

Equality & Diversity Strategy

2010-13



OUR MISSION

To deliver excellent, customer focused and cost effective housing services to all our residents



Please feel free to get in touch with us if:

- You feel this document is not as clear and easy to read as you would expect; or
- You believe that we aren't doing the things that this document says we will do; or
- You just want to talk to someone about this document

Whatever the reason, if you want to talk to us about this document you should contact:

Head of Housing Policy & Diversity on Freephone 0800 195 5552

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Effective from:	April 2010
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Introduction

- 1.1** SHP's approach to the delivery of services to the tenants and leaseholders of Sutton Council and the employment of its staff is underpinned by a number of drivers, one of which is ensuring equality and addressing diversity.
- 1.2** We endeavour to embed these drivers in all that we do and the equality and diversity strategy identifies our medium term objectives for ensuring that our services (a) meet the needs of all of our customers, (b) are accessible to them all, and (c) are delivered in an equitable and non-discriminatory way by a staff group which is representative of and understand the needs of the local community. This strategy is an overarching strategy that will directly influence the delivery of all our strategies to ensure that our priority of making services accessible to all is achieved.
- 1.3** The Equality & Diversity strategy has been devised in consultation with our customers and based on feedback from the STATUS tenant and leaseholder satisfaction surveys, the Board Diversity Committee and the Equality & Diversity Committee which includes representatives from residents, staff and the Board.
- 1.4** Our strategy and accompanying Single Equality Scheme will focus on the six strands of diversity (age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion/beliefs, sexual orientation) as defined in Equality legislation. These equality groupings are those for which Sutton Housing Partnership has or will shortly have a legal duty with a responsibility to eradicate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity in both service provision and employment. In addition, our strategy will also focus on improving the socio-economic position of our residents, especially in relation to the provision of training, employment and financial inclusion initiatives.
- 1.5** However, we recognise that other groups in society and amongst both our customer base and staff may also experience discrimination and inequality of opportunity. We will therefore ensure that our strategy encompasses other diverse groups that exist amongst our customer base and which we have identified from surveys and consultation as requiring additional support to access services. Such groups include people with learning difficulties; those with mental health or alcohol or substance misuse issues; ex-offenders; some lone parents particularly those who are very young; those who have suffered domestic violence and those, like many of our residents, who are elderly or frail.
- 1.6** There are other driver strategies for Customer Focus, Environmental Sustainability, Risk Management and Value For Money and together with the strategies for direct and support services our strategies provide the focus for achieving our Priorities.

Where Are We Now?

2.1 The current position in relation to the embedding of equality & diversity is reflected in the following:

- The Board Equality & Diversity Strategy Committee oversees and monitors progress against strategic objectives and plays a key role in ensuring compliance with our key legislative duty of the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- The Board established an Equality & Diversity Champion role to provide challenge and to champion equality & diversity issues at board meetings and chairs the Board Equality & Diversity Strategy Committee;
- Our approach to Equality & Diversity is shared and supported by the Council and there continues to be close partnership working to ensure equality and diversity in all aspects of service delivery and in working towards the 'excellence' level of the Equality Framework;
- We are involved in innovative practice such as the continuing work on domestic violence and the further development of the 'Breath' user support group for survivors of domestic violence as a self supporting organisation;
- We have maintained close links with Mencap Pathway to provide employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and we work closely with the Council's floating support provider 'In Touch' who support vulnerable tenants in sustaining their tenancy;
- We have collected diversity profiling data for around 87% of our customer households which has given us the following information about our customer base -
 - ◇ 11.4% of our customers are from black and minority ethnic groups
 - ◇ Nearly 39% of our customers are aged 60 or over
 - ◇ 64% of our tenant households are headed by women
 - ◇ 23% of our customers have identified themselves as having a disability or long term illness
 - ◇ Our identified faith groups are Christian (63%), Muslim (3.3%), Hindu (0.8%) and Buddhist (0.4%)
 - ◇ 41 tenants have self identified as being lesbian, gay or bisexual
 - ◇ 32 tenants have self identified as being from the traveller community;
- We hold additional communication needs information for tenants who require large print, translation, interpretation, braille, audio CD or home visits;
- All strategies, major policies, procedures and Board reports contain equality impact assessments (EIAs) which identify any potential or actual negative impact and propose action to redress these;

- There is an Equality & Diversity Committee attended by staff and resident representatives which monitors performance in relation to targets and action plans and audits EIAs. There are close links with the Board Equality & Diversity Strategy committee e.g. sharing of minutes, attendance at each others meetings;
- Generic and specialist training has been delivered to staff and Board members to assist in the embedding of equality and diversity;
- We have the disability 2 ticks award;
- We are members of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme and have submitted an application to the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index;
- We have been actively involved in local diversity forums and support their ongoing development with both staff and other resources;
- Our staff survey gathers the same diversity profiling information as we gather for customers;
- Staff training is responsive to diversity information (e.g. our aspiring managers programme contains a commitment to prioritise staff from currently under represented groups);
- There are many and varied examples where we have produced a positive impact by tailoring our services to meet the diverse needs of our customers.

2.2 It was the view of the Audit Commission in their inspection of October 2009 that

for equality and diversity strengths outweighed weaknesses. They commented that “A clear commitment to diversity is helping to drive forward improvements. Staff training is in place and SHP has a good understanding of its tenants and is starting to use data to tailor services effectively. Diversity monitoring of service take up and equality impact assessments are identifying barriers to the service. A good range of support for vulnerable residents, including victims of domestic violence, is in place. SHP complies with the DDA. However, the approach to domestic violence has some weaknesses, outreach work to marginalised communities and diversity outcomes from contractor monitoring are limited.”

Where Do We Want To Be?

- 3.1** We want to see a service where we fully appreciate and value the diverse experiences, skills and backgrounds of everyone in the communities we serve and all the staff we employ. We will also ensure that our services are relevant to, and accessible by, all our customers, through there being:
- Barrier-free access to our services;
 - Service information readily available in the formats that customers need;
 - Consultation with a diverse group of residents to ensure we are providing the services they need;
 - Comprehensive completion and review of EIAs on all our strategies, policies and procedures;

- An embedded approach to equality and diversity that means it is part of how all of our staff think and act and that they are continuously looking to better meet the diverse needs and aspirations of our customers;
- Respect for diversity within communities where such diversity is celebrated and valued;
- A diverse and capable workforce that reflects the community we serve;
- Equal access to training and career development opportunities for all staff;
- A workplace that is free of discrimination and harassment.

Our Strategic Objectives

4.1 In order to embed equality and diversity we have prioritised a number of strategic objectives which are:

- **To be fully aware of, and understand, our customers' diverse needs [ED01]**
Covering data collection & profiling, consultation, staff training, resident representatives training
- **To respond to our customers' diverse needs in the services we deliver [ED02]**
Covering equality schemes, EIA, staff training
- **To ensure that all customers are able to access our services [ED03]**
Covering EIA, staff training

4.2 To measure our progress in meeting these objectives we will use quantitative and qualitative indicators including:

- Proportion of customers for whom we have diversity information split down in to each diversity group;
- The degree to which consultation engages with customers from all of the diverse groups we serve;
- Overall satisfaction of diverse groups of customers with opportunities to participate in management and decision making ;
- The extent to which we have delivered effective equality and diversity training to the staff, the Board and resident representatives;
- The extent to which our Board, Senior Management Team and staff group as a whole reflects the diverse community we serve;
- The number of examples we continue to have of positive impacts as a result of tailoring our services to meet the diverse needs of our customers;
- The extent to which we have implemented the action plans linked to our single equality scheme;
- The proportion of our policies and procedures with an Equality Impact Assessment which results in improved access to services;
- Overall satisfaction of diverse groups of customers with the services we provide;

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- The degree to which our diverse customers are accessing and engaging with our services.

Embedding Our Drivers

5.1 In delivering our services we will seek to embed the organisation's other strategic drivers:

- The driver of **customer focus** is interdependent with equality and diversity and so all the measures to embed equality and diversity will help to embed customer focus;
- In addressing the **risks** associated with this driver we will ensure that sufficient and appropriate staff training takes place to provide the capacity and capability to continually ensure that equality and diversity remains embedded. In addition we will monitor the implementation of this strategy and particularly the improvement actions that will address the identified risks;
- We will take account of **sustainability** issues by ensuring that any new initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of our properties, recycling and waste management, water usage etc are provided to residents on a fair basis. In addition we will ensure that sustainability initiatives do not negatively impact on the accessibility or provision of our services for any of our residents;
- In pursuing opportunities for **value for money** we will seek to provide frameworks for equality schemes and

EIA that provide the most effective outcomes for the resources required to complete them. In addition, we will regularly review training and consultant provision for cost effectiveness and identify the most cost effective methods for collecting customer profiling data.

Issues To Consider

6.1 The issues which may impact on the embedding of equality and diversity that we are aware of are:

- Changes in government policy in relation to equality and diversity will need to be incorporated in to our approach to service delivery;
- Much of our success in delivering equality and diversity outcomes is dependent on equality and diversity being embedded in our partner organisations, particularly contractors;
- There may still be gaps in understanding what a fully embedded service looks like which will require effective communication and training;
- Our current IT system does not easily incorporate the automatic flagging of customers' individual needs but this will be addressed within our new CRM system.

Expected Impact

7.1 We expect, through the successful implementation of this strategy, to have the following impact:

- **Customers** from all diversity groups will feel that we better understand their needs and are committed to the elimination of discrimination in service provision and the promotion of equality of opportunity. Services will be available that better meet their needs and they will be able to readily access these services. Services will be delivered in ways which better reflect their diverse needs;
- **SHP** will have a better informed and more knowledgeable staff who will naturally consider equality and diversity issues in designing and delivering their services. The staff group itself will better reflect the diverse nature of the local community.

Resources Required

8.1 To successfully deliver this strategy we will require the appropriate level of resources, the implications of which are:





- The existing level of staff responsible for delivering this strategy is sufficient. Many of the actions arising from the strategy will be delivered within service areas and they will be required to use their existing staff resources for this purpose;
- It will be necessary to train staff on the new CRM system to ensure that they

make full use in service delivery of the customer profiling information we have gathered.

Strategy Delivery





























9.1 The actions required to implement this strategy in its first year are contained in the appended Equality & Diversity Action Plan 2010-11. It should be noted that in the process of ensuring the continued embedding of equality and diversity many of the actions relating to this driver will be contained in the Service Plans of the individual service areas.









Action Plan Key

Reference	Service Improvement Plan reference	Summary of action	Responsible Officer	Start date	End date	Evidence of action having been completed
		Expected impact on customer focus (access, care or involvement)				Expected impact on risk
		Expected impact on equality & diversity				Expected impact on value for money

Operational Actions

ED.OA.01	Carry out Equality & Diversity Awareness training for staff and contractors	AH	Apr-10	Apr-10	Training completed
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Improves the capacity of staff to recognise and respond to equality & diversity issues in the delivery and development of their services			
					
ED.OA.02	Carry out faith and belief awareness training for front line staff	AH	Apr-10	Apr-10	Training completed
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Improves the capacity of staff to recognise and respond to faith and belief issues in the delivery and development of their services			
					
ED.OA.03	Equality statement from Chief Executive on internet and intranet	AT	Apr-10	Apr-10	Statement available
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Publicises both to staff and customers the organisations commitment to equality & diversity			
					
ED.OA.04	Set up diversity monitoring on the Covalent performance management system	AH/JG	Apr-10	Sep-10	Covalent set up and in use.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Assists in assuring targets are being met and enables us to report to customers our progress on equality & diversity issues			
					
ED.OA.05	Improve internet and intranet E&D pages to promote equality generally and matters of interest to different diversity groups	SY	Apr-10	Mar-11	Improved internet and intranet E&D pages.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Publicises both to staff and customers the organisations commitment to equality & diversity and provides useful information for customers in different diversity groups			
					

ED.OA.06	Support the launch of a disability forum	AH	May-10	Sep-10	Forum established
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Enables disabled customers views to be better represented and increases our ability to respond to their issues		
ED.OA.07	Publish an Equality Impact Assessment review programme and monitor its implementation	AH	May-10	Mar-11	Programme published, monitored and completed.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Ensures that equality & diversity issues are assessed and addressed on a regular basis		
ED.OA.08	Attend the LBS Equality & Diversity Forum	AH	May-10	Mar-11	Ongoing attendance and networking.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Increases our insight in to what the equality & diversity issues of our customers are and how these are being addressed by our partners		
ED.OA.09	Arrange Stonewall training/briefing session for staff and Board	AH	Jun-10	Aug-10	Training and briefing sessions held.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Improves the capacity of staff to recognise and respond to sexual orientation issues in the delivery and development of their services		
ED.OA.10	Carry out a gap analysis/assessment under the new Equality Framework for Social Housing	AH	Jun-10	Aug-10	Gap analysis completed and action plan established for future improvement action needed prior to formal assessment.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Identifies the potential for improvements in our approach to equality & diversity issues		
ED.OA.11	Complete application for the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index	AH/AA	Jul-10	Sep-10	Application submitted.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Identifies the potential for improvements in our approach to sexual orientation issues and provides greater assurance to our customers of our willingness and ability to provide services appropriate to their needs		
ED.OA.12	Produce a half yearly and annual Equality & Diversity report.	AH	Jun-10	Nov-10	Annual and half yearly report submitted to the Board.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
	✓		Ensures that all service based actions to improve our services are captured and reported both to the Board and to residents		

ED.OA.13	Draw up an action plan to implement any new requirements of the new Equality Act	AH	Jun-10	Mar-11	Action plan drawn up.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Ensures that any legal requirements in relation to dealing with equality & diversity issues are addressed			
 ✓					
ED.OA.14	Commence review programme for collection and updating of tenant profiling data.	SY	Jul-10	Mar-11	Reviews sent out on a rolling programme.
		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Ensures profiling data is kept up to date			
 ✓					



Putting Customers First
Making Services Accessible To All
Achieving Value For Money
Providing Quality Homes
Creating Safe, Welcoming Neighbourhoods
