

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy



1 Policy statement

Solihull Community Housing (SCH) is committed to the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion. We define these concepts as:

- a. **Equality** is being fair and ensuring that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics. The law defines protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment/transgender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- b. **Equality of opportunity** means giving people an equal chance to access SCH's homes, services and jobs. It also means removing barriers for people who may be disadvantaged so that they have the same opportunities as their peers.
- c. **Diversity** recognises that, though people have things in common with each other, they are also different in many ways. Diversity is what makes us different because of protected characteristics and other things such as life experiences.
- d. **Inclusion** is where differences are seen as a benefit, and where perspectives and differences are recognised, leading to better decisions. Inclusion is about bringing diversity into action, allowing everyone to feel included and where people are proud to pull together to create an environment of mutual respect. Inclusion is also where people can feel that they belong because they are seen and valued for who they are and they can be their true.

SCH meets its legal and moral obligations. We do not discriminate against any individuals or groups. Victimisation, bullying or harassment is not tolerated. We comply with the Equality Act 2010, other relevant legislation, statutory codes and guidance.

We positively embrace and celebrate diversity and promote an inclusive culture in our role as an employer and a provider of homes and services. We acknowledge that everyone is different, and that people have different needs and perspectives. Each individual brings their own contribution, experience, skills and knowledge to make Solihull Community Housing a successful organisation.

This policy applies to everyone at SCH, including the Board and employees, apprentices, volunteers, residents, service users and external partners with whom we work, such as contractors, consultants and other agencies.

2 Policy aims

Our values are Honesty, Excellence, Achieving together, Respect and Transparency.

SCH's long-term equality aims are intricately linked to the organisational values as follows:

Honesty

Our expectations of both ourselves and others are set out explicitly as follows:

- a. Treating people with dignity and respect and striving to create an environment where individual differences are recognised and valued.
- b. Ensuring that external agents and other partners operate this policy or demonstrate that they have their own appropriate equality policy and practices that promote fairness and inclusion.

- c. Operating a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and reserving the right to terminate contracts where this policy is found to have been breached.
- d. Taking action to protect employees who are at risk of violence while carrying out their duties.

Excellence

We serve our customers in the best possible way by:

- a. Ensuring that they have the same opportunities to access to our homes, services and jobs and implementing policies in a fair way.
- b. Regularly reviewing the make-up of our local communities and residents to ensure that our services remain accessible and meet individual needs.
- c. Tailoring service delivery procedures whenever possible to meet needs and personal circumstances of residents, customers or employees.
- d. Putting customers at the heart of everything by listening to and learning from them.
- e. Advancing equality of opportunity by undertaking Fair Treatment Assessments to assess the impact of our decisions on residents and local communities.

Achieving together

We value partnership working to meet diverse needs by:

- a. Implementing strong cross-departmental working within SCH to deliver the best services and meet the needs of customers and employees.
- b. Securing and maintaining effective partnerships with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and others to meet housing needs, delivering excellent services, developing innovation and identifying emerging needs of the local community.
- c. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults who are vulnerable and at risk of harm.

Respect

We treat people with dignity and care by:

- a. Recognising that everyone has the right to equality of opportunity and fair treatment, opposing discrimination.
- b. Taking positive action to redress inequality and disadvantage.
- c. Promoting our code of conduct and values to ensure that we act professionally and treat people with dignity and respect.
- d. Delivering services in a sensitive manner by treating residents as individuals by working flexibly to meet their needs.
- e. Fostering good relations between people through celebrating events that help to promote community cohesion.
- f. Creating a working environment where employees can thrive and reach their full potential.
- g. Making reasonable adjustments where appropriate to remove disability-related barriers.
- h. Undertaking regular staff surveys to help identify trends or issues that may need addressing.

Transparency

We publicise our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and report achievements by:

- a. Making this policy available on our website and to anyone who requests it.

- b. Aligning our equality plans with corporate objectives and delivery plans to help embed fairness and inclusion throughout the organisation.
- c. Developing service standards so that customers know what they can expect from us.
- d. Empowering service users by making them aware of their rights and entitlements as appropriate.
- e. Offering options for accessing homes and services and giving customer feedback.
- f. Actively monitoring the accessibility of our services to ensure fairness and inclusion.
- g. Publicising our achievements.
- h. Publicising workforce information including differences in pay between men and women and use the information to develop initiatives and interventions to address inequality issues.

3 Strategic aims and objectives for 2020-2025

Our equality objectives are embedded in the key strategic priorities which provide a framework for everything we do. The following strategic aims and objectives drive our performance management infrastructure that enables us to demonstrate accountability and report progress.

Strategic aim	Strategic objectives
Creating homes	<p>Creating homes for the future to meet the needs of our customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in social housing in partnership with SMBC • Provide an efficient and effective repairs service • Ensure homes are safe • Data driven green approach to our managed portfolio
More than bricks and mortar	<p>A clear and accessible service offer to improve the lives of customers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance service offers to support our wider customer base to achieve positive outcomes • Reducing homelessness and risk of homelessness across the borough • Delivering excellent core housing management services that are integrated and highly visible
Strengthening communities	<p>Enable resilient and thriving communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to create resilient and thriving communities • Implement a Community Engagement roadmap to empower customers and involve them in the heart of decision making
Excellent customer service	<p>Deliver excellent customer service, consistently using community and customer driven insight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding a clear approach to supporting vulnerable customers across all SCH services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuously improving services and processes through customer insight Delivering services for customers in the way they want and reduce customer effort
Passion in people	<p>Creating a great place to work, where the whole team feels valued, empowered and motivated, with tools needed to deliver excellent service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting and developing our staff

4 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2020-2022**

The plan at **Appendix 1** sets out the priority actions for delivery by March 2021. The Plan reflects SCH's long-term strategic and equality objectives that are set out above and key tasks included in departmental team plans.

The operational delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will be overseen by the Senior Leadership Team who will report overall progress to the Executive Management Team.

The Board will receive progress reports through routine performance management of the organizational delivery plan.

Key achievements and will be highlighted in the Annual Public Sector Equality Duty Report and the Annual Gender Pay Gap Report.

5 **Roles and responsibilities**

Everyone at SCH has a responsibility to implement and promote this policy. Individuals and groups have specific responsibilities as follows:

- a. **Board members** exercise leadership through policy and strategy approval, holding executives to account for performance and demonstrating appropriate behaviour and conduct.
- b. **Executive and Senior Leadership Teams** are responsible for visible leadership, the overall implementation of the policy and strategy, reporting performance and setting standards for exemplar behaviour and conduct.
- c. **Direct employees, apprentices, volunteers and contractors** are responsible for familiarising themselves with and acting in line with this policy.
- d. **Managers:**
 - Must exercise leadership, demonstrate strong application of the policy in their area of work and model appropriate behaviour and conduct.
 - Will ensure that their staff are familiar with this policy, have the necessary advice and guidance to implement the policy and know how to report relevant incidents and get support.
 - Are required to take speedy and appropriate action to deal with complaints/incidents indicating actual or potential breach of this policy, in line with established employment practices, policies and procedures fairly and consistently, and for highlighting and addressing outcomes and reporting practices that could lead to discrimination.

6 **Policy review**

SCH will keep this policy under review and amend it as necessary.