



Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Policy Statement

Homes for Wells is committed to eliminating discrimination and achieving diversity in all our activities. We recognise that people are different and aim to ensure that we treat each individual with dignity and respect.

We are committed to developing an organisational culture which values from all sections of the community. This will involve creating an environment that capitalises on everything that makes people unique and gives everyone a fair and equal chance to be successful.

This organisation recognises that some kind of difference, discrimination or disadvantage are shared and experienced by particular groups, for example on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, ethnic origin, race, nationality, disability sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, age, marital status or ex-offenders.

2. Definitions

Discrimination. It is unlawful to discriminate against a person, directly or indirectly on the grounds of protected characteristic.

Protected Characteristics. The Equality Act 2010 defines equality in terms of 'protected characteristics':

- Age. Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (eg 32 year olds) or range of ages (eg 18-30) year olds.
- Gender reassignment. The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- Marriage and civil partnership. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.
- Pregnancy and maternity. Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- Race. Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

- Religion and belief. Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (eg atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- Sex. A man or a woman.
- Sexual orientation. Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or both sexes.

Direct discrimination consists of treating a person less favourably than others are or would be treated in the same or similar circumstances according to the above categories.

Indirect discrimination consists of applying a requirement or condition which, although has been applied to all, has the effect of disadvantaging people (according to the above categories) unless the practice can be justified.

Victimisation is when an individual is treated detrimentally because they have made a complaint or intend to make a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence or intend to give evidence to a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment having regard to all circumstances and the perceptions of the victim.

A racist incident is defined as 'an incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person' (Stephen Lawrence Inquiry 1999).

Disability. A disabled person is defined as 'someone who has 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'. Long term means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.

3. Policy Objectives

Homes for Wells will aim to:

- Encourage a corporate culture where equality and diversity is treated as a core value;
- Be aware of all forms of discrimination in its operations, activities and dealings with communities and strive to eliminate them;
- Provide information which is non-discriminatory in content, accessible to all and actively promotes equality;
- Take prompt, responsive action in all cases of harassment and conflict;
- Comply with our regulatory and legal equality responsibilities as a minimum.

4. Responsibilities

The Board

The Board has a corporate responsibility for ensuring that equality and diversity is promoted and that this policy and strategy underpins all aspects of the work of Homes for Wells.

Staff, contractors and suppliers

All staff has a responsibility to ensure that the policy is incorporated into their work related activities. Employees, contractors and board members are expected to abide by this policy. Any breach will be taken very seriously.

Tenants

Homes for Wells expects that all tenants treat our workers with respect and courtesy. It is not acceptable for our workers to be subjected to verbal or physical abuse. Such incidents will be investigated and if proved, suitable action will be taken which could result in the withdrawal of services and possibly legal action.

5. Strategy

5.1 Corporate culture

Homes for Wells will ensure that staff, tenants and stakeholders are made aware that equality and diversity is one of our core values. We aim to develop a culture where equality and diversity issues are discussed openly on the basis of facts not assumptions. Homes for Wells is committed to ensuring staff, tenants and stakeholders believe the organisation takes decisions in a fair and open manner.

5.2 Governance

It is essential that the organisation's Board is representative of the communities it serves. This will be balanced with the need for experience and relevant skills and where necessary, Homes for Wells will seek alternative methods of gaining the views of diverse groups.

5.3 Employment

Homes for Wells is committed to recruiting staff who meet the required competency profile for the job for which they have applied, irrespective of their background.

5.4 Communication and access to information

Homes for Wells will ensure that, where necessary, the information provided is in an appropriate format. Homes for Wells will ensure that information will be non-discriminatory in content.

5.5 Tenant empowerment

Homes for Wells aims to better understand the diverse needs of its tenants. Opportunities for the involvement of tenants will be increased, ensuring that that their views form an integral part of the organisation's decision making.

Account will be taken of the individual circumstances of tenants attending meeting, ensuring that the location is convenient and accessible.

6. Implementation and complaints

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy will be vested in the Board of Homes for Wells.

Any nominee for housing who feels his/her application for housing has been unfairly dealt with shall have the right to make a formal complain to Homes for Wells. Any employees are encouraged to raise grievances where they feel there has been a breach of this policy.