Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2025

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Lead officer:	Paul Edwards
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Version control:

Version	Date	Reason for change
1.0	February 2025	Revised policy

1. Scope

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy applies to everyone at Solihull Community Housing (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. Definitions

We use the term EDI which includes the following working definitions:

a. **Equality** is about being fair. It means ensuring that individuals or groups who share protected characteristics, are not unfairly disadvantaged. **Inequality** is where people are 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. At SCH, we also consider disadvantages faced by people due to poverty, socio-economic and care leavers.

b. **Equality of opportunity** means giving people an equal chance to access SCH's homes, services and jobs. It requires the removal of unreasonable barriers for people who may be disadvantaged to give them the same opportunities as others.

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 as well as 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 putting diversity into action, allowing everyone to feel included and where people are proud to pull together to create an environment of mutual respect. When people feel included, they have a sense of belonging and can be themselves.

References to governing body/board include anyone who is on the SCH Board or committees that report to the Board.

All references about staff or employees include apprentices and temporary colleagues.

3. Organisational strategic objectives and values

EDI is central to delivering our strategic aims and objectives, measuring our performance and being publicly accountable to our stakeholders. Our strategic aims are to deliver the following during 2025:

- Creating homes
- Being more than bricks and mortar
- Strengthen communities
- Driving excellence in customer services
- Being passionate about people

We are committed to becoming a diverse and inclusive organisation and placing our customers, staff and other stakeholders at the HEART of what we do. Our HEART values are Honesty, Excellence, Achieving together, Respect and Transparency. Our long-term equality aims are underpinned by our HEART values as well as the principles that we operate our business by:

- Being inclusive
- Listening to our customers
- Supporting our customers
- Embedding our culture to deliver the HEART values
- Promoting environmental sustainability

4. Policy objectives

Our EDI objectives are to:

a. Nurture and strengthen EDI leadership to create a culture of safety and trust where people feel valued and heard and EDI remains central to decision-making.

b. Know our residents and communities so that we can shape services that meet their needs and ensure that diverse customers are satisfied.

c. Ensure our employees are representative of our locality and region, strengthening employees' appreciation and understanding of the equality and diversity agenda.

d. Enable diverse customers to give views and opinions and enable diverse voices to shape and improve services.

e. Continue to publish EDI objectives and achievements annually and celebrate diversity.

5. Policy statement

SCH is committed to the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion. 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 diverse needs and perspectives. Everyone brings their own contribution, experience, skills and knowledge to make SCH a successful organisation.

We expect our board members, staff, customers, suppliers and other stakeholders to treat people with dignity and respect. 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.

SCH not only meets its legal and moral obligations but aims to go beyond the law. We do not discriminate against any individuals or groups. We do not tolerate victimisation, bullying or harassment of customers, staff, contractors and others with whom we work. We comply with the Equality Act 2010, other relevant legislation, statutory codes and guidance and reflect best practice whenever appropriate. We comply with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, the Housing Ombudsman and the Building Safety Regulator in relation to EDI.

a. Operating a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and reserving the right to terminate contracts if this policy is breached.

b. Taking action to protect employees who are at risk of violence while carrying out their duties.

6. Key policy details

The policy is expected to achieve the following:

a. **Governance and corporate EDI ownership:** Board leadership on EDI, through boardroom behaviours and recruitment, selection and training for governing body members.

b. **Employment:** Recruit and retain diverse talent, caring for our employees and hear the voices of diverse staff.

c. **Personalised and effective services:** Identify overall and individual needs of customers and staff and use known information to develop services, deliver services flexibly, make reasonable adjustments, deliver tailored support and protect people from harm.

d. **Regulation and Consumer Standards:** Deliver regulatory and legal requirements and robustly demonstrate that EDI is part of the way we let, manage, maintain and keep our homes safe, deliver services and hear the diverse voices of our customers.

e. **Action on hearing diverse voices of customers:** Enable diverse customers to give feedback, work with us to shape and improve services and build capacity for customers to hold us to account.

f. **Sustainable neighbourhood and communities:** Create neighbourhoods that are safe, secure and sustainable.

g. **Procurement:** Robustly demonstrate EDI requirements in procurement of goods and services from third parties during procurement and through supplier performance management.

h. **Stakeholder collaboration:** Work with the EDI Staff Network to enhance EDI, celebrate diversity and hold us to account and enabling cross-functional internal and external co-operation to meet customer needs and expectations and enhance community cohesion.

i. **Assess our performance on EDI:** Demonstrate that EDI is reflected in policy development and review through Fair Treatment Assessments, staff and customer surveys, complaints and performance management.

j. **Positive Action:** Take positive action to redress inequality and remove disadvantages.

k. **Demonstrate public accountability:** Publish this policy and our achievements through the annual Public Sector Equality Report, Pay Gap Reports on gender, disability and ethnicity and Tenants Annual Reports.

7. Communications

The policy is communicated to Board members and employees via the Code of Conduct and employee contracts.

The policy is communicated to external partners and contractors through contracts, service level agreements and partnership working arrangements.

Board and staff members receive EDI training at induction stage and through routine refresher training.

8. Meeting individual needs and reasonable adjustments

SCH is accredited as a Disability Confident organisation. We make reasonable adjustments in employee recruitment, selection, retention and all other arrangements for staffing. Reasonable adjustments are also made for board members and other volunteers.

Reasonable adjustments are made for tenants, housing applicants and other customers on request, including provision of information in alternative formats and languages, and supporting residents through advocates, carers and authorised third parties.

9. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion summary

The policy relates to SCH's role as a social landlord, employer and organisation operating in the public sector. It is supported by an action plan that is designed to ensure that we remain a fair and accessible organisation and continue to value our people.

The policy is implemented via a dedicated EDI Action Plan that sets out the priority actions to be delivered during a specified period. EDI Action Plans reflect SCH's long-term strategic and equality objectives that are set out above and key tasks included in departmental team plans.

The EDI Action Plan for 2025/26 focuses on:

a. Ensuring that the governing body is diverse and that members reflect thought diversity in behaviours and decision-making

b. Reflecting EDI in strategic decision-making and performance management

c. Continuing to support and build capacity for the Staff EDI Network

d. Identifying outcomes of the results of the Everyone Matters Project and continuing to update tenants' information and new tenants

e. Removing any communication barriers for customers

f. Ensuring our employees are representative of our locality and region, strengthening employees' appreciation and understanding of the equality and diversity agenda

g. Reviewing arrangements for staff retention and career development

h. Delivering coaching and mentoring opportunities for under-represented staff

i. Identifying service improvements from hearing diverse voices

j. Reviewing arrangements for SCHAPE Panel

k. Hearing the voice of diverse customers

l. Demonstrating public accountability for EDI

m. Celebrating diversity

10. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The main legislation and regulations governing this policy are:

a. Equality Act 2010 and associated laws and statutory codes and guidance

b. Housing Regulatory Consumer Standards

c. Health & Safety legislation

d. Housing, Health & Safety, Childrens and other Acts related to SCH's role as a social landlord

e. Employment Acts

11. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with all policies, procedures and guidance relating to SCH's role as a manager of social housing, an employment and a service provider.

12. Key roles and responsibilities

	Key role	Key responsibilities
Board	Demonstrate leadership in EDI through policy and strategy approval, holding executives account for performance and demonstrating appropriate behaviour and conduct.	Ensure that SCH meets its legal and regulatory responsibilities and monitor performance.
Chief Executive	Demonstrate visible leadership and ensure the overall implementation of the policy and strategy.	Report performance to the governing body, set standards for exemplary behaviour and conduct.
ELT	Exercise leadership, demonstrate strong application of the policy in their area of work and model appropriate behaviour and conduct. Ensure that employees 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.	Operational delivery in line with the policy and reflect good practice. 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.
Employees	Familiarise themselves with and acting in line with this policy.	Support SCH to deliver the EDI policy in day-to-day operations. Bring to their manager's attention relevant information or incidents.

Customers	Keep to tenancy and other conditions that relate to fairness, equality, inclusion and anti-social behaviour.	Bring to SCH's attention relevant information or incidents.
Contractors	Familiarise themselves with and acting in line with this policy.	Support SCH to deliver the EDI policy in day-to-day operations. Bring to SCH's attention relevant information or incidents.

13. Monitoring arrangements

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

The Board or a governing body committee will receive progress reports through routine performance management of the organizational delivery plan.

Key achievements will be reported via annual reports for tenants, the Public Sector Equality Duty Report and the Pay Gap Reports as required by legislation.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Executive Leadership Team unless there are any significant changes to current legislation or regulation, good practice or guidance, or as the result of the outcome of an incident review or Ombudsman determination.

Get in touch

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