

Equality, Diversity & Social Inclusion Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

Solo Housing is committed to respecting the principles of equality, diversity and social inclusion and is committed to creating and sustaining an inclusive culture and working actively to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, and social exclusion in all forms in employment practices and service delivery.

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- I. Identify and eliminate discrimination and social exclusion within our services and our employment practices.
- II. Promote equality of opportunity in relation to employment, service delivery, contractors & procurement.
- III. Support the development of a positive inclusive environment where our residents, staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders feel valued and are treated with respect and dignity.

1.2 Solo Housing is committed to the principles of the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, and other relevant United Kingdom equality legislation.

2. Scope

This document sets out Solo Housing's overall policy for delivering its commitment to promote equal opportunities, value diversity, combat discrimination and ensure that our services are inclusive and accessible.

- 2.1 This policy covers the areas of service delivery, employment and procurement and relates to all employees, volunteers, contractors and temporary workers, residents, and other stakeholders.
- 2.2 Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion extends to all the following protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Political Opinion, Dependents and Family Status.
- 2.3 We also recognise that our work often brings us in contact with vulnerable and marginalised groups (including those vulnerable or marginalised due to economic or social status), and our commitment extends to people in these groups.
- 2.4 For the purpose of this policy:
 - I. Equality does not mean treating people the same but is about recognising that everyone is different, yet deserving of an equal level of respect, and that all people have an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

- II. Equality is also concerned with ensuring that a person is not treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- III. Diversity is concerned with recognising, respecting, and valuing the positive aspects of difference. It is also about creating a positive environment and culture where the diverse needs of all people can be understood and met.
- IV. Inclusion is about creating a positive environment and organisational culture where barriers to participation are removed, and people are respected and valued for the positive things that they bring.

3. Our policy ensures:

- I. Residents, staff, volunteers, contractors & other stakeholders will not be treated less favourably because of their protected characteristic.
- II. All residents, staff, volunteers, contractors & other stakeholders will be treated fairly and with an equal level of respect.
- III. Our policies and processes will be applied fairly in order to eliminate discrimination so that all our personnel and clients can achieve their full potential.
- IV. Unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation towards staff, volunteers, residents, contractors & other stakeholders will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate policy.
- V. Understanding of difference and inclusion will be promoted within the workplace and in our services as part of developing a positive environment and culture.
- VI. Where possible people will have equal access to employment, education and training opportunities, goods services, and facilities.
- VII. Where relevant, issues of equality, diversity and inclusion and human rights will be considered as part of the decision-making process.

3.1 Service delivery - In relation to service delivery we require our staff and volunteers to:

- I. Ensure our services are inclusive and accessible for those in need and that there is fair access to and exit from services for all residents & other stakeholders; identifying and, where possible, removing barriers which prevent equality of opportunity and inclusion.
- II. Monitor diversity of existing and potential residents & those in need and use this information to improve service delivery and business planning.
- III. Actively engage with people from different protected groups and provide opportunities to develop better understanding and promote good relations between people with different protected characteristics, by providing opportunities for residents and those in need to shape the services they receive.
- IV. Ensure information provided is clear, accessible, and provided in alternative formats as needed.
- V. Provide a mechanism for complaints or comments to be made confidentially.
- VI. Encourage our staff and volunteers to anticipate the needs of people who approach Solo Housing, particularly those with a disability, and make reasonable adjustments as needed.

3.2 Employment - In relation to staff and employment we will take active steps to:

- I. Ensure our policies, practices and procedures do not unlawfully discriminate against any employees and ensure they comply with equality legislation and codes of practice in relation to recruitment, selection, training, promotion, discipline, or dismissal procedures
- II. Investigate and actively challenge any incidences of bullying, harassment or victimisation and take appropriate steps as set out in relevant policies, minutes, standing orders and procedures.
- III. Ensure we provide our staff, managers, volunteers and committee members with regular mandatory training and development in equality, diversity, and inclusion to enable them to understand their responsibilities in relation to equality legislation.

- IV. Ensure our decision-making processes are transparent and aligned to the principles of fairness.
 - V. Ensure that we monitor the effectiveness of our confidential system for complaints (grievance).
 - VI. Monitor and take account of the differing needs of all protected groups the needs of people with a disability in line with upholding the principles of equality legislation, providing reasonable adjustments where needed.
 - VII. Implement our recruitment policies and guidelines fairly and monitor applicants by protected group to ensure that potential job applicants are not discriminated against.
 - VIII. Ensure we provide opportunities for the development of all staff regardless of whether they work full time or alternative working patterns such as shift work or part time hours.
 - IX. Work to remove barriers to participation by creating channels of communication and opportunities for people to be consulted on equality issues that are relevant to the workforce.
 - X. Utilise positive action initiatives in the recruitment process where reasonably practicable, for example such as with the protected characteristic.
 - XI. Ensure we have adequate systems in place to collect and analyse equality monitoring information across the protected groups e.g. discipline and grievance, dismissal, promotion, training etc.
- 3.3. Procurement - In relation to procurement we will take active steps to:
- I. Require potential suppliers and contractors to demonstrate adherence to equality and diversity best practice.
 - II. Use equality practice as part of the evaluation criteria for selecting potential suppliers or contractors.
 - III. Ensure our procurement processes are open to a diverse range of suppliers.

4. Responsibility implementation and Monitoring

- 4.1 The Executive Committee is responsible to adopting the Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion Policy and reviewing the policy every three years or more frequently where there is a change of guidance or legislation within the context of the overall governance of Solo Housing
- 4.2 The CEO is responsible for implementing the policy across staff, volunteers, the executive committee, contractors, and other relevant stakeholders
- 4.3 All staff, volunteers, and those in a position of leadership or management, must ensure they are familiar with the contents of this policy, that they model the behaviours set out in the policy and they do their part to ensure that this policy is embedded, implemented, and adhered to within their area of responsibility.
- 4.4 Any failure to adhere to this policy will be addressed through the supervision process or through formal investigation, which may lead to dismissal.