

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (2016 - 2020)

Promoting Equality
Respecting Diversity
Embedding Inclusion

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EDI Strategy Message from CEO

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are at the very core of Trust Housing Association and inform everything we do.

As a social landlord we are particularly keen to raise awareness of the importance of inclusivity in housing. Having a comfortable home in a secure community is a basic human requirement that not only impacts on physical and emotional wellbeing but influences equality of opportunity in other aspects of life.

Equality and diversity are the responsibility of everyone in our organisation. This belief informs and shapes our business strategy, the values we uphold and the decisions and actions we take.

Our vision is to reinforce Trust Housing Association as a leader in the promotion of Equality and Diversity. We are therefore committed to strengthening a reputation as a fully inclusive organisation whose policies and actions demonstrate this – from the way we shape and deliver customer services to staff recruitment and training, and how we engage with the diverse communities we serve.

We are proud to have achieved a new milestone in terms of recognition for our record on diversity, earning 9th place in the National Centre for Diversity's top 100 Index of Inclusive Organisations in 2016.

This EDI strategy showcases our vision, commitment and the actions we will take to enhance and sustain a culture and environment that allows every individual to flourish, and respects, values and rewards their needs and contributions.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhona McLeod". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Rhona McLeod
Chief Executive

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Introduction

As a leading provider of social housing, mainly for older people across Scotland, Trust is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work.

We believe that in order to provide equality of opportunity it is essential to recognise and enshrine equal rights and to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) issues are not treated as separate issues but are mainstreamed throughout the organisation.

Our EDI strategy flows from our corporate Bright Future Strategy which states:

“Equality and diversity lie at the heart of our business and we aim to establish Trust as a leader in the promotion of equality and diversity and as an organisation which is fully inclusive in everything we do- we expect our partners to share these values. We don’t believe in the single story or stereotypes and recognise that people and their experiences are made up of many stories. We value diversity and aim to make sure our services are tailored and accessible to different needs.”

We recognise that the people who provide our services, those that use them and the wider communities with which we engage, constitute individuals with diverse backgrounds, characteristics, experience and needs.

We also recognise that prejudice, discrimination and harassment remain part of everyday life in society for many people. We are committed to doing all we can as an organisation to achieve a fairer, more equitable society that respects and recognises diversity of every kind.

For this reason we do more than simply comply with equality and diversity legislation: we identify, champion and embed best practice. We raise awareness of people’s rights and responsibilities in terms of equality and diversity throughout the communities we serve.

We strive to act as a driver for change, helping to break down barriers that hold people back and affording them opportunities to succeed. To this end, we are focused on creating a culture and environment that allows every individual to flourish and that respects, values and rewards their needs and their contributions.

We believe in accountability for both actions and for inactions. We also believe that transparency and measurement are critical components in achieving an effective EDI strategy. Strong leadership is also vital and our board and senior management are committed to championing equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives throughout our organisation.

We are committed to promoting equality and have in place related policies and procedures which cover all the Protective Characteristics. To ensure that the commitment to EDI is delivered, Trust has established an award winning Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Programme which includes all protective characteristics in the Equality Act 2010:

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

Our EDI strategy will focus on achieving positive outcomes for potential and existing tenants as well as for staff, our partners and the wider community. We will continue to take direct positive action to address the needs of under-represented communities that face barriers in accessing information, services and employment opportunities. We will do this in partnership and consultation with wider community groups, voluntary and public organisations.

Key commitments

Commitment to staff

- + To support a culture that enables all staff to achieve their full potential
- + To sustain a workplace where the dignity and rights of all are respected and protected, and the needs of staff are met
- + To ensure appropriate use of language in all communications
- + To equip staff with knowledge and skills needed to comply with the EDI strategy
- + To identify and eradicate discrimination and harassment
- + To maintain fair and transparent recruitment, promotion and reward processes

Commitment to customers

- + To ensure fair and equal access to services for all
- + To embed a culture of respect for all
- + To ensure staff are aware of and trained in diversity and equality issues
- + To address any concerns over EDI issues promptly, fairly and transparently

Commitment to our community

- + To ensure we engage and consult with wider communities and develop positive action projects to work with under-represented communities
- + To ensure our services reflect the diverse needs of the communities we serve
- + To demonstrate leadership on EDI issues

Awards & Accreditations

- Trust has won a number of awards and been cited as an exemplar of Good Practice:
- + Diversity Star Performer, 250 – 2000 employees at the 2016 national Diversity Awards
 - + Named number one inclusive organisation in Scotland and 9th place in UK top 100 inclusive organisations in 2016
 - + First housing association in Scotland to achieve Investors in Diversity accreditation and Leaders in Diversity accreditation
 - + CEO and EDI manager are Patrons of the Diversity National Network
 - + Awarded Investors in People (IIP) Gold accreditation
 - + Signatory to Equality & Diversity CIH Charter for Housing



Leadership

We acknowledge that visible top-level commitment is vital for a rigorous EDI programme to succeed. All Trust board members, senior management and supervisory staff will commit to achieving excellence in the field of EDI.

As part of this commitment they will be expected to lead by example and also to communicate the importance of these issues at all levels throughout the organisation and beyond it in dealings with third parties.

We have established an EDI Working Group with representation from all departments and customers which will jointly develop a range of outcomes for the organisation including specific targets and timeframes for achieving these targets. The focus will be on achieving measurable positive outcomes rather than focusing only on processes. Members of the group will collaborate to ensure we achieve implementation in all areas of the organisation's activities.



Communication

We recognise that strong leadership entails a commitment to championing equality, diversity and inclusion issues beyond the confines of our own organisation. Trust will endeavour to raise awareness of these issues in all dealings with clients, suppliers and other stakeholders, including community groups, statutory bodies and other service providers in the private and public sectors.

We will create and adopt an Inclusive Communications Strategy that will include measures to address communications barriers including those we have identified spanning language and literacy, mental health and audio and visual impairment. We will utilise tools, guidance and practices we have developed to overcome these barriers.

We will actively seek marketing opportunities for press releases, articles, events or speaking opportunities that help disseminate information about our EDI programme and our commitment to Investors in Diversity. We will employ a mix of targeted material, PR campaigns and grassroots engagement. We will also conduct an internal communications campaign, using appropriate content and communication channels to raise awareness of our EDI strategy among staff and tenants.





An essential first step when managing an EDI strategy is to gauge where your organisation currently stands in terms of culture, systems, processes and procedures. It is important to ascertain the starting point in order to accurately measure progress towards goals.

We are committed to transparency and to introducing and maintaining clear performance indicators to measure and monitor our achievements and outcomes.

Trust will set up an **Equality Impact Assessment** in service delivery to ascertain our progress and also to highlight areas of particular strength and to identify areas where we need to focus more effort in order to improve.

We will continue to conduct Employment Monitoring so that we will have a transparent means of gauging how we are performing in relation to employment and human resource issues.

This will extend from looking at equality issues in relation to people seeking employment at Trust to managing the talents and developing the potential of existing staff.

We will collate data about the profile of our workforce in terms of age, disability, gender and race on an ongoing basis. We will also report on the diversity profile of job applicants and record their success rates in gaining interviews and also in securing employment.

We believe that every member of staff has a responsibility and role in delivering our EDI strategy and we will ensure that all staff understand the objectives and actions that support the EDI strategy.

We will provide our people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to implement and progress equality, diversity and inclusion in their work.

We will look at opportunities for staff gaining recognition from undergoing EDI training as part of a personal development planning. We will also ensure that training encompasses existing staff and new staff.

Induction procedures will be reviewed to ensure that EDI awareness is included for all new recruits.

EDI Champions

We will appoint EDI champions from the Board, senior staff and staff from all levels and locations. We will also seek EDI Champions on customer base. These champions will have a remit to help lead EDI objectives across the organisation.

Positive Action

Trust Housing Association has been and remains committed to going beyond the letter of the law. We will continue to develop projects and promote good practice stemming from adherence to the Equality Act but we will go beyond this and promote equality in all business functions and customer interactions.



Projects/Initiatives

Trust is engaged in several projects which are linked to the EDI agenda. These include:

Happy to Translate

An innovative project which uses custom-designed tools, training and procedures to help people who have little or no spoken or written English to overcome communication barriers. It has been adopted by an increasing number of organisations including housing, contractors, regulatory bodies and the emergency services to help them to improve service provision and access to services for people who require language assistance in Scotland and UK.



Partnerships

We will work with equality stakeholders with expertise in different strands, sharing our own strengths and learning from others with different specialisms and experience.

Older People Services Project (Big Lottery funded)

This project reaches out to older people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds and communities and works with them, their families and carers to help them to access a wide range of services and benefits. It has been set up specifically to address the needs and rights of older BME people who were both under-represented and disadvantaged when it came to accessing much-needed services and benefits including pensions, disability badges, home repairs, carer allowances and suitable housing. The project will set up Ethnic Minority Older People Forum and also undertake research into the future needs of older BME people to inform the planning agenda across many stakeholders.

Memories Project (Heritage Lottery Funded)

This unique historical project addressed both the diversity and inclusion agendas by collating and preserving the stories of older BME people who came to Scotland in the 1950s and 1960s to build new lives. The book charts their struggles and hardships and how they overcame prejudice, poverty, isolation and language barriers, and it also celebrates their achievements, their humour, their bravery, ingenuity and endurance.

www.Equalityscotland.com

We are the only housing association to have a website dedicated to our EDI programme and activities. We will continue to develop and maintain it with updates on all activities, projects, information guides.



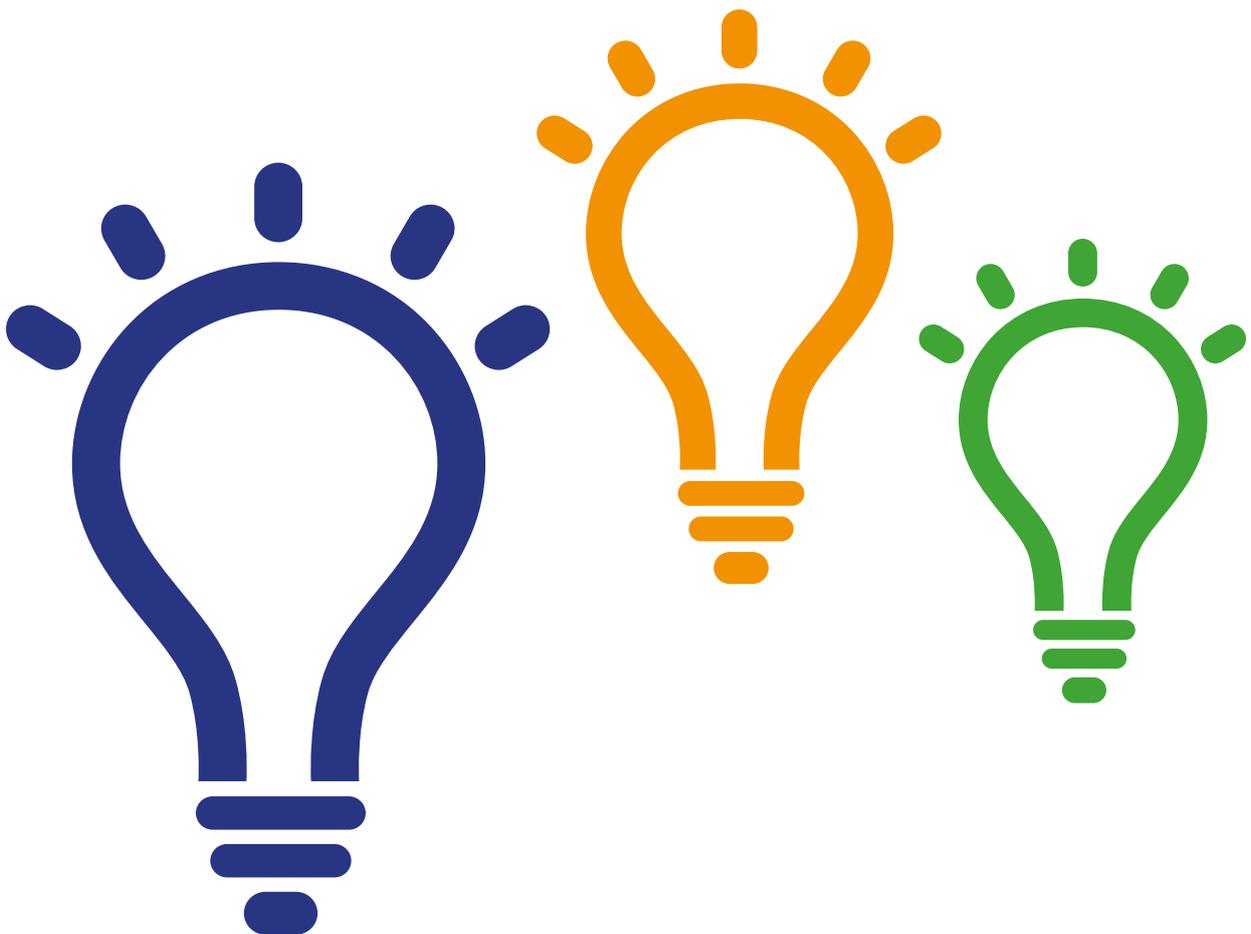
Good Practice

We will catalogue examples of our own best practice by recording case studies that can be used as a learning resource both internally and which can also be shared with other parties.

We will also continue to seek opportunities to learn from the experiences of other groups that have achieved excellence in EDI issues. This may be done via workplace visits, attending networking events or other means of exchanging information.

Procurement

We will screen our procurement commissioning policies to determine that they meet EDI best practice principles.



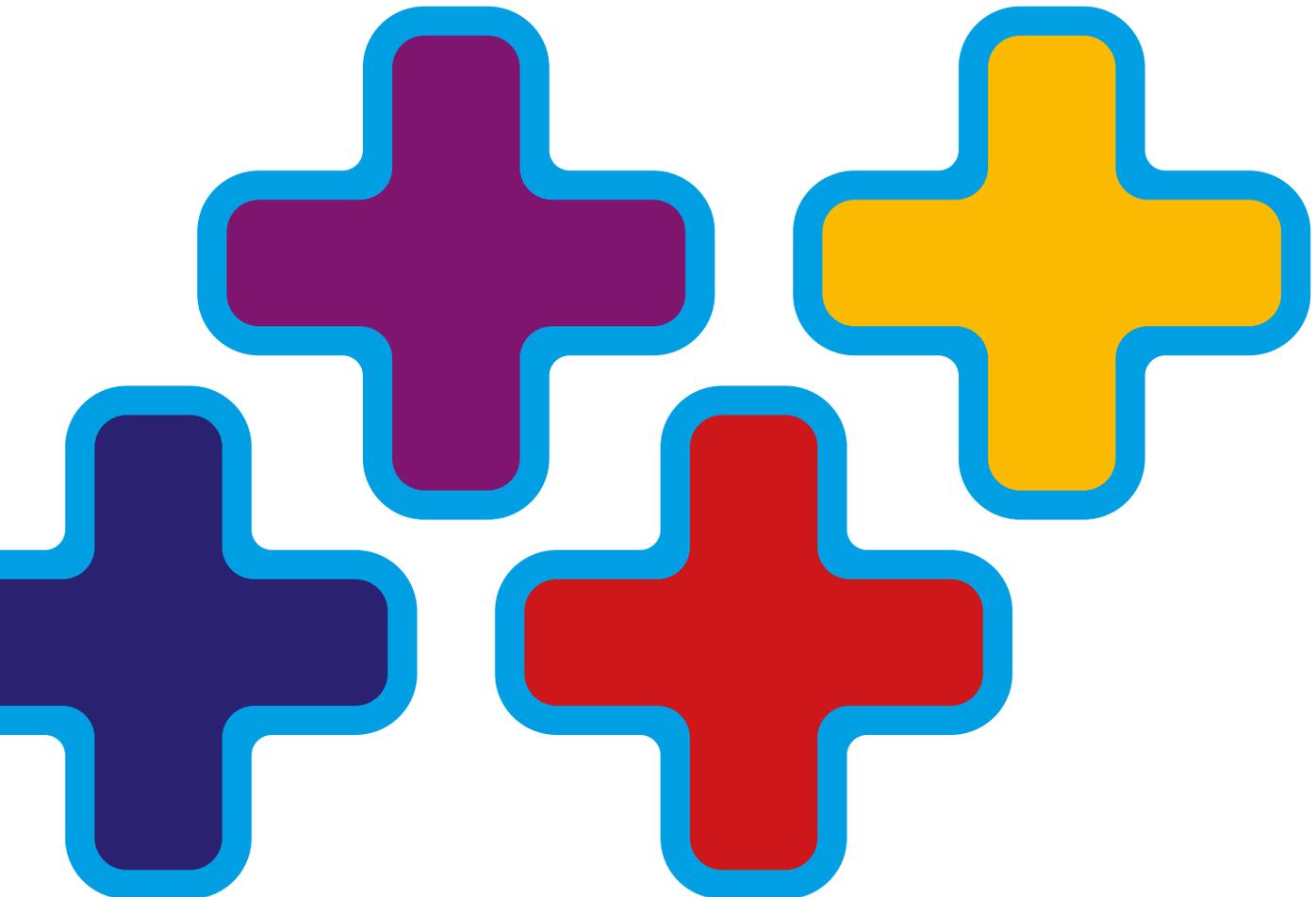
Review and Implementation

Continuous evaluation ensures that feedback can be acted upon in a timely manner for maximum impact and effectiveness.

We will keep the strategy under review and will regularly assess the progress we are making towards achieving our EDI commitment.

Action Plan

1. Trust Housing Association will continue to deliver on an EDI action plan including gaps identified after surveys carried out with staff, tenants and external stakeholders by the National Centre for Diversity.
2. Delivery of the action plan will be monitored and reviewed by the EDI Working Group.





*This information can be made in Braille, tape,
large print and community languages.*

To request a copy please contact 0131 444 1200

If you want to find out more about our EDI Programme, you can contact Rohini Sharma Joshi, our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, on 0131 444 4950.

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www.equalityscotland.com



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