

Fair Play 4 All

2011– 2013



*Introduction
Page 5*

*Protected
Characteristics–
Disability
Page 7*



*Achievements to
Date
Page 13*

*Employment
Page 20*



*Procurement
Page 22*

“Delivering Accessible Housing Services”

Contents

Background	Page 3
Introduction	Page 4
Introduction	Page 5
Protected Characteristics– Age	Page 6
Protected Characteristics– Disability	Page 7
Protected Characteristics	Page 8
Protected Characteristics– Race	Page 9
Protected Characteristic– Religion and Belief	Page 10
Protected Characteristics– Sex	Page 11
Protected Characteristics– Sexual Orientation	Page 12
Achievements to Date	Page 13
Achievements to Date	Page 14
Achievements to Date	Page 15
Achievements to Date	Page 16
Achievements to Date	Page 17
Tenant Involvement	Page 18
Tenant Involvement	Page 19
Employment	Page 20
Employment and Training	Page 21
Procurement	Page 22
Communication	Page 23
Monitoring and Reporting	Page 24
Governance	Page 25
Appendix 1: Action Plan	Page 26
Appendix 1: Action Plan	Page 27
Appendix 2: EIA Template	Page 32
Appendix 2: EIA Template	Page 33
Appendix 3: EIA Programme 2010– 11	Page 36
Appendix 4: EIA Programme 2011– 12	Page 40
Appendix 5: EIA Programme 2012– 13	Page 41
Glossary	Page 42
Useful Contacts	Page 44

Homes



Report

Background



We are, (the Company) an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up by Ashfield District Council (ADC) on 1st April 2002 to manage, maintain and improve it's housing stock.

We are one of the top performers nationally and have a reputation for delivering excellent Housing Management, Maintenance and Support Services. In September 2005, we were the first ALMO in the country to complete its' programme of modernisation and repair works to Council homes to meet the Governments 'Decent Homes Standard', over four years ahead of the government's 2010 deadline.

Our vision is:

“To ensure present and future customers, service users, and stakeholders of Ashfield Homes enjoy decent housing and a good quality of life in a stable community through the provision of excellent services, which meet their aspirations and provide value for money.”

We are dedicated to providing equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, harassment, intimidation and disadvantage. Our aim is to foster safe, strong and inclusive communities where the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued; and those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.

Our values are:

- To provide excellent housing services, which represent Best Value to the tenants of ADC and the wider community;
- To strive to create an environment to make it an excellent employer of choice;
- Efficiency, economy, effectiveness, equity and quality will be at the heart of our performance culture. Underpinning all of this will be what matters to customers;
- To involve service users to the level and extent they choose at all stages of decision making processes;
- Employees will work together to deliver the aims of the Company recognising that teamwork is more effective than working alone and in isolation;
- When complaints are received, problems occur and mistakes are made we will investigate quickly, put it right, and learn so it doesn't happen again;
- To adopt a spirit of openness when making decisions and delivering services.



Fair Play 4 All

This document is our Equality Scheme. We call it Fair Play 4 All

Introduction

Why does Equality and Diversity matter to us?

As a public body we have a legal duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure that we:

- Develop and publicly set out equality objectives;
- Set out the steps to achieve these objectives;
- Implement these steps unless it would be unreasonable and impracticable to do so;
- Review and update, as necessary, the objectives every three years.

These should all address the following three central issues:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Advance equality of opportunity;
- Foster good relations.

Our aim is equality for our employees and everyone who uses our services. We recognise that we must have a workforce that is representative of the community we live in, so that we can provide the most effective services.

Housing is a basic part of our everyday lives. It is important that all residents, from whatever background should enjoy equal treatment in the provision of housing and that they should not feel threatened in their own home.



Equality is all about making sure everyone is treated fairly and provided with the same life opportunities. It is not about treating everyone the same as they may have different needs to achieve the same outcomes.

Diversity is about recognising and valuing individual differences and raising awareness about them.



What is an Equality Scheme?

This document sets out how we aim to ensure that Equality and Diversity are not stand alone or specialist issues. They are the responsibility of all our employees to ensure that they are mainstreamed and embedded into all strategic planning activities and day to day service delivery activities.

We aim for a holistic approach to service planning and delivery rather than uncoordinated initiatives. This Scheme is designed to provide an overview of our approach to our statutory duties in an easy to read format, setting out how we consider all protected characteristics.

Aims

This Equality Scheme aims to:

- Achieve high levels of satisfaction from all tenants with the delivery of our services;
- Remove any unintended adverse impact from service delivery, policies and procedures;
- Achieve a representative workforce and Board.

The Equality Act 2010

The purpose of the Equality Act 2010 is to review, revise and consolidate existing equalities related legislation to create a single approach to unlawful discrimination. The Act also implements the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The nine protected characteristics receiving protection under the Act are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender Reassignment;
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships;
- Pregnancy and Maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or Belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual Orientation.



The Equality Act 2010 expands the way positive action can be used so that employers can select someone for a job from an under represented group when they have a choice between two or more candidates who are equally suitable.

Protected Characteristics - Age

Age

A reference to an age group is a reference to a group of persons defined by reference to age, whether by reference to a particular age or to a range of ages.

Why age matters

At different stages of life, our residents have very different needs for housing. We need to understand fully what these different needs are, so that we can provide everyone with the services they need.

Sometimes people make assumptions about others because of their age, and this can affect their access to services and employment. Older people are more likely to suffer ill health, disability or impaired mobility, meaning that they are more vulnerable and might find it difficult to access services. Young people, on the other hand, can often be stereotyped and tend to be less confident in accessing services or getting involved, and are likely to be less experienced in the responsibilities of having a tenancy.

Our employees now have the right to work past the age of 65, and employers must give consideration to a request to do this.

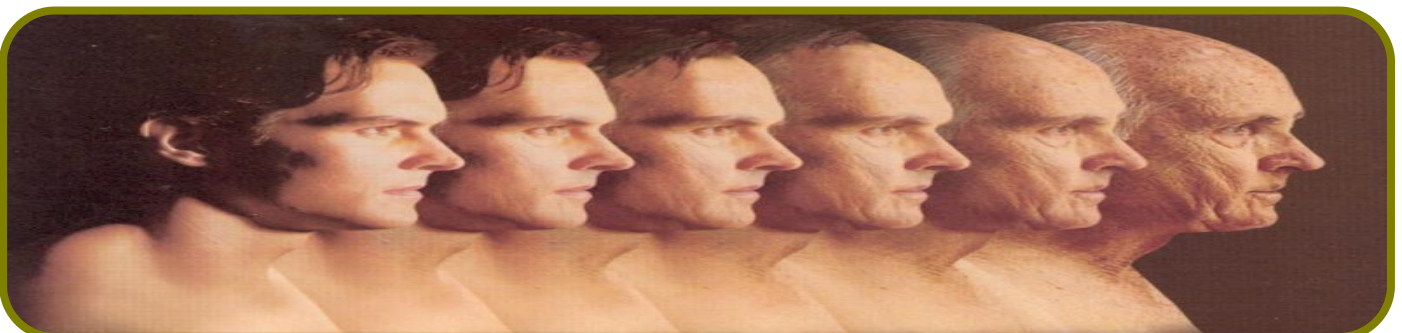
Age profile

We have currently collected 96% of our tenants age profiles.

Ages	Ashfield Homes Tenants %	Ashfield District %	England %
16-29	9	20	22
30-59	38	54	52
60 and over	53	26	26

As illustrated in the table above the age proportions of Council tenants are not representative of the Ashfield or England proportions with younger tenants aged less than 30 under represented and tenants aged 60+ greatly over represented. We will ensure that our Lettings and Possession policies and procedures do not treat our younger applicants and tenants in a less favourable way than their older counterparts.

There are greater numbers of employees aged 30-59 (67%) than the Ashfield and England proportions. Approximately 24% of the Company's workforce is aged over 50 and it is forecast that by 2020, nearly a third of the National labour force will be over 50.





Disability

A disabled person is someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

We use the **Social Model of Disability**, which says that it is society that creates barriers that limit or prevent people with disabilities from enjoying the same opportunities as people who have no disabilities, as demonstrated below.



Impairment (functional limitation)
+
Barrier (organisational, physical, attitudinal)
=
Disability

(remove the barrier/s and you remove the disability, even though impairment may remain)

Why disability matters

Disabled people often face barriers of discrimination and stigma. Inappropriate design of physical facilities in housing and offices make it difficult or impossible to access the same level of service others expect. The same is true of the way in which we communicate information about our services.

Disabled people often have lower figures for employment, activity rates and earnings, even though many of them would like to work. Despite progress in recent years, we consider that we have a small number of employees who have not declared their disability. We know that we need to do more so that people feel confident that they can declare their disability.

Disabled people can also experience bullying and violence and people with learning disabilities appear to be particularly vulnerable to this.

Disability profile

We have currently collected 65% of our tenants disability profiles.

Males and females born in the Ashfield District have a lower chance of living a disability free life compared to England as a whole. As people living in the District age, this chance significantly reduces, resulting in the majority of people aged 65 and over living with a disability.

From the information we have collected of our tenants so far, over a third of these (34%) have disclosed a disability.

The current number of employees that have disclosed a disability is 5.2%, which is slightly higher than the average of the UK's working population with a disability at 5%.

Protected Characteristics

Gender Reassignment

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the persons sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

A reference to a transsexual person is a reference to a person who has this protected characteristic. Transvestites (a person who wears clothing of the opposite sex) are not included within this characteristic.

Why gender reassignment matters

This group are often subject to harassment in various forms from name calling to physical violence. This could inhibit our employees and residents from living in the way that they choose.

People considering gender reassignment often experience the discomfort of gender dysphoria which is the feeling of being in the wrong body. This can lead to mental health issues and research has shown that there are higher attempted suicide rates amongst this group.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

A person has this protected characteristic if the person is married or is a civil partner. All employees are asked whether they are married or in a civil partnership.



Pregnancy and Maternity

This protected characteristic prohibits less favourable treatment on grounds of pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding.

We currently ask all housing applicants whether a member of their household is pregnant and take this into account when allocating properties.



We have a Maternity and Paternity Information Pack for all employees to access to help them understand their maternity and paternity rights when pregnant or their partner is pregnant.

Protected Characteristics - Race



Race

This is groups of people who share a distinctive genetic inheritance, including colour. This also includes nationality, ethnic and national origin as well as things such as the language, religion, culture and national identity you were brought up with.

Why race matters

In general people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities often experience difficulties in accessing the same quality of services as other people and in gaining employment. This can be due to prejudice. Also, language barriers may make it difficult to know what is available and to make the best use of what is there.

Some of our BME residents may be subject to harassment in the communities they live and work in. On occasions BME residents may also have cultural needs for particular kinds of housing.

Race profile

We have currently collected 83% of our tenants race profiles.

Race	Ashfield Homes Tenants %	Ashfield District %	England %
White British	94	98.1	87
White Irish	0.6	0.4	1.3
White Other, including European	1.8	0.5	2.7
Other	1.1	1	9
Prefer not to state	2.5	0	0

As demonstrated in the table above the Ashfield District has a lower proportion of BME communities than England as a whole, which is also reflected in our tenants profile. We need to ensure that all of the services we deliver are accessible to all communities and tenants are willing to disclose their race without fear of discrimination.

Of those employees that have completed an ethnicity monitoring form, 98.4% employees classed themselves as White British with 1.6% classing themselves as being from a BME group. The percentage of BME employees at a senior officer scale within AHL is higher at 2.1% suggesting that employment policies and practices are non discriminatory.

Gypsies and Travellers

We recognise that Gypsies and Travellers are a recognised ethnic group and include them on all monitoring forms. We have also been involved in the countywide assessment of their needs and will continue to work with our partners to ensure that their needs are considered for all services we provide.

Protected Characteristics - Religion and Belief

Religion and Belief

Religion means any religion, Belief means any religious or philosophical belief. A reference to religion includes a reference to lack of religion, and a reference to belief includes a reference to lack of belief.

Why religion and belief matters

Our employees and residents may express their religion and belief in different ways, for example through the clothes they wear, the festivals they celebrate, the food they eat, the venues they will use and many more.

Religion and beliefs can lead to a strong sense of community. On occasions residents may also have religious needs for particular kinds of housing.



Religion and belief profile

Religion or belief	Ashfield Homes Tenants %	Ashfield District %	England %
Christian	70	72.9	71.7
Buddhist	0.01	0.08	0.3
Muslim	0.04	0.1	3.1
Sikh	0.04	0.1	0.7
Any other religion or belief	0.6	0.16	1.9
No religion or belief	26	17.8	14.6
Religion not stated	3	8.7	7.7

We have currently collected 67% of our tenants religion or belief profiles.

As illustrated above there are a higher proportion of tenants with no religion or belief compared to overall proportions in the Ashfield District. In comparison the proportion of tenants that are a Buddhist, Muslim or Sikh are lower than the Ashfield proportions. We need to ensure that our policies and procedures do not favour applicants and tenants with a Christian faith above those from other religions and beliefs.

Job applicants are asked their religion and belief which demonstrates that there are higher numbers of Christians applying for vacant posts (50.8%) than from any other religion or belief, but this is still significantly lower than the Ashfield and England averages. A high number of applicants also preferred not to reveal their religion or belief which reveals that we need to do more to ensure that employees and future employees can disclose their religion or belief without fear of discrimination.

Protected Characteristics - Sex



Sex

A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman. A reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same sex.

Why sex matters

Women and men have different needs for housing services, for example, women are more likely to experience domestic abuse, be lone parents and are more likely to have caring and childcare responsibilities.

Women are more likely to experience discrimination and sexual harassment, which can make it difficult for them to get involved or to progress in employment. Women often earn less than their male counterparts and are still under-represented at professional and managerial levels.

Sex profile

We have collected 100% of our tenants sex profiles and as demonstrated below there are higher proportions of female tenants than the proportions for Ashfield as a whole. This could be explained by women more commonly having childcare responsibilities and so have a greater need for social housing but we need to ensure that our policies and procedures do not discriminate against men.

Sex	Ashfield Homes Tenants %	Ashfield District %	England %
Female	59	52	49
Male	41	48	51

We currently have a higher proportion of male employees (59%) than their female counterparts (41%). The highest concentration of males we employ are employed within the Technical Services Department and the highest concentration of females are employed within the Housing Services Department. Both figures are indicative of the Housing and Construction Sectors.

There are also higher numbers of men employed at senior officer scale or above suggesting that the we need to ensure that women are not experiencing discrimination when applying for senior posts.

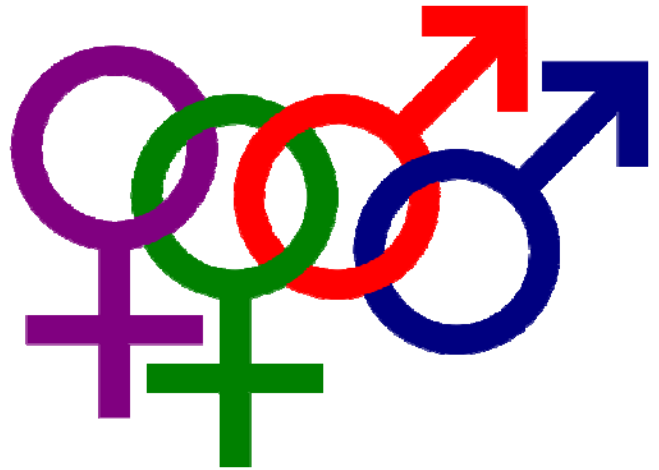


Protected Characteristics - Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation

This means a person's sexual orientation (attraction) towards:

- People who are the same sex as them (a gay man or a lesbian)
- People who are the opposite sex to them (straight)
- People of both sexes (bisexual).



Why sexual orientation matters

Lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people are often forced to choose in their work and personal lives between being open and honest about their sexuality, avoiding the issue, or lying to colleagues and friends. This can cause a huge amount of stress to the individual, both at work and in their personal life.

Stonewall (an organisation fighting for equal rights for LGB) have highlighted some disturbing facts in relation to LGB people and housing, including the following:

- One in five have experienced homophobic bullying in the workplace in the last five years;
- One in five expects worse treatment from a housing officer if open about their sexual orientation;
- For one in six LGB victims of hate crime the perpetrator lived locally;
- 7% of LGB people have had their home or property vandalised.

Sexual orientation profile

We have currently collected 58% of our tenants sexual orientation profiles. Of these 1% identified themselves as LGB, which compares to estimates that the UK's LGB population is 1.5% (Office for National Statistics, 2010). The national figures are only estimates and may not be accurate as many LGB individuals may not wish to disclose their sexual orientation.

8% of the tenants asked their sexual orientation so far preferred not to state this. We need to ensure that tenants and our employees feel that they can openly disclose their sexual orientation without fear of discrimination.



Job applicants are asked this which demonstrates that there are higher numbers of heterosexuals applying for vacant posts (80%) than from any other sexual orientation group. Similar to tenants there are also high numbers of applicants (30%) not wishing to disclose their sexual orientation.

Achievements

The Company has a strong commitment to embed Equality and Diversity into all of our business activities. Our Business Delivery Plan has eight strategic aims and two of these relate specifically to Equality and Diversity. They are:

- **Excellent Customer Services**

Ensuring that we deliver services that are perceived as “excellent” by the people who use and experience our services

- **Equality and Diversity**

To continually promote equality of opportunity and value diversity



We achieve these through the following seven ways:

Equality and Diversity principles are built into service delivery at all levels:

- Equality and Diversity is a standing agenda item at all strategic meetings of the Company;
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are carried out on all our functions, policies and procedures to ensure that we are offering fair and accessible services to all;
- Robust procurement and selection of our partners and contractors.



Achievements to Date

All people within the local community are provided with equal access to our services:

- Offering home visits for customers where required;
- Female operative only appointments are available;
- Induction loop systems in all private interview rooms and meeting rooms;
- Promotion of access to services via Minicom / Textphone;
- Access to qualified British Sign Language (BSL) signers, who are able to carry out home visits or private interviews;
- Access to interpreters when communicating with customers that do not speak English;
- All written information that we produce is available in audio, Braille or in other languages;
- Customers with visual impairments are supplied with magnifying sheet readers;
- We can be contacted on Freephone numbers;
- An accessible website which can be translated into different languages using 'Google Translate', the font size can be increased to suit the customers' preference and customers who are visually impaired can listen to audio commentary of the website content through 'Browse Aloud';
- Emergency repairs are offered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year;
- All offices and buildings are wheelchair accessible;
- All offices and buildings include Braille signage;
- All conference and meeting venues used by the Company are accessibility assessed to ensure that they can be accessed by all;
- When undertaking repairs individuals needs are taken into account;
- When replacing kitchens and bathrooms as part of our major works programme we can fit adapted amenities which would allow easier access to the tenant. For example a low level shower rather than a bath for a tenant with a disability or mobility issue.

Employees or organisations acting on behalf of the Company do not practice unlawful or unfair acts of discrimination:

- Compulsory training is provided for all employees, the Board, contractors and involved tenants
- We robustly check the partners and contractors that we work with to ensure that their Equality and Diversity culture and ethos matches ours.



Regular monitoring and reviewing of our services:

- We collect customers and employees protected characteristic information in a sensitive matter;
- We produce an annual Equality and Diversity Profiling Report to identify the breakdown of our current and potential customers from the Housing Register;
- An Employees Equalities Profiling Report is presented to our Board for scrutiny on a twice early basis;
- Monitoring key service areas by protected characteristics to highlight any groups who may be under or over represented in some services areas or in the take-up of services;
- Our Supported Housing Services Section is assessed against the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) which includes specific requirements for Equality and Diversity issues. The service consistently receives A and B grades for the quality of service we provide to some of our most vulnerable customers;
- The Company has undertaken two equal pay audits which have confirmed that the Company has no equal pay issues of substantial concern. This will be kept under regular review to ensure this continues;
- Results of satisfaction surveys across all service areas, along with comments, compliments and complaints and service improvement suggestions from our customers are monitored by each of the protected characteristics to identify any areas of potential adverse effects or less favourable treatment for any group of customers or section of our community;
- We monitor and learn from complaints and compliments;
- Outcomes of comments, compliments and complaints are discussed with our tenants who make recommendations for improvement;
- We have self assessed ourselves with complying with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Housing Code of Practice.



Achievements to Date

Working in partnership with local organisations to promote and encourage good practice:

- Our Aids and Adaptations Service has been developed in conjunction with Nottinghamshire Social Services Occupational Therapy to ensure that people with disabilities receive appropriate and timely services and adaptations to enable them to continue living independently in their homes;
- Our Supported Housing Service employees are trained to refer minor adaptations to the Aids and Adaptations Service;
- We invest over £350,000 each year to undertake adaptation work;
- We are a member of the Mansfield and Ashfield Domestic Violence Forum and have developed a Domestic Violence Policy in conjunction with them, to provide clear and comprehensive guidance to all front-line employees who may come into contact with customers affected by domestic violence and abuse;
- We are a key partner in the Sanctuary Scheme to ensure that survivors of domestic violence can continue to live safely in their home;
- Our Supported Housing Services Section has developed a number of partnership working protocols with a number of agencies and organisations, to ensure that we are able to respond to a range of customers needs;
- We work in partnership with the First Contact Signposting Scheme to ensure our tenants over 60 are aware of services to enable them to stay safe and independent in their own homes;
- We are an active member of Ashfield Partnership Against Crime (APAC) at all levels;
- When undertaking major works to the properties we manage, we assess with our partners whether adaptations are required which would allow easier access to amenities for the tenant. For example low level/ level entry showers rather than baths can be fitted.



**Respect
for Ashfield**

Achievements to Date



Seek to ensure that our workforce reflects the communities we serve and that every employee is treated fairly:

- Our Human Resources Team monitor a number of employment related areas to assess whether the workforce is representative of the wider Ashfield community;
- If required will put in place actions for improvement, for example, we may advertise job vacancies in a wider geographical area to ensure these are reaching the widest audience possible;
- We are a Disability Symbol User which recognises that we are committed to recruiting and retaining disabled people;
- Policies are regularly reviewed in relation to the retirement of employees;
- We are compliant with the Display Screen Equipment Regulations for all employees and undertake tailored ergonomic assessments where required;
- All employees are offered free eye tests;
- All employees are provided with access to our occupational health provision;
- Health surveillance is undertaken;
- Counselling is provided to employees where appropriate;
- We make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled employees to carry out their duties. These may include, but are not limited to, provision of specialist equipment and training, job redesign, retraining, flexible hours, remote working and/or redeployment to a suitable alternative post.

Dealing with all issues of harassment sensitively and promptly:

- We have policies including the Dignity at Work and Whistle Blowing Policy which provide for the protection of employees who want to report bad practice without fear of being victimised as a result;
- Disciplinary action will be considered in respect of any employee whose conduct or actions are inconsistent with this Scheme;
- Legal action may be taken against tenants whose conduct breaches the conditions defined in the Tenancy Agreement;
- Customers who behave in a discriminatory manner will be informed that such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated;
- Any offensive graffiti in our communities, that we are responsible for and, will be removed within 24 hours;
- We have developed procedures for handling Anti Social Behaviour (ASB), harassment, nuisance and Hate Crime to ensure that prompt action can be undertaken;
- We report concerns of child and vulnerable adults safety to the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Teams.

Tenant Involvement

Involving tenants

We are committed to involving all tenants and service users in decisions that affect their homes, communities and lives. To achieve this we have developed a participation framework following extensive consultation with tenants about how they would like to get involved.

The framework aims to ensure that:

- Everyone who wants to is able to become involved;
- There are opportunities for tenant involvement;
- Service improvements and feedback suggested by tenants are fully considered and implemented where reasonable to do so.

There are now a number of ways for tenants to get involved including:

- Mystery shopping,
- Tenants Scrutiny Panel,
- Tenants Gateway,
- Tenant Inspectors and
- Tenant and Resident Associations.

Further information is available in the Ashfield Tenants Compact.

Setting standards with tenants

The social housing regulator, TSA, and their subsequent replacement the HCA have set minimum standards for all the services we deliver. Since these standards were announced we have been in touch with tenants to test whether we meet these standards and what we should be doing to deliver excellent housing services.

We have sought the views of tenants through a variety of ways including: at a number of local events, through the Homes 4 Rent magazine, through taking part in focus groups and completing surveys over the phone, in paper or in person.





Consulting tenants

To ensure that this Scheme addresses the needs of all of our tenants and residents, especially those harder to reach, we have asked for their opinions and views through a focus group held in December 2010.

Harder to reach tenants covering all of the protected characteristic groups were invited to the event to try to make the consultation representative of the community we serve. A summary of their details is as follows:

- Age: 57% were aged 30-59 and the remaining 43% aged 60+. Tenants aged 16-29 were invited to the event but were unable to attend.
- Disability: 86% of attendees disclosed a disability, of whom over two thirds had mobility issues.
- Gender reassignment: 0% of attendees disclosed that they were living as a different sex to those that they were born.
- Race: 86% were White British and the remaining 14% were Black British.
- Religion and Belief: 43% were Christian and the remaining 57% did not state a religion or a belief.
- Sex: 71% were male and the remaining 29% female.
- Sexual orientation: 71% were heterosexual and the remaining 29% did not wish to disclose their sexuality.

Tenants also helped to decide the name of this scheme 'Fair Play 4 All - Delivering Accessible Housing Services'.



Employment

Obligations

Our employees must be aware of their legal obligation that an unlawful act of discrimination could expose us to legal proceedings. It should be emphasised that employees may be held **solely liable** in civil proceedings for unlawful acts of discrimination if we can establish that we have taken such steps as are reasonably practicable to prevent acts of discrimination.

Employment Policies

A wide range of employment policies are in place to protect employees from harassment and discrimination within the work place, including the following:

- Code of Conduct
- Dignity at Work
- Flexible Working Arrangement
- Grievance and Disciplinary
- Job Sharing
- Maternity Leave
- Paternity Leave
- Recruitment and Selection
- Redeployment
- Retirement
- Whistle Blowing



Flexible working arrangements are offered to all employees to assist with individual personal circumstances, provided that this does not conflict with our service delivery commitments.

Action will be taken to eliminate harassment at work. Harassment will be considered to be a breach of our Code of Conduct and therefore, perpetrators will be subject to disciplinary action. We will not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of employees by other employees, customers, contractors, members of the public in any circumstances and will take appropriate action against the perpetrators, including police or legal intervention if appropriate.

Equal Pay 2010

We are committed to the principle of equal pay in employment and consider that all employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this we will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from bias, we will achieve this by:

- Conducting Equal Pay Audits to monitor all pay practices, including those for employees in non-standard employment and those absent on maternity leave;
- Providing information to employees on our pay practices;
- Ensuring that employees are informed about how their own pay is calculated;
- Providing suitable training and guidance for employees involved in decisions relating to pay and benefits;
- Consulting with employees, their representatives or trade unions on our approach to equal pay where appropriate.

Employment and Training



Representative workforce

We advertise vacancies in a wider geographical area, there are occasions where this is out of our control as we cannot determine the protected characteristics of individuals applying for jobs.

We also continually monitor our recruitment and promotion process to ensure that we are attracting candidates from all protected characteristic groups and that employment decisions are non discriminatory.

Training

Training will be a key driver in changing people's attitude towards Equality and Diversity issues. We are committed to training our employees so that they are more aware of and have the skills to take positive action in removing barriers placed in the way of any individual group. Equality and Diversity is firmly embedded into our annual training programme, provided for all employees and Board members.



All of our employees are required to attend the following compulsory corporate training courses every three years, organised and monitored by our Human Resources and Development Section:

- Equality and Diversity
- Excellence in Customer Service
- Dealing with Difficult People

All Board Members also receive training on the following subjects:

- Equality and Diversity
- Recruitment and Selection

Front line employees (where appropriate) are also required to attend the following compulsory training courses:

- Anti Social Behaviour including Hate Crime
- Safeguarding Children
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

We promote equality of access to training and development opportunities across all of our service areas, and for our employees at all levels through the six monthly Performance and Development Process where all of our employees are provided with the opportunity to sit down with their Line Manager to identify training and development requirements. We also ensure that all of our employees have fair access to training, development and chance of promotion

We invite our partners and contractors to undertake the same Equality and Diversity training that we offer our employees and Board Members.

Procurement

Responsibilities

Managers responsible for procurement and partnership arrangements must ensure that Equality and Diversity considerations are encompassed as part of the overarching procurement process.

Minimising risk

For main partnership arrangements to minimise the risk of our contractors and partners practising unlawfully or discriminating we:

- Evaluate their commitment to Equality and Diversity before awarding contracts;
- Evaluate their commitment to Equality and Diversity in partnership reviews.



Discriminatory Behaviour

We will take swift and appropriate action in the event that a partner or contractor is found to be in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

We can also remove any employees from projects should we deem them to be acting in a discriminatory way whilst undertaking works on our behalf.

Further information is detailed in our Procurement Strategy.

Medium partnership arrangements (with more than twenty direct employees) must demonstrate a suitable Equality and Diversity Policy in alignment with this Equality Scheme. This will be a condition of appointment to work on our behalf and will be evaluated by our Human Resource and Development Section

Small arrangements (with less than twenty direct employees) must formally agree to comply with this Equality Scheme and demonstrate how this will be achieved. This will be a pre condition of appointment to work on behalf of the Company and will be evaluated by our Human Resource and Development Team.





Communicating with leaseholders, tenants and residents

We keep our leaseholders, tenants, residents and partners up to date with all aspects of our business through a variety of methods; including:

- Tenants responsibilities which are clearly set out in the Tenancy Agreement which is reviewed and updated regularly following consultation;
- A magazine, Your Future in Our Homes, is sent to all Housing Applicants on the waiting list;
- A magazine, Homes 4 Rent, is sent to all tenants;
- A magazine dedicated to leaseholders, Leasehold News 4 You is sent to all leaseholders;
- Our website is regularly updated and has been accessibility with tenant representatives;
- Our Service Standards, available for all services we provide, detail to tenants and future tenants the standard of service they can expect to receive from us;
- We have developed 'Tenant's guide to leaflets' which provide tenants with important information on key services that we provide.



Communicating with employees

We keep our employees up to date through the following ways:

- A magazine, The Zone, is sent to all of our employees;
- Employees are briefed on important Company information through monthly 'Core Brief' bulletins;
- Information is passed to all of our employees through team meetings;
- Our intranet (internal website for all of our employees to access) is updated on a regular basis;
- We have a two day Employee Conference every year to build team morale and provides our employees with the opportunity for feedback;
- All of our employees have regular 1-2-1 sessions with their Line Manager where information can be passed on and they have the opportunity to discuss any work related concerns or issues.

Interpretation and translation

The Company has access to interpreters if required if our employees were in a position where a leaseholder, tenant or resident could not speak English or were deaf and required a British Sign Language (BSL) signer. The Company is also able to translate documents into other languages, on an audio CD, or into Braille. Partially sighted tenants are provided with Magnifying Sheets if required. Posters advertising our interpretation and translation services are on display in all Company buildings, the internet and customers are also informed of this through our publications.



We will continue to review our methods of communication and listen to feedback to ensure that we continue to provide up to date information in an easy and accessible way.

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring performance

We will monitor our performance on Equality and Diversity through our Equality Scheme Action Plan and existing performance indicators across all our key service areas, examples below.

Performance Indicators 2010/11

KPI	Definition
EQ1	Average time in working days to respond to people who have complained about racial harassment
EQ2	% of staff who have undergone DDA training as a proportion of all employees
EQ4 / Bv16a	% of employees who have stated that they meet the DDA definition as a proportion of all employees
EQ5	% of employees at SO level or above who are female
EQ6	% of employees below SO level who are female
EQ7	% of employees at SO level or above who are BME
EQ8	% of employees below SO level who are BME
EQ9	BME employees as a proportion of all employees
EQ10	BME applicants for jobs as a proportion of all applicants
EQ11	BME employees making a grievance as a proportion of all employees
C26 a-f	% of tenants on whom the landlord has diversity information
C27	% of tenants on whom the landlord has signed consent to share diversity information

Diversity Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE)

The Diversity KLOE is also reviewed by service area as part of the Continuous Improvement Service Area Reviews.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAS)

We undertake EIAS (EIA template demonstrated in Appendix 1) to assess the actual or likely impact of functions, policies, procedures and strategies on the protected characteristic groups. We have developed a three year programme for completing these.

Actions arising from EIAS will be built into Service Plans to ensure that all of our tenants, residents and leaseholders are provided with every opportunity to access our services and are treated in a fair and non discriminatory manner.



Governance

Our Board and Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that the Scheme is put into action across the Company and actions are completed.

Our Corporate Development Team has responsibility for monitoring policies and services and raising any issues with the Senior Management Team.

A monitoring report will be presented to our Board on an annual basis. The Company Solicitor and Secretary and Human Resources and Development Manager have responsibility for presenting this.



We consult with our Tenant Gateway and Scrutiny Panel members on how they want to hold us accountable for our progress on our equality objectives and performance in this area.



Appendix 1: Equality Impact Assessment Template

Initial Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate:		Name of the policy or service to be assessed:	
Policy completed by:	Date:	Assessed by:	Date:
What are the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy / service?			
2. Who defined the terms/scope of the policy / service? (e.g Ashfield Homes, central or regional government).			
3. Are there any other Ashfield Homes services or external agencies who share responsibility for the policy / service?			
4. Is the policy / service directed or influenced by another policy controlled by the Council or Ashfield Homes?			
5. Who is intended to benefit from the policy / service and in what way?			
6. What outcomes are expected from the implementation of this policy / service?			
7. What factors could contribute/detract from these outcomes?			
8. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the policy / service?		9. Who implements the policy / service and who is responsible for it?	



<p>10. Upon which of the protected characteristic groups could the policy / service have a differential impact?</p>	<table border="0"> <tr><td>Race</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Age</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Gender Reassignment</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Disability</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Religion or belief</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Sex</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Sexual Orientation</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Marriage & Civil Partnership</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Pregnancy & Maternity</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>Other</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td><input type="radio"/></td></tr> <tr><td>(Please state)</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>				Race				<input type="radio"/>	Age				<input type="radio"/>	Gender Reassignment				<input type="radio"/>	Disability				<input type="radio"/>	Religion or belief				<input type="radio"/>	Sex				<input type="radio"/>	Sexual Orientation				<input type="radio"/>	Marriage & Civil Partnership				<input type="radio"/>	Pregnancy & Maternity				<input type="radio"/>	Other				<input type="radio"/>	(Please state)				
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Other				<input type="radio"/>																																																							
(Please state)																																																											
<p>11. What existing evidence (anecdotal or factual, local, regional or national information) do you have for this?</p>																																																											
<p>12. Could any of the differential impacts identified in your answers to questions 10 and 11 amount to the policy / service having an negative or less favourable impact on anyone?</p>																																																											
<p>13. If you have answered 'Yes' to question 12, can the negative or less favourable impact on this group be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity?</p>																																																											
<p>14. Are there any experts / relevant groups who you can approach to explore their views on the actual or potential impacts of the policy / service?</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>15. Please list the relevant groups / experts and the dates on which the consultation took place.</p>																																																								

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment Template

<p>16. How were the views of these experts / groups obtained?</p>	<p>Letter <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Meetings <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Interviews <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Telephone <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Workshops <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Forums <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Questionnaires <input type="radio"/></p> <p>Other <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Please state)</p>
<p>17. Please explain in detail the views of the relevant groups / experts on the actual or potential impacts of the policy / service.</p>	
<p>18. Taking into account the views of the groups / experts, and the available evidence, please clearly state the risks of potential negative impacts weighed against the benefits of the policy.</p>	

Equality Monitoring

<p>19. Please state clearly what monitoring systems will be used to measure the impact of the policy / service on the protected characteristic groups.</p>	
<p>20. Who will be responsible for monitoring the impact of the policy / service on relevant groups?</p>	
<p>21. Please state the date(s) on which the monitoring will take place.</p>	
<p>22. Please clearly state how often and where you will publish the results of this monitoring.</p>	



Recommendations and Decisions

23. What are the main conclusions of this Initial Equality Impact Assessment, in terms of the likely impact upon protected characteristics?			
24. As a result of these conclusions what actions (if any) to remove negative or less favourable impacts will be included in your business planning and action planning processes, and what are the timescales for implementation?			
25. What performance indicators (if any) will be used to monitor the impact of the policy / service on protected characteristics?			
26. Do the conclusions of this assessment suggest that a full Equality Impact Assessment is required?	YES	NO	Please explain and justify your decision:

Notes:

If the answer to question 26 is 'Yes' Responsible Officers should note that they must review and re-consider the policy in light of the findings of the Full Equality Impact Assessment.

A completed Initial or Full Equality Impact Assessment must accompany the report to SMT or Board seeking approval for any new (or significantly amended) policy.

A completed Initial or Full Equality Impact Assessment must be added to the Company's Equality Impact Assessment Register.

Glossary

ADC	Ashfield District Council– the landlord.
AHL	Ashfield Homes Limited- the Managing Agent.
ALMO	Arms Length Management Organisation– a company set up to manage and improve council housing stock.
APAC	Ashfield Partnership Against Crime– local organisations working in partnership to tackle ASB.
ASB	Anti Social Behaviour- a variety of behaviour covering a whole complex of selfish and unacceptable activity that can blight the quality of community life.
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BSL	British Sign Language
Direct discrimination	This is treating one person less favourably than another. An example would be not to allocate a property merely because of the applicants ethnic origin or gender.
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission- a statutory body that promotes and monitors human rights and protects, enforces and promotes equality across the protected characteristics
Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)	An EIA is a means to ensure that organisations think carefully about the likely impact of policies, procedures, strategies, functions and services on tenants, leaseholders, residents, employees and other stakeholders.



Harassment	Harassment can take many forms from the most obvious abusive remarks to extremely subtle use of power. It can be intentional or unintentional. However, the key issue is the impact of the behaviour on the person receiving it and the feeling of an intimidating environment.
Hate Crime	These crimes occur when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived protected characteristic
Indirect discrimination	This refers to applying a provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular protected characteristic. An example would be if the Company imposed a ban on all employees wearing head dress as this would prevent some individuals with certain religions and beliefs from working for the Company.
KLOE	Key Line of Enquiry– a framework for evaluation of housing services.
KPI	Key performance indicator– one of the methods used to monitor performance in this area
LGB	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
QAF	Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework– to assess the quality of support services we deliver
TSA	Tenant Services Authority– social housing regulator
Victimisation	This is where a person is treated less favourably

Useful Contacts

Contacts

Age UK	Website - www.ageuk.org.uk
Equalities & Human Rights Commission	Website - www.ehcr.org.uk
Gender Trust	Website - www.gendertrust.org.uk
UK Inter Faith Network	Website - www.interfaith.org.uk
Muslim Council of Britain	Website - www.mcb.org.uk
National Institute for the Deaf	Website - www.rnid.org.uk
National Institute for the Blind	Website - www.rnib.org.uk
Stonewall	Website - www.stonewall.org.uk
Terrence Higgins Trust (HIV charity)	Website - www.tht.org.uk
The British Council of Disabled People	Website - www.bcodp.org.uk
The Disability Alliance	Website - www.disabilityalliance.org
Women and Equality Unit	Website - www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

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Notts
NG17 7BE
Tel - **01623 608932**

Sutton Property Shop
16 Brook Street
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Notts
NG17 1AL
Tel - **01623 608950**

Hucknall Property Shop
Council Offices
Watnall Road
Hucknall
Notts
NG15 7LA
Tel - **0115 956 8713**

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