

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

INFORMATION

Policy Name	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Effective Date(s)	May 2020 – May 2022
Approved By	Risk and Compliance Group
Approval Date	6 th May 2020
Policy Owner/Dept	Director of Customer Service Delivery
Policy Author	Head of Regeneration
Review Date	May 2022
Policy Framework Ref	ED1
Version Number	1.1

Your Housing Group Strategic Theme			
Operational Excellence	<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Experience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Growth and Financial Strength	<input type="checkbox"/>	People and Culture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Relevant National Standards or Regulation	Please State if the Policy aligns to any of the Regulators Standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood and Community Standard • Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
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Relevant Legislation	Please list any legislation applicable to the Policy; (e.g. Welfare Reform and Work Act; Equality Act 2010 etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Act 2010 • Human Rights Act 1998 • Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 (Section 149) • Data Protection Act 2018 • Mental Capacity Act 2005
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1. Purpose of the Policy

This policy outlines YHG's commitment to promoting equality and diversity both for customers and within the workplace.

This policy also sets out YHG's commitment to supporting vulnerable customers.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to everyone within Your Housing Group, including the Board, staff and temporary workers. Agents, sub-contractors, partners, customers and stakeholders are required to operate this policy. External parties commissioned to provide services are responsible for ensuring that their workers and sub-contractors work to this policy.

3. Definitions

The following terms are used in the policy:

Equality: Treating people fairly, in ways that are free from discrimination and providing the same opportunities for all. Taking positive action to create a fairer society where everyone has the same chance to fulfil their potential, have access to services to meet individual needs and participate in the community.

Diversity: Being inclusive. Understanding, respecting and valuing differences between individuals.

Vulnerability: A person with vulnerability or individual service needs is someone who may have difficulties managing their tenancy or affairs as a result of health, disability, learning, behavioural or mental health issues, family, social and financial or other circumstances, or any combination of these. Any person or household can experience needs or vulnerabilities at some point in their life.

Protected Characteristics: The characteristics are set out below.

Race: Refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. This definition may also include social class discrimination.

Gender: Legal definition is a man or a woman, although as gender identity is becoming more fluid, Your Housing Group will consider this in its policies and actions.

Gender reassignment: The process of transition from one gender to another. This definition can also include trans people and does include Gender Identity.

Disability: A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. However, this disability definition can also include people with long term and progressive illness.

Sexual orientation: Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Religion or belief: Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Age: Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18-30 year olds).

Marriage and civil partnership: Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman, but now includes marriage between same-sex couples. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Pregnancy and maternity: Pregnancy is the condition of expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding

4. Consultation

This policy has been consulted on by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group and Risk and Compliance Group.

5. Background and Context

The Equality Act 2010 has nine protected characteristics which are:

- Race
- Gender
- Gender Reassignment (including Gender Identity)
- Disability
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or Belief
- Age
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity explicitly.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (General) 2011 (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) applies across Great Britain to public bodies, and to other organisations when they are carrying out public functions.

The duty requires organisations to have due regard to equality in the way it conducts its business. In doing this Your Housing Group must take steps to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people
3. Foster good relations between people.

This equality and diversity policy and approach to promoting it provides Your Housing Group with a framework within which it will operate, providing equality and diversity in employment and service delivery.

6. Policy Detail

Policy Statement

Equality and diversity recognises everyone's strengths and potential. It helps to develop diversity in the workplace which can benefit customers, employees, partners and the organisation's performance.

Pursuing equality and diversity can attract new people and has the potential to create new ways of working which can improve services to customers and communities as well as improving relations with the wider public.

The advantages of equality and diversity cannot be achieved unless it is incorporated into every aspect of an organisation's values and goals.

Your Housing Group is committed to promote equality and diversity which helps to provide people with the support and services they need to continue to live independently in their own homes.

Your Housing Group also supports flexible working and family friendly employment to help demonstrate our overall approach to equality & diversity.

In developing this equality and diversity policy and strategic approach, consideration has been given to equality and diversity legislation, public duties, good practice and guidance.

At Your Housing Group, the principles of equality and diversity are underpinned by effective leadership to secure tangible outcomes for customers and reap business benefits. This means doing the right things, in the right way. Treating people fairly and valuing diversity are central to the success of the organisation and its future.

To achieve these policy aims Your Housing Group will:

- Ensure that decision-making structures consider equality and diversity, through a process of Equality Impact Assessing.
- Ensure the widest possible representation and involvement of customers, staff and board members, through profiling and gathering customer knowledge.

- Ensure that equality and diversity is a fundamental principle in policies and procedures and that policies are equality impact assessed.
- Ensure our knowledge of customers means that we provide the best possible service which meets individual and community needs.
- Ensure that no job applicant receives less favourable treatment than any other, and that only the best individual is recruited.
- Ensure that all employees and Board members are supported in developing the skills and abilities they require to carry out their current and any likely future duties in the organisation by creating equal access to training.
- Ensure that there is an environment where everyone feels valued and can perform to their best potential.
- Ensure that the Board, staff, customers and visitors understand and follow the standards of behaviour that are required for the appropriate management of equality and diversity.

Your Housing Group have signed up and committed to achieve the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Equality and Diversity Charter.

The charter includes a set of commitments which are underpinned by a range of outcomes - together, the commitments and outcomes provide a framework against which organisations can assess where they are now and where they aspire to be.

The charter consists of two core elements:

- **Who we are:** inclusive leadership and organisational culture
- **Who we serve:** involved and empowered customers in the communities where we work

By signing up to this charter, YHG are making a public commitment to deliver a fair and accessible housing service which is clearly focused on outcomes for staff, tenants and communities.

YHG wants to make sure that our commitment to equality and diversity is reinforced by the organisations values and embedded in day-to-day working practices.

YHG are committed to the interests of customers and partners by working together and drawing on collective skills, knowledge and experience, in order to be stronger and more effective.

YHG aim to be widely recognised as an employer of choice, with high performing individuals and teams, where great people develop and build their careers.

YHG aim to do the right thing; respecting customers, partners and colleagues and balancing our ethical, social and financial responsibilities

YHG recognise that everyone is different and should be treated as an individual. To achieve fairness, YHG pro-actively tackle disadvantage and discrimination and remove barriers to provide everyone an equal chance to access our homes, services, jobs and

contracts. Actively promoting opportunities for all and eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation, are integral to YHG's work.

Fair treatment, inclusion and valuing diversity are paramount to reducing inequality due to age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnic or national origin, nationality, colour, religion or belief, sexual orientation, social class and other irrelevant factors such as background, size or appearance.

YHG do not tolerate any discriminatory or offensive behaviour, including harassment, bullying or victimisation.

Vulnerabilities

YHG will also protect those with vulnerabilities which may or may not include a person's disability and which may or may not fall directly under the Equality Act 2010.

Vulnerability may not be a permanent status, however people may have periods of their life when they experience vulnerability. YHG recognise that some people may not see themselves as vulnerable and must ensure staff members can manage these situations with sensitivity.

Any person or household can experience needs or vulnerabilities at some point in their life. A person with vulnerability or individual service needs is someone who is likely to have difficulties managing their tenancy or affairs as a result of health, disability, learning, behavioural or mental health issues, family, social and financial or other circumstances, or any combination of these.

YHG take the view that it will support vulnerable individuals where possible.

YHG see that without the right support in place, the following groups of people, may potentially be vulnerable:

- Frail elderly people
- People with a physical disability including those with long term, fluctuating or progressive illness
- People with a sensory disability
- People with mental health issues
- People with dementia/ Alzheimer's
- People with learning disabilities or difficulties
- People who are isolated
- People who neglect themselves
- People at risk of abuse and harassment (including domestic abuse and hate crime)
- People with challenging or antisocial behaviour
- People with literacy difficulties
- Rough sleepers
- People who misuse alcohol
- People who misuse drugs
- People moving from supported accommodation

- People discharged from institutional care
- Refugee/asylum seekers
- Ex-offenders or people who are vulnerable as a result of having served a custodial sentence.
- People with a history of street homelessness
- Young people leaving care or evicted by parents
- Those who are made vulnerable due to circumstance (e.g. recent bereavement or relationship breakdown)
- Those who are vulnerable due to domestic violence, harassment, or victims of repeat burglary or crime

The following people could be more likely to experience vulnerability, particularly if they have one or more of the above characteristics:

- Frail and/or older people
- People discharged from hospital following crisis admission
- Young people
- Young people leaving care
- Teenage parents
- Pregnant women
- People who have child care responsibilities
- People with learning disabilities
- Illiteracy or inability to speak English
- Physical disability
- Blindness or visually disability
- Deafness and/or speech disability
- Living with Advanced HIV/Aids
- A person with a medical condition that will seriously impair their ability to manage on a day to day basis, e.g. mental illness, such as schizophrenia/bipolar or depression, or age related mental deterioration such as early stage Alzheimer's disease or senile dementia

There are a number of additional circumstances which could give rise to short or medium-term needs, which in turn could threaten a tenancy. These include domestic abuse, harassment, a young person leaving care, a person leaving supported housing (or having floating support withdrawn), release from a custodial sentence, asylum seekers given leave to remain and substance abuse.

People may also be vulnerable due to a lack of capacity. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 aims to empower and protect people who may not be able to make some decisions for themselves. It also enables people to plan ahead in case they are unable to make important decisions for themselves in the future. People could lose mental capacity because of a mental illness or due to a broad range of factors including stress, anxiety, influence of drugs or alcohol or acute depressive episodes.

Being unwell or having a mental illness does not automatically mean you lack mental capacity so unless stated otherwise capacity should always be presumed. If a person is deemed to lack capacity this does not mean that it is permanent or applicable to every decision that they make.

Your Housing Group will take capacity into account whilst carrying out its duties

Responsibilities under this Policy

The Director of Customer Service Delivery has overall responsibility for promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at YHG.

The Head of Regeneration has day to day responsibility for delivering the commitments under this policy.

The Equality and Diversity Steering Group has responsibility for coordinating activity across the business and for delivering on the Equality and Diversity Action Plan in support of the Charter.

The Group Board Champion for Equality and Diversity has responsibility for championing issues of Equality and Diversity at Board level and for challenging where issues are identified.

7. Risk Management

Failure to recognise and consider issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in decision making could leave YHG at risk of breaching the Equality Act 2010 and at risk of legal challenge.

This is managed by ensuring that all staff received training in equality and diversity at induction, by ensuring mandatory training for staff on a 3 year basis and through ensuring that issues of equality and diversity are considered in policies and Group Board decisions.

8. Data Protection, Record Storage and Retention

Any equality and diversity data collected in relation to customers or staff is collected for a legitimate purpose and is processed and retained in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and of the General Data Protection Regulations.

9. Equality and Diversity

This policy complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure equality of treatment for all customers without discrimination or prejudice.

On request, YHG will provide translations of all its documents, policies and procedures in various languages and other formats.

10. Communication

This policy will be made available on the YHG intranet for staff and on the YHG website for customers.

11. Learning and Development

All staff receive mandatory training on equality and diversity as part of their staff induction.

All staff are required to undertake refresher training on a 3-year basis through the Helix e-learning system.

Managers are required to undertake recruitment and selection training as part of their development, covering issues of equality and diversity.

12. Performance Management of this Policy

The Group Board has the overall responsibility for the development and delivery of this Policy.

The E&D Steering Group will monitor delivery of the policy and agree & deliver on the action plan to meet the CIH Charter.

This policy is supported by an action plan and guidance notes.

This document is designed to complement existing equality and diversity performance and will be reviewed regularly.

13. Review of this Policy

This document will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required by statutory, regulatory or best practice requirements or the need to update following reviews of other Group wide policies.

Related Documents

Document Type	Name
Connected Policies and Procedures	This policy is consistent (where relevant) with Your Housing Groups current policies, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Policy • Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy • Anti-Social Behaviour and Hate Crime Policy • Absence Management Policy • Employee Code of Conduct • Gender Reassignment and Trans- Equality Policy • Policy Framework Policy
Forms and Letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIA Guidance Notes • EIA Full Assessment Form • EIA Initial Assessment Form
Leaflets/Publicity Material	
Training Materials Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Training for all Staff – Helix • Staff Induction Training • Recruitment and Selection Training • Safeguarding Training – Helix • Tran-Awareness Training - Helix
Intranet/ Website Page	Available on YHG Website and Youggle