

Diversity and inclusion Policy



Summary:	This policy sets out Genesis Housing Association's commitment towards Diversity and Inclusion. It applies to all employees of Genesis, whether on permanent or fixed term contracts, working full time or part time hours. It also applies to bank workers, agency workers, volunteers, consultants, contractors and work experience students.
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1. Purpose

This policy will:

- enhance our reputation as an employer, and help attract, motivate and retain staff. The recruitment, retention, training and promotion of colleagues regardless of their background, through our recruitment practices and through celebrating their differences, and being mindful of protected characteristics
- ensure better and more inclusive service provision for our customers.
- encourage an active approach towards tackling discrimination, which will minimise complaints, disciplinary action and employment tribunal claims.
- encourage greater awareness and understanding of the different protected characteristics.

2. Definitions

- **Equality:** an understanding that:
 - every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, a right to be treated the same as everyone else, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability
 - certain groups within society experience common forms of discrimination.
- **Diversity:** an active approach that:
 - recognises, values and takes account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills, needs and experiences
 - encourages and uses those differences to create a cohesive community and effective workforce.
- **Inclusion:** to positively strive 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.
- **Network Group:** this is a staff group with defined terms of references which seeks to support and represent colleagues of a similar background across the business.
- **Protected characteristics:** as defined in the Equality Act 2010, these are:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion and belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation.

3. Policy statement

Genesis is committed to respecting and promoting diversity, inclusion and equality for customers, staff, stakeholders and volunteers.

We will not discriminate, harass or victimise anyone regardless of their background, characteristics or beliefs.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we will not tolerate any discrimination, harassment or victimisation of someone because they have or are perceived to have a “protected characteristic” or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Although Genesis is not a “public body” within the meaning of the Equality Act, we have adopted and give due regard to the aims of the Equality Duty as part of our policy. Giving due regard means consciously thinking about the aims as part of the process of decision-making. See Section 12 for details on the aims and the Equality Duty.

We recognise a statutory duty to challenge any instances of discrimination as an employer, landlord, service provider, partner and through contractors and procurement.

Our customer and staff forums will provide insight so we constantly monitor the way we work to improve the delivery of our services so they are inclusive and meet the diverse needs of our people and customers.

The HR Director, or an appropriate delegate will report regularly to the Genesis staff forum and staff network groups on diversity and inclusion matters

Similarly, the Customer Experience Director, or an appropriate delegate, will report regularly to the customer forums on related matters.

Diversity and inclusion assessment and improvement plans will be completed for all new and changed projects, strategies, restructures, policies and procedures etc.

We will encourage customers and staff with lived experience of Diversity and Inclusion to provide training and support for customers, staff and stakeholders.

As essential best practice we will systematically monitor our service delivery and employment practices to ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate any discriminatory behaviours, policies and practices.

Where we keep data on protected characteristics for customers and staff, we ensure that the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and our data protection policy are followed.

4. Customer involvement

By understanding the background of our customers and celebrating their diversity we will be able to more effectively deliver the right services, for the right people at the right time.

We will harness the expertise of our customers, staff and stakeholders, with the overall objective of helping our customers to thrive within their communities.

We will build up coalitions with customer forums and external providers in the areas where we have a presence to enable customers to have greater input into how we deliver our services.

Closely aligned to our volunteering offer, we will offer our customers opportunities to get involved more directly with our diversity and inclusion activities at a level which suits them. This could be in the form of a one - off activity, or a regular time commitment. We will be clear about how much influence and time commitment each volunteering opportunity involves and provide feedback about what the activity achieved.

5. Staff responsibilities

Employees must be aware of and take responsibility for diversity and inclusion in their behaviour with customers, colleagues and stakeholders.

Managers are accountable for communicating and disseminating this policy to all employees to ensure that all employees are fully aware of their individual and legal responsibilities, and that diversity and inclusion remain a key part of all that we do .

Senior managers will ensure that adequate resources are provided for encouraging, promoting and monitoring this policy.

If an employee, in undertaking duties and responsibilities on our behalf, witnesses a discriminatory incident, they have a duty of care to other employees and members of the public to challenge discriminatory behaviour and practice where it is safe to do so, and in the case of racist and other discriminatory incidents, e.g. Hate Crime, a duty to report and record the incident to police, their line manager or the HR Department.

6. Recruitment, retention and progression

We apply the principles of the Equality Act 2010 when designing and reviewing our recruitment processes and policies. Where specialist agencies highlight best practice in recruitment, retention and progression matters, we will recommend that these practices are implemented in the wider business.

When commissioning training for career progression we will ensure that the principles of this policy are followed, through digital learning opportunities, 'lunch and learns' and discussions via groups and forums.

7. Partnership working

We will form partnerships with specialist agencies who will add value to our work and together we will develop innovative solutions to meet the needs of our customers.

When commissioning contractors and third party services, we will insist that their policies on equality, diversity and inclusion match or exceed this policy.

We will promote best practice when Diversity and Inclusion partnerships make practical changes for our people and staff that directly contribute towards Genesis corporate values.

Our day-to-day work will continue to support and facilitate Genesis Diversity and Inclusion activities through our Network groups, Genesis staff forum, and customer forums including the Women's Network, G Force, The LGBT Customer Forum, and BAME network, Customer Disability Forum, Faith and Belief/Older Persons Working Groups. Lunch and Learns with key stakeholders will provide information on Diversity and Inclusion issues that affect staff and customers.

8. Complaints

Genesis will investigate all claims of discrimination in a thorough and serious manner and fully support any legitimate claims of discrimination. An employee or customer who feels they have been discriminated against within the scope of this policy should raise the matter through the grievance and dignity at work policies and procedures (for employees) and Comments, compliments and complaints policy (for customers).

9. Background Legislation

- **Equality Act 2010:**

The Act includes an Equality Duty requiring public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having due regard means consciously thinking about the above three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making. Although Genesis is not a “public body” within the meaning of the legislation, we have adopted these aims as part of our policy.

- [Equality Duty for public sector \(EHRC website\)](#)
- [Data Protection Act 1998](#)

10. Diversity and inclusion

A Diversity and Inclusion Assessment has been completed as part of this policy review and a copy is available on request. The assessment was made as part of an independent assessment on the organisation’s diversity commitment by the Schneider Ross Agency, with the following summary findings:

- We currently do not keep reportable data on maternity/pregnancy, gender reassignment and marriage/civil partnership for staff or customers.
- There are no observable correlations between staff and customers in the other respective areas.
- There are issues with under-reporting and possible gaps in the collected data, which needs addressing.

No change to policy content was made following the assessment. To request a copy please contact us at policy@genesisha.org.uk or for further information on our commitment to equality and diversity at Genesis please visit our [website](#).

11. Customer engagement and impact

This policy has been developed in close liaison with customers from our regional committees and focus groups. Suggested changes that were incorporated into the final policy were:

- amended definitions of diversity and inclusion
- make commitment towards public equality duty clearer.
- clarify several statements throughout the text, eg learning commitment, customer involvement etc.

12. Other useful documents

- Diversity and inclusion assessment template
- Diversity and inclusion work plan

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