

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction

At YHN, we value, celebrate and embrace Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

Equality is about making sure that everyone has the same opportunities to achieve the same or similar outcomes. It is not about treating 'everyone the same' but recognising that "one size doesn't fit all" and that services should be tailored to meet individual needs.

Diversity is about respecting, valuing and celebrating people's differences.

Inclusion is about making sure that people feel comfortable to be themselves, that they belong and can reach their full potential without disadvantage or discrimination

This policy sets out our framework for how we want to work and meet our equality duties. It supports our EDI Plan which identifies our equality objectives and the action we will take to achieve them.

2. Our commitments

We want to be an organisation where Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is part of who we are and how we work. We will:

- treat everybody fairly, with dignity and respect
- be tolerant, understanding and not judge others
- comply with our legal and regulatory equality duties, not just because we have to but because it is the right thing to do and good for our organisation
- take strong action against discrimination, bullying, harassment and hate crime and provide support to customers and staff who experience it
- deliver appropriate, accessible and responsive services
- get to know our customers so we can shape services to meet their needs
- build an inclusive and supportive workplace where every-one can bring their whole self to work and succeed in being their best
- consider how the decisions we make impact on equality, diversity and inclusion
- promote equality, diversity and inclusion with our customers, suppliers, partners and other organisations who we work with.

<p>As an organisation, we aim to embed these commitments in our every-day work. This is the responsibility of board members, our leadership team, employees and others who represent YHN.</p>

3. Background

Our values

This policy will help us deliver our vision of being ‘first for housing’. It is an essential part of living our values:

Be **R**eady, Be **A** amazing, Be **R**evolutionary, Be **E**nergetic

Legislation and regulation

As a social housing provider, there are legal and regulatory requirements we must meet. The Equality Act 2010 streamlined and strengthened previous equalities’ legislation to more effectively tackle disadvantage and discrimination in relation to nine ‘protected characteristics’:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage & civil partnership
- pregnancy & maternity
- race (including colour, ethnic and national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires organisations delivering public services to give ‘due regard to’ the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations (tackling prejudice and promoting understanding)

Social housing regulation requires providers to treat all tenants with fairness and respect. We should demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our tenants in relation to the protected characteristics and additional support needs in the way we provide services and communicate with tenants.

4. Our approach

4.1 Providing services

We aim to provide services that are accessible to the communities we serve and meet their needs. We do this this by:

- providing a range of services which support successful living, promote independence and reflect the diverse needs of our customers
- communicating with customers in a way that suits their preferences and needs, tailoring the information we provide according to anticipated need
- understanding current and future customers’ needs, aspirations, expectations and opinions through collecting demographic information, in line with General Data Protection Regulations, and using customer insight and engagement to develop a deeper understanding.

4.2 Discrimination, harassment and hate crime

YHN aims to deal promptly and effectively with all aspects of discrimination, harassment, hate related crime and domestic violence, as they impact on customers, communities and employees. We offer a range of support to those affected. We take a tough stance on hate crime and follow a victim led approach. We are also part of a multi-agency approach to reporting hate crime through ARCH (Agencies against Racial Crime and Harassment).

We have specific HR policies for employees on how to raise issues of harassment, bullying and other serious concerns including Dignity at Work, Grievance, Whistleblowing and Domestic Violence Policies.

4.3 Recruitment, employment, learning and development

Our People Strategy recognises that 'key to succeeding long into the future will be our people.' We will ensure that YHN's leaders advocate our values and behaviours and have the skills, knowledge and courage to challenge and address issues where colleagues are not acting in line with these. To help us achieve a diverse, inclusive and representative workforce, we are a 'Disability Confident' and Mindful' Employer', a signatory to the 'Time to Change' Charter and use Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index and Diversity Champions programme to measure our progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace. We support the development our staff network groups: Vis-ABLE, Proud@YHN and Multi-Cultural Staff Network Group (MCSNG)

YHN Board Members and staff receive mandatory training so that they can mainstream YHN's commitment to EDI in their everyday work. We will continue to explore how we can keep this up-to-date, relevant and engaging.

4.4 Working with other organisations

We strongly support equal opportunity, equal access and positive outcomes for all sections of the community when procuring goods, works and services. We will aim to ensure that organisations which provide services on our behalf comply with equality legislation and promote equality, to ensure that people and communities fulfil their true potential

4.5 Policy and decision making

As part of our general equality duty, we will undertake equality analysis on significant decisions, policies and practices to understand the impact on groups who share protected characteristics.

We set out relevant equality considerations at the front of each board report.

We will use benchmarking, self- assessment and accreditation to check how we are doing, identify good practice and continue to improve our approach to EDI. Our approach currently includes being a signatory to the CIH Equality Charter and self-assessing against the Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF). We will continue to review how we use EDI external benchmarking and accreditation to support improvement and consider value for money as part of this.

4.6 Reporting and monitoring

We will report annually to Board on EDI progress and key measures of success.

5. Further information

Members of the public who are dissatisfied with the service they have received or feel that they have been unfairly treated can complain through our Corporate Complaints Procedure. Information about this can be found on www.yhn.org.uk or call 0191 278 8600.

Employees who have a concern about an equality issue relating to their employment can speak to their line manager, Human Resources, a Contact Support Colleague (CSC) or a Union representative.

For further information about this policy, please contact Jill Davison, Strategic Business Manager, 01912788624