

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY



MONITORING INFORMATION:

POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:	EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY
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OWNER:	SCOTT GRIFFIN
JOB TITLE:	HUMAN RESOURCES ADVISER
APPROVAL ROUTE:	EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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Our Vision

Teign Housing and Templer HomeBuild are committed to providing our staff, customers and stakeholders with an environment that is diverse, inclusive, and fair in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010.

We are dedicated to raising the standard of our housing services through investment and adapting to changing needs. We are committed to working with our tenants and partners to provide opportunities and develop thriving communities in our local area in accordance with our organisational values:

- Respectful
- Resourceful
- Ethical

This Policy exists to support our vision and values by making sure it is achieved fairly and in a way that everybody can access its benefits and have the same opportunities.

We are committed to providing fair and equal treatment to all our staff, tenants, and contractors. We do not discriminate (either directly or indirectly) against any person, or group on the grounds of any of their protected characteristics. Promoting and supporting EDI is everyone's responsibility regardless of job role or seniority.

We will eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation through greater knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the differences between us. We will:

- Ensure our policies and procedures reflect our approach to equality and diversity.
- Ensure that we clearly communicate our approach to our stakeholders and provide information in plain English and in Braille, large print, audio format or in different languages when required
- Embed our approach with staff, board members and involved tenants by including this policy in our new starter inductions and through regular training
- Provide fair services that everyone can access by making reasonable adjustments
- Operate fair recruitment and employment practises
- Set targets and objectives for EDI within our Corporate Plan

Legislation

This policy has been written in line with the Equalities Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 as set out by the UK Government. The Equalities Act places accountability on organisations to ensure that access to services is made available equally, diversely, and inclusively to all. The Act stipulates that any form of discrimination based on the grounds of a Protected Characteristic is illegal. The nine Protected Characteristics are:

1. **Age**
2. **Disability**
3. **Gender Reassignment**
4. **Marriage & Civil Partnership**
5. **Pregnancy and Maternity**
6. **Race**
7. **Religion or Beliefs**
8. **Sex**
9. **Sexual Orientation**

As a registered social housing provider and charitable organisation, we must also fulfil our requirements set by our Regulator to:

- Treat our tenants with fairness and respect
- Treat all employees with fairness and respect
- Demonstrate that we understand the needs of our consumers.

Discrimination and Bias Defined

- Direct discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably and is disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic they have.
- Indirect discrimination is when a person is unjustifiably treated less favourably or disadvantaged due to an activity, policy, procedure, or practise which is indirectly discriminatory in relation to a protected characteristic, or if a person is treated less favourably due to an association with someone else with a protected characteristic.
- Unconscious bias is when immediate assumptions are made about someone else that leads to stereotyping and unreasonable actions or behaviours towards that person.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying can be defined as: “Seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as being vulnerable”. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019)

Harassment can be defined as: “Aggressive pressure or intimidation”. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019)

We support the right of all people to be treated with dignity and respect at work. We recognise that workplace bullying has a detrimental effect on people and their work and will ensure a working environment to support the dignity of staff and customers which is free from bullying and any forms of harassment.

All staff will be made aware of this policy and will be expected to comply with it. Appropriate disciplinary action, including warnings and dismissal for serious offences, may be taken against anyone who violates this policy. All staff will help to create a workplace where bullying is unacceptable. Everyone has a duty to refrain from such behaviour. Managers have a responsibility to raise awareness, respond positively to complaints and challenge unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

We recognise our responsibility to protect staff from bullying at work by members of the public. Staff have the right to be treated with respect by the people who receive the services that we provide. The bullying or harassment of staff by people outside the organisation will be considered under Teign Housing’s Anti-Social Behaviour and Contact Management Policies.

The bullying and harassment policy has both a formal and informal approach in order that complaints can be dealt with appropriately. All counts of bullying or harassment must be reported and actioned appropriately. We encourage complaints to be resolved informally in the first instance, although all complaints of a formal nature will be responded to as quickly as possible in strict confidence.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1997, we have certain legal duties to ensure the physical and psychological health, safety, and welfare of employees at work. This includes assessing the causes of stress at work and introducing measures to reduce or prevent stress.

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits harassment related to any of the protected characteristics. Members of staff may be legally liable for harassment of colleagues or third parties [including customers] and may be ordered to pay compensation by a court or employment tribunal.

Whilst other forms of harassment may not be in breach of the law, they may contravene this policy, and as such are unacceptable and may therefore be subject to disciplinary action.

Examples of bullying and harassment include (but are not limited to):

- Unfair treatment
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Spreading rumours
- Making threats
- Verbal and Physical Abuse
- Discrimination against a protected characteristic

We recognise our responsibility to ensure that no members of staff are discriminated against because of their protected characteristics. This could include during recruitment and promotion activities. We also have a duty to protect our customers from discrimination when accessing our services and to promote equal opportunities to all.

We appreciate that a high proportion of our residents live with disabilities or other protected characteristics and vulnerabilities, so we will ensure as far as reasonably possible to tailor our products and services to cater to our diverse customer base.

Equality Impact Assessments & Due Diligence

To promote equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout everything we do, Teign Housing conducts Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on all new policies, procedures, strategies or projects and activities that are likely to have implications on our stakeholders.

The EIA template is available via the SharePoint Intranet site and encourages the author to assess the extent to which equality, diversity and inclusion has been considered in the project and to highlight areas where EDI could be further embedded and promoted, and to evaluate all possible steps to eradicate potential discrimination. All completed EIAs are reviewed and approved by the Respect for People Group.

When procuring new suppliers, staff are required to obtain a copy of the supplier's own Equality and Diversity Policy, or where such a policy doesn't exist for smaller suppliers, they are sent this policy and asked to agree to the principles of Teign Housing's policy. This is to ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusion is embedded into our supply chains. All supplier E&D policies are vetted by the Respect for People Group.

The Respect for People Group

The Respect for People Group is our internal Equality & Diversity body, with a remit to plan, oversee and monitor key organisational activity in all aspects of equality, diversity, and inclusion in accordance with our corporate objectives. The group consists of staff representatives from each department, some involved residents and senior management to ensure that there is a consistent approach at all levels of the business, including representation from our subsidiary company Templer HomeBuild.

The group meet to oversee and monitor organisational activities to ensure that they remain compliant to the Equalities Act 2010 and promote fairness and diversity. The group will also lead on organisational training and awareness campaigns as well as providing feedback on Equality Impact Assessments from across the organisation.

Chartered Institute of Housing Equality & Diversity Framework

We are committed to achieving the Chartered Institute of Housing's Equality & Diversity self-assessment framework, an industry recognised accreditation. To achieve this, we will ensure:

- Equality and diversity is driven from the top
- Equality and diversity inform our business planning
- Equality and diversity shapes our organisational culture
- Equality and diversity is supported through training and engagement
- We know who our customers are
- We involve our customers in shaping and scrutinising our services
- We represent and support the communities we serve

The Respect for People Group and the Senior Management Team will have overall responsibility for monitoring and implementing these criteria across the organisation.

Recruitment & Disability Confident

We operate fair recruitment and employment practices that are managed by our Human Resources teams (this is managed by Ian Williams for Templer HomeBuild staff). They write and monitor our recruitment policies which consider the equality and diversity in our recruitment process and training.

Teign Housing is proudly recognised as a 'Disability Confident Employer'. This demonstrates our commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse range of job candidates based on the skills, abilities and experience they can offer, regardless of any disability or health conditions they may have. Teign Housing will make reasonable adjustments where appropriate to enable those with any disability to attend interviews.

Monitoring & Review

This policy will be monitored by the Director of People and Technology and The Respect for People Group in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Housing Equality & Diversity Framework. For further information on the Equalities Act 2010, and our legal obligations, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>