

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Directorate: Business Services

Date of Issue: October 2022

Version: 6

Document Information

Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.

This policy states how we will promote EDI in our service delivery and in the management of our organisation. It also sets out the rights and responsibilities of Salix Homes and our board members, colleagues and others who may work on, occupy, visit, or use our premises, or who may be affected by our activities or services in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

This policy supports us to operate in line with this legislation so that no customer, job applicant, colleague, contractor or other stakeholder are unfairly or unlawfully discriminated against in any way, in their dealings with us.

Service Standard / Performance Measure:

Salix Homes will develop and adopt a set of measures and we will regularly, and at least once every 12 months, review and monitor our progress against our equality, diversity and inclusion commitments and objectives to ensure we are meeting organisational, legal, regulatory and best practice requirements.

All new starters will receive EDI training and existing colleagues will receive appropriate refresher training on a regular basis.

We shall also use this information to ensure our services are accessible to all and free from discrimination where possible and reasonable to do so.

We shall regularly, and at least once every 12 months, carry out an engagement relating to EDI and the working environment to understand colleague experiences. This will help to inform our progress against our commitments and objectives.

We collect customer profile data to understand the different needs of our customers. This information shall be used effectively to identify best practice as well as gaps or shortcomings within our organisation and to tailor our approach in correcting these.

Where barriers to collecting data exist, we will take action to identify, understand and remove these to ensure we have the best quality of data to inform our progress on our objectives and commitments to EDI.

We will monitor, report and publish information on our performance against our EDI commitments and objectives. Performance will be reported in areas such as Board membership, recruitment and promotion of colleagues, customer complaints and satisfaction

Document Information

in addition to our progress against the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan. This data will be used to identify areas for improvement.

Progress will be published on our website for customers and intranet for colleagues regularly, and at least once every 12 months.

We recognise that working in partnerships with others will enable us to have a broader impact in promoting EDI. And we will play an active role in those partnerships.

Risks:

The following have been identified as possible risks to the achievement of the aims of this policy:

Failure to incorporate equality and diversity into our service provision

Risk: Equality impact assessment is not undertaken

We will ensure new and reviewed policies and key decisions are accompanied by Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). Embedding a practice of solely approving policies and key decisions with associated EIAs. Ensuring EIA forms are completed and presented to Board, Committee and SMT as appropriate.

Responsible: Governance Manager

Risk: Customer and Colleague insight not collected and appropriately shared

The EIA will only be as good as the insight available. Our levels of customer and colleague profiling data must remain high and this data must be appropriately shared to enable insight to be accessed and to influence service design.

We will ensure that customer and colleague intelligence is reviewed on a regular basis to identify and address inequalities in our service provision and business. Strategic actions will be captured within our Inclusion Strategy Action Plan. This will be monitored by Board and the Senior Management Team (SMT) as appropriate.

Responsible: SMT, Inclusion Partner & Governance Manager

Risk: Appropriate consultation does not take place

Quantitative data will not always be sufficient to effectively undertake equality analysis. In such instances, consultation should take place to better understand the needs of different groups.

Responsible: Service Managers

A lack of strong leadership to endorse commitment to equality and diversity

Board and SMT will have the necessary knowledge and skill to understand the strategic importance of equality and diversity, which will enable them to encourage and enforce our commitments. The publication of progress against our Inclusion Strategy Action Plan will ensure focus on equality and diversity remain in place.

Responsible: Chair of the Board and Chief Executive

A lack of, or poor quality, equality and diversity training interventions

A failure to provide good quality training interventions may result in colleagues that are not equipped to deliver or influence accessible services, and who may display behaviour that is not acceptable in line with our commitments. This will be monitored by our complaints and grievance processes and feedback from both customer and colleague engagements.

Responsible: People Services Manager.

Document Information

We choose to not support or represent the communities we serve when we are able to do so

We acknowledge that there may be times when we are unable, for example, due to resource restraints, to support initiatives within our communities. However, the risk occurs when there is a conscious decision not to engage when we have the capacity. This will serve only to undermine our commitments and permit our integrity to be questioned within our workforce and communities. Our service action planning process will enable managers to review activities planned for the year and discussion decisions at an operational level before providing approval.

Responsible: SMT

Related Policy/Procedure & Documents:

- Inclusion Strategy
- Inclusion Strategy Action Plan
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Equality Analysis Toolkit

Related Legislation / Relevant Regulation:

This policy is written in recognition of, but not in place of our responsibilities, under legislation, regulations and codes of governance, including, but not limited to:

- the Equality Act 2010, incorporating the Public Sector Equality Duty
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020
- the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing

Retention & Legal Basis for Storage:

When handling data related to EDI personal data will be encountered. The handling and use of this data will be practised in accordance with the General Data Protection regulations. We will process this information under the following:

Legitimate Interests: Necessary for the purposes of legitimate interests pursued by the controller or a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests, and right of freedoms of the data subject.

Stakeholders of the policy:

- Inclusion Group
- Colleagues
- Recognised Trade Unions
- SMT
- Board
- Remuneration and Governance Committee
- Customer Committee

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)

Anonymised sensitive personal data will be used to understand the effectiveness of this policy. The handling and use of this data will be practised in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

Salix Homes processes this information under the following:

Document Information

Public interest – Where it is needed in the public interest such as equal opportunities monitoring or in relation to our occupational pension schemes.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

In implementing this policy, we aim to promote and embed equality, celebrate diversity and create a more inclusive culture in which people can thrive. An Equality Impact Assessment has hence been carried out, finding that this policy has a positive impact on the protected characteristics.

EIA completed by Roda Ogunpehin/Sarah Henderson
Date 16/06/22

Introduction

1. Salix Homes is actively committed to embedding and promoting a culture of diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion within our workplaces and the communities we serve. We recognise that everyone is different and can make and bring their own unique contribution, experience, knowledge and skills to the organisation. And that the contributions of all colleagues are recognised and valued. This policy confirms our commitment to responding positively to social diversity in the delivery of our services, as a landlord, an employer and as partner and confirms our commitment to tackling inequality, underrepresentation, discrimination and disadvantage.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

2. Our Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Statement is as follows:
 - We believe everyone deserves to feel safe and valued without discrimination.
 - We value the diversity in our colleagues and the communities we serve.
 - We welcome that every person brings a unique perspective to advance our mission in ensuring equality diversity and inclusion in everything we do.
 - We strive for continuous learning and the improvement of diverse experiences.
 - We commit to using these practices for our businesses and communities.

Aim of the policy

3. We recognise that we have the power to reduce the disadvantage that people experience by ensuring our services are responsive and accessible to all. We also acknowledge that our ability to meet diverse needs is improved by having a diverse workforce that reflects the community we serve, and which has the skills and understanding to achieve our objectives.
4. The aims of this policy are to:
 - To eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for all, in our role as a housing provider and employer;
 - To treat all our customers and colleagues fairly and with dignity and respect;
 - To value and respond appropriately to diversity in our communities and in our individual customers and colleagues;
 - To show zero tolerance of discrimination, harassment and hate crime;
 - To promote tolerance and community cohesion in our neighbourhoods;
 - To comply with legislation and seek to meet best practice standards;
 - To encourage our contractors and suppliers to promote equality, respect diversity and prevent discrimination.
5. To achieve these aims, we believe that it is important that equality and diversity is normalised so that it becomes an integral part of service delivery and how we engage with others.
6. We believe that EDI can be integrated through achievement of the following commitments:

7. EDI is driven from the top
It is important that there is strong leadership around EDI. To achieve this our governing body, senior management team and wider leadership team will endorse a strategic commitment to EDI.
8. EDI informs our processes
We must ensure EDI informs our processes, our investment decisions, and how we design effective and value for money services. To achieve this, we will undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) as a way of considering the effect, or potential effects, of a policy or practice on different people or groups who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. This will be transparent, monitored, reported and acted upon.
9. EDI shapes our organisational culture
Clear, transparent and public commitment to EDI will enable us to communicate our zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory attitudes and practices.
10. EDI is supported through colleague training, development and engagement
Colleagues at all levels who have the right knowledge and skills to understand the diversity of others can use this knowledge to shape and improve the services they deliver.
11. We know who our customers are
The proactive use of customer insight will better enable us to understand the current and future needs and aspirations of our customers in relation to services they access and their housing requirements.
12. We involve our customers in shaping and scrutinising our services
Encouraging and respecting the contributions of a diverse range of customers will empower them to participate in the monitoring and review of our services. This valuable feedback will support us to 'get it right first time', improve customer satisfaction and value for money.
13. We represent the communities which we serve
Building visible links with local, diverse and representative community groups and community advocates will strengthen our relationships and build trust, which will help us to influence safer and more tolerant communities. Aspiring to have a workforce that broadly reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.
14. We support the communities which we serve
We will work with the communities we serve to enable us to work openly with partners to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Scope of the policy

15. This policy applies to all areas of Salix Homes business and to "colleagues", by which term we mean all employees, board and committee members and agency staff. Wherever this policy refers to colleagues it includes everyone mentioned here unless specifically stated otherwise.
16. The policy states the rights and responsibilities of Salix Homes, colleagues and customers in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.
17. All our colleagues will receive the EDI training which is accessible to all on the intranet.

Definitions

18. Equality is the equal access to opportunities and services for all individuals and groups, promoted by proactively removing barriers to services or reducing the negative impacts of systemic and structural inequalities and biases.
19. Diversity refers to the presence of people who, as a group, have a wide range of characteristics, seen and unseen, which they are either born with or have acquired.
20. Inclusion is the welcoming of, ability to share, and engagement with the ideas and perspectives of people with a wide range of characteristics whereby everyone is enabled to be themselves.
21. Equity is recognising that individuals have different circumstances and giving people what they need, in order to make things fair. It also recognises that everyone doesn't begin in the same place in society and advocates for those who may have been historically disadvantaged, making it difficult for them to thrive. Equity considers historical and other factors in determining what is fair. Salix Homes aims to consider this in all aspects of design, content and delivery of our processes, policies and activities.

Duties under Equality Act 2010

22. We are committed to meeting our obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices.
23. The Equality Act 2010 protects people with 'protected characteristics' from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The protected characteristics are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity
24. Under the Equality Act 2010, everyone in Britain is protected from discrimination and the main types are:
 - Direct discrimination
 - Indirect discrimination
 - Harassment
 - Victimisation
25. We will take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by colleagues, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others during our activities. We will take proportionate action in all complaints.
26. **Appendix 1** outlines the nine protected characteristics and the types of discrimination that the legislation covers.

27. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, so far as it should apply to our organisation as a Registered Provider of Social Housing. Therefore, we continue to have regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
28. Salix Homes recognises that Socioeconomic background is an area where inequalities exist and commits to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.
29. We also recognise using our unique position to address or influence positively the inequalities in the following:
- Digital exclusion
 - Financial exclusion
30. In addition to complaints, customers can report acts of discrimination according to Anti-Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse Policy.
31. Colleagues can report acts of discrimination in accordance with the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Monitoring and Review

32. Each quarter there will be a review of complaints according to protected characteristics data held by SMT and our customer Complaints Oversight Group. Where incidents of note are identified key learning can be shared across the organisation. Board will be updated annually on customer complaints and any EDI insights will be shared.
33. We commit to monitoring and reviewing the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan and any other related action plans, including actions resulting from EIAs which will be held centrally by our Inclusion Partner. SMT and our Governance Remuneration Committee will meet regularly to monitor our progress and determine any recommendations to mitigate any concerns.
34. Annually we will report to Board on our performance against EDI commitments.

Accountability and Reporting

35. We will monitor, report and publish information on our performance against our EDI commitments and objectives. Performance will be reported in areas such as Board membership, recruitment and promotion of colleagues, colleague engagements, customer complaints and satisfaction in addition to our progress against our Inclusion Strategy Action Plan.

36. This data will be used to identify areas for improvement. Progress will be published on our website for customers and intranet for colleagues regularly, and at least once every 12 months.

Gathering and using Information about our Customers and Colleagues

37. We will use equalities data to help inform our understanding of the individual needs of our customers and colleagues.
38. We will continue to work with customer and colleague engagement groups to gather specific information about the opinions of those with segmented equality characteristics; and use this data to tailor and target our approach to communicating with colleagues and customers where appropriate.

Accessible/Alternative Formats

39. We will continue to provide communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of our customers and colleagues where reasonable to do so.

Responsibilities

40. The Board, in relation to EDI is responsible for:
- Promoting Salix Homes' equal opportunities policies and have overall responsibility for their implementation and monitoring.
 - Overseeing a process for recruitment of Board members to vacancies on the Board, subsidiary boards or committees in line with the succession plan, the recruitment policy and the Statement of Preferred Board Composition, whilst having regard for the diversity of the communities we serve.
 - Establishing a code of conduct and standards of expected behaviour, aligned to the culture and values of Salix Homes, for the Board.
 - Regularly seeking assurance about how EDI commitments and objectives are being delivered in practice and tracks progress against priorities it has set.
 - Ensuring that annually information about our work to deliver on EDI commitments and objectives and progress made is published.
 - Establishing a culture that is positive, focussed on the needs of current and future customers and embeds EDI in the organisation.
41. Remuneration and Governance Committee, in relation to EDI is responsible for:
- Determining the skills, behaviours and competency requirements for all boards and committees, in relation to EDI
 - Monitoring and reviewing the Board succession plan and recruitment practices to ensure diverse membership with collective skills and attributes to govern effectively.
 - Reviewing EDI policies and practices to support the success of the organisation and to reflect our values and commitments, making recommendations to the Board as appropriate.

- Consider equality in pay and conditions annually and recommending approvals to Board.

42. SMT in relation to EDI is responsible for:

- Providing effective leadership and delivery of a clear vision to the organisation on our approach to equality and diversity, establishing a culture within which it can grow.
- The implementation of the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan and other commitment which promotes EDI.
- Ensuring EIAs take place to improve customer and colleague experiences and confirming that any associated activity identified following an EIA is actioned.
- Championing equality and diversity through role modelling, attendance at related events and through their communications.
- Ensuring legislative requirements are met.

43. Governance Manager will:

- Ensure EIAs are completed for all appropriate policies.
- Support Board in complying with Governance requirements in relation to EDI.

44. Inclusion Partner will:

- Support Salix Homes in complying with the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.
- Provide guidance on equality and diversity issues.
- Provide facilitation and servicing to the Inclusion group

45. The Inclusion Group will:

- As a voluntary group, champion the views of colleagues in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Meet regularly to discuss any equality and diversity related issues.
- Monitor relevant policies and frameworks for colleagues.

46. The People Services Manager will:

- Ensure that effective equality and diversity learning interventions are in place for colleagues
- Implement activities identified within the Inclusion Strategy or by the Inclusion group to positively improve colleague experiences.
- Ensuring compliance with employment legislation relating to EDI.

47. Service Managers will:

- Achieve equality and diversity objectives and targets for their areas of responsibility.
- Undertake EIAs as and when required ensuring actions identified are met.
- Ensures they and their team members are trained and equipped to deliver services that provide access to all
- Oversee day to day implementation of this policy.
- Champion equality and diversity through role modelling, attendance at related events and through their communications.

48. All Colleagues & Contractors will:

- Ensure that they positively engage in learning opportunities to support them to develop their knowledge and skills around equality and diversity.
- Pay due regard to this policy and are responsible for ensuring compliance to it when undertaking their jobs or representing Salix Homes. All our colleagues have a responsibility to champion Salix Homes values and competencies relating to inclusion.
- Achieve equality and diversity objectives and targets they are set

49. Customers will:

- Adhere to the terms of the tenancy agreement which includes not acting in a discriminatory way against any individual based on their protected characteristics.

Non-compliance

55. We take seriously complaints made under this policy and will take proportionate action in all circumstances.

56. For colleagues, this may include disciplinary procedures being instigated which could lead to dismissal.

57. For customers, Salix Homes tenancy agreements clearly set out responsibilities to behave in a reasonable manner including any visitors to the property. They include specific clauses which includes hate behaviour and domestic abuse. We will take appropriate action against tenant's, household members and visitors if they do not comply with the conditions of the tenancy agreement.

58. For other third parties action will be taken against non-compliance as appropriate, this may result in the termination of contractual arrangements and/or legal action.

Policy Review

59. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner as required by statutory, regulatory or best practice.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Salix Homes via governance@salixhomes.co.uk

Appendix 1: Key Summary of definitions with The Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act sets a UK-wide legal framework for protecting the rights of individuals and for advancing equality of opportunity for all. It replaces previous “stand alone” legislation on issues such as sex discrimination, equal pay, disability discrimination and race relations to provide a single legal framework.

The Equality Act uses the term “protected characteristics” to describe the groups that have legal protection from discrimination. The protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act are as follows, along with a brief description of each:

Age

This refers to a particular age group, whether this is a particular age (for example 39 year olds) or a range of ages (for example 21 to 24 year olds).

Disability

This covers people who have or have had a physical or mental difficulty which has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities or would have such an effect if measures were not being taken to treat or control the difficulty.

Gender reassignment

This covers people who propose to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. The process is a personal one not a medical one: it is not necessary for the person to be undergoing medical treatment.

Marriage and civil partnership

This covers people who are either married or in a civil partnership.

Race

A racial group is a group of persons who are defined by reference to race. Race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief

This includes any religion, religious belief or philosophical belief. It also includes any lack of religion, religious belief or philosophical belief.

Sex

This covers men and women.

Sexual orientation

This means a person’s sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex, or persons of either sex.

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy refers to the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby, and maternity refers to the period of 26 weeks after birth.

Under the Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise another person because they have one or more of the protected characteristics. This applies to:

- How Salix Homes - as an employer - treats our colleagues and people seeking employment with us;
- How Salix Homes - as a provider of housing and related services - treats anyone who receives or seeks access to our properties and services.

Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation are defined as follows:

Direct Discrimination

This is where someone treats another person less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic. Direct discrimination can occur when a person is treated less favourably because that person is linked or associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. It can also occur where a person is treated less favourably because it is wrongly thought that the person has a particular protected characteristic or is treated as if that person does.

Indirect Discrimination

This is where a rule or policy is applied to everybody but would put people with a relevant protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage. However, there is no discrimination if the rule or policy can be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Discrimination arising from Disability

This is a particular form of discrimination where someone treats another person less favourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability. However, there is no discrimination if the treatment can be justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment

This is where unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic (or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature) has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another person.

Victimisation

This is where someone is subjected to a detriment because that person does a protected act, or it is believed that that person has done, or may do, a protected act.

A protected act means bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010, giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Act, doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Act and alleging that someone has contravened the Act.

If you do treat someone less favourably because they have taken such action, then this could be unlawful victimisation. There must be a link between what the person did and your treatment of them. The less favourable treatment does not need to be linked to a protected characteristic. This only applies where the person subject to detriment is an individual.

However, giving false evidence or information, or making a false allegation, is not a protected act if the evidence given or the allegation is made in bad faith. Any allegations or information provided in bad faith may result in disciplinary action being taken against the individual(s) who made such claims.