



Dale & Valley Homes

Equalities and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

Our **vision** and purpose is to:

“Provide homes and neighbourhoods that our customers want to live in and are proud to live in”

We are committed to equalities and diversity in all aspects of our operations and fully endorse the removal of all barriers to the effective participation of all stakeholders arising from race, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexuality, gender identity and age.

This policy emphasises our commitment to equality and diversity in all aspects of our work, including: -

- Our governance arrangements
- Our role as an employer
- The provision of our services
- The procurement of external services; and
- Our approach to partnership working.

This policy has been adopted as part of a wider strategic approach to equality and diversity that is set out in our strategy which should be considered alongside this policy. The strategy outlines the work that we intend to undertake in order to ensure that equality and diversity is fundamental to our work and to ensure that we meet key legislative requirements arising from: -

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Civil Partnerships Act 2004
- Equality Act 2006 Sexual Orientation
- Equality Act 2006 Religion or Belief
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2005

It also details how we intend to meet key regulatory requirements that are outlined in: -

- The Audit Commissions Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) 31; and
- The Equality Framework for Local Government.

2. A Definition of Equality and Diversity

The promotion of equality and diversity represents a commitment to ensure that no individual suffers discrimination in their use of, and access to, public services in any way, including as a result of their race, disability, gender, religion or belief, sexuality, gender identity and age.

3. Our Commitment to Equalities and Diversity

We believe that the services that we provide will best meet the needs of our communities if: -

- Our system of governance reflects our communities in its make up
- Our customers have equal access to the use of our services and, through our involvement structures, to opportunities to comment upon them; and
- Our workforce reflects the make up of our communities with all applicants for employment being treated equally, and individual members of staff being given equal opportunities to progress within the organisation according to their ability.

In order to ensure that these are achieved we will ensure that equality and diversity issues will be central to Dale & Valley Homes organisational culture by taking measures such as (this is not an exhaustive list): -

- Ensuring that all board members and staff are provided with training on equality and diversity issues
- Ensuring that we undertake customer profiling to monitor the make up of our communities
- Developing a system of reporting that ensures that our Board receives appropriate information about equality and diversity issues
- Ensuring that our Board and workforce reflects our communities, taking positive action to recruit individuals from groups that are under represented where necessary
- Ensuring that appropriate resources are available to support our responsibilities with regard to equality and diversity issues
- Ensuring that our Customer Involvement framework reflects our communities, and that appropriate training is offered to all customers who are involved
- Promoting our own values in partner organisations
- Continually learning from best practice and developing our own practice accordingly.

4. Equality and Diversity in Our Governance

Dale & Valley Homes' Board will play an important role in ensuring that the services that we provide meet the needs of our customers. It is therefore important that the make up of the Board reflects, as far as possible, the communities of Wear Valley, and that the Board is responsible for the promotion and monitoring of this strategy.

We will ensure that: -

- The composition of the Board is monitored in order to ensure that it reflects our communities
- All vacancies for the Board are widely publicised and that we take positive action in order to encourage applications for Board Membership from members of groups who are considered to be under-represented at Board level
- All Board members are provided with appropriate levels of support in order to ensure that they are able to provide a full role in the governance process.
- All Board members are provided with full training with regard to the provisions of this policy and the responsibilities of the Board with regard to equality and diversity
- The Board is provided with monitoring information with regard to equality and diversity issues to ensure that our services are delivered equitably.
- Board Members are represented on our Corporate Equality Group.
- Board Members are Diversity Champions

5. Equality and Diversity in Employment

Dale & Valley Homes values our employees and recognises the fundamental role that they have in the successful delivery of our services to our customers. We will take positive action to ensure that all of our employees are able to work in an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. We will also take positive action to ensure that our workforce reflects the make up of our communities, ensuring that no applicant for employment receives unfair discrimination.

We will: -

- Monitor the composition of our employees in order to ensure that it reflects the make up of our communities
- Review the selection criteria for jobs to ensure that they do not appear to be discriminatory in nature
- Ensure that all vacancies are widely advertised and that positive action is taken to encourage applications for employment from people from groups that are under represented within our workforce
- Set targets for the recruitment of employees from groups that are demonstrated to be under represented within our workforce

- Ensure that all of our employment policies and practices are compliant with all of the relevant equalities legislation.
- Ensure that all employees are provided with training on the law with regard to equality and diversity and to Dale & Valley Homes own strategy and objectives
- Undertake comprehensive monitoring of and reporting on equality and diversity within our employment practices.

6. Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

Dale & Valley Homes is committed to ensuring that all of our customers are treated equally in the provision of our services and that no individual is discriminated against on unreasonable grounds.

We will ensure that: -

- All of our offices are accessible to all of our customers irrespective of any physical disabilities that they may have
- Information about our services is produced in plain English and is available in a range of different formats according to the needs that are identified
- There are clear standards for dealing with all complaints of discrimination or harassment and are clearly communicated to all stakeholders
- We monitor individual elements of our services, including, for example, allocation of properties, and provide regular reports to ensure that our services are delivered equitably
- All complaints of harassment are investigated and that appropriate action is taken against the perpetrators

7. Our Policy Commitments

Dale & Valley Homes will seek to develop its work with regard to equality and diversity in order to eliminate unfair discrimination on any grounds, including (this is not an exhaustive list): -

- Race
- Disability
- Gender Identity
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Age
- Religion and / or Belief

We recognise that some groups within our communities require specific provision within an overall framework and have made the following commitments: -

7.1 Black and Minority Ethnic Communities

Dale & Valley Homes recognises that racist behaviour and harassment can have a significant impact on the lives of individuals. Negative perceptions of individuals that arise from their ethnicity, culture, dress or religious belief can significantly affect their access to services or to employment opportunities.

Dale & Valley Homes recognises its duty under the terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 to promote race equality and eliminate discrimination.

We will: -

- Continue to monitor lettings made to BME applicants, and the delivery of services to BME customers, measuring the satisfaction of BME customers
- Develop targets for lettings to BME applicants
- Continue to undertake partnership working to promote race equality and to develop links with customers from BME communities
- Take positive action to promote the involvement of customers from BME groups
- Fully investigate any incident of racial harassment and take appropriate action against the perpetrators

7.2 Disabled People

Some people with disabilities are denied equal access to services or employment as a result of direct or indirect discrimination. Dale & Valley Homes recognises its duty under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and will work to ensure that all people with disabilities have equal access to services and employment opportunities.

We will: -

- Ensure that all of our services and offices are accessible to disabled customers
- Take positive action to promote the involvement of disabled customers through the development of appropriate involvement methods
- Ensure that the Council's adaptations scheme is widely publicised
- Ensure that information about our services is available in alternative formats, including in Braille or on tape, according to any identified need
- Develop our partnership working with agencies who represent the needs of disabled people so that we can better understand the needs of our disabled customers

7.3 Gender Identity

It is unlawful to discriminate or harass anyone on the grounds that the person intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment. These issues are covered in the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations of 1999. Gender reassignment is a separate issue and unrelated to sexual orientation despite a common misunderstanding that the two issues are part of the same picture.

We will

- Ensure neither employees or customers are discriminated against, harassed or victimised on the grounds that they intend, are undergoing or have undergone gender reassignment.

7.4 Women

We recognise that women can experience discrimination and disadvantage in access to services and employment opportunities. Women can also be the subject of sexist behaviour or harassment in the home or the work place. Dale & Valley Homes is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all women.

It will: -

- Ensure equal access to employment opportunities
- Ensure equal access to services
- Monitor the involvement of women in the involvement framework to ensure that women are adequately represented
- Continue to work with partner agencies to ensure that our services for women who have suffered domestic violence are appropriate to meet their needs
- Ensure equal access to decision making processes.

7.5 Age

Whilst the legislation is aimed at any aspect of discrimination relating to age, 'ageism' has been primarily been an issue for older people. An important factor driving the legislation is economic concern about the declining number of younger people in the workforce in proportion to those over 50. Nearly a third of the labour force will be over 50 by 2020.

We will:

- Ensure neither employees or customers are discriminated against, harassed or victimised on the grounds of their age.

7.6 Sexual Orientation

Dale & Valley Homes is committed to the removal of barriers to services and employment opportunities that may arise from a person's sexuality. Sexual orientation is defined as "referring to an enduring pattern or emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes".

Employers are encouraged to consider whether their policies and procedures respect the sensitivity of the individual's sexual orientation and the importance of maintaining a high level of confidentiality. Workers of all sexual orientations should feel welcome and safe in their workplace and the dignity of all should be respected.

We will: -

- Work with gay, bisexual and lesbian people to tackle discrimination against them
- Work with partner agencies that represent the needs of gay, lesbian and bisexual people to ensure that our services meet with their needs.
- Make staff aware that it is unacceptable and unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise someone on grounds of sexual orientation
- Ensure staff and customers know what to do if they believe they have been discriminated against on grounds of sexual orientation

7.7 Religion and/or Belief

The Equality Act 2006 contained a provision to implement legislation which would make it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of religion, or belief in the following areas:

- The provision of goods, services and facilities
- The disposal and management of property
- Education
- The exercise of public functions

We will:

- Ensure that customers and staff are protected from direct and indirect discrimination, and harassment and victimisation, on the grounds of religious belief.

8 Responsibility

The main responsibility for the successful delivery of this policy, and the wider Equality and Diversity Strategy, rests with the Board of Dale & Valley Homes.

However, all stakeholders in the provision of our services, including the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team, employees, external contractors and customer representatives will have responsibilities in respect of the promotion and delivery of this policy.

The Board will oversee the delivery and development of this policy and will scrutinise our work with regard to equality and diversity based on regular reports provided.

All employees and external contractors must observe this policy during the course of their employment with Dale & Valley Homes and ensure that they do not: -

- Discriminate against anyone
- Engage in any form of harassment
- Fail to deal properly with any allegation of harassment, direct or indirect discrimination that is received.

Employees will be expected to undertake training with regard to equality and diversity and to promote the work of Dale & Valley Homes in this regard.

9 Review of This Policy

This policy will be reviewed in line with our Equality & Diversity Strategy review.