

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-26









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Introduction

Our vision is that equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental in everything we do, raising awareness of the importance of inclusivity in housing. As a housing provider, we believe that having a safe home is a basic human right that impacts on both physical and emotional wellbeing and influences equality of opportunity in other aspects of life.

As a responsible housing provider, we are committed to achieving equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work. We believe that in order to provide equality of opportunity, it is essential to recognise equal rights and ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusion issues are not treated as separate issues but are regarded as mainstream throughout the organisation. To support this on 19 May 2021 we adopted a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (EDI Strategy) flows from our Corporate Strategy, which states:

'We are redoubling our commitment to local people. We want to strengthen our involvement in a wide range of community matters, to help us truly understand the challenges our residents face and boost our ability to impact them positively. Housing isn't just about putting a roof over people's heads – it's about creating an environment everyone can thrive in.'

With this in mind, our EDI Strategy reflects our Corporate Strategy's three strategic themes: Safe, Satisfied, Sustainable. This reflects the strategic thinking and shared purpose of our Board members and the Executive team.

We recognise that the people who provide our services, those that use them and the wider communities with which we engage, constitute individuals with diverse backgrounds, characteristics, experiences and needs. We are committed to doing all we can as an organisation to achieve a fairer, more equitable society that respects and recognises diversity of every kind.

We believe in accountability for both actions and inactions. We also believe that transparency and measurement are critical components in achieving an effective EDI strategy. Strong leadership is also vital, and our Board and Executive are committed to championing equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout our organisation.

Our EDI strategy focuses on achieving positive outcomes for existing and future residents as well as for colleagues, partners and the wider community. We will continue to take positive action to address the needs of underrepresented communities that face barriers in accessing information and services. We will do this in partnership and consultation with wider community groups, voluntary and public organisations. We will monitor allegations of anti-social behaviour (including domestic abuse and hate crimes) separately from other complaints. Our Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy is in place and we will vigorously investigate and deal with any form of hate crime or discrimination.

Alongside other key strategies, we will set our priorities to advance equality, diversity and inclusion across the business. This will support us in meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and our responsibilities under the regulatory framework, going beyond legislation to meet our moral and social responsibilities.



EDI terms, vision and mission





Defining terms

Equality, diversity and inclusion often go hand in hand, but are different from one another.

Equality



Fair treatment and opportunity for all, no-one is treated differently or discriminated against because of their protected characteristics*

Diversity



Taking account of differences between people and groups of people, and placing positive value on these differences

Inclusion



An environment where everyone feels welcome and valued

* Protected characteristics – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Our EDI vision



We are proud of the rich diversity of our Housing Solutions staff and community. Our diversity is our strength, and we work hard collectively to protect

it. We have zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind.

We will take positive action to tackle racism wherever it exists, and we will work hard to promote the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do. We recognise the need to play our part in bringing about positive change.

Within Housing Solutions, we have a dynamic Inclusion Champions Group, Staff Forum and residents' Service Improvement Team who work with us to facilitate open and honest discussions. These discussions help to shape our policies and services. We aim to be inclusive, diverse and equal.

Tragedies such as the Grenfell fire and George Floyd's death have reignited conversations within Housing Solutions on how we can improve. We acknowledge there is more to be done to break down barriers, to connect our leaders, and tailor our services to meet the needs of our staff and residents.



Our EDI mission

Our Corporate and EDI missions are aligned to meet our Corporate Mission:

'to make our residents proud of where they live and our colleagues proud of where they work'



We have a dedicated and passionate workforce and know the value that diversity brings to the workplace. Accordingly, we are working to ensure that our Board and colleagues reflect a wide range of views and backgrounds.

Achieving equality and valuing diversity is about making sure that all people are treated fairly and given equal opportunity, either in the standard of service they receive, or as our employees. It is not about treating everyone the same but recognising that everyone's needs must be met in different ways.

We are proud that we can serve our residents, we are fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity, developing inclusive services, celebrating diversity and putting our residents at the heart of everything we do. Equality also recognises that historically and currently, certain groups of people with protected characteristics have experienced discrimination.

It is our aim to:

- 1. Ensure that every person is able to give their best and unfair discrimination is not tolerated;
- Provide equality, fairness and respect for everyone employed by, and that works for Housing Solutions, whether temporary, permanent, part-time or full-time;

- 3. Eliminating all forms of unlawful discrimination, this includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities. It also includes ensuring accessibility of services for residents, making reasonable adjustments, and designing services to be as inclusive as possible;
- Ensure that our residents are valued for their diversity and that they do not suffer unlawful discrimination;
- 5. Promote equal treatment for all colleagues and residents alike regardless of background;
- 6. Provide guidance on best practice to make Housing Solutions an inclusive organisation as an employer and provider of services.

The society we live in is changing. At one level it appears there is greater awareness of inequalities and injustice than ever before; on another, examples of discrimination and disadvantage are never far from the headlines. With equality, diversity and inclusion, there is always more that can be done, and we are committed to doing just that.

Our resident base is diverse and some of the most vulnerable residents live in the homes that we manage. We know we cannot make a positive impact for residents or succeed as a business without recognising, respecting and valuing people's differences and making sure that our residents and staff feel comfortable to be themselves.

Equality for Housing Solutions is about ensuring that all individuals have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives. We believe that noone should have poorer life chances because of where or whom they were born, what their beliefs are or whether they have a disability.



Our values

Each of us takes responsibility to ensure a positive outcome for our

Ownership

Use creative thinking, passion, energy and enthusiasm to achieve practical results.

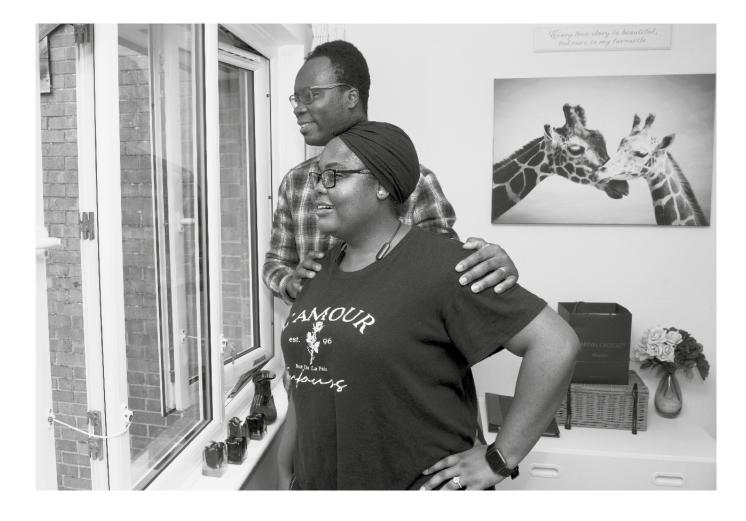
Innovation

Work co-operatively in teams and across teams to adhieve more together than we could alone.

Teamwork

Ensure that everyone we deal with is able to participate in our services and organisation.

Inclusion









The Equality Act 2010

This Act simplified, streamlined and strengthened equalities law. It gives individuals greater protection from unfair discrimination and makes it easier for employers and organisations to understand their responsibilities. It also sets

a new standard for those who provide public services to treat everyone with dignity and respect. This forms the primary legislative basis under which our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy operates.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

Created under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty means that Housing Solutions as a public body, must fulfil the duty to ensure we consider the needs of different individuals in our day-to-day work – whether delivering services, involving residents to help shape our policies or in relation to our employees.

When carrying out our work we must have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different communities. We will ensure that our policies help to deliver efficient and effective services by undertaking equality impact assessments when developing new policies or updating existing policies.

Regulatory standards

The debate following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower and subsequent publication of the White Paper has encompassed issues much wider than fire safety, including the way tenants and residents perceived that they were viewed, and a strong sense that people living in social housing were stigmatised more generally. There were important equalities dimensions to this debate, which have been highlighted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.



The Regulator of Social Housing sets standards with which we must comply, this includes the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard which states:

Registered providers shall:

- Treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- b. Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

To meet this requirement, the Regulator expects 'registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants'. We report each year to the Board the assessment of compliance with the regulatory standards, including the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.



Governance

We will hold ourselves accountable and set goals to measure our progress. This will include publishing our data internally and externally and regularly monitoring and reporting via our Board, Executive Team and Inclusion Group.

We recognise that we might not always get it right in moving forward change, but we are committed to learning from our experiences and driving continuous improvement. The governance

of our EDI work will be embedded across the organisation and managed by the Inclusion Group who report to the Executive Team and ultimately the Board.

We will follow the National Housing Federation – Code of Governance 2020. The Code sets a framework for organisations to achieve an equality, diversity and inclusion baseline for excellent governance.

The four core principles we will adhere to are:





Our residents and staff

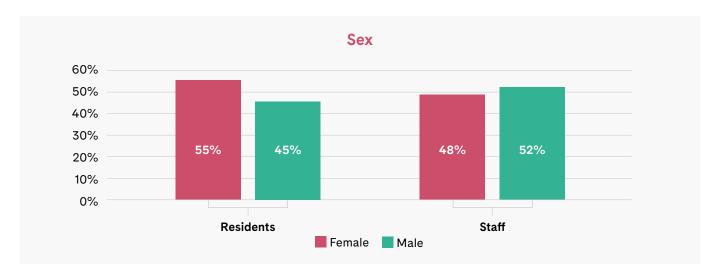
We have in place a variety of support mechanisms for residents and staff, tailoring our support to meet specific needs, this includes:

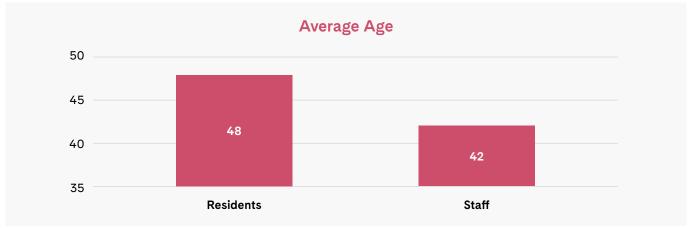


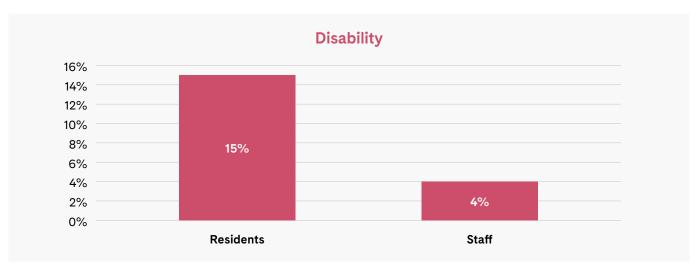


Resident and staff profiles

Understanding the diversity of our residents and staff helps us to deliver more targeted services and support, building stronger community relationships. As of September 2021 this is how our resident and staff profile looked.

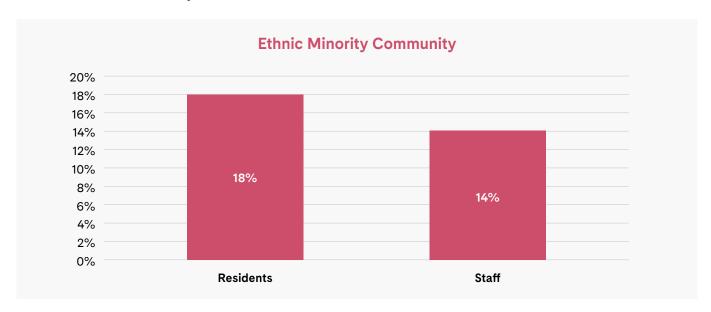


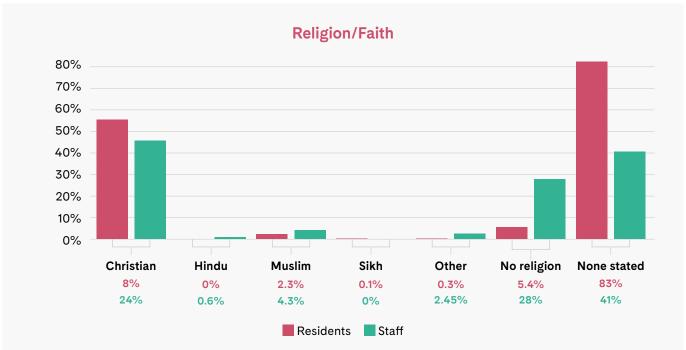






Resident and staff profiles





As an organisation we are broadly representative of our residents in terms of sex, ethnicity and age profile. We are however concerned that the majority of colleagues choose not to share their sexual orientation. We also know that our information on colleague disability does not include those who may have long term health

conditions, and we have limited faith data for our residents and colleagues. We therefore do not know enough to better support them. We are committed to improving our data to ensure that we can appropriately tailor our services and support for residents and colleagues.



How the Board will monitor and review progress

The Board has overall accountability for the delivery of the strategy. In particular, this means the Board will monitor the progress of the strategy. We will report to the Board bi-annually on progress against the objectives and measures set within the strategy.

How we inform stakeholders of performance and progress against our objectives

As part of our Annual Report, we will include performance against our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives for each year, providing an assessment of what we achieved or did not achieve. We will publish our performance against the objectives both internally and externally, via our intranet and website, and we will publish our achievements against the strategy within the report to residents each year.





Equality, diversity and inclusion strategic objectives

We are committed to tackling discrimination, putting measures in place that are aimed at preventing and responding to such issues. We will go beyond getting the basics right that will help us continue working towards building communities and a work environment where residents and staff feel acknowledged as uniquely different but equally valued.

Through their participation in workshops held in August and September 2021 residents and staff were central to developing EDI actions. They highlighted that the leadership were accessible and approachable, and that progress had been made in celebrating difference.

Employees felt the organisation was familyfocused and colleagues from diverse backgrounds were respected, valued and treated as individuals.

Residents recognised the increasing challenge the organisation was facing to improve engagement. Through focus group discussions and workshops, both groups shared their aspirations about key activities for us to focus on. These are highlighted below.





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