

POLICY DOCUMENT CONTROL

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EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY

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Equality & Diversity Strategy

1. Introduction: Letting our Differences Work- Commitment of Nehemiah Housing

At Nehemiah UCHA, herein after referred to as Nehemiah Housing, we celebrate difference. We believe that diversity and inclusion stimulate creativity, innovation and success.

Creating a diverse and inclusive environment is a journey of continuous improvement. It requires commitment.

People are our business. To meet their needs and harness their abilities we need to understand them. We have to know who they are and their strengths, resources, and problems.

Our aim is to understand the needs of our residents, communities and staff to be better placed to meet them.

We believe that:

- Good equality and diversity practices improve organisational effectiveness, increase employee motivation and efficiency, and strengthen values within the organisation.
- Diverse teams are more creative, more innovative and make better decisions which lead to more appropriate services.
- Sound equality, diversity and inclusion practices are an indicator of a modern, forward-thinking organisation that makes its work relevant to all those who need it.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion is a financial benefit to the organisation as it reduces staff turnover and improves reputation.

2. Scope of Policy – Defining what is Diversity

Diversity encompasses a multitude of areas such as gender, race, disability, physical ability, mental capacity, education, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, values, ages, cultures – this list is not exhaustive. The definitions of the protected characteristics are attached to this document as **Appendix 1**. A summary of the various legislation supporting the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy **under**

section 7 of this document. There is also a breakdown of the various types of discrimination, harassment and victimization which can be found in **Appendix 2.**

Embracing diversity means acknowledging, understanding, and appreciating the differences between individuals and developing a workplace that enhances their value. By being flexible in our approach it is then possible to achieve a rewarding environment.

Our Vision and Values

This policy supports Nehemiah's Vision and Values which highlights our commitment to ensuring that all staff and stakeholders are treated fairly and equally.

Our Vision: Our vision is to be the leading independent BAME housing provider in the UK, delivering a range of services which are unsurpassed in the community. Our Values are:

PASSIONATE - we are **passionate** about empowering people to build communities alongside homes.

DIVERSITY - we believe **diversity** is a strength in every aspect of our work and the communities around us.

INTEGRITY - we act with **integrity** in all that we do even when that is not the easy option.

SUSTAINABLE - we believe our actions and their impact must always be **sustainable**.

The difference between Diversity and Equality

Diversity and equal opportunities are often regarded as the same thing. However, they are different. Valuing diversity is about seeing everyone as individual valuing the abilities and skills they can bring to the organisation. Equality is about emphasizing inclusiveness, openness and fairness offering a positive outlook on the many differences. It is usually prompted by external factors such as legislation and codes of practice.

Inclusion

An inclusive work environment is one where prejudice is removed. It is an environment where everyone can fully participate in creating success, and where everyone is valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, perspectives and abilities.

Contractors and Consultants

There will be no discriminatory practices in the approval of contractors or consultants or in the allocation of work.

- procurement policies and procedures will be non-discriminatory.
- consultants and contractors will be required to demonstrate a commitment to equality principles; and
- Consultants and contractors will be required to sign up to the association's policy statement.

Work/Life Balance

Everyone has their own unique needs which require a flexible response. Nehemiah Housing is committed to developing skills and providing tools, resources, and a supportive environment for employees.

Our employees work with their managers to make choices to help them balance their work and personal life whilst also meeting the needs of the organisation and our customers.

Service Delivery

Nehemiah Housing in producing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is demonstrating its commitment to the needs of its, tenants, employees, contractors, and other stakeholders. We shall be reviewing our performance and areas for improvement in respect of:

- Corporate Culture and Governance
- Access and Customer Care
- Service User Involvement
- Partnerships
- Harassment and Domestic Violence
- Legislation

Disability Adjustments

Nehemiah Housing will make any reasonable adjustment required to facilitate disabled access for applicants, employees, customers, and employees who become disabled while working for the organisation. This includes both physical adaptations to buildings and schemes as well as making our services available in a suitable format for disabled users.

3. Responsibility for Policy Implementation

It is the responsibility of:

The Board working with the Executive are responsible for ensuring that both statutory and regulatory obligations are met. Also, that all staff receives the appropriate guidance; training to develop their awareness and responsibilities to fulfill Nehemiah Housing obligations.

All employees, and in particular Line Manager etc., have responsibilities to ensure the continuing success of the implementation of this policy by: -

- Refraining from harassment and discrimination
- Bringing to the attention of Management any suspected practices in breach of this policy
- Ensuring that the provision of employment and service delivery is carried out in a non-discriminatory manner.
- Working together to promote a harmonious working environment and eliminating discrimination and harassment.
- An annual report will be prepared for the Board on the implementation of the equality and diversity objectives and agree new objectives or targets which need to be addressed in the future.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy and as such can be contacted by telephone 0121 358 0966 or email contact@nehemiah.co.uk

4. Breach of this Policy

Breach of Nehemiah Housing policy on Equality & Diversity will be taken seriously and the appropriate response taken, whether this is one of its employees, its tenants or other service users and providers.

- If a **member of staff** breaches this policy, it may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- If a **Board member** breaches this policy, it may result in the Board member being removed from their position on the Board.
- If a **customer** breaches this policy it may result in the customer being removed and/or excluded from the property, using the appropriate protocols.
- If a **visitor** breaches this policy, it may result in the Visitor being removed and/or excluded from the building.

- If a **contractor** breaches this policy it may result in their company being removed and/or excluded from contract work.

5. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Action

We are committed to having a workplace where everyone can participate in our success, and everyone is valued for their individual skills, perspectives, abilities and experiences. Our commitment is at the heart of our values outlined within Nehemiah Housing Corporate Strategy, policies, and everyday practices of our workforce.

We will put our commitment into action in the following ways:

- Participation in inclusive and diverse events and activities
- Actively engaging with diverse communities
- Continuous training and development of our management and staff
- Flexible work-life balance practices for our staff
- Recruiting a diverse workforce
- Positively promoting images of diversity in our publications and premises
- Encouraging and enabling our partners to implement diversity practices
- Encouraging and enabling our residents groups to implement diversity practices
- Developing policies and services which are sensitive to ethnicity, culture, gender and disability
- Complying with relevant legislations such as The Equality Act 2010
- Actively challenging discrimination committed by staff, tenants or partners

By placing diversity at the heart of our organisation we create a culture that encourages every member of staff to think about equality and diversity in everything they do.

6. Equality Objectives

Reports will be prepared to monitor the implementation of the annual action plan and the achievement of equalities targets as follows:

- Diverse Workforce/customers - statistical records of the applications, offers and acceptances of housing will be prepared for the Executive Team and the relevant Committee,
- Policies and Procedures – Equality Impact Assessment of policies and procedures against our stated objectives to analyse how the effectiveness of policies in practice and impact on the various constituents served by respective policies – employee, tenants, and potential customers of the Association.
- Stakeholders contacts Analysis - Analysis of equality and diversity information provided by applicants, employees, board, tenants, and other stakeholders.

- To review this policy on an annual basis
- Equality & Diversity Training - Corporate training for all employees and board members at least on a 3-yearly basis.

7. Legislations & Good Practice Addressing Equality & Diversity

LEGISLATION	SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION
Equality Act 2010	<p>Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and aims to streamline and combine previous legislation such as Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and ensures consistency in what employers need to do in order to make the workplace a fair environment and compliance with the law.</p> <p>The Act offers protection for: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships and pregnancy and maternity which are called Protected Characteristics.</p>
Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023	<p>The new law will place a new duty on employers to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment. Tribunals will have the power to increase compensation by up to 25% if they find an employer has breached this duty.</p>
Human Rights Act 1998	<p>The Human Rights Act 1998 is an Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom which received Royal Assent on 9 November 1998, and mostly came into force on 2 October 2000. Its aim is to "give further effect" in UK law to the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights.</p> <p>In particular, the Act makes it unlawful for any public body to act in a way which is incompatible with the Convention, unless the wording of an Act of Parliament means they have no other choice. It also requires UK judges to take account of decisions of the Strasbourg court, and to interpret legislation, as far as possible, in a way which is compatible with the Convention.</p>

LEGISLATION	SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION
Civil Partnership Act 2004	<p>The Civil Partnership Act 2004, grants civil partnerships in the United Kingdom with rights and responsibilities identical to civil marriage. Civil Partners are entitled to the same property rights as married opposite-sex couples, the same exemption as married couples on inheritance tax, social security and pension benefits, and also the ability to get parental responsibility for a partner's children, as well as responsibility for reasonable maintenance of one's partner and their children, tenancy rights, full life insurance recognition, next-of-kin rights in hospitals, and others.</p>
Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005	<p>Under this new piece of legislation, any form of harassment is unlawful.</p> <p>Now, a woman can bring a claim IF, on the grounds of her sex, a male colleague engages in unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating her dignity, creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.</p> <p>Also. If a female employee is subjected to unwanted, verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct, of a sexual nature, that violates her dignity at work - she can bring a claim against her employer.</p>
Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006	<p>Makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of an individual's age which includes apparent age where direct discrimination is concerned or indirectly a person's age group.</p>
Equality Act 2006	<p>The Equality Act 2006 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom covering the United Kingdom. The changes it made were,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (merging the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission) • outlawing of discrimination on goods and services on the grounds of religion and belief (subject to certain exemptions) • allowing the Government to introduce regulations outlawing discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation in goods and services, which led to the Sexual Orientation Regulations 2006 • creating a public duty to promote equality on the ground of gender (EA 2006 s 84, inserting SDA 1975 s 76A, now found in EA 2010 s 1) <p>The Equality Act 2006 is a precursor to the Equality Act 2010, which combines all of the equality enactments within Great Britain and provides comparable protections across all equality strands. Those explicitly mentioned by the Equality Act 2006 include age; disability; gender; proposed, commenced or completed gender reassignment; race; religion or belief and sexual orientation.</p>

LEGISLATION	SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION
Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006	<p>The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom (citation 2006 c. 1) which creates an offence in England and Wales of inciting hatred against a person on the grounds of their religion. The Act was the Labour Government's third attempt to bring in this offence: provisions were originally included as part of the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill in 2001, but were dropped after objections from the House of Lords. The measure was again brought forward as part of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill in 2004-5, but was again dropped in order to get the body of that Bill passed before the 2005 general election.</p> <p>The Act is notable because two amendments made in the House of Lords failed to be overturned by the Government in the House of Commons.</p> <p>Most of the Act came into force on 1 October 2007.</p>
Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007	This Order prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities, services, education, management and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions.
Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 Schedule 6 and 8	These regulations implement the age strand of Directive 2000/78 EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and vocational training. The Directive also applies to discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, religion or belief and disability.
The CRE Code of Practice	The Commission for Racial Equality Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing demonstrating how companies can best implement policies to combat discrimination and improving opportunities for groups adversely affected. Code available from: www.equalityhumanrights.com

8. Publications Supporting Equality & Diversity Policy & Strategy

We aim to ensure that Individuals are not treated less favorably than others because of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, marital status, or any other reason.

Equality & Diversity is built into all of our policies. The following policies and strategies specifically support our diversity aims:

- Corporate Strategy
- Marketing and Communications Strategy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Single Equality and Diversity Scheme and Action Plan
- Anti-Harassment Policies – [Bullying & Harassment, Sexual & Racial Harassment etc]
- Housing Management Policies – [such as ASB, Harassment, Domestic Violence etc]
- Employment Policies including, Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Appraisal, Grievance And Disciplinary Policies etc
- Customer Engagement Strategy

9. Policy, Review and Assessment

This Policy may be amended by **Nehemiah Housing**, at any time to consider changes in legislation and best practice, but formally on an **annual basis**.

Any enhancements to statutory provisions that affect this Policy will automatically be incorporated.

Version History

Version	Date	Author	Reason
Version 1	07/2007	CS Mgr.	New Policy for adoption
Version 2	06/2019	CS Mgr.	Presented for cyclical review & approval
Version 3	07/2020	CS Mgr.	Presented for cyclical review & approval
Version 4	07/2021	Co Secretary	Presented for cyclical review & approval
Version 5	10/2024	Head of Governance	Presented for cyclical review & approval

Appendix 1: Definitions of Protected Characteristics

Age

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year old) or a range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

• Disability

A person has a disability if s/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.

• Gender Re-assignment

This is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. Under the Equality Act 2010, it is no longer necessary to be under medical care to be legally protected.

• Marriage and Civil Partnership

Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. 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 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. Protection from unfair treatment applies for both the pregnancy and in respect of any illness arising from the pregnancy.

• 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 religion or belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

• Gender

A man or a woman.

• Sexual Orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Appendix 2: Types of Discrimination

Types of discrimination, harassment, and victimisation

The Act sets out protections for individuals against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. These protections apply to all staff - permanent, temporary and contractors.

• Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have, or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic.

• Discrimination by association

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. The Equality Act will protect carers from discrimination e.g. caring for a disabled child or relative at home.

• Perception discrimination

This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that protected characteristic. However, this does not apply to pregnancy and maternity or marriage and civil partnership.

• Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when a rule, provision, criterion, policy or a practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

• Harassment

The Equality Act prohibits three types of harassment. These are:

- harassment related to a protected characteristic (age; disability; gender re-assignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation);
- sexual harassment; and
- less favourable treatment of a worker because they submit to, or reject sexual harassment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.

Harassment is “unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation) which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

Employees can also complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant protected characteristic themselves.

Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

• Third party harassment

Under section 26 of the Equality Act 2010, Nehemiah is potentially liable for harassment of its employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of Nehemiah, such as customers or clients.

- **Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly or has suffered a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint. There is no need for a victim to show that they have been less favourably treated than someone who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act. They need only show that they have been treated badly. This would include for example, isolating someone because he or she has made a complaint, or giving him or her more difficult work to do.

- **Unconscious bias**

Unconscious Bias refers to biases that influence our thoughts and behaviours without our awareness. These biases can influence our decision making automatically and are often triggered by our brain making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, without all the relevant information and instead are informed by our background, cultural environment, and personal experiences.