



HONEYCOMB GROUP

Equality & Diversity (Equal Opportunities) Policy

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Team:	All
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1. Introduction

The world in which we live is increasingly diverse, requiring us to understand differences and cultures so that our services and homes remain accessible to all.

Furthermore embracing diversity is key in the way we do business and underpins our purpose “Champions for Happy Homes”.

Equality and diversity is at the heart of our mission, our values, our policies, and the everyday practices of our workforce. It drives us to make Honeycomb Group (HG) inclusive and accessible to all.

2. The Meaning behind the Words

Diversity

Diversity is recognising that each person is different, and these differences make us unique. These differences give each individual their own unique skills, abilities, experiences, perspectives and ways of working and communicating.

We will accept, respect and value these differences which include gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, religion or belief, gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity.

Equality

The rights of different groups of people to receive the same treatment.

Protected characteristics

These are the nine characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation (includes lesbian, gay and bisexual people)

Inclusion

An inclusive environment is one where prejudice is removed. It is an environment where everyone has equal opportunity to fully participate, and where everyone is valued for their distinctive experiences, perspectives and abilities. Breaking barriers and building people, sits at the core of our mission.

Equal Access

All customers are entitled to access services and not to be discriminated against on the basis of their protected characteristics. We have some homes and services where access is restricted on the basis of the purpose of those homes or services, such as housing schemes provided for over 55s or services provided for people with a specific need such as adaptations to help them manage with a disability.

Direct discrimination

Treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others because of that characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

Putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that puts someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage.

Victimisation

If someone is treated badly because they complain about discrimination or if they help someone who has been discriminated against, this is called victimisation. Victimisation is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

Reasonable adjustment

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a reasonable adjustment as reasonable steps taken to prevent a disabled person suffering a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled.

Customer Influence

Customers influence our work, shape our policies, and monitor the services they receive.

3. Aims

To make our vision – “Champions of Happy Homes” a reality, we will:

- Comply with all current E&D related legislation
- Take steps to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Have a workforce that welcomes diversity
- Ensure customers, stakeholders and partners are aware of our commitment to diversity
- Take positive action to address the causes of bullying, harassment, hate crime, victimisation and discrimination, and support victims

4. Achieving our aims

To achieve our aims, we will take the following actions:

Accessible services:

- Provide accessible services and homes
- Understand the diverse needs of our customer so that we can improve and tailor services more appropriately to meet their requirements
- Identify and overcome barriers to accessing services and homes
- Collect, analyse, and review information to ensure we meet our diversity standards

Customer influence:

- Actively engage with diverse communities
- Collect and regularly update customer census information
- Engage customers from diverse backgrounds in reviews of service provision and improvement
- Provide relevant equality and diversity training for customers who are engaged in areas of service reviews and development
- Continually increase our knowledge and understanding of customer’s diverse needs.

Workforce:

- Ensure our employment practices are non-discriminatory
- Create a culture that encourages all colleagues to think about equality and diversity in everything they do
- Act against those who infringe the principles of this policy

Legal compliance and best practice:

- Ensure that the staff handbook reflects current equality and diversity employment law and includes best practice
- Participate in initiatives or support organisations that work to combat hate crime
- Comply with all relevant equality and diversity legislation and aim to apply best practice in all our activities including:
 - Equality Act 2010
 - The Human Rights Act 1998
 - The Code of Practice on Gender Equality Duty (Equal Opportunities Commission)
 - Statutory Code of Practice on racial equality in Housing
 - Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulatory Framework

Promotion of equality and diversity:

- Promote dignity and respect to all, exercising zero tolerance of intimidation, victimisation, bullying or harassment, and ensuring that everyone understands about their rights and responsibilities
- Use positive images that promote diversity in our publications
- Support organisations that actively promote diversity in our region
- Support diverse communities

5. Responsibilities

Equality and diversity is the responsibility of us all. It is our attitudes and behaviours that are crucial to ensuring our services and employment practices are fair and meet this policy's aims.

Board of Management

Our Board members are responsible for setting the culture and environment in which E&D operates so that diversity is embraced across the group in line with our organisation's values. The Board are responsible for monitoring our equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) data to measure delivery and success and impact of our EDI Strategy.

Leadership

Our Group Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring this policy is effective. Our executive and managers will be responsible for making sure that our every day we all operate within the Group's policy to deliver our services, and ensure that all reasonable and practical steps are taken to avoid discrimination, ensuring:

- We are all aware of the policy and the arrangements
- Grievances concerning discrimination are dealt with fairly and promptly

Staff

It is everyone's responsibility to:

- Comply with our policy, procedures and all supporting documents, ensuring no individual is discriminated against or harassed because of their protected characteristic

- Live the values of HG
- Inform their manager if they become aware of any discriminatory practice

6. Training

We understand that embedding equality and diversity in all we do requires ongoing training. We are therefore committed to ensuring staff have the training, support, and information they need.

7. Performance Monitoring

We will measure our performance against agreed targets and benchmark these with our peers to ensure we are achieving our aims.

8. Policy Links

Equality, diversity and fairness are built into all of our policies and procedures. The following documents specifically support our diversity aims:

- Aids and Adaptations policy
- Anti-Harassment & Anti-bullying Policy
- Business Plan
- Corporate Strategy
- Communications Policy
- Customer Engagement Strategy
- Customer Service Strategy
- HR equality and diversity Policies and procedures
- Staff Handbook
- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy