

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2027



Version	Date of Approval	Changes made to Policy
V1	10 November 2009	n/a
V2	2 June 2014	No changes
V3	2 October 2017	Complete re-write
V4	15 February 2021	Update
V5	September 2024	Revision of National and Local Priorities What we've achieved added Updated Strategic aims added

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Langstane Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for 2024-2027 which outlines our commitments for the next three years.

In this updated Strategy we build upon what we have accomplished and outline our objectives and broad vision for fully embedding an equal and diverse culture within the Langstane Group.

Equality, diversity and inclusion is the responsibility of everyone in the Group. This belief informs and shapes the Group's Business Plan, the values that are upheld, the decisions that are made and the actions that are taken.

We are committed to strengthening our approach from the way we deliver customer services to recruitment and training and how we engage with the diverse communities we serve.

Helen Gauld
Chief Executive

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

The Langstane Group ensures that equality, diversity and inclusion is promoted and that everyone involved with the Langstane Group has an equal opportunity to participate, from our Board, our female based leadership team, our colleagues to our customers. 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 ethos of the Group where we celebrate the benefits that a multi-cultural society brings.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states:

'Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no one should have poorer life chances because of the way they were born where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability'

Diversity

Being more aware of and proactive about the diversity of customers will ensure the Group provides the right services and meet the needs and aspirations of our customers.

Inclusion

Inclusion is including people in a way that is fair for all, values everyone's differences and empowers and enables each person to be themselves and achieve their full potential and thrive and work, in their homes and communities.

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, diversity and inclusion are fully embedded in all areas of work that is undertaken by, and on behalf of, the Langstane Group.

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.

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.

In addition to the Equality Act the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 is now in force. This provides greater protection for those who are targeted by hate crime and offences aggravated by prejudice.

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'. It is unlawful to discriminate against anyone who is protected by law.

There are a number of ways discrimination can be established:

- 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 partnership	Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman. A 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 and work with the Scottish Human Rights Commission to promote awareness, understand and respect human rights and encourage best practice.

The Scottish Government

The Scottish Government sets out its approach to promoting equalities in a framework. Their vision is that Scotland in 2030 is a place where people are healthier, happier and treated with respect and where opportunities, wealth and power are spread more equally.

In 2022 the government updated guidance on the Fairer Scotland Duty. This sets out responsibilities for public bodies to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions. The Association while not a public body in terms of equalities, will have regard to this duty, particularly in relation to low income and area deprivation. In terms of outcomes people face as a result of socio-economic disadvantage the Association will have regard to poorer skills and attainment, lower health life expectancy and less chance of being treated with dignity and respect ensuring mitigation is in place to improve the lives of our customers.

Aberdeen City Council

Fully embracing its public sector duties, Aberdeen City Council continues to strive 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 and that services provided by or on behalf of the Council are made available to all individual and groups equally and without discrimination. 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 continues its strong commitment to equality and recognises that promoting equality and diversity is a continuing journey. Their aim is to support a fairer inclusive Aberdeenshire where equality of opportunity is an important consideration.

Aberdeenshire Council fully recognises and embraces its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010. To support this the local authority will ensure they:

- Take effective action on equality
- Make the right decisions, first time around
- Develop better policies and practices based on evidence
- Are more transparent, accessible and accountable
- Deliver improved outcomes for all in the community; and
- Ensure equality outcomes have a positive effect

An Equalities Mainstreaming and Outcomes report is published every three years to demonstrate Aberdeenshire's 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.

What we've achieved

- Partnering with Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) to provide training for colleagues and welcoming GREC to share Langstane's HQ
- Providing translation / interpretation services to customers
- Continuing accreditation with Disability Confident
- Mental Health first aid training for colleagues
- Aids and adaptations self-referral scheme for tenants
- Working with partners, Houseability, the Disabled Persons' Housing Service and others to improve access to housing
- Working with the Scottish Government's contractor and Social Work to provide accommodation for asylum seekers
- Partnering with Strathclyde University to understand how Langstane can take a modern approach to diversity, equality and inclusion for all Our People
- Equality impact assessments for all customer facing policies
- Providing a comprehensive welfare advice service to customers
- Partnering with CFine and Instant Neighbour to provide assistance at the start of 'Our Customers' journey with Langstane
- Establishing a new furniture project to alleviate furniture poverty
- Continuing to target fuel poverty through vouchers and practical help
- Providing a discount scheme to 'Our Customers' and 'Our People' through 'Housing Perks'
- Connecting with young people to develop skills and knowledge as an ambassador for 'Developing the Young Workforce' programme

The following aims support the Group's strategic vision to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are embraced:

STRATEGIC AIMS

- Offices and colleagues 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.
- New or refurbished builds 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;
- The Group will refer / signpost tenants for specialised support where required;
- Those providing services on behalf of the Langstane Group have policies, procedures and working practices that reflect the principles of the Group;

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 let us know their preferred communication methods;
- Translation and interpretation services are provided where needed;
- A range of communications methods are in place to allow people and organisations supporting those with protected characteristics, to participate in decision making.

A diverse, talented and motivated governing body and workforce that understand and reflect the needs of the communities, 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;

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

- 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.
- 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 continue and where practical, accommodation will be provided at affordable rents along with expertise from staff provided on an ad hoc basis;
- The Group will work jointly with other organisations to actively alleviate social and cultural barriers to ensure communities are sustainable and excellent places to live

Robust and comprehensive equality evidence is available for the design and delivery of services

- The gathering of equalities data for tenants and waiting list applicants will be robust and comprehensive
- Equalities data will be analysed and the information used to ensure minority groups are represented in the delivery of services

Review and monitoring

The Strategy will be reviewed every 3 years. An annual report is provided to the Board of Management on the delivery of the Strategy.

Alternative formats available

So that everyone can access this strategy and other Langstane documents this strategy will be available in digital and hard copy format. It will also be available in large print and in alternative languages. If you need to access alternative formats, please contact the Customer Service Team, or email us on info@langstane-ha.co.uk.

Right to complain

In the event you are not satisfied with the service you have received, please contact the Association for a copy of the Complaints Policy, which can also be viewed on the Association's website – www.langstane-ha.co.uk

If you would like this document sent to you in large print, please contact Customer Service on 01224 423000