

Policy Name	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Policy Category	Corporate & Governance
Policy Number	CG011
Officer Responsible	Chief Executive
Application	Lochaber Housing Association, Lochaber Care & Repair and LHA Property Services
Scottish Housing Regulator Standard	5
Equality Impact Assessment Complete	Yes
Date to Board of Management	August 2023
Next Review Date	June 2028

Introduction

The Lochaber Housing Association (LHA) Group is committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all tenants, customers, Board members and staff.

The LHA Group respects and values the diversity of groups and individuals that it interacts with and the benefits this can bring, and it will take appropriate action to ensure those who may otherwise be excluded, feel included.

This policy outlines our intent to fulfil our aims of providing opportunities for all sections of the community; develop and enhance sustainable neighbourhoods and provide an enjoyable working and living environment which is free from harassment and discrimination.

Policy Objectives

To prevent discrimination and eliminate prejudice within the organisation and our community.

To advance equality of opportunity for all of our customers, colleagues and stakeholders.

To treat all of our customers and employees fairly, and with dignity and respect.

To promote inclusion and celebrate diversity.

To show zero tolerance for harassment and hate crime.

To promote, support and recognise tolerance and cohesion within our community.

To comply with our legal and regulatory obligations and seek to demonstrate best practice standards.

Legal and Regulatory Requirement

The LHA Group will meet all of its legal obligations as set out in the following

legislation:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998 and associated European Union directives
- The Scotland Act 1998
- The Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2010

These underpin our approach to both promoting fairness and equality, and ensuring legislative compliance in respect of the nine protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010

Definitions

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, when or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics.

Promoting equality is about behaving in a way that tackles inequalities, aiming to ensure that all staff and customers are treated fairly, and do not experience discrimination.

Promoting diversity is about recognising that everyone is different and creating a working environment that values each customer and employee ensuring that services are delivered that suit all sections of the community.

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential.

Protected characteristics

There are 9 defined characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 and they are noted below.

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

- Sexual Orientation

This policy is not, however, restricted to just these protected characteristics.

The LHA Group also recognises that factors such as socio-economic status and background, including income, education, employment, and social supports, can impact on an individual's life experiences, their ability to access opportunities and their sense of inclusion. We will take this into consideration wherever appropriate when identifying and developing service improvement initiatives.

Our Commitments

Within our Business Plan, our core values inform and direct our strategic objectives with equality central to our values, in that, we will always promote fair treatment and equal access to services and opportunities for all.

Gathering and Using information about our customers and colleagues

The LHA Group will collect, review and measure data on a regular basis to inform us on our performance measured against equality issues.

We will carry out equality impact assessments on our policies and processes to ensure they align with our equality objectives and ethos. We will address any aspect of our policy or service delivery that has a detrimental impact on any protected characteristic group or individual.

We will provide a full explanation of why information is collected and what it is used for, ensuring that every individual is aware of their right to opt out of providing such information.

We will store information securely and sensitively and only use it for the purpose of promoting and ensuring equality and fairness and improving outcomes.

Policy Implementation and Management

We will adhere to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and action plan to ensure that we follow a planned approach to equality and diversity that supports this policy and seeks continuous improvement.

Dealing with complaints

All complaints are dealt with in line with our Complaint Handling Procedure. In terms of this policy, complaints can be made if we fail to apply this policy properly, or don't meet our organisational standards. We give tenants a copy of our Complaint Handling Procedure when they become tenants of the association. We also advise any other service users of our Complaint Handling

Procedure if they want to make a complaint. Details of our complaint procedure are available on our website.

We also provide information about the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Ombudsman deals with complaints involving maladministration, that is, bad practice.

Tenants and service users must, in general, use our complaints procedure before contacting the Ombudsman.

Consultation and review procedures

Our procedure for consulting with tenants and other service users in developing organisational policies are contained in our Tenant Participation Strategy. This strategy also sets out how we review existing policies and practices. In general, we review our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion every three years or as required due to changes to law or good practice guidance.

Training

We will ensure that all Board members and staff members will be suitably trained not only in the policy objectives but the operational tools needed to embed and respond to equality issues.

General Data Protection Regulations

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own data protection policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in LHA Group's privacy notices.

This policy can be made available in other formats, for example in large print, audio format or Braille, the document may also be available in other languages, in full or summary form, as appropriate.