

# **LONGHURST GROUP OF COMPANIES EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PRINCIPLES**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Longhurst Group of Companies (LGOC) is committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality of opportunity. Our Equality and Diversity Principles embody this commitment.

These principles provide a broad framework of values and guidance to support excellent service provision that meets the needs, preferences and aspirations of all our stakeholders.

These principles are a key element of our arrangements for governance and to develop coherent, value-based policy and strategy.

They define our agreed approach to Equality and Diversity through shared values and resources whilst allowing each member the flexibility to operate in ways that reflect its own distinctive objectives, services and culture.

## **2. KEY DRIVERS**

### The Longhurst Group of Companies' Vision

“To be a leading provider of excellent housing, care and support services, making a positive impact in local communities.”

Longhurst Group of Companies will achieve its excellence objectives fully only by properly understanding and delivering its equality and diversity commitments.

We recognise that promoting equality and celebrating diversity underpins how we manage our businesses, support our people and deliver services to our customers.

The LGOC recognises and values the variety of individual contributions from different people. We encourage and support staff and customers to develop their potential skills and abilities to enhance their personal contribution.

### The Equality Act 2010

The Act replaced earlier equality legislation, streamlining the law. It has introduced mandatory Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED), which replaces previous separate duties relating to race, disability and sex equality.

The broad purpose of the equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into day-to-day business operations; to avoid direct or indirect discrimination and and advance equality of opportunity.

The LGOC is not identified as a Public Authority in Schedule 19 to the Act or Schedule 1 to the Specific Duties regulations.

However, as an organisation that may deliver functions of a public nature, and in terms of best business practice, the LGOC has made a commitment to fulfil the Public Sector Equalities Duties.

### **3. OUR SHARED PRINCIPLES**

The LGOC has identified four key principles. Each member will apply these principles in their day to day work, paying attention to both our legal and regulatory obligations and our individual service standards and priorities.

#### 1. Human Rights Approach

The LGOC will take a Human Rights approach to equality and diversity that puts each individual's needs and preferences at the centre of our work, whilst maintaining a fair and proportionate balance between the individual's rights and the rights and welfare of the wider community.

#### 2. General Duty

Each member will ensure we comply with the general duty of the Equality Act and are able to demonstrate how we:

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

#### 3. Specific duties

Although the Public Sector Equality Duty regulations do not apply to us, each member is committed to these specific duties to move beyond compliance to implement best practice.

We will publish each year and in a manner accessible to the public, information that demonstrates compliance with the General Duty. That is, what we actions we have taken to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations

in particular to employees and other people affected by our policies and practices who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

We will publish at least every four years specific and measurable objectives to meet further the General Duty.

#### 4. Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF)

The SHEF is a performance and improvement tool to help self regulate organisations diversity and equality practice. Each member will use the SHEF framework to assess compliance and identify future equality objectives. The SHEF focuses on five key areas:

- 1) Knowing our customers and equality mapping
- 2) Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- 3) Customer engagement and satisfaction
- 4) Responsive services, access and customer care
- 5) A progressive and diverse workforce.

Using SHEF as an assessment tool allows us to benchmark, share good practice and develop and monitor Equality Action Plans.

#### **4. APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES**

Each member publishes an equality document which sets out how they deliver their commitments to equality and diversity.

In applying the principles, a range of tools, actions or approaches may be taken to achieve the overall commitments.

#### Defining Equality and Diversity

Each member will define Equality and Diversity within their organisation, engaging Board members, staff, customers and stakeholders, where appropriate, in this process.

#### Equality and Diversity Objectives and Policy

Each member will identify and publish their Equality and Diversity objectives and policies, taking into account organisational purpose, business priorities and key strategies.

In setting these objectives and policies, each member will have regard to their operating context, including local circumstances, service provision and customer insight and information.

#### Legal Compliance

Each member will ensure compliance with the Equality Act, incorporating legislative requirements and recognised good practice into all of our service delivery and employee policies and procedures, and supporting these with appropriate training and guidance.

#### Social Housing Equality Framework

To ensure we maximise the learning from best practice and peer review, the LGOC will adopt the Social Housing Equality Framework as a tool to measure continuous improvement.

## Policy Development

Legally we are required to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day operations of our business. We are also committed to researching and implementing best practice.

When we revise or develop new policies, we will:

- actively consider all aspects of the legislative requirements; and
- discover and incorporate best practice from a variety of other organisations.

## Equality Analyses

We will use Equality Analyses to develop understanding of the impact of existing or developing policies, services or functions.

Each member of the LGOC will have a robust process and timetable for the completion of Equality Analyses for key policies, projects and service reviews.

## Service Improvements

The LGOC recognises that equality and diversity is an important element to consider when identifying and implementing service improvements. Equality analysis will form an integral part of informing and testing service improvements.

## Performance Management

The LGOC will ensure that equality and diversity performance measures and targets are incorporated into performance management architecture. We will report data clearly and objectively as part of our governance arrangements, using mechanisms subjected to regular scrutiny and review.

## Effective Benchmarking

We will use population demographic and other data to identify potential discrepancies. We will take appropriate opportunities to learn from excellent performers and understand the best of current practice.

Each member is committed to internal benchmarking, comparing services, performance and costs.

## Training and Support

We will educate, support and enable employees, partners and customers with equality and human rights training.

Aligning closely with the LGOC's values, our commitment and consistent approach to equality and diversity will play an important part in our recruitment, retention and appraisal processes.

## Joint Working

To ensure we maximise the benefits for the LGOC, we will:

- take advantage of, where appropriate, shared skills, resources and expertise; and
- work with partners and stakeholders who engage with our employees or customers to ensure they share and promote similar values, principles and practices to our own.

## **5. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The principles, and our performance in implementing these principles, will be reviewed periodically as part of each member's established governance arrangements.

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