

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. We are committed to preventing discrimination and promoting equality for customers and colleagues and 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 equal opportunity and choice.
- 1.6. We will provide an inclusive environment by removing any physical, sensory, and intellectual barriers to people when accessing our services.

DEFINITION

- 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 all Alliance Homes colleagues; in the delivery of the services we provide, and how we conduct ourselves.

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- 1.11. All colleagues include employees and Board members of Alliance Homes, volunteers, and people engaged through, or by, a limited company, an employment agency or bureau and supplied to Alliance on a temporary basis.
- 1.12. This policy applies also to sub-contractors. Alliance Homes will take all necessary steps to ensure good performance and compliance with appropriate behaviours.
- 1.13. 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.
- 2.2. We are committed to:
 - 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.
- 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:
 - 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.

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- 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 behaviour is deemed to be discriminatory, or a form of harassment will be subject to disciplinary procedures as outlined in the Disciplinary Policy.
- 2.5. Our policy is not limited to the minimum standards imposed by the law. We are committed to achieve best practice and being proactive in all matters relating to equality, diversity, and inclusivity, including learning from others.
- 2.6. We extend the legal definition of the Protected Characteristic 'Sex' as stated in the Equality Act to include all gender, including non-binary, fluid, and non-identification.
- 2.7. We also recognise that the behaviours through which equality and inclusivity are evident must be consistent with the values that underpin this policy document and the values of Alliance.
- 2.8. 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 in such circumstances.

3. Monitoring, consultation, and review

- 3.1. All colleagues have the personal responsibility to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act, this policy, and to treat all others with dignity at all times and not to discriminate against or harass any other person.
- 3.2. 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.
- 3.3. Customers, colleagues, and service users may be involved in giving feedback on this policy, leading to amendments where appropriate.
- 3.4. This policy will be reviewed within three years of its approval date.

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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 Policy
 - Dignity at Work Policy
 - Human Rights Policy
 - Pay Policy
 - Redundancy and Redeployment Policy
 - Domestic Violence and Abuse Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
 - Criminal Records Fair Chance Policy
 - Data Protection Policy

6. Version control and approval dates

Approval stage	Date completed
Equality Impact Assessment completed	16 th March 2023
EIA reviewed by HR Specialist in Equality	16 th March 2023
SLT review / approval	19 th May 2023
Board or Committee approval	n/a
Next review date	31 st May 2026

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Protected Characteristic Definitions

Appendix 2 - Equality Impact Assessment

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Appendix 1

What are the Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010?

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)

* 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.

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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. Aims of the SPPF being assessed.

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

The purpose of 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. The Policy aims to explain our strategic approach relating to equality and diversity and how we will deliver it.

3. Who has been consulted in developing the SPPF?

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

The People Team have refreshed this policy.

4. Does the SPPF promote equality of opportunity?

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 AGAME and leading with our values 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.

5. 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?*

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- 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?

Protected Characteristic	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Information source/s **	Comments/evidence
Race			✓		We will collect information relating to the diversity of colleagues and will seek to better understand the customers we serve so that we can better understand their needs.
Disability			✓		We have been certified as a Disability Confident Leader in the services we provide to colleagues and customers.
Gender			✓		We Continue to see an almost 50/50 split in the representation of our colleagues, and at the leadership level females represent 60% of the group.
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			✓		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 context. Various diversity days are publicised to colleagues throughout the year.

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Protected Characteristic	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Information source/s **	Comments/evidence
Age			✓		North Somerset has an increasing 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
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 are a member of the Tommy's scheme which means we fully consider the needs of pregnant and breastfeeding staff.
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.

Was there a negative impact identified in question 5? If yes go to question 6. if not go to question 7.

6. If "negative impact" identified in table (4) above is it?

Legal -

What is the level of impact? -

YES	NO
HIGH	LOW

If it is not legal and/or high impact – (i.e.: if you have highlighted NO to legal and HIGH to impact, then the document should be referred to Head of HR)

7. If positive impact has been identified in table 4 above, how can it be improved upon or maximised, either in this SPPF or others?

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This policy aims to ensure a consistent and pro-active approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion at Alliance. We will build on lessons learned in the delivery of the Being You strategy and action plan.

8. Full EIA (or if you decide full EIA is not necessary but some changes should be considered)

- *Are there changes you could introduce which would make this SPPF work better for this group of people?*
- *Is further research or consultation required?*

9. Does this proposal have any potential Human Rights implications?

If yes, please describe (if necessary, please refer to the Alliance Homes Group Human Rights Policy)

This policy meets the requirements of Article 14, Prohibition of discrimination, ensuring that all customers have equal access to service delivery, regardless of a protected characteristic.

It also meets the requirement of Article 8, respect for family life and home, by ensuring that we provide a tailored, fair and consistent approach to our customers.