



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY

Lead Manager:	Head of Neighbourhoods/HR Officer
Responsible Senior Manager:	Managing Director
Approved By:	STAR Board
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1. Aims and Commitments

This strategy aims to help us to meet our commitment to provide tenants, residents and employees with a culture of inclusion, where there is equality of opportunity and people are treated with dignity and respect.

We recognise that different people, communities and neighbourhoods have different needs and our aim is to treat everyone fairly.

We are committed to tackling discrimination, promoting equality opportunities and valuing diversity in our organisation and in the communities and neighbourhoods we work in.¹ in delivering this strategy we are not looking to solely comply with legislative requirements our commitment also underpins our organisational values:

2. Our Values

We will be enterprising

We will act with integrity

We will take responsibility

We will be reliable and supportive

We will use our resources wisely

What is 'Equality'?

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and no less favourably regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

What is 'Diversity'?

Diversity is recognising, valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, needs and experiences. It is also about encouraging and using those differences to create a cohesive community and effective workforce

What is 'Inclusion'?

Inclusion is ensuring that everyone is given the opportunity to participate. It is the practice of providing equal access to opportunities and resources, involving everyone so they have a say in our work and their views are heard, supported and respected.

3. Putting our commitments into practice

If you apply to live in one of our properties or you are already one of our tenants and leaseholders, we will:

- Make sure that our reception areas and offices are accessible..
- Provide the information you need, in ways that you find easy to understand.
- Take into account any particular needs you have as a tenant or leaseholder.
- Take prompt and effective action if you face harassment where you live.
- Only work with contractors and other agencies that share our commitment to be fair to all.

If you apply to us for a job or are already a member of staff we will:

- Recruit and promote staff solely on their merit, experience, ability and potential.
- Provide an environment appropriate to the needs of staff, making reasonable adjustments and adaptations where appropriate.
- Provide training and other opportunities to help staff to develop their skills and talents.
- Provide the necessary equipment to staff to help them to do their job effectively.
- Promote a culture that respects and values each other's' differences and promotes, dignity, equality and diversity
- Take prompt and effective action if you face harassment at work.
- Advertise and promote our vacancies to encourage applications from individuals with protected characteristics or groups who are currently underrepresented by the organisation.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Board Members

- Set our organisational Equality and Diversity strategy and ensure compliance is achieved
- Monitoring the implementation of the Equality Action Plan

Managing Director, Director of Finance and Resources and Senior Management Team

- Implement the Strategy and Action Plan
- Review progress of the Equality Action Plan
- Ensure that adequate resources are available for the implementation of the Equality Action Plan
- Promote a working culture that respects and values differences, and promotes dignity, equality diversity and inclusion

Managers

- Promote a culture of equality and diversity for staff and communicate the importance of adherence to the strategy
- Implement the Equality and Diversity Strategy ensuring that all actions are delivered

- Ensure that all aspects of their service area comply with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Challenge discrimination in their service area

Employees

- Comply with the aims and commitments outlined in this strategy to encourage diversity and eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion and ensure that their actions do not contribute to the unfair or discriminatory treatment of others
- Challenge and report any unfair, discriminatory or otherwise unwelcome treatment to their line manager or Senior Manager responsible for the service area.
- Develop our knowledge of our customers to enable us to better meet their needs.

Resident Involvement Groups

- Involved tenants will receive guidance about the organisational equality and diversity aims and commitments as outlined in this strategy.
- We will promote equality, diversity and inclusion and ensure that their actions do not contribute to the unfair or discriminatory treatment of others.

Contractors and Partners

- Operate in accordance with organisational aims and commitments as outlined in this strategy
- Operate in line with Equality and Diversity legislation
- Demonstrate policy and procedures consistent with our organisational Equality, Diversity and inclusion Strategy
- Have a workforce trained in equality and diversity issues
- Promote equality and diversity and ensure that their actions do not contribute to the unfair or discriminatory treatment of others.

5. Legislation and Regulation

The **Equality Act 2010** is the UKs primary legal framework for protecting individual rights and furthering equality, diversity and inclusion. The Act regulates the way that businesses operate to protect individuals across society from unfair and discriminatory treatment.

The Act identifies 'protected characteristics' as age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnerships

In addition the Act stipulates that STAR as an organisation carrying out public functions, has specific obligations under the **public sector equality duty** (PSED). The organisation must demonstrate due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (i.e. by removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by

people due to their protected characteristic, or meeting the needs of those with a protected characteristic, and encouraging their participation in public life or activities where participation is low)

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Social Housing Regulator sets out the regulatory standards which require registered housing providers to respond to the needs of diverse residents. STAR will treat all residents and tenants with fairness and respect including those with protected characteristics and those with additional support needs.

STAR adheres to the **National Federation of Housing's Governance Code** and it places greater accountability to residents and customers, including setting out the leadership to support the board to take an active lead in committing to equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the organisation's activities as well as the board's own composition. What we want our strategy to achieve

- To champion equality and diversity in everything that we do, to ensure that diversity is valued and to help to tackle discrimination, deprivation and economic disadvantage.
- To continue to develop a positive culture of equality, diversity and inclusion within the organisation among staff and Board members.
- To continue to take a lead in promoting equality and diversity in service delivery and employment and for challenging discrimination.
- To ensure that we continue to be an organisation that recognises the contribution of all staff, which is supportive, fair, just and free from discrimination.
- To ensure that we continue to be recognised as an exemplary employer within the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- To influence and support our partners to promote equality and diversity and to adopt best practice.
- To develop practices that promote the right for all to participate in all aspects of life by promoting practices and initiatives that remove barriers to participation.
- To embed equality and diversity good practice in our work and use the process of mainstreaming to ensure that this occurs.
- To involve residents, service users and other customers actively in our work and ensure that our work takes into account the needs of equality groups.
- To continue to develop Translation & Interpretation services to fully communicate with all the communities we serve.
- To deliver our functions and services in a way that ensures access for all and prioritises action to benefit those experiencing greatest disadvantage.
- To develop and implement exemplary employment policies and practices and to have a workforce that is representative of the population of Shropshire.
- To work with our partners to develop excellence in equality and diversity initiatives and outcomes.

6. The link between the strategy and our work

Our strategy outlines the key actions that will be taken to promote equality, diversity and inclusion during 22 - 2023.

The strategy covers work that will meet the needs of the 'equality groups'. We know that for some there is the experience of compounded disadvantage. This strategy acknowledges the need to respond to the diverse needs of individuals.

This strategy applies to all aspects of our functions and services. These include:

- The provision of services including services to leaseholders
- The commissioning and procurement of goods and services
- The recruitment and employment of staff
- The training and development of staff
- Our community involvement
- Consultations with local people, and in our partnerships with other organisations

Our Equality Target Groups

This strategy has been produced in line with the Equalities Act 2010. The Act introduced the term 'protected characteristics' to describe the groups protected by the law.

These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy or Maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Other groups have been identified that also need a focus and attention to help to overcome disadvantage. They are:

- Rural area isolation
- Young people
- People experiencing financial and social exclusion
- People with literacy and numeracy issues
- Ex-offenders

7. The work we have done so far

As an organisation we have:

- Set equality and diversity standards and made a commitment to treat everyone fairly and treat any special needs with sensitivity, tact and diplomacy
- Engaged staff, board members and tenant representatives in an Equality and Diversity Awareness training programme.
- Developed an online Equality & Diversity training module that is accessible to all staff via our online learning platform.
- Developed opportunities for tenants to become involved in scrutiny and area panels.
- Developed recruitment and selection processes that are accessible to all, encouraging applications from individuals with protected characteristics or groups who are currently underrepresented by the organisation
- Achieved Disability Confident Employer status
- Implemented a Learning and Development Policy so all employees have fair access to training opportunities including professional qualifications
- Developed work placement and apprenticeship opportunities across the organisation to attract young people to the organisation
- Promoted flexible working practices through the launch of a Hybrid Working Policy for staff
- Developed a wellbeing offer to staff that recognises and reflects the importance of good mental health and well being
- Redeveloped our exit process to understand the experiences of working for us and reasons for leaving to take account and act on any detrimental equality, diversity and inclusion issues
- Working towards accreditation of White Ribbon to demonstrate our commitment to making a difference in our communities and ending violence against women
- Regularly engaged with Board and Staff Consultation groups to consult on changes to HR policy and Practice
- Demonstrated a commitment to meeting the housing related support needs of our tenants, by working in partnership with statutory and third sector organisations
- Developed communication methods to ensure that these are tailored to the needs of our tenants and residents
- Ensured that staff are aware of residents communication needs by refreshing the 'vulnerability information' we hold on our tenants.
- Developed contract management, procurement and commissioning frameworks and processes that take into account the differing needs of our tenants and residents and encourage supplier diversity
- Developed and implemented the Contractor Portal for Responsive Repairs and Adaption programmes, the Electrical Inspections contract and the Central Heating Servicing contract
- Developed and implemented the Tenant Portal and continue to promote its use with tenants.
- Completed DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) assessment improvement work to ensure that communal areas are fully accessible to Disabled residents
- Procured an Equipment & Adaptations Service contract and achieved 100% customer satisfaction in this area.

8. Developing and Monitoring our Equality and Diversity Strategy

Although we recognise that we have made good progress in embedding equality and diversity into the organisation we know we can do more. Our action plan for 2022-23 is attached at Appendix 1.

To ensure that the actions in our plan happen we will:

- Ensure that our Board, Management Team and Employees understand their roles in promoting our approach to Equality and diversity
- Make sure that Equality and Diversity is an integral part of business plans and performance management frameworks
- Provide ongoing training and guidance to managers and staff to ensure that they understand their responsibilities
- Provide ongoing training to Board members and Resident Representatives to ensure that they understand their responsibilities

Appendix 1

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2022– 2023

No.	Objectives	Lead Officer	Timescale	Actions	Outcome	Comments/updates (with date)
1	Create an inclusive customer experience and respond to future customer needs	AA	Sept 2022	<p>Understanding our customer data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the 2021 census for Shropshire, which will be published in spring 2022. An analysis of 5 specific themes around:- • Growth in population • Growth in number of households • Diversity make-up • Ageing of population • Disability of population <p>• Collect tenant data via STAR survey. Provide incentives to customers to provide personal data.</p> <p>• Identify emerging trends and groups requiring help to overcome disadvantage.</p> <p>Customer Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of approach to recruitment of tenant representatives from diverse backgrounds to ensure a wide range of viewpoints • Development of Customer Voice Strategy 	<p>Improved diversity data to develop a better understanding of the needs and issues of our customers. Creation of future data driven action plans.</p> <p>Greater understanding of the views and needs of our customers.</p>	
2	Create an inclusive colleague experience	CA	Sept 2022	<p>Understanding our workforce data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a diversity 'data cleanse' of employee data aiming for 90% declaration rate. 	<p>Improved diversity data declaration rates to develop a better understanding of the needs and issues of our</p>	

Appendix 1

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and collate diversity data in relation to Board members, specifically data on gender and protected characteristics. • Complete the NHF - EDI data tool (which compares the workforce to the local community based on stock locations) https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/diversity-and-equality/EDI-tool/ • Analyse EDI data on a quarterly basis and provide a balanced scorecard to SMT to identify trends and prioritise actions. • Identify emerging trends and groups requiring help to overcome disadvantage <p>Publish data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish and present equality data more visibly to meet responsibilities of Public Sector Equality Duty. Prepare workforce data annually for inclusion in Shropshire Council's workforce report. <p>Equality and Diversity Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review mandatory equality and diversity training to ensure this is robust and effective. • Monitor completion of training for staff and Board. • Provide training to colleagues to increase understanding on the Public Sector Equality Duty 	<p>workforce and diversity of our Board. Creation of future data driven action plans.</p> <p>The ability to measure the impact of our actions to improve EDI and set out actions to address areas of under-representation.</p> <p>Compliance with PSED.</p> <p>Improvement in performance and service delivery to meet the needs of our customers and colleagues.</p>	
3	To ensure all tenants, irrespective of race, have accessibility to make complaints and be treated with respect and fairness.	Oct 2022	<p>Understanding our customer experience</p> <p>Analyse complaint data to understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of complaints made • Makeup of complaints' by diversity groups • Number of complaints relating to disrepair or substandard homes <p>Prepare report to SMT/Board on findings and if applicable, identify ways to improve accessibility for all customers.</p>	<p>Better understanding of the makeup of complaints that have been received and to remove barriers for any specific groups</p> <p>To encourage tenants to make complaints.</p>	

Appendix 1

			Nov 2022			
4	Leadership commitment - create a culture where the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are visible and actively championed and role modelling inclusive behaviours.		May 2022 Aug 2022 Ongoing May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of senior sponsors from Board/SMT to demonstrate commitment to equality objectives Sponsorship of a staff diversity award to recognise staff achievements and work undertaken by STAR. Capture case studies and publicise stories of work undertaken through Tenant and Staff newsletters Identify a process for analysis of equality impact of major service changes and policy updates on customers and staff. Details of assessment should be included in Board papers and reports to demonstrate how this had been considered. 	<p>EDI is visible and actively championed at a senior level.</p> <p>Demonstrate our approach to EDI and that this is delivered as part of the day job.</p>	
5	Work with our partners to help create a more inclusive STAR service delivery		Dec 2022 May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore further opportunities for collaboration with stakeholders to share ideas and best practice. Set diversity requirements for our contractors and suppliers through our procurement processes. 	<p>STAR to lead by example by setting expectations on those who want to work with us and enable the sharing of best practice with our partners.</p>	