



Equality and Diversity Strategy 2017 – 2020



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Introduction

Langstane Housing Association Ltd and its subsidiaries (known as the 'Langstane Group' or the 'Group') provide a range of housing and services to approximately 3,000 households across the north-east of Scotland. Many of the Group's customers are those who have experienced disadvantage or vulnerability at some point in their lives.

Over 80 people are employed by the Group, primarily working in Aberdeen but also from a satellite office in Elgin.

A number of external organisations are contracted to provide services directly to the Group's tenants and other customers.

Celebrating the benefits that a multi-cultural society brings, the Langstane Group ensures that equality and diversity is promoted and that each person has an equal opportunity to participate. This is done not because of any legal requirement; this is done because it is what the Group stands for and compliments the values and ethos¹ of the Group.

Links

This Strategy compliments and links to a number of relevant policies, procedures and corporate documents including the Business Plan, Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, Tenant Participation Strategy, Community Investment Strategy, Communication Strategy, and all Recruitment and Human Resource Management.

Vision

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY



Equality is not about treating all people in the same way. It's about recognising and respecting diversity enough to adapt practice and procedure to suit all.

The Group's vision is that the best practice principles of equality and diversity are fully embedded in all areas of work that is undertaken by, and on behalf of, the Langstane Group.

The needs of the diverse communities served by the Group are reflected in the services provided. All services are accessible, inclusive and non-discriminatory.

A firm commitment is given by the Group to ensure equality and diversity is respected in all that is done. This will support the values and ethos of the Group's Business Plan.

¹ See Business Plan 2015-2018, revised April 2016

Overarching aims

The following overarching aims support the Group's strategic vision to ensure equality and diversity is embraced:

- Accessible and responsive high quality services and homes are provided to all;
- A range of communication methods, appropriate to the needs of a diverse society, are used to provide equality of opportunity;
- A diverse, talented and motivated governing body and workforce that understands and reflects the needs of the communities served, is recruited, developed and retained; and
- The local and national agenda is shaped and influenced to improve equality and diversity across the north-east of Scotland and beyond.

Legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 consolidated many pieces of anti-discrimination legislation into a single legal framework to simplify, strengthen and remove inconsistencies that previously existed.

In general terms this legislation requires public sector organisations to have due regard (fair consideration and sufficient attention to) three general duties. These are to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Langstane Group is not listed as a public body for this legislation but the principles of good practice are adopted to ensure no individual or group of individuals are disadvantaged.

Protected characteristics

The Equalities Act 2010 introduced nine protected characteristics.



The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. These protected characteristics are detailed below. It is unlawful to discriminate against anyone who is protected by law.

There are a number of ways discrimination can be seen:

- Direct discrimination
- Associative discrimination
- Discrimination by perception
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation

Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year-olds)
Disability	A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
Sex	This refers to whether a person is a man or a woman
Gender reassignment	This is the process of transitioning from one gender to another
Race	This 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 (such as atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition
Sexual orientation	This is whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes
Marriage and civil	Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman. A

partnership	marriage now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple Same-sex couples can have their relationship legally recognised as a 'civil partnership'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act)
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the 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

Discrimination

Direct discrimination	This is where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic
Associative discrimination	This is direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic
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
Indirect discrimination	This can occur when a rule or policy is applied to everyone but disadvantages a person with a particular protected characteristic
Harassment	This is behaviour that is deemed offensive by the recipient. Employees can now complain of the behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them
Victimisation	This occurs when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or grievance under this legislation

National and local priorities

Although the Equality Act 2010 details the legal framework in place, the Equality and Human Rights Commission is the regulatory body responsible for enforcing the Equality Act 2010. They are accredited by the United Nations as an “A status” national human rights institution. Their duties include reducing inequality, eliminating discrimination and promoting and protecting human rights.

The focus of the Commission’s regulatory role is to help organisations achieve what they should, not to catch them out if they fall short. To achieve this they have a range of powers. These include providing advice and guidance, publishing information and undertaking research.

When these methods are ineffective, they have a range of enforcement powers as set out in the Equality Act 2006.

The Scottish Government

In 2016, the Scottish Government introduced the Fairer Scotland Action Plan. There are five high-level ambitions and fifty actions designed to ensure that by 2030 there is:

- A fairer Scotland for all;
- Child poverty is ended;
- Young people are given a strong start in life;
- Those working have fairer lives; and
- There is a thriving third age (ensuring older people are supported to keep on working if they wish to do so).

Aberdeen City Council

Fully embracing its public sector duties, Aberdeen City Council has plans in place to make the city of Aberdeen a fairer and more equitable place in which to live and work.

The principles are that communities will be engaged, informed, and safe. The city will be accessible and equality and diversity celebrated with services provided that fully understand and take into consideration protected characteristic specifications.

An Equality Outcomes report is published to demonstrate how Aberdeen City Council meets its commitments towards equalities.

Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire Council fully recognises and embraces its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010. Within its plans, the local authority wishes to ensure that:

- Safer and better decision making is achieved due to being better informed of equality and diversity matters.
- A better understanding of the needs of people of different race will be promoted and strategies developed to support them.
- A better understanding of the needs of people with a disability is promoted alongside strategies which ensure access to council services and which support them in education and employment.
- A better understanding of the needs of LGBT² people as employees and customers will be developed alongside strategies that minimise bullying and harassment in schools and the community to achieve measurably reduced levels of prejudice and discrimination.
- Recruitment is implemented with fairness and transparency and fully supports people with a protected characteristic.
- There will be a more inclusive culture whereby all employees understand and respect difference.

An Equalities Mainstreaming and Outcomes report is published to assist Aberdeenshire Council to demonstrate its achievements and progress.

Moray Council

Moray Council believes in, and is committed to, the principle of equality of opportunity.

Recognising its duty to encourage the fair treatment of all individuals and the prevention of exclusion from society, the Council's vision is to be an equal opportunity employer and to make sure the services and facilities provided are accessible to all.

A Single Equality Scheme has been developed to enable Moray Council to meet its commitments.

² LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender

Delivering the vision

It is important that the Langstane Group not only sets down its vision, but also puts into place plans to make sure the vision becomes a reality. The following will be undertaken and evidenced:

Strategic Aim :

Accessible and responsive high quality services and homes are provided to all

- Offices and staff are accessible to all tenants and other customers;
- Policies and procedures reflect the positive principles of inclusion, accessibility and diversity and protect vulnerable members of society from harm. For example those who may be subject to hate crimes, domestic abuse, or experience mental ill-health;
- New developments will consider, and where appropriate, accommodate a range of physical and wellbeing needs to ensure accessibility and sustainability;
- Aids and adaptations are carried out as soon as practical to assist tenants to live independently - as noted in the Asset Management strategy;
- Where required, the Group will refer / signpost tenants and other customers who need specialist support, to service support providers with that particular expertise;
- Those providing services on behalf of the Langstane Group have policies, procedures and working practices that reflect the principles of the Group;
- Social value will be added to the procurement process where appropriate to do so.

Strategic Aim :

A range of communication methods, appropriate to the needs of a diverse society, are used to provide equality of opportunity

- Key documents are available in alternative formats such as audio, easy read, and if appropriate, braille. Large print is available on request;
- Browse Aloud and translation services are available on the Group's website;
- Tenants and other customers can stipulate their preferred communication methods;
- Translation and interpretation services are provided where appropriate;
- A range of communications methods are in place to allow people / organisations supporting those with protected characteristics, to participate in decision making.

Strategic Aim :

A diverse, talented and motivated governing body and workforce that understand and reflect the needs of the communities worked with, is recruited, developed and retained

- A balance of skills, knowledge and competencies will be developed through appropriate training, awareness raising sessions, briefings and direct experience;
- A culture of openness and acceptance of the needs of others will be developed to enhance engagement levels and eliminate unconscious bias;
- Appropriate non-discriminatory language will be used at all times (verbal and written) to reinforce a zero tolerance of any form of discrimination;
- The recruitment process will continue to be supportive of, and accessible to, those with protected characteristics;
- Accreditation with organisations / schemes that promote best working practice, will be considered and if appropriate, implemented;
- Reasonable adjustments will be implemented to support individuals who have alternative requirements. This will include the provision of fair and flexible terms and conditions.

Strategic Aim :

The local and national agenda is shaped and influenced to improve equality and diversity across the north-east of Scotland and beyond.

- National and local consultation documents will be responded to, providing constructive challenge when required to ensure the continued protection of the Group's tenants and other customers;
- Appropriate working groups / meetings will be actively attended and the needs of the most vulnerable within our society recognised and championed;
- Strong links with support agencies will be created and where practical, accommodation and services provided at affordable rates along with expertise from staff provided on an ad hoc basis;
- The Group will work jointly with other agencies / organisations to actively alleviate social and cultural barriers to ensure tenancies and communities are sustainable and excellent places to live.

Review and monitoring

This strategy will be reviewed in 2020 or earlier if required.

Annual monitoring will be carried out by the Resource & Investment Committee.