



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy	HR001
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Thame & District Housing Association (TDHA) is committed to treating people fairly. This means a workforce that is truly representative of all sections of society, that every employee feels respected and is able to give of their best, and residents needs are understood and catered for.
- 1.2 This EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) policy shows our approach to ensuring fair treatment for all and to eradicate prejudice and discrimination. The policy aims to create a shared understanding about what we mean by EDI and a commitment to the actions needed to take EDI beyond warm words to being hardwired throughout the association.

What is equality?

- 1.3 At its core, equality means fairness: we must ensure that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics. Equality also means equality of opportunity: we must ensure that those who may be disadvantaged can get the tools they need to access the same, fair opportunities as their more advantaged people in society.

What is diversity?

- 1.4 Diversity is recognising, respecting, and celebrating each other's differences. A diverse environment is one with a wide range of backgrounds and mindsets, which allows for an empowered culture of creativity and innovation.

What is inclusion?

- 1.5 Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued. An inclusive environment can only be created once we are more aware of our unconscious biases and have learned how to manage them.

What are the protected characteristics?

- 1.6 The following are the legal protected characteristics under The Equality Act (2010). This Act is wide reaching and replaced legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). People have a combination of the nine characteristics, this combination is sometimes termed intersectionality. Intersectionality recognises that individuals may experience overlapping forms of discrimination or disadvantage such as age and disability.

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

- 1.7 There are other characteristics that are often considered, such as social class, that currently sit outside of the Act.
- 1.8 Discrimination on the grounds of any of the nine characteristics is illegal. Discrimination takes many forms including direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, bullying, harassment, and victimisation. A link can be found here to the full [Equality Act 2010](#).

2. How do we assess the impact of our decisions?

- 2.1 The main tool to consider and to be able to demonstrate that EDI has been considered is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA is a tool that helps ensure decisions, practices and policies within organisations are fair and do not discriminate against any protected group. The process usually includes filling out an EIA template which is unique to an organisation.
- 2.2 Initially, EIAs were introduced to help organisations meet the public sector duty under the Equality Act (2010). Under the Act, public sector organisations, or those in the third sector who work with the public, must show due regard to eliminate prohibited conduct, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Therefore, standard EIAs include the nine protected characteristics as defined by the Act.
- 2.3 EIAs themselves are not a legal requirement, they are though an effective tool proven to help organisations meet their responsibilities under equalities law. With awareness and understanding of inclusion increasing, the implementation of EIA's is now common across sectors all sectors.
- 2.4 EIA have often been used as tick box exercise and TDHA need to adopt an approach that is proportionate, helps us to meet the Act and adds value to our decision making.

3. What does this mean for TDHA?

3.1 EDI has three main benefits that are important for TDHA, these are -

- i) **Commercial** - There is a wealth of evidence that shows that businesses that embrace EDI have better decision making and improved performance.
- ii) **Regulation** – Where the Act has been shown to be breached this has led to hefty fines and decisions having to be rerun so they consider the protected characteristics wasting time and money.
- iii) **Ethically** – Being fair is the right thing to do!

4. Our commitments

- To ensure fairness in all we do.
- To create an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all people are recognised and valued.

- The commercial, legislative, and ethical benefits of EDI are understood and promoted through employee and Board member training.
- Our training will include the opportunity for discussion so people can learn about EDI, sharing their views in a safe and supportive environment.
- No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. Breaches by anyone representing TDHA could lead to disciplinary proceedings, or breaches by tenants could ultimately lead to termination of the tenancy.
- We review all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness and assess the equalities impact in our decisions.
- This policy is fully supported by the Board and senior management.
- We will implement the intentions of this policy through our business plan.

5. Translating these commitments into action

- 5.1 TDHA have five areas of focus, each area is considered in the remaining part of this policy with actions identified for each, the five areas are -

Section 1 - Leadership

Section 2 - Delivery

Section 3 - Positive impact for residents

Section 4 - Contractors and suppliers

Section 5 - Review, monitor & learn.

Section 1 – Leadership

- 5.2 While leadership needs to come from all levels, the Board play a fundamental role.
- 5.3 The Board has primary responsibility for ensuring the EDI Policy is implemented and offering leadership and direction in its delivery.
- 5.4 TDHA will seek to ensure diversity within the make-up of the Board with Board members undertaking training.
- 5.5 All Board Members must sign up to the EDI Policy which forms part of the code of conduct. Breaches may result in removal from the Board.
- 5.6 TDHA need to show how the Act is considered in decision making to avoid challenges and get the best possible results. Our future policies will include a specific section that demonstrates how we have assessed the EDI impact, using the below questions-
- Who is impacted by the changes proposed?
 - What's the scale of the impact?
 - How do we know?
 - How has the above information been used to shape the policy and decisions?

- 5.7 While all Board members need to have a good understanding of EDI, in line with the newly adopted National Housing Federation 2020 Code of Conduct we are working to identify a named EDI lead from the Board.

Section 2 - Delivery from employees

- 5.8 All employees will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential.
- 5.9 Job description and person specification will be reviewed when vacancies arise to ensure they are still relevant and include no requirements which are unjustifiable and potentially discriminatory.
- 5.10 All vacancies will be advertised internally, and external recruitment may be through advertisement and/or through recruitment agencies who adhere to good EDI practice.
- 5.11 All secondment/acting up opportunities and temporary vacancies will be advertised in accordance with the Association's normal recruitment procedures. Such posts should normally be for no longer than a six-month period, and the reasons for them being temporary positions will be clear.
- 5.12 Those on selection panels will be given necessary training to ensure decisions are taken in accordance with EDI.
- 5.13 The Association will actively encourage members of disadvantaged and under-represented groups in society to apply for employment. All applicants will receive a summary of the Association's EDI Policy.
- 5.14 All TDHA employees must comply with the EDI Policy. They have personal responsibility to ensure they do not discriminate against anyone, or collude in the discrimination of others.
- 5.15 The Association's appraisal and supervision processes will ensure that an evaluation on EDI performance is considered.
- 5.16 Any staff member wishing to complain about discriminatory behaviour should use the Association's Grievance Procedure or the procedure outlined in the Harassment Policy.
- 5.17 All staff are encouraged to complete a detailed incident form if they are subject to any discriminatory behaviour from anyone in the course of their work, whether or not the alleged perpetrator is employed by the Association.
- 5.18 The Association is committed to training for all members of staff and Board Members to enable them to conduct their roles fully and effectively. Training needs of Board Members will be analysed annually. All staff and Board Members will receive ongoing EDI training.

Section 3- Positive impact for residents

- 5.19 Selection for flats and other services will be based on whether the accommodation or service meets the person's need. To ensure fairness TDHA ensure that protected characteristics are considered at the application stage. Our allocations policy explains how we make these decisions, which is inline with the local council's Homechoice agreements.

- 5.20 The Association has a Harassment Policy which residents and employees are made aware of. Policies and procedures have been developed which aim to provide protection, support to victims, and take speedy and appropriate action against all perpetrators. The Association will investigate all cases of possible harassment, whether so perceived by the victim or any other person.
- 5.21 There is a complaints procedure which is widely promoted to all residents to ensure they can complain if dissatisfied with any aspect of service delivery, or if they feel they have experienced discrimination in accessing or receiving services.
- 5.22 The Association will always look to find the most practical means to ensure effective communication. This may include interpretation and translation facilities e.g. leaflets in large print, easy read formats, and audio. We will also exploit technological advances as much as possible such as translator apps.
- 5.23 Residents may request a verbal description/explanation of information from TDHA staff in addition to any written information they receive.
- 5.24 The Association believes that resident participation offers one of the best ways for promoting EDI in its decision making and service improvement. Participation approaches are in place and are regularly reviewed to ensure inclusivity.

Section 4 - Contractors, consultants & agents

- 5.25 The Association will ensure contractors, consultants, and agents from all sections of society are given the opportunity to apply for work.
- 5.26 Tendering and selection stages will be monitored to ensure that work is awarded fairly based on service quality, cost, and respect for the Association's residents.
- 5.27 The Association expects contractors, consultants, and agents comply with the Association's EDI Policy which is shared during tender processes.
- 5.28 Residents are involved in the process of monitoring the work carried out by contractors through satisfaction surveys.

Section 5 - Review, monitoring & learning

- 5.29 All review and monitoring will ensure EDI issues are an integral consideration.
- 5.30 The Chief Executive is responsible for all aspects of EDI monitoring, for progressing new initiatives, and for raising the profile of EDI within the Association.
- 5.31 The Association will produce equality monitoring statistics in the following areas, these will be included in our annual performance report as of 2025.
- Access to services
 - Employment and training
 - Harassment cases
 - Complaints
 - Committee membership

6. Summary

- 6.1 EDI is an area where views often differ, views have become increasingly polarised with social media playing a big part signposting content that re-enforces what people have read – this phenomenon is often termed an echo chamber.
- 6.2 It is important to create opportunities for conversations that enable views to be explored, especially around emerging areas of EDI if meaningful learning experiences are to be created and a truly inclusive culture created.
- 6.3 While this policy looks to prevent unfair and discriminatory practices, it is realistic and recognises that we all prejudge (prejudice) based on our experiences and have unconscious bias.
- 6.4 Through the actions in this policy and the focus on continued learning we are committed to ensuring TDHA obtain the significant benefits from embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion.

END