

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY (EQUALITY POLICY)



1. Background and objectives

- 1.1. Alliance Homes' purpose for our Equality Policy is to ensure that in our employment of colleagues and in our service delivery to customers, no person, group or community is unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against.
- 1.2. As a housing association, we play a vital role in employing people, supporting people, strengthening communities and providing safe, secure homes. This policy sets out our commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity and creating an inclusive environment for colleagues, customers and partners. We aim to ensure that everyone is treated with dignity and respect, and that our employment practices and services are fair, accessible and free from discrimination. We recognise:
 - That discrimination and inequalities have a significant negative effect on people, their families and the communities they live and work in.
 - That we have regulatory, social and moral duties to develop and promote equality of opportunity and inclusivity.
 - That we have a key role in supporting and maintaining the development of cohesive communities where people can prosper and enjoy living.
- 1.3. We celebrate the diversity found within our workplace and in the communities we serve. We seek to provide an environment in which all our colleagues, customers and partners can access equitable services, living and working without the fear of discrimination.
- 1.4. More than this, we recognise that by taking people's diverse characteristics fully into account we gain maximum benefit from their uniqueness, improving our services and strengthening the whole community. It is by acknowledging people's different experiences, identities, backgrounds and needs that we can truly respect them, valuing difference and acting accordingly.
- 1.5. We will provide a fully accessible customer service that all our customers can use and benefit from in a manner that respects their dignity and independence and promotes equitable access and choice.
- 1.6. We will endeavor to provide an inclusive environment by removing any physical, sensory, social and intellectual barriers to people when accessing our services.

DEFINITIONS

- 1.7. Equality means ensuring opportunity for all by breaking down barriers and eliminating discrimination.
- 1.8. Diversity means acknowledging and valuing differences between people. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences.
- 1.9. Inclusivity refers to an individual's experiences, sense of belonging, and being safe to be who you are.

SCOPE

- 1.10. This policy applies to:

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- All Alliance colleagues, Board members, workers, volunteers, and people engaged through or by a limited company, an employment agency or bureau and supplied to Alliance on a temporary basis
- Contractors, agency staff and consultants
- Job applicants and candidates
- Customers, and service users
- Visitors, suppliers and community partners

1.11. It covers all aspects of employment, housing management, service delivery and community engagement.

1.12. Our Equality Policy is not intended to be viewed in isolation as it directly links to other strategies, policies and procedures. Please see below 4. Associated Documents

2. Policy detail

2.1. We are committed to the achievement of equal opportunities; this is central to our business and how we work. Everyone who is or who seeks to be a colleague or customer of Alliance Homes is entitled to receive equality of opportunity and treatment that is appropriate and fair.

We are committed to:

- Providing homes and services that are inclusive, accessible and responsive to diverse needs.
- Creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our colleagues are recognised and valued.
- A working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all.
- Training, development and progression opportunities are available to all colleagues.
- Reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness.
- Regarding breaches of our equality policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.
- Monitoring and reviewing this policy regularly.
- Ensuring our approach aligns with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards and wider regulatory expectations.

2.3 We will not discriminate nor allow harassment, directly or indirectly, on the basis of current or future protected characteristics as defined by the law of England and Wales.

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- We believe discrimination or harassment, either direct or indirect as defined in law, is unacceptable and we will not tolerate it.
- We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment against an individual because they are associated with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment against an individual on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic.
- We will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any of our colleagues or customers by third parties such as clients, partners, contractors or other customers.
- We will not tolerate the victimisation of any colleague or customer because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so or being about to do so.

- 2.4. Colleagues whose behavior is deemed to be discriminatory, or a form of harassment will be subject to disciplinary procedures as outlined in our Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.5. Our policy is not limited to the minimum standards imposed by the law. We are committed to achieving best practice and being proactive in all matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusivity, including learning from others.
- 2.6. We recognise that people may identify in a range of ways, including non-binary and gender-fluid identities, and we are committed to creating an inclusive workplace where all individuals are respected and supported. For the purposes of applying UK equality law and making employment decisions, we follow the definitions and requirements set out in the Equality Act 2010, which distinguishes between the protected characteristics of sex and gender reassignment.
- 2.7. Additionally, we recognise that despite our best intentions circumstances may arise where we fail to provide an appropriate and professional service to people, consistent with the aims of this policy. We are committed to act to resolve matters in such circumstances.

2.8 Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals from discrimination based on the following protected characteristics, which are defined in more detail at Appendix 1:

Age	Disability
Gender reassignment	Marriage and civil partnership
Pregnancy and maternity	Race
Religion or belief	Sex
Sexual orientation	

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We also meet our responsibilities under:

- The Regulatory requirement from the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard:

2.1 Diverse needs
2.1.1 Registered providers must use the relevant information and data to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs; andb) assess whether their housing and landlord services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants.

- The Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards (2024/25)
- The Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code
- Relevant health, safety and safeguarding legislation
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), when performing public functions e.g. allocating and managing social housing
- The Disability Confident Leader self-assessment and continuous improvement framework

RESPONSIBILITIES

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2.9 All Colleagues

- Treat colleagues, customers and partners with dignity and respect
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour and language
- Contribute to an inclusive culture and inclusive service delivery
- Follow this policy and attend required training

2.10 Managers

- Lead by example and promote inclusive behaviours in line with our cultural standards
- Ensure fair and consistent application of policies
- Support colleagues with reasonable adjustments
- Address concerns promptly and appropriately
- Embed inclusive practice into team and service planning

Reference - Reasonable adjustment, unreasonable behaviour

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2.11 EDI Lead /People Team

- Provide expert advice on equality legislation and best practice
- Monitor and report on workforce and customer equality data
- Support champions and inclusion initiatives
- Lead Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) for policies and service changes
- Deliver training, campaigns and awareness activities

2.12 Customer-Facing Teams

- Provide services that are accessible, inclusive and responsive
- Identify and remove barriers that may prevent customers from engaging with us
- Use customer insight, demographic data and feedback to shape service delivery
- Work sensitively with customers from all backgrounds
- Ensure reasonable adjustments and tailored support are offered

2.13 Inclusive Employment Practices

We are committed to:

- Fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment
- Providing reasonable adjustments for disabled colleagues and candidates
- Supporting flexible working where possible
- Ensuring policies and processes are free from bias
- Monitoring workforce diversity to identify and address inequalities
- Supporting colleague wellbeing and psychological safety

2.14 Inclusive Service Delivery

We will:

- Ensure services are accessible and responsive to diverse needs
- Use customer insight, demographic data and community intelligence to inform service design
- Engage with customers and communities to understand barriers and lived experience
- Conduct EIAs for new or changed services, policies or projects
- Provide information in accessible formats where required

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- Work with partners to support vulnerable customers and promote community cohesion

2.15 Tackling Harassment, Hate Crime and Discrimination

We take a zero-tolerance approach to:

Harassment	Hate incidents and hate crime
Discrimination	Victimisation

We will:

- Support customers and colleagues who experience discrimination or hate incidents
- Work with partners, including the police and safeguarding teams, where appropriate
- Take action against perpetrators in line with policy and legislation

2.16 Reporting and Addressing Concerns

We encourage colleagues and customers to raise concerns about discrimination, harassment or exclusion. Concerns can be raised through:

Line managers	Incident/Accident/Sexual Harassment reporting
People Team	Whistleblowing or grievance procedures
Customer complaints processes	Fair Treatment Contacts

2.17 All concerns will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and investigated appropriately.

3. Monitoring, consultation, and review

- 3.1. The Board is ultimately accountable for making sure this policy is delivered and will monitor performance against it. Delegated accountability for equality, diversity and inclusion and all associated policies and practices sits with the Chief Executive Officer. We monitor our performance in delivering the objectives of this policy by reporting to our leadership teams a range of measures.
- 3.2. Customers, colleagues and service users may be involved in giving feedback on this policy, leading to amendments where appropriate.

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- 3.3. We collect and analyse colleague and customer data to: identify trends and inequalities, measure progress against our EDI objectives, inform targeted interventions, and improve service design and customer outcomes.
- 3.4. We publish statutory and regulatory reports including: Gender Pay Gap, Ethnicity Pay Gap, Disability Pay Gap.

This policy will be reviewed within 3 years of its approval date.

4. Equality and diversity

- 4.1. This policy is subject to a periodic Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 4.2. The purpose of such an assessment is to consider the effect of the policy regarding the recognised protected characteristics of equality and ensure that it does not unfairly impact any individual or group. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or other grounds set out in our Equality and Diversity Strategy and Policy. Remedial action will be undertaken if a detrimental effect is identified.
- 4.3. The EIA also requires the policy author to consider whether the policy is likely to negatively impact on a person's Human Rights.
- 4.4. This policy and any other related Alliance Homes publications can be provided in other formats for those with visual, literacy or language difficulties.

5. Associated documents

- 5.1. This policy is associated with:

Recruitment and Selection Policy	Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy
Pay Policy	Redundancy and Redeployment Policy
Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy	Discrimination Based Incident Hate Crimes Policy
Safeguarding Adults Policy	Employment of Ex-offenders Policy
Customer Care Policy	

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6. Version control and approval dates

Approval stage	Date completed
Equality Impact Assessment completed	16/02/2026
EIA reviewed by HR Specialist in Equality	16/02/2026
SLT approval	21/05/2026
Board or Committee approval	02/06/2026
Next review date	June 2029

7. Appendices

- 1.0 Protected Characteristic Definitions
- 2.0 Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 1

Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010

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Term	Definition
Age	Age refers to people of a specific age, or to people in a particular age group.
Disability	A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender re-assignment	In UK law, a person has this characteristic if they are planning to have, or is undergoing, or has had, a process which will re-assign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. For the purposes of this policy, we also include people who identify themselves as transgender but who do not intend to undergo re-assignment surgery, as well as people who are androgynous and those who identify themselves as non-gender.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	A person has this protected characteristic if they are married or in a civil partnership.
Pregnancy and Maternity	This protects people from being treated less favourably than others as a result of them being pregnant, having given birth, or because they are breastfeeding.
Race	This protected characteristic covers groups of people who share a distinctive inheritance such as ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality.
Religion or belief	This covers people with a shared religion or belief. Religion means any religion (including no religion), and belief means any religious or philosophical belief (including lack of belief).
Sex*	This characteristic refers to whether someone is a man or a woman.
Sexual Orientation	This means a person's sexual orientation (attraction) towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are the same sex as them (a lesbian or gay man) • People who are the opposite sex to them (a straight person) • People of both sexes (a bisexual person)

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In Alliance Homes we extended the legal definition of this Protected Characteristic to include non-binary, fluid, or non-identification of gender. This is an implied aspect of the Equality Act, where perceived Discrimination occurs. Alliance Homes believes it should be explicitly stated to include non-binary, fluid or non-identifying.

Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment must be conducted alongside the review of an existing policy or the creation of a new one.

1. **Name the Strategy, Policy, Procedure or Function (SPPF) being assessed and name of author.**

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2. **EIA format?**

Policy review Consultation Meeting Other _____

3. **Aims of the policy being assessed.**

- *Whose need is it designed to meet?*
- *Are there any measurable elements such as time limits or age limits?*

The EDI Policy sets out our commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity and creating an inclusive environment for colleagues, customers and communities. It aims to ensure that in our employment of colleagues and in our service delivery to customers, no person, group or community is unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against. The policy supports our compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards, and our commitments as a Disability Confident Leader.

4. **Who has been consulted in developing the policy?**

- *Make reference or links to consultation/evidence documents*

The People Team have refreshed this policy.

5. **Does the policy promote equality of opportunity?**

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The policy promotes equality of opportunity across the protected characteristics as follows:

It aims to ensure an equitable approach is taken to equality related discrimination and to go further to create inclusive culture and behaviour to Alliance's colleagues, customers and partners.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion spans the whole of A-Game and leading with our standards is an integral part of delivering Plan A 2.0. We EIA all Strategies, Policies and often events to assess the equality impacts of them. All protected characteristics are considered as well as issues around rurality and social mobility.

We monitor all key stages of HR processes to track their impact on protected characteristic groups.

- 6. Identify potential impact on each of the diversity "groups" by considering the following questions (the list is not exhaustive but an indication of the sort of questions assessors should think about):**
- *Might some groups find it harder to access the service?*
 - *Do some groups have particular needs that are not well met by the current SPPF?*
 - *What evidence do you have for your judgement (e.g. monitoring data, information from consultation/research/feedback)?*
 - *Have staff/residents raised concerns/complaints?*
 - *Is there local or national research to suggest there could be a problem?*

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Protected Characteristic	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Information source/s **	Comments/evidence
Race			✓		<p>We are committed to being a zero tolerance to racism organisation.</p> <p>We collect information relating to the diversity of colleagues and seek to better understand the customers we serve so that we can better understand their needs.</p> <p>We are delivering Race Awareness Training to colleagues and participated in Race Equality Week to ensure a consistent level of knowledge in colleagues, and try to address unconscious bias.</p>
Disability			✓		<p>We continue to be certified as a Disability Confident Leader in the services we provide to colleagues and customers. We will provide reasonable adjustments including alternative formats, particularly for inclusion, where necessary.</p>
Gender			✓		<p>We continue to see an almost 50/50 split in the representation of our colleagues. and promote gender equality in employment and leadership.</p> <p>We are aware of the gender imbalance we have in operative and support roles.</p> <p>We have rolled out Sexual Harassment training and reporting procedures to all colleagues as a result of the Worker Protection Act.</p>

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Transgender			✓		We have a track record of providing one on one support to transgender colleagues and customers ensuring an individual rather than one size fits all approach.
Sexual orientation			✓		Our policy supports LGBTQ+ inclusion in employment and services. We continue to monitor the sexual orientation of our colleagues and to try to tailor services as best we can. We also provide awareness training on an ongoing basis.
Religion or belief			✓		We are aware of the different religions and beliefs that operate within North Somerset and the wider area. Various diversity days are celebrated throughout the year to raise cultural awareness.
Age			✓		North Somerset has an ageing population. The majority of our tenant population is older and living longer, but not necessarily healthily. This has a direct impact on our services and the way in which we deliver them. We will provide reasonable adjustments including alternative formats, particularly for inclusion, where necessary.
Marriage & Civil Partnership			✓		The policy seeks to ensure that we monitor all protected characteristics and that no particular individual or group is being excluded from our services.
Pregnancy and Maternity			✓		We support fair treatment during pregnancy, maternity leave and

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					return-to-work, and encourage flexible working and agile working.
Rural issue			✓		We review the impact of delivering services to our rural communities.
Social mobility			✓		With the Cost of Living impacting both our colleagues and customers we are continually seeking ways of helping and signposting to appropriate resources. We provide non-digital service access routes.