p>John Barnes</p> <p>Ray Shearsmith</p> <p>Ray Shearsmith</p>	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
Benchmark our progress on equality and diversity matters against other housing associations, challenging our performance and implementing actions where required	Use the Diversity benchmarking group, SWAMPED Benchmarking Club and Sovereign Development Consortium to examine good practice	Ongoing	Top quartile performance when compared to peers	Diversity working group	<i>R1, R2, R3, D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, G1, G2, G3,</i>

Domestic Violence					
Incidents of domestic violence are not tolerated and are handled quickly and effectively with full support provided to the victim	Staff attend regular training in domestic abuse to ensure their approach is effective	Ongoing	Domestic abuse cases responded to within target & Satisfaction with ASB process	Zoe Godding	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2</i>
	Domestic abuse policy and procedures reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with appropriate specialist agencies	March 2011	Review complete	Zoe Godding	
	Promote role as a third party reporting centre	March 2010	Increase in reporting	Zoe Godding	
Harassment & Anti-Social Behaviour					
The way we deal with harassment and anti-social behaviour is appropriate and effective for all residents	Staff attend regular training on harassment and anti-social behaviour to ensure their approach is effective	Ongoing	Cases responded to within target	Zoe Godding	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2.</i>
	Monitor satisfaction to ensure our harassment and anti-social behaviour policies and procedures are fair and equitable	Ongoing	Satisfaction levels with ASB process show equality	Zoe Godding	
	Harassment & anti-social behaviour policies and procedures reviewed on a regular basis in consultation with appropriate specialist agencies	March 2011	Review complete	Zoe Godding	
	Promote role as a third party reporting centre	March 2010	Increase in reporting	Zoe Godding	

Resident Involvement					
All residents have the appropriate opportunities to get involved in resident participation activities that appeal to them	Review involvement opportunities & activities in line with 2007 STATUS survey and resident feedback to increase participation amongst all residents	2010 STATUS	2010 STATUS survey shows less variations in participation by diversity group	Johanna Barrett	R2, D3, D4, D6, G3, D6, R3
	Increase liaison with Hard to Reach groups such as BME groups.	Ongoing	Representation of active residents to be reflective of resident community (11% BME)		
	Increase involvement of young people by Setting up a youth panel	March 2010	Youth panel setup		
	For all major projects, consult people from all diversity groups and encourage them to get involved.	Ongoing	Consultation completed		

Housing Solutions as an Employer

Outcome	Activity/Action	Timescale	Measure	Responsibility	Equality Duty
Culture					
We know the profile of our staff and use this information to tailor services	Raise staff awareness of the need for diversity data	July 2009	% response rate to diversity questions	Diversity working group	R2, D3, D4, D6, G3
	Carry out data verification for staff	September 2009	Verification complete	Sharon Cartwright	
	Analyse data and use it to inform services	Ongoing	Reduction in variations in staff satisfaction by diversity group	Sue Turner	

Encourage all staff to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate harassment and discrimination and promote good relations between different groups	Expand membership of the Diversity Working Group to include Ambassadors from all areas of the organisation	Ongoing	Areas represented	Diversity working group	<i>R1, R2, R3, D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, G1, G2, G3,</i>
	Train Ambassadors to enable them to effectively carry out their role	December 2009	% attended training		
	Widen the use of the Diversity page on the intranet	Ongoing	% increase in hits		
	Raise awareness of diversity through the celebration of History months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender History Month • Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month • Black History Month 	Annually February June October	Diversity events celebrated		
We are an employer of choice	Aspire to achieve Sunday Times top 100 status	December 2009	Status achieved	Sue Turner	<i>R2, D3, G3</i>
Employment					
Where possible flexible working opportunities to be available to all staff	Flexible working options to be promoted to all staff and included in recruitment advertising (with restrictions if appropriate for certain services)	On-going	Flexible working options promoted	Sue Turner	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3, D6</i>
	Consideration to be given to impact on other staff not on flexible working and how changes in other staff members working patterns may affect them	On-going	Staff satisfaction	All Managers	
Pay and conditions are fair and equitable for all staff	Regular pay audit carried out and inconsistencies investigated and acted upon	Annual	Pay audit completed Reduction in gender pay gap	Sue Turner	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1</i>

There are no barriers by gender for staff in joining any service areas or taking on management roles (Team leaders or senior managers)	Review gender imbalance amongst senior management team, identify reasons behind this and any actions necessary to address this	April 2010	Review completed & actions agreed	Sue Turner	<i>G1, G2, G3</i>
	Review gender imbalance within specific services (trades, admin etc) to identify actions that could be taken to promote applications from all genders and ensure working conditions/practices do not discriminate against particular gender	April 2010	Reviews completed & actions agreed	Sue Turner	
Increased awareness amongst all staff of available benefits	Promote available benefits – including pensions and annual health screening	On-going	Awareness of benefits available increases	Sue Turner	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
People with a disability can access work experience and gain confidence in the workplace	Support the “Ways into work” initiative	Ongoing	Placements offered	Sue Turner	<i>D3, D4, D5, D6</i>
The Diversity of all service areas is representative of the community	Offer non traditional work placements for young people and women	Ongoing	Placements offered	Sue Turner	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3, D6</i>
	Promote the EDGE Forward mentoring programme to staff	Annually	Number of mentees	Sue Turner	
	Promote employment within trades to females through careers fairs	Ongoing	Gender spilt within trades team	Sue Turner	
	Continue to achieve Disability ticks status	Ongoing	Status maintained	Sue Turner	
	Continue to achieve Age positive status	Ongoing	Status maintained	Sue Turner	
	Investigate Stonewall top 100 employers status and report on findings to Executive Team making recommendations for improvements	March 2010	Report completed and recommendations implemented	Sue Turner	

Training					
All staff attend regular equalities and diversity training	Review Equality & Diversity training to ensure it meets identified needs	March 2010	Training reviewed and amended	Sue Turner	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2, D5.</i>
	All new staff attend E&D training and existing staff attend refresher every 2 years All staff attend Disability Awareness training	On-going	All staff attend training every 2 years		
Training offered is accessible to all staff and meets their needs	Train frontline staff in dealing with vulnerable residents	March 2010	Attendance of training	Liz Robertson	
	When setting up training programmes consideration is given to part-time or flexible workers (time of day, child care etc)	On-going	EIA carried out on proposed training programme	Sue Turner	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
MDHA Residents' Association Executive attend regular equalities and diversity and disability awareness training	Review Equalities and Diversity training to ensure it is effective and covers all diversity strands	March 2010	Equality and Diversity training reviewed and changes made	Sue Turner	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2, D5.</i>
	Training provided for Residents' Association Executive	Ongoing	% MDHA RA Executive who attend	Johanna Barrett	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2, D5.</i>
Staff satisfaction					
There is limited variation by diversity strand of staff satisfaction with Housing Solutions as an organisation	All actions contained within this and other service Improvement Plans will contribute towards addressing this	2009	2009 Employee Opinion Survey shows reduced variation in satisfaction by diversity strand	All	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2</i>
Governance					
Board is representative of their customers	Consideration given of current Board membership as new members recruited	On-going	% male/female Board membership	Board	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
Board attend regular equalities and diversity and disability awareness training	Training provided for Board	Ongoing	% Board members who attend training	Board	<i>R1, D1, D2, G1, G2, D5.</i>

Board and Executive Team can make informed decisions on equality and diversity and are aware of the Group's progress	Regular reports from Diversity Working Group to Executive Team and Board	At least every 6 months	Reports circulated	Diversity working group	R1, R2, R3, D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6, G1, G2, G3,
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Housing Solutions as a Client

Outcome	Activity/Action	Timescale	Measure	Responsibility	Equality Duty
Our key contractors are fully aware of and are addressing core equality and diversity issues	Improved contractor monitoring in relation to gender issues (staffing balance and training opportunities etc)	Ongoing	Regular E&D monitoring of contractors in place	John Barnes	R1, D1, D2, G1, G2, D5.
	Monitor satisfaction with our contractors services by diversity to ensure there is no discrimination	Ongoing	Limited variation in satisfaction by diversity group	John Barnes	
Where appropriate residents are offered diversity specific services	Identify residents who require/prefer particular services delivered by member of same sex.	On-going	Where possible option is offered	John Barnes	
	Criteria within procurement process for contractors to try and provide same sex operatives where appropriate	On-going	Included within procurement process		
Procurement practices are fair and equitable	Monitor procurement practices to ensure they are fair and equitable	Ongoing	Equality impact assessment completed on procurement procedures	Ray Green	R2, D3, D4, D6, G3

Housing Solutions as a partner in the Community

Outcome	Activity/Action	Timescale	Measure	Responsibility	Equality Duty
Community development activities address diversity issues	Consider diversity issues when developing community activities programme	On-going	Effective community activities programme in place	Johanna Barrett	R3, R2, D3, D4, D6, G3
Local schools promote positive attitudes towards diversity	Continue to offer PSHE lessons to schools	Annually	Number of lessons completed	Johanna Barrett	R2, D3, D4, D6, G3 R3

Services meet community needs	Extend community links outside the Royal Borough for example Wycombe, Wokingham and Basingstoke	Ongoing	Links with agencies	Johanna Barrett	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i>
	Develop links further with Gay Berkshire, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Forum and implement changes to service or employment practices where required	March 2010	Links established and recommendations implemented	Johanna Barrett	
Good relations between different groups is promoted	Celebrate diversity events, e.g. Eid with local agencies	Ongoing	Events celebrated	Johanna Barrett	<i>R2, D3, D4, D6, G3</i> <i>R3</i>
	Invest further resources into the success of WAMCF	March 2010	Resources invested	Johanna Barrett	