



Langstane Housing Association Equality and Diversity Strategy – 2021 – 2024



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

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Forward

I am pleased to introduce the Langstane Group's Equality and Diversity Strategy 2021-2024 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.

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.

Equality and Diversity 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.

The Langstane Group ensures that equality and diversity is inclusive and promoted and that everyone involved with the Langstane Group 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 ethos of the Group where we celebrate the benefits that a multi-cultural society brings

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.

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.

In addition to the Equality Act, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill has been introduced to the Scottish Parliament (2020).

Hate crime is the phrase used to describe behaviour which is both criminal and based on prejudice. Whilst there are already laws in place to protect certain groups from hate crime, this Bill updates the existing laws and consolidates them into one Bill. It also adds to the groups currently specifically protected by hate crime laws.

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 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
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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 2010.

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).

In 2019, the Scottish Government reiterated their commitment to tackling poverty and inequality while working to ensure a fairer Scotland.. For people and communities, particularly those which experience disadvantage and inequality, the Scottish Government committed to working collaboratively, both across government and with external organisations to address these issues.

The Scottish Government also pledged to building strong, resilient and supportive communities. As part of this commitment the Scottish Government has introduced to the Scottish Parliament, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill. Hate crime can threaten communities and can be motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity. The Bill seeks to introduce age into the existing protected groups under this legislation and creates a new crime of stirring up hatred against any of the protected groups.

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. 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 LGBTQ¹ 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.

¹ LGBT - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Questioning or Queer

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

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;
- The equality impact of customer facing policies for all the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act will be assessed and due regard taken of the assessments;
- 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

- To facilitate this, an Equality and Diversity Champion will be identified to promote all aspects of equality and diversity within the Group. The Equality and Diversity Champion will ensure staff and Members of the Board are aware of their responsibilities;
- 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; including increasing Disability Confident² Accreditation to Level 3; and
- 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.

² Disability Confident is creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled people

Review and monitoring

This strategy will be reviewed in 2024 or earlier if required.

Annual monitoring will be carried out by the Board of Management as part of the annual strategic update and Annual Assurance process.