



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Introduction

Govanhill Housing Association (GhHA) is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values all cultures and communities. This commitment is reflected within this policy and in all our interactions with employees, Management Committee members, potential employees, customers, visitors, suppliers, and contractors.

The policy covers the legal and regulatory requirements we must meet, and how we will ensure outcomes which support applicants (both housing and employment) customers, communities, employees, Management Committee members and any other stakeholders. This policy applies to both GhHA and to our subsidiary Govanhill Community Development Trust (GCDT).

The Association is committed to ensuring our employees and tenants and residents in our communities do not face discrimination, victimisation, harassment or social exclusion.

Equalities is about all people being able to access services and opportunities and preventing discrimination, **Diversity** is about recognising, respecting and valuing differences in people and **Inclusion** is about creating an environment where everyone feels welcome, valued and respected irrespective of their differences.

As a key and visible organisation within the communities we serve, we are committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and challenging discrimination in everything we do.

The policy applies to all our services and activities, including:

- Membership and governance
- Services to tenants and other customers
- Tenant participation and consultation
- Community regeneration
- Recruitment and employment
- Contracts with external companies and organisations
- The policy is supported by an overarching strategy that guides its implementation and sets out the long-term vision.
- This policy is also supported by an Action Plan. This details specific actions and timelines in our activities to meet the objectives of this policy.

Aim and Objectives

We aim to ensure that every employee, tenant, resident, customer, contractor, potential employee and any other stakeholder is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

This policy supports that aim through two main objectives:

1. To ensure that no individual, group or organisation interacting with the Association, whether seeking a service, support or advice, or working with or for us in any capacity is treated less favourably than anyone else.
2. Promote awareness and a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment

This policy applies to:

- Tenants, residents and housing applicants
- Employees and Management Committee members
- Job applicants
- Contractors, partners and services users

Policy statement

This section describes our core equalities principles.

Policy statement:

We aim to ensure that every employee, tenant, resident, customer, contractor and stakeholder is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

We are dedicated to turning this commitment into meaningful action.

As such we will work:

- To eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity for all, in our role as a housing provider and employer/potential employer.
- To treat all our customers and employees fairly and with dignity and respect.
- To value and respond appropriately to diversity in our communities and in our individual customers and staff members.
- To show zero tolerance of harassment and hate crime.
- To promote understanding and community cohesion in our neighbourhoods.
- To comply with legislation and seek to meet best practice standards.

- To encourage our contractors and suppliers to promote equality, respect diversity and prevent discrimination.

We will seek to promote and achieve equality of treatment and opportunity for all groups in society without discrimination or prejudice on any grounds. The Equality Act introduced the term “protected characteristics” to describe groups against whom any sort of discrimination is unlawful.

Legal and good practice requirements

This Policy takes account of legal, regulatory and good practice requirements, including (but not limited to):

- The Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010
- Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Section 5.3 of the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management
- Getting the Balance Right (published by the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations in 2011)
- The Equality and Human Rights Commission “Human Rights at Home” guidance for social housing providers (2011)
- The Scottish Housing Regulator’s: “Collecting Equality information:
- National Guidance for Scottish Social Landlords”. This will be referred to as ‘SHR data collection guidance’ within the rest of this policy
- “Is Scotland Fairer?” report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Scotland (2018)
- ACAS

Regulatory requirements

The Scottish Government published the Scottish Social Housing Charter in April 2012 and subsequently updated in 2017 and 2022. The Government’s commitment to ensuring that RSLs behave in a way that promotes equality and eliminate discrimination is characterised by outcome 1:

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- *they support the right to adequate housing*

- *every tenant and other customer has their individual needs and rights recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.*

Section 5 of the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management requires all RSLs to “*conduct their affairs with honesty and integrity*” and, within this, RS5.3 requires RSLs to pay “*due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality diversity and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance arrangements*”.

Other Regulatory Standards relevant to this policy include:

- Standard 1: The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.
- Standard 2: The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.
- Standard 4: The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation’s purpose.

This policy also takes account of the SHR Regulatory Framework. The Framework makes equality not just a legal duty, but an integral criterion for assessing how social landlords operate.

Protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Marriage and civil partnership
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex
8. Gender reassignment
9. Sexual orientation

Positive action

An important part of promoting equality objectives is positive action. This is covered in the Equality Act 2010. Positive action involves activities that are intended to address historic patterns of discrimination against certain groups.

The Equality Act 2010 outlines two types of positive action which, in certain circumstances, are permissible:

1. General
2. Recruitment and Promotion

Positive action and positive discrimination are not the same. Positive action is legal and encouraged when done correctly. Positive discrimination (for example hiring someone solely because of their protected characteristic regardless of merit) is unlawful in the UK.

A positive action that would be legitimate, could include encouraging women to apply for senior posts in housing if women were under-represented in such positions.

The Human Rights Act 1998

This incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic British law and came into force in the UK in October 2020. The Act contains 16 articles which cover a range of rights with a basic aim is to ensure that everyone should be treated fairly, with dignity and respect. Both the UK government and the The Public Sector Equality General Duty also places a number of requirements on employers which apply in situations when a disabled person is placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled. These duties are called reasonable adjustments.

The three requirements are:

1. Changing the way things are done when a disabled worker is at a substantial disadvantage by a provision, criterion or practice of their employer;
2. Making changes to overcome barriers created by the physical features of a workplace; and,
3. Providing extra equipment (auxiliary aids) or otherwise providing an auxiliary service/s to assist.

Types of discrimination

Direct Discrimination: This is the less favourable treatment of an individual or group when compared to others, and this treatment is because of a protected characteristic. An example of this would be to refuse to employ somebody because they had an impairment, which had no relevance to their ability to carry out the job they had applied for.

Associated Discrimination: This is direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. For

example, a non-disabled person is discriminated against because they need to take care of disabled dependent.

Discrimination by Perception: This is direct discrimination against someone because others think that they possess a particular protected characteristic. They do not necessarily have to possess the characteristic, just be perceived to possess it. For example, a person is not shortlisted for a job on the basis that the recruiter assumes the applicant does not have the correct visa to work in the UK as they have a foreign looking name on their application form.

Indirect Discrimination: This is when an apparently neutral requirement or condition impacts adversely, or has a disproportionate effect, on a particular equality group. An example of this could be holding meetings at times which are inconvenient for people with childcare responsibilities and not providing crèche facilities.

Harassment: This occurs when a person engages in unwanted conduct which is related to a protected characteristic, and which has the purpose or the effect of (i) violating the dignity of another person or (ii) creating for that person an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. An example might be displaying a topless calendar on a wall where this makes the workplace an offensive place to work for any employee.

Harassment by a Third Party (as an employer): The Association is potentially liable for the harassment of its staff or customers by people they do not themselves employ, for example a contractor or consultant.

Victimisation: This occurs when someone faces discrimination because they have made an allegation of unlawful discrimination or because of assisting or supporting a complainant. An example might be refusing to consider someone for a promotion because they gave evidence on behalf of a colleague who made a complaint of unlawful race discrimination.

Institutionalised Discrimination: This was first defined in the context of racism and exemplified in the Macpherson report on the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence as: *“the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.”*

Recruitment

We understand the importance of developing a diverse workforce and Management Committee that represents the communities we serve. We will at all time promote fair and equal access to all job opportunities for existing and future staff.

It is the Association's policy that all recruitment decisions will be based solely on the merits and abilities of candidates and no other criteria will be used. In order to achieve this, equality and diversity practices are integrated into every stage of the recruitment and selection process.

A fair recruitment process removes barriers to the employment of people from different backgrounds. This enables the Association to recruit from the widest pool of talent, potentially raising the standard of applicants and therefore increasing the opportunity of a more diverse workforce which reflects our communities.

We ensure all staff and Management Committee members involved at any stage in the recruitment and selection process have received appropriate training with particular emphasis on equality and diversity. This ensures that those involved in the recruitment and selection process will not discriminate either knowingly or unknowingly by asking any inappropriate questions.

More detail is provided in our recruitment policy and processes.

With regard to the recruitment of Management Committee members, we have a separate policy that covers this matter.

Redundancy Selection

Redundancy selection will be made according to the statutory requirements and in line with EVH Staff Terms and Conditions of Employment. This ensures a fair process in consideration and selection for redundancy as well as during any redundancy process.

Equalities data collection

In delivering the objectives of this policy it is important that we know who our tenants, committee members, applicants and other customers, employees and volunteers are. Effective systems for collecting information and monitoring performance are a key part of this policy.

The Scottish Housing Regulator's thematic inquiry "Use of Equality and Diversity Information by Scottish Social Landlords" recommends that social landlords should take the following actions:

- Review their data collection for the equality elements of the ARC (ethnicity and disability), so that submissions are complete as far as reasonably possible and minimise the number of “unknowns”;
- Use equalities data to help inform their understanding of the individual needs of their tenants and other service users;
- Consider whether satisfaction surveys – with the permission of the relevant tenants – could be used to gather specific information about the opinions of those with particular equality characteristics; and
- Use equalities data to tailor and target their approach to communicating with tenants and other service users.

We will collect information from customers at the following stages:

- Membership of the Association: application process for membership
- Governing Body Members: annual equalities form
- Recruitment: equalities monitoring form
- Employees and Volunteers: successful applications from employment and an annual employee declaration.
- Housing Applicants: equalities data collection as part of housing application pack
- New tenants: equalities data collection as part of sign-up
- Existing Tenants: biennial visits to all tenants and via three yearly equalities data collection exercise
- Wider Role and community initiatives activities: participation survey forms

In asking for co-operation, we will make clear that equalities collection is not compulsory and the recipient can choose not to provide some or all of the information requested. We will also explain clearly the reasons for asking for the information and how it will be used. Some examples include:

- Monitor practice to ensure that no unlawful discrimination is happening
- Using data to provide appropriate services to address the needs of staff, tenants, applicants and other customers
- Improve existing services

Equality Impact Assessments

Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) allow us to take proactive steps to identify and remove potential discrimination or, in some cases, the relevant action will be to adapt a policy or practice to better advance equality. It is important to recognise that providing the same service in the same way to everyone can sometimes create a disadvantage.

We will measure the impact of our key policies, procedures and services upon protected characteristics through carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) where required as part of our policy or service development and/or review programme.

Making Information Accessible

People can sometimes face indirect discrimination when information isn't accessible to them. For example, someone with a visual impairment may struggle to read our allocation policy if it's only available in standard print. Similarly, someone who doesn't speak English as their first language may find it difficult to communicate with staff. This kind of discrimination is often unintentional, but it's important that we take steps to prevent it.

To help address this, we will provide information in alternative formats when needed. These may include:

- Large print
- Audio versions
- Translations
- Language or sign language interpreters
- Braille
- We also have staff who are proficient in other languages who may be able to help as well as staff who can use sign language to BSL standards

As members of Happy to Translate, we will promote this service in our communication materials and make sure it is clearly displayed in our reception and interview rooms.

Responsibilities

Staff will lead by example, challenge discriminatory behaviour and make management aware of any instances of discrimination.

Specific responsibilities:

- Director: Overall responsibility for policy implementation and governance diversity
- Head of HR and Corporate Services: Employee and recruitment compliance including complaints
- Head of Tenancy Services: EDI in service delivery
- All staff and Management Committee members: Responsible for upholding and promoting EDI in their work

The Association has a policy of zero tolerance to discriminatory practices and breaches of equal opportunities. Any allegations/complaints against a member staff or Management Committee members will be investigated thoroughly.

Policy review

This Policy will be reviewed at least every three years. The next review will therefore take place in July 2028 or earlier to take account of changes to applicable legislation, regulation or developments in good practice.

The Action Plan will be updated and reviewed by the Management Committee annually.

UK GDPR Privacy Statement

The Association will gather and use certain information about individuals in accordance with UK GDPR and DPA 2018. Staff members have a responsibility to ensure compliance with the terms of the privacy policy and to collect, handle and store personal information in accordance with relevant legislation. The Fair Processing Notices (FPN) detail how personal data is held and processed.