

Equality and Diversity Policy

1.0 Policy Summary

1.1 This policy sets out Stonewater's approach to Equality and Diversity

2.0 Policy Objectives

2.1 We recognise that staff, tenants, contractors and customers are central to our success and that we work in a diverse society. We acknowledge our legal responsibility to make sure all groups have equality of opportunity. Stonewater's policy clearly demonstrates our commitment to ensuring equality and diversity irrespective of:

- Race/Ethnicity/Nationality
- Disability
- Age
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion/ belief
- Marriage or Civil partnership
- Pregnancy/Maternity

2.2 Stonewater acknowledges that people are discriminated against for reasons other than the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 and recognise our moral obligation to challenge discrimination and injustice where practical and appropriate. Our moral commitment to championing equality and diversity will include the following:

- Socio economic group
- Appearance
- Political affiliation
- Class
- Membership or non membership of a Trade Union
- Responsibility for dependants
- Part time or shift workers
- Unrelated criminal activities
- Any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice

- 2.3** The aims of this policy are to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; foster good relations between different groups; tackle prejudice and promote understanding; and that our residents, Board and Committee Members, contractors, forums and staff reflect the communities in which we work. In achieving these aims, we will comply with the current equality legislation and regulatory requirements.
- 2.4** We have created our Equality and Diversity Policy and the measures to put it into practice on the basis of engagement with our tenants, stakeholders and to reflect best practice.
- 2.5** The responsibility for the Policy lies with the Board and the Chief Executive. However, each member of staff has a responsibility to make sure they apply this Policy.
- 2.6** In providing housing services and recruiting to our governance structures and staff, we will aim to ensure that we do not discriminate, that we treat everyone fairly and equitably and we will respect their human rights.

3.0 Policy Details

General

- 3.1** We will not treat anybody applying for housing, receiving services or working for us less or more favourably than anyone else due to a protected characteristic.
- 3.2** We will take positive action when we need to, to allow members of an under represented groups with a protected characteristic to receive equality of opportunity in housing, services and work.
- 3.3** The members of the Board, Committees, and Resident Groups will role model and champion our commitment to equal opportunities. Following our equal opportunities policy is essential for a Tenants' and Residents' Association to be recognised.
- 3.4** All main contractors, consultants and other agencies we hire must adhere to our equal opportunities policy, and over a reasonable time period have or set appropriate targets for representing minority groups within their workforce and have systems for monitoring and reporting progress as required by the equality legislation.
- 3.5** Contractors, consultants and other agencies working for us or in partnership with us will be asked to attend our equality and diversity training.
- 3.6** If we discover unlawful discrimination by partners, consultants, contractors or suppliers we will take action and where necessary we may review or terminate our agreements with them.
- 3.7** We will agree initiatives with our major partners to promote social inclusion and enhance community cohesion.

- 3.8** We will take effective action to tackle victimisation and harassment and we will always adopt a victim centred approach.
- 3.9** We will provide support to residents and our staff & partners will follow all of our Harassment and Victimisation policies and procedures that apply to the service they provide, and will provide sufficient support through our various assistance programmes to help employees.
- 3.10** To make sure people have equal access to services, we will provide an interpreter service and translate policies and documents where essentially required to meet people's needs.
- 3.11** We aim to ensure that all our offices are accessible and where this is not possible ensure that the service provided is accessible.
- 3.12** We will build all new housing to the current standards set out in the equality and planning legislation.
- 3.13** We will ensure that there is equal access to information and services by providing appropriate facilities. We will continue to consult with residents and stakeholders to ensure that our organisational development helps us to meet our aims in the Business Plan.

Housing and Associated Services

- 3.14** In providing services to our clients, we will:
- i. ensure our properties are let through the use of fair processes adopting the relevant housing letting systems with an aim to prevent prejudice or discrimination; and
 - ii. Make sure we deal with complaints promptly, fairly and without discrimination.

Employment

- 3.15** Using tools such as workforce profiling we aim to:
- i. make sure that we have access to the widest range of people and recruit the best employee for the job;
 - ii. make sure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment than another and that, wherever possible, we give them the help they need to reach their full potential;
 - iii. achieve a workforce based on ability, which is in line with the working population in the communities in which we work;
 - iv. make sure all staff co-operate in this policy; and
 - v. Take appropriate action against anyone who breaches this policy.
- 3.16** Further information regarding our approach to recruitment and selection can be found in our Recruitment Policy and associated guidance.

3.17 Further information regarding our approach to learning and development can be found in our Learning and Development Policy and associated guidance.

Record Keeping:

3.18 To ensure that this policy is operating effectively and that the organisation is providing a fair and equitable service we will keep records of residents, employees, job and housing applicants for as long as necessary. Information collected will include the 9 Protected Characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. Ongoing monitoring will allow us to take appropriate action to tackle discrimination, victimisation or harassment and promote equality of opportunity.

3.19 Each year, employees will be able to check and, if necessary, correct their own records. Otherwise, we will restrict access to this information in line with the data protection regulations.

3.20 We will analyse these records regularly and take appropriate follow-up action.

4.0 Key Objectives

4.1 We are able to design and maintain services that meet the diverse needs of the communities in which we operate.

4.2 Clear leadership establishes a strong ethos for equality & diversity and improves our outcomes and service delivery.

4.3 We develop a cohesive Stonewater Equality & Diversity Strategy and Improvement plan.

4.4 Resident and staff profiling data is recorded and maintained.

4.5 All Stonewater staff have an understanding of equality & diversity issues that relate to their delivery of service, reflecting good practice and their rights and responsibilities as a member of staff.

5.0 Key Outcomes

5.1 We will comply with equality legislation and work towards developing mechanisms to challenge and tackle discrimination when providing goods and services.

5.2 When employing staff, we comply with all equality legislation

5.3 We will treat people fair and equitably to improve equality of opportunity for our staff, residents and stakeholders.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

This policy aims to ensure that Stonewater is fully compliant with its legal obligations and places equality & diversity at the heart of all of its working practices. The policy allows us to consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work, in developing policy, in service delivery and in relation to all our employees and residents.