
NOTE: This policy can be made available in a range of formats. Please contact the Head Office if you require this document translated or issued in a format which is more appropriate for you.

Equality, diversity and inclusion policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Housing associations serve many diverse communities, including LGBTQ+, people of all ethnic backgrounds, disabled people, people of all genders and all ages. This policy sets out Sutton Housing Society's commitment to addressing equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of our business.
- 1.2 We are mindful of the world around us and of the inequalities that exist. To embed our culture of inclusion, we need to understand the meaning of equality, diversity and inclusion:
- **Equality** is the absence of discrimination based on a person's protected characteristic. The Equality Act 2010 was designed to legally put an end to all types of victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity
 - **Diversity** is the recognition and value of differences between people. Diversity creates cultures that values peoples' differences
 - **Inclusion** refers to an individual's experience in society.
- 1.3 Sutton Housing Society (SHS) is committed to promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and a culture that values difference. We aim to provide high quality services that meet the current and future needs of our employees and our residents.
- 1.4 As an employer, we recognise that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace. Sutton Housing Society aims to be an inclusive employer, where diversity is valued and respected, with the ability to recruit and retain a diverse workforce that reflects, as much as possible, the communities we work with.
- 1.5 This policy applies to residents, volunteers, employees, Board Members and other workers. Any external contractors, third parties or sub-contractors providing services on behalf of SHS are responsible for adhering to this policy. Any issues that arise with regards to equality or diversity will be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

2. Policy statement

- 2.1 This policy sets out how we will promote equality, diversity and inclusion across SHS and ensures compliance with the Equalities Act 2010, General Data Protection Regulations, Public Sector duty, the local authority, the GLA (the Greater London Authority), the Regulator of Social Housing Standard and the National Housing Federation.

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- 2.2 All aspects of Sutton Housing Society's work, our business and services are covered by this policy.
- 2.3 We have placed equality, diversity and inclusion at the centre of everything we do.
- **Accountable (be the body...):** We will work in a way that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and does not discriminate against any of our residents, staff or other stakeholders.
 - **Listen:** We will work in partnership with our residents, staff and other stakeholders to encourage a culture where everyone is valued and respected, and their voice is heard.
 - **Personal:** We will work to ensure that our practices are transparent and open to scrutiny.
 - **Enjoy (what we do):** We will work towards a culture which is fair and where all our residents, staff and other stakeholders have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
 - **Bold:** We will work to ensure that the skills and knowledge of our workforce meet the diverse needs of residents. Sutton Housing Society should be led by a Board that fairly represents the communities it works in, and acts as a true leader in promoting equality.
 - **Kind:** People with protected characteristics should have equal access to services and to Sutton Housing Society's decision-making processes.

3. Legal and regulatory requirement

3.1 *Equality Act 2010*

We are committed to meeting the duties of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act protects people with 'protected characteristics' as listed below:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (includes colour, nationality and ethnic origins)
- religion and or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

- 3.1.2 We will ensure that no employee, job applicant or residents / applicant is discriminated against or receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of their protected characteristic or their health, family circumstances (responsibility for dependents), criminal convictions, HIV status, plus any other ground which cannot be shown to be justified.

3.2 *Regulator of Social Housing Standard*

Our Regulator specifies the requirements on housing associations through its Standards framework. At SHS we review our compliance with the regulatory standards annually to ensure we remain compliant and adhere to the latest Standards.

3.3 *Public Sector Duty Act*

Under this duty, all organisations providing a public service (such as housing management) are required to have due regard to the need to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3.4 *Inclusive London*

3.4.1 Inclusive London is the Mayor's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and it sets out how he will help address the inequalities, barriers and discrimination experienced by different groups of people in London. SHS is committed to following the spirit and principles of Inclusive London and to tackle inequality by tackling the housing crisis and providing more affordable homes.

3.4.2 As an investment partner with the GLA, SHS is contractually required to meet minimum standards outlined in the table below, within one year of the grant allocation being approved by the GLA. These standards seek to implement the Mayor's Good Work Standard 'diversity and recruitment' pillar and are being introduced to reflect the Mayor's commitment to ensuring London is a more equal, diverse and inclusive city for all.

3.4.3 The equality, diversity and inclusion standards for "Inclusive London" are:

- All investment partners must offer diversity and inclusion training for all employees
- All investment partners must implement a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination, harassment and bullying
- All investment partners must broaden recruitment channels and encourage applications from diverse and under-represented groups
- All investment partners must collect and monitor workforce data to benchmark the diversity of their workforce against the local area of the organisation
- All investment partners must publish their gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

3.4.4 As a GLA investment partner, we develop, publish and implement an equality, diversity and inclusion action plan and provide an annual update on implementation. At SHS we achieve

this through the publication of our Single Equalities Scheme which is monitored by the HOC.

4 Commitment to residents and applicants

4.1 As a landlord we will:

- Seek to understand who our residents are and provide a range of appropriate services for them
- Through our governance arrangements, ensure that Board Members have an understanding of our resident group
- Actively seek the views of residents (and applicants where appropriate), when planning, reviewing or making significant changes to our services, ensuring they are accessible, relevant and of use
- Provide clear and meaningful information in ways that are accessible and which meet the diverse needs of our residents
- Investigate promptly any complaint and take immediate action where there is evidence of direct or indirect discrimination
- Implement the Residents Charter, developed with residents during 2021.

5. Commitment to staff

5.1 Sutton Housing Society is committed to ensuring that its employees, Board Members, other workers and job applicants are treated fairly, in an environment free from discrimination with regard to the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 (as outlined above).

5.2 Sutton Housing Society will not tolerate attitudes and behaviours that amount to discrimination or indirect discrimination, including harassment by a third party, victimisation and bullying. Breaches of our equality, diversity and inclusion policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

5.3 As an employer we will:

- Provide reasonable adjustments for any employees who are disabled where reasonable and possible
- Provide relevant training and skills for employees and managers to ensure we value diversity and reduce inequality
- Monitor and reviewing diversity across our employees to assist Sutton Housing Society to continue to be a great place to work
- Monitor / review our employment policies to ensure that they are fair and demonstrate our commitment to diversity
- Equality of opportunity is provided for all staff, who are given the opportunity to develop and realise their full potential.

6. Commitment to partners

6.1 When working with others we aim to:

- Promote and share information relating to good practice of equality and diversity
- Ensuring that equality and diversity is embedded throughout our procurement activity.

7. Monitoring and review

7.1 Sutton Housing Society recognises the importance of monitoring, reviewing and reporting on this policy and measuring progress in meeting our policy statement. To achieve this, our annual single equalities scheme outlines our priorities each year; this is monitored by the Housing Operations Committee.

