

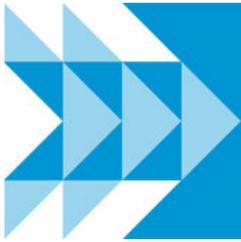
Better Together

Equality and diversity strategy 2013-16

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1	Previous strategy reviewed	Margi Shand	21/10/13

Equality and diversity strategy
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Equality and diversity strategy 2013-16

Ensuring we treat customers' and staff as individuals; with respect and dignity at the core to all that we do. We need to better understand the communities in which we work, the workforce that we employ and how these are changing.

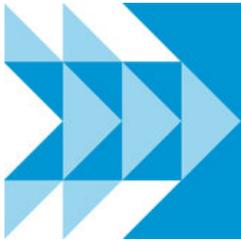
1. Introduction

- 1.1 At Housing 21 equality and diversity is not about ticking a box. Individuality is one of our key values; by respecting people as individuals we can meet different needs better. Equality, equality and diversity and inclusion need to work together to create a fairer society. It is about recognising, embracing and valuing difference to the benefit of everyone.
- 1.2 We promote equality and diversity as not just being about legislation and the 9 protected characteristics; we need to make sure we also consider other areas such as wealth and ageing in particular. Equality and diversity is about embedding a positive culture across the organisation which can have a real impact on productivity, commercial competitiveness, motivation of staff and loyalty.
- 1.3 It is important that customers and staff understand our values and that inappropriate or offensive behaviours are not tolerated. It is essential that we help people understand the impact of such behaviours.
- 1.4 We must better understand the profile of our customers' and staff. Accuracy of this knowledge helps provide a better quality service that meets individual needs. Where populations are becoming increasingly older we must work in partnership to help face the challenges they present such as housing, health and welfare services within communities.
- 1.5 In 2008, the current Equality and diversity Strategy was produced along with Disability and Gender Action Plans. These documents led to real step's forward; however it is recognised this work needs to be reviewed to ensure work on this important agenda remains relevant.
- 1.6 This strategy has key links with other agendas across Housing 21 including the Customer Engagement strategy, the Dementia & Long-term Conditions Strategy, Welfare Reform, the Localism Act and the Human Rights Act.

2. Where are we now?

- 2.1 A review of progress of the 2008 Equality and diversity Strategy objectives has been carried out. Some of the commitments made in the 2008 strategy remain relevant and will be incorporated into this



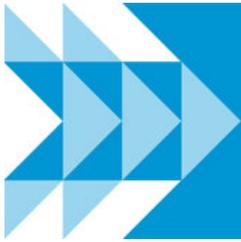


- strategy. Both the disability and gender equality action plans will also be incorporated into the equality and diversity strategy to ensure one focused strategy rather than separate action plans.
- 2.2 In November 2012 an exploratory study of experiences of equality and diversity issues in Housing 21 services was carried out. This focused research project has helped identify some of the areas we need to focus on going forward. The key findings from the report include a need for improved training, consistency of approach to equality and diversity and tackling prejudice attitudes, improved information provision and gaining a better understanding of any specific requirements.
- 2.3 In 2012 a project was carried out to discuss potential issues for older people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT). The project found there are concerns with the number of people who still feel reluctant to come forward about their sexuality. Recommendations from this project have been included in this strategy.
- 2.4 Research was also carried out looking at good practice inside and outside the sector. This highlighted some of the good work taking place at Housing 21 *such as* the welfare benefits advisors and the use of alphabet boards to assist staff in meeting customer communication needs. Within the housing sector ideas such as business cards containing useful tips and advice on how to deal with situations sensitively stood out as something that could work for Housing 21.
- 2.5 Our Human Resources Team have recently reviewed their policies and in doing so carried out equality impact assessments, including those policies being removed. There have been good examples of targeted recruitment campaigns. However we need to better understand the communities in which we work to make sure we are meeting individual and collective needs.
- 2.6 Whilst black and minority ethnic (BME) monitoring is undertaken it is not as extensive as it should be and therefore any learning from existing processes is superficial and disconnected to the business need. Ensuring we understand what we are monitoring, together with why and how it can be utilised to continuously improve performance will be a key part of this work.

3. What influences what we do?

- 3.1 ***Moral & business case*** – There is a strong moral and business case for being an inclusive and diverse organisation. This is not just about compliance or regulation; although ensuring we are compliant with legislation is important. Housing 21 strives to go beyond this in our approach to equality and equality and diversity. This is about seeing the benefits of being inclusive. It can increase market access and

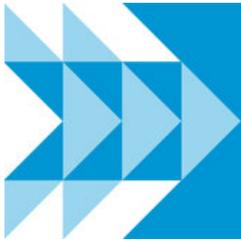




improve customer service and can help retain staff for longer. The social model of disability identifies that it is society that is the main contributory factor in disabling people. Housing 21 is committed to including, empowering and respecting people regardless of their individual differences.

- 3.2 **Emerging demographic** – Numbers of people living longer is on the increase. In England and Wales numbers of older people aged 65 years and over is expected to rise by 65% in the next 25 years to over 16.4 million in 2033 (Age UK 'Later Life in the UK', 2012:3). The number of people over 85 years in the UK is predicted to double in the next 20 years and treble in the next 30 years. And almost 1 in 5 people will live to celebrate their 100th birthday (Age UK 'Later Life in the UK', 2012:3).
- 3.3 Over the last 2 decades England and Wales have become more ethnically diverse. The 2011 census survey has shown the numbers of older BME people to be growing at a faster rate than the rest of the older population. Currently this makes up around 8% of the population of older people (Age UK 'Later life in the UK', 2012:3) and one source (Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Garwood, 2010:52) estimates this will increase ten fold by 2030. According to available data the BME group amongst Housing 21 customers is currently under represented with only around 3-4% of housing customers indicating they are from a BME background.
- 3.4 Current research also indicates a rise in the number of people stating they are lesbian, gay or bisexual. However Housing 21 currently shows a lower than expected number of staff and customers indicating they are lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- 3.5 These statistics clearly influence what we do but we should not lose sight of the importance of the individual. Responding to the needs of the individual remains at the core of our approach.
- 3.6 **Commercial market** – More and more people are buying services that are respectful and specific to lifestyle. In the past people would often accept what was on offer however this is increasingly changing. We need to work with communities to better understand local need and therefore evidence demand for specific or 'exclusive' services. We also need to better understand the shelf life of these services and whether future generations still require this. For example our LGBT research suggests a greater demand for a bespoke offer from Older LGBT people and very little demand in the younger / younger older generation. A commercial and social decision needs to be made: Do we support segregated communities and if so to what extent and purpose? We also need to make sure that we think about the building design and the facilities to reflect the local community.



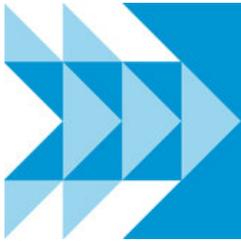


- 3.7 **Regulation** - As a housing and care provider we are regulated by the Homes & Communities Agency www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ (HCA) and the Care Quality Commission www.cqc.org.uk (CQC). Both regulators highlight the importance of treating people with respect and delivering choice. Although it is important that Housing 21 is compliant; we must not be lead by legislation and regulation.
- 3.8 **Legislation** - The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010 and brought all separate legislation relating to equality into one place. The main aim of the Act was to not only streamline the law but also to strengthen the law relating to equality. It is important to comply with the legislation; however we want to go beyond this including widening from the 9 protected characteristics detailed on the Equality Act. The 9 protected characteristics detailed in the Act are as follows. However through this strategy we will also consider wealth and ageing and the impact this has on our customers.
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage & civil partnerships
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

4. Where do we want to be?

- 4.1 Housing 21 strives to be seen as an inclusive and attractive organisation both for staff and customers. We want to be a listening, learning and engaging organisation. Putting customers at the heart of what we do is a key priority. We need to value difference and see this as an asset.
- 4.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) gives the opportunity for staff to think through and analyse whether a policy, procedure or practice has a differential impact on a particular group. By embedding this practice in day to day operations staff begin to understand why equality and diversity is important. We will need to identify where we feel EIA's are needed rather than all policies. Some policies may need to be in place due to legislation; however it will be important for our Policy Committee to challenge and understand where these should be carried out.
- 4.3 Having achieved the Investors in People accreditation in 2012. We aim to achieve Investors in People silver by 2014. Part of this work will





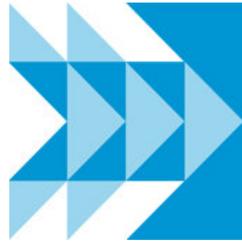
focus on the equality and equality and diversity indicators therefore demonstrating how important this work is.

- 4.4 There are several accreditation schemes that we could consider, however it is important that they add real value to what we do and improves the experience for people who work with us. It would need to fit with what we are trying to achieve and has to be for the right reason rather than simply ticking a box.

5. How will we know when we are there?

- 5.1 An Equality and Diversity Steering Group has been established and includes staff from across the organisation. Their role includes monitoring how we are progressing and helping to promote the importance of equality and diversity across Housing 21. The National Customer Committee will also monitor progress.
- 5.2 Putting in place performance measures that will be tracked and monitored for improvement is always vital to monitoring improvements. The organisation will need to track areas such as increases in customer satisfaction around support plans, are there trends around complaints, who are we partnering with and is this changing, why are people moving in or out, why staff may leave Housing 21 and does our workforce reflect the communities in which we work. The Executive Team and the Board need to agree a set of corporate targets which should be approved and scrutinised by the National Committee, our formal customer scrutiny panel.
- 5.3 Equality Impact Assessments can be an effective method to help staff consider the impact of a policy, procedure or service review on all individuals. In addition to embedding this practice across the organisation we will need to be able to demonstrate outcomes and learning from the EIA's that have been completed.
- 5.4 As highlighted in 4.4 there are accreditations that Housing 21 may consider achieving, however it is crucial that this fits with our corporate strategy and is evidenced to deliver value.
- 5.5 It will be important to report regularly to the Board, Executive Team and National Committee progress being made with this strategy. The Strategy will also be reviewed annually making sure what we have in place remains fit for purpose and relevant.





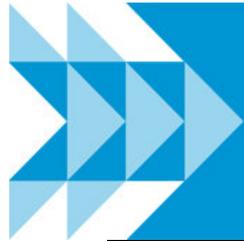
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Activity	Owner	By when
Objective 1 – Normalising and embedding an inclusive culture that embraces equality and equality and diversity (delivery)		
Review of corporate strategy & corporate objectives to ensure plans do not have a differential impact on a particular group – ensure universal fairness, treating people as individuals	Executive Team	Year 1 and ongoing
Marketing, branding and communications – ensure H21 use inclusive images across all marketing and communications including publications for staff and customers. This should include images of people who are LGBT as well as different disabilities and cultures. Need to also consider equality and diversity in the messages we send for example including covering interviews in My Time with a variety of different customers demonstrating equality and diversity	Head of Marketing and Communications	Year 1 and ongoing
Provide support and clear procedural guidance for staff and customers who may fall victim to bullying or harassment – ensure current policies are fit for purpose	Director of HR/OD	Year 1
Enable informal support networks to be established across the organisation for example ensuring staff and customers who are LGBT can share experiences of issues they may face	Customer Engagement Manager	Year 1
Ensure monitoring of legislation and compliance as well as ensuring that all policy reviews include an equality impact assessment	Chair of Policy Committee	Year 1 and ongoing
Each level of staff & customer groups will own the agenda at different levels – defined responsibility to implement strategy. Ensure ownership & responsibility of all areas.	Executive Team	Year 1
Set standards and expectations to ensure customers and staff understand what is expected of them – promote our values and be prepared to challenge Ensure all staff performance plans include an appropriate target on equality and diversity	Executive Team	Year 1
Ensure we attract & recruit staff that share H21's values and support a diverse	Director of HR/OD	Year 2





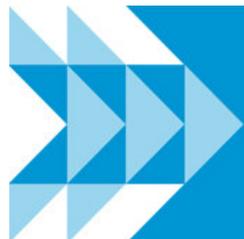
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customer base. Increased targeted recruitment, improve our equality and diversity statement in recruitment packs, test attitudes more thoroughly at interview and in referencing.		
<p>Make sure our values are included in the induction process - giving staff the confidence and courage to challenge inappropriate or offensive behaviours</p> <p>Training – develop and deliver a programme of training for different levels of managers and front line staff. Need to support managers to understand communities and any to deal with tensions/issues effectively – highlight responsibilities. Giving managers’ confidence when dealing with situations sensitively needs to form part of the training including use of language.</p> <p>Make sure the competency and procedures are dealt with efficiently and effectively – a clear disciplinary framework needs to be in place. A programme of ongoing refresher training is also required. To sit alongside other training programmes National Committee and Regional Partnership Groups members will also need to attend training on equality and diversity to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities with this agenda.</p>	Head of Learning & Development	Year 2
Ensure we make reasonable adjustments over and above what is required by legislation making sure support is put in place where requested – not just the physical environment but also other support that may be required (Staff)	Director of HR/OD	Year 2
Ensure we make reasonable adjustments over and above what is required by legislation making sure support is put in place where requested – not just the physical environment but also other support that may be required (customer)	Director of Operations	Year 2
Court & care business plans – include equality and diversity targets in all court business plans and domiciliary care services. Need to ensure the corporate plan drives local plans and vice versa – important that all business plans link together. Need to ensure courts, offices and services are inclusive and responsive to different needs	Regional Operations Directors	Year 2
Need to better understand our customer profile and what formats we need to ensure are available readily. Make accessing these formats easy for our customers and promote how to access them. Ensure staff are positive about providing literature in a	Head of Marketing and Communications	Year 2





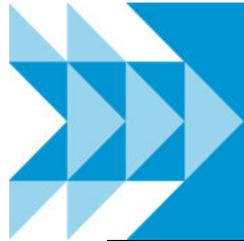
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way and that they have quick and simple access to them.		
Working with external partners and gaining access to funding to progress our aims and enhance opportunities for staff and customers	Intelligence Manager	Year 3
Objective 2 – Having confidence in how it works (testing)		
Monitor & review statistics – review what we evidence, what we collect and what we do with it	Director of Business Development	Year 1
Sharing good practice – use positive examples in Team Talk and on other communication tools	Head of Marketing & Communications	Year 1 and ongoing
Equality Impact assessments – review and ensure current method is fit for purpose, use in all we do include including specific policy reviews and any service reviews	Head of Governance	Year 1
Achieve Investor In People silver – making sure the focus is on the Equality and Equality and diversity indicators	Head of Learning & Development	Year 2
Policy Committee, Equality and diversity Steering Group & National Committee to track progress with strategy and make sure it is reviewed regularly to ensure strategy continues to be relevant Driving a programme where customers and staff are testing our performance and assisting to drive improvements.	Customer Engagement Manager	Year 2
Expanding the comparator work and benchmark against it which would then drive who we work with. Improve how we benchmark with external partners and build partnerships	Intelligence Manager	Year 3
Explore and identify accreditations – what would fit with Housing 21. Options may include Positive about disability, Stonewall work place index, Chartered Institute of Housing Charter	Director of Business Development	Year 3
Peer monitoring from customer and staff groups – including the National Committee, Regional Partnership Groups and My Voice	Customer Engagement Manager	Year 3
Value for money – assessing the satisfaction of those who are already accessing our services as well as expanding accessibility to new customer groups and making their experience equally satisfactory. Having a better recruited and better equipped workforce with fewer staff leavers and	Director of Finance Director of HR/OD	Year 3





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Objective 3 – Sustainability and future relevance (planning and future proofing)		
Ensure Customer profiling is improved and that this leads to a better understanding of future generations/customers	Intelligence Manager	Year 2
Carry out a value for money assessment on a regular basis – signed off by the National Committee.	Director of Finance	Year 2
Customer service improvements – carry out regular customer satisfaction surveys to track levels of improvement	Director of Business Development	Year 2
Ensure strategy is reviewed every 12 months to ensure progress and complete a full report for the National Committee, Your Voice and the Board every 12 months – need to make sure what we have in place is fit for purpose	Customer Engagement Manager	Year 2
Ensure a good understanding of the marketplace – commercial perspective/ Sustainability	Head of Commercial Development	Year 3
Develop research to look at exclusive developments – is this for Housing 21, explore alternatives – need to understand if we support exclusive developments in particular cases	Research Manager	Year 3
Reducing risk of disciplinary and employment tribunals – making sure we recruit people with right values. Making sure we embed our values across every layer of staff engagement and management.	Director of HR/OD	Year 3

