



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Directorate: People & Inclusion

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy confirms Salix Homes commitment to ensuring a strong culture throughout the organisation of fairness, courtesy and respect.
- 1.2. Salix Homes is actively committed to embedding and promoting a culture of diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion within its workplaces and the communities it serves. This is demonstrated through its values and competencies, in particular Inclusive '*We advocate for others whilst embracing and promoting inclusion*'.
- 1.3. This policy applies to all tenants, customers, colleagues, agency staff, contractors, its supply chain and other stakeholders of Salix Homes.

2. Aims

- 2.1. The aims of this policy are to:
 - ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is a guiding principle in all Salix Homes activities.
 - support compliance with associated legislation and regulation.
 - provide direction on roles and responsibilities to support the implementation of Salix Homes EDI ambitions.
 - provide clarity on the action to be taken to raise concerns in relation to EDI.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. **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.
- 3.2. **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.

- 3.3. **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.
- 3.4. **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.
- 3.5. Appendix 1 provides useful definitions in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

4. Policy Principles

- 4.1. Salix Homes recognises that colleagues, customers, Board Members, partners and other stakeholders come from diverse backgrounds, and have different lived experiences, opinions, strengths and needs. This is something to be celebrated and incorporated into working practices to promote positive experiences.
- 4.2. Salix Homes also recognises that people must be protected from discrimination, victimisation and harassment as detailed in the Equality Act 2010 (see sections 8&9 and Appendix 1.).
- 4.3. Salix Homes also recognises that socioeconomic background is an area where inequalities exist and commits to addressing this disadvantage and inequality where it can do so.
- 4.4. The following principles are identified as good practice in supporting Salix Homes in embedding EDI in its decision-making processes and in identifying and removing systemic and organisational barriers to equality of opportunity and to maximise the benefits of EDI:
 - EDI should be owned and driven through strong leadership from Board and Committee Members and Salix Homes leadership team.
 - Meaningful vehicles for the colleague and customer voice should be utilised to amplify and provide appropriate platforms for engagement. All customers should have access to the opportunity to be involved in influencing decision making.
 - Customers should be involved in shaping and scrutinising services and for developing bespoke engagement opportunities for lesser-engaged and seldom-heard people and communities.
 - Consideration should be given to the diverse needs of customers and prospective customers in relation to services provided.

- EDI should inform business planning, investment decisions, the design and delivery of services, procurement and relationships with partners, suppliers, contractors, customers and communities
 - Meaningful equality analysis as part of inclusive decision-making should take place.
 - All language, imagery and publicity should be accessible, inclusive and representative of diverse communities and information in alternative formats should be provided if required.
 - Information relating to the different ways in which services can be tailored to meet customer needs should be communicated.
 - Efforts should be made to continually improve and maintain the quality of EDI monitoring data and this data should be used to substantiate insight and develop fair and accessible services to existing and future colleagues and customers.
 - Action should be taken to engage partners and the wider community to advance equality of opportunity, foster good relations between different groups, eliminate discrimination, and tackle harassment, hate incidents, hate crime and domestic violence.
 - EDI should inform and shapes culture through colleague development and engagement.
 - EDI aims and ambitions should be transparent and well communicated, informed by good practice, up-to-date sector knowledge and demonstrate a detailed understanding of areas for improvement.
 - Adequate resources should be made available to fulfil EDI objectives.
- 4.5. Salix Homes recognise that it has the influence to reduce the disadvantage that people experience by ensuring its services are responsive and accessible to all, therefore appropriate stakeholders of this policy should consider and use these principles to guide their actions and inform their practice.
- 4.6. Customers have the expectations of their interactions with Salix Homes clearly detailed within their Tenancy Agreement. This sets out responsibilities, which include, the requirement to behave in a reasonable manner including any visitors to the property, specific clauses on hate behaviour and domestic abuse.

5. Raising of concerns

- 5.1. Although the intention of this policy is to ensure that stakeholders are treated fairly and with respect, there is recognition that on occasions this intention may not always be met.
- 5.2. Salix Homes takes seriously all concerns raised in the application of this policy, in particular those that allege direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Salix Homes will take proportionate action in all circumstances.

- 5.3. Where concerns arise, it is important that they are raised through the appropriate channels so that they can be addressed and any learnings can be incorporated into future activities.
- 5.4. Colleagues with concerns should, in the first instance, refer to the Dignity at Work Policy for guidance on how to raise them. It should be noted that the Dignity at Work Policy is not limited to raising concerns about other colleagues but also includes procedures for raising concerns about third parties, such as the behaviour of customers or partners which it is felt that they are in breach of this policy.
- 5.5. Customers and partners should raise their concerns about Salix Homes' adherence to this policy through Salix Homes Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy. Salix Homes customers can also report acts of discrimination using the Anti-Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse Policy.
- 5.6. Where non-compliance with this policy is identified there are a range of consequences depending on the findings and contractual relationships, for example:
 - Colleagues may be subject to disciplinary procedures, which could result in their summary dismissal.
 - Customers may be identified as in breach of their tenancy agreement, which may result in their tenancy being ended.
 - Other third parties may have their contract terminated and/or legal action may be taken.

6. Monitoring Arrangements.

- 6.1. Salix Homes agree and report annually on its performance against a set of EDI commitments to its Board. This information is published for transparency purposes. No information collated will be published or used in any way that allows any individual to be identified.
- 6.2. Data relating to the diversity of colleagues, customers, Board and Committee members is collected, analysed and monitored for equality analysis and to support Salix Homes to maximise equitable outcomes and inform positive practice. For example, EDI information overlaid on operational data dashboards across the organisation can provide new customer insights.
- 6.3. Information is also collected to better understand support or communication needs of customers to adjust services provided and improve the customer experience.
- 6.4. Individuals can request to have equality information that they have provided to be removed by contacting Salix Homes Data Governance Officer.

6.5. Performance in achievement of the delivery of this policy includes a range of measures which includes:

- Progress on the achievement of EDI Commitments.
- Composition of Board and Committees
- Gender Pay Gap
- Ethnicity Pay Gap
- Disability Pay Gap
- % of Diversity information held for colleagues
- Workforce demographics
- Colleague satisfaction in relation to Inclusion
- No. of Dignity at Work concerns raised.
- Diversity of candidates and their progress in recruitment and selection.
- % of Diversity information held for customers
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures for:
 - Overall satisfaction
 - Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant's views and acts upon them
 - Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about the things that matter to them
 - Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect.
 - Satisfaction that Salix Homes makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.
- Equality analysis of complaints received.

7. Roles / Responsibility

7.1. 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

7.2. 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.
- Considering equality in pay and conditions annually and recommending approvals to Board

7.3. SLT 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 EDI commitments and other commitments which promote EDI.
- Ensuring equality analysis takes place to improve customer and colleague experiences and confirming that any associated activity identified following this is actioned.
- Championing equality and diversity through role modelling, attendance at related events and through their communications.
- Ensuring legislative requirements are met.

7.4. The Governance Team will:

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

7.5. 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

7.6. The People Services Team:

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

7.7. Wider Team Managers will:

- Achieve equality and diversity objectives and targets for their areas of responsibility.
- Undertake equality analysis as and when required ensuring actions identified are met.
- Ensure 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.

7.8. All Colleagues, Contractors and partners 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 colleagues have a responsibility to champion Salix Homes values and competencies relating to inclusion.
- Achieve equality and diversity objectives and targets they are set.

7.9. 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.

8. Legal / Regulatory Links

- 8.1. See section 9 for details of key legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 8.2. Salix Homes must also comply with 'The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard' set by the Regulator for Social Housing.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 9.1. Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.
 - Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
 - Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences.
 - Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.
- 9.2. 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. We will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Race
 - Religion or belief

- Sex
 - Sexual orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity
- 9.3. We also recognise that Socio-economic background is an area where inequalities exist and commit to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.
- 9.4. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is 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.
- 9.5. Where reasonable to do so, Salix Homes will make reasonable adjustments to ensure compliance with the Act.

10. Related Documents

10.1. Additional related documents which support this policy include:

- Salix Homes Values and Competencies
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Third Party Threatening or Abusive Behaviour Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- NHF Code of Conduct
- Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Vulnerable Customer Policy
- ASB, Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure.
- Tenancy Agreement

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.

Discrimination, Harassment and Victimisation

Under the Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise another person because they have one or more of the protected characteristics. These are briefly described 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 favorably 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 relevant protected characteristics 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.

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 detriment because they have done or are believed to have done a protected act. A protected act means bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010, such as 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