

HFI's Equality and Diversity Strategy

- a summary, 2009 – 2012

Introduction

The Audit Commission in its 2008 inspection report found strengths outweighed weakness in relation to Homes for Islington's (HFI's) commitment to and progress in equality and diversity issues. The Audit Commission subsequently classed HFI within the 10 performing housing authorities in the country in its approach to equality and diversity.

This is a summary of Homes for Islington's full equality and diversity strategy which is available to view on our website www.homesforislington.org.uk.

The strategy sets out how we will ensure our employment and service delivery practices are truly representative and inclusive of all our customers and staff, regardless of disability, race, ethnicity, colour, national origin, gender (including transgender), sexuality, age, religion or other belief, language, HIV status, class or social background, family status, responsibility for dependents and unrelated criminal convictions.

Our equality and diversity strategy gives clear information to our staff, residents and partners on our approach to equality and diversity, and through the action plan, our priorities for 2009-12.

HFI's commitment to equality and diversity

HFI's equality and diversity policy links directly into our equality and diversity strategy and action plan, which sets out our priorities for action to improve the living and working environment for all our residents and staff.

We are committed to promoting equality and diversity among our customers and staff and to treat everyone fairly and without discrimination. We believe that diversity adds value to our organisation and the work we do. This means that we will recognise people's different service needs and make our services relevant to their individual needs, whenever possible.

As an employer, we will actively empower our staff to develop their potential and take pride in their abilities and resources and also provide them with training on their duty as set out in the strategy to promote equality and value diversity and combat discrimination and harassment.

HFI welcomes and is committed to fulfilling its legal duties set out in all current and impending equalities legislation

In partnership with our community

HFI will continue to develop and implement this strategy in partnership with our residents, tenants and residents' associations, representative or advocacy groups within the community, staff and contractors.

We will actively seek to promote community cohesion, as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. We welcome feedback on the strategy and we facilitate and encourage it. We will be proactive in reaching out to all the groups in our community to seek their input and advice on how we put the strategy and action plan into practice.

We will use a wide range of creative methods to reach our residents to ensure that all our residents receive and understand information about HFI and that there is the widest possible access for people who do not speak or read English and for disabled and deaf residents and staff.

Providing high-quality accessible services for all

HFI is committed to providing high-quality, accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse community.

We will provide information on our services that is accessible to customers with differing needs and available in formats that are appropriate to them. HFI has a translation and interpreting policy which governs our translation and interpretation services. We will advertise these services to ensure they are accessible to customers that require these services.

HFI is also committed to working with others to tackle poverty and increasing the life chances of our residents and customers, including through the improvement of social housing within Islington. We will work to promote community cohesion on our estates, support those suffering from hate crimes and take action against the perpetrators of such offences.

Combating discrimination and valuing diversity in our workforce

We will develop and promote policies giving all our staff equal access to employment and career development opportunities.

We will train all our staff and board directors on this policy. Every member of our staff has the responsibility of complying with and actively promoting our equality and diversity policy and we will ensure this is a key part of the induction of new staff and part of the regular appraisal of existing staff.

Working with our residents and partners

HFI will use a variety of ways to seek the views of its customers on its standards of service delivery and to identify improvements.

We have a number of formal structures by which residents can become involved in the monitoring of HFI's performance and direction including tenant and residents associations, consultative panels and Board membership.

HFI also works in partnership with other key stakeholders within the borough including the council, the local police authority and primary care trust and others

to ensure that we seek better ways of working together to meet the needs and aspirations of the whole community we serve. We are also a significant purchaser of services within the local area. We will use our influence and purchasing power to promote this strategy amongst our contractors and partners.

Knowing our community

To ensure that our services are inclusive, we will systematically collect and monitor equalities data using this information to identify areas in which we need to improve.

HFI has built a comprehensive profile of its customer base and will continue to use this to target and improve services and ensure our services are not discriminatory. With this information we will continue to identify any gaps or under-representation by any of the equality target groups in our community and see where we need to take action to address this.

Learning from complaints

We will regularly monitor our complaints handling process to ensure that we respond effectively to our customers and to determine whether there are any areas of discrimination we need to address.

The process is used to spot trends in performance and identify areas in need of improvement. HFI will use this valuable feedback from our customers to tackle inequalities and to improve our services to meet diverse customer needs more effectively.

To be an employer of choice

HFI wants to be an employer of choice and aims to attract and retain a talented and diverse workforce that reflects the community we serve. We aim to have a workforce that is truly representative of the community it serves at all levels within the organisation.

HFI promotes a culture in which all staff are treated with dignity and respect. In compliance with the general race, disability, and gender duties we collect information from our staff and prospective employees across all six diversity strands of age, gender, race, disability, sexuality and religion or belief.

We use this equalities data to ensure people are treated fair and equality in recruitment, training and promotion and other employment practices. HFI aims to increase the numbers of women and black and minority ethnic officers (BAME) within senior management posts and a number of programs and initiatives are planned or are in place to achieve these goals.

Equalities in Procurement

We believe that procurement is an important function and one that we will use to actively promote our equality and diversity policy and strategy.

Our procurement strategy aims to ensure that our contracts are delivered in a way which is non-discriminatory, that contractors practice equality in the delivery of their own services and employment practices and promotes equality of opportunity for all our residents, staff, and local businesses.

Who will make our strategy work?

The HFI Board Directors, consist of tenants, leaseholders, independents, and council representatives. Our Board Directors and the chief executive are responsible for the delivery and review of this strategy.

We aim to make our Board truly representative of our local community and we will encourage people from under-represented groups to seek Board membership.

HFI's equality and diversity strategy is a public document and we will be answerable to the public and to our residents in particular for delivering the programme and agenda set out in the strategy.

We have adopted the Equality Framework for Local Government, which we will use along with our partner Islington Council to measure our progress in achieving equality and celebrating diversity within our community and workforce.

Equality Impact Assessments

Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 we have a duty to monitor and review all existing or proposed policies and functions relevant to the duty to promote race equality and identify any adverse effect on any of our black and ethnic minority communities.

Complying with the requirements of the Equality Framework also requires the completion of equality impact assessments. To address multiple discrimination, we will adopt an impact assessment process covering all six target groups (age, gender, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion/belief) and investigate any adverse effect of our policies or functions on these groups.

HFI will carry out a formal equality impact assessment during the development of all strategies, policies, procedures, and projects which are likely to have a significant impact on residents and/or staff, to assess whether there is any adverse impact on any particular equality group. The results of these assessments will be published on our website.

Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

The equality and diversity strategy is reviewed in a number of ways:

- HFI's Board of Directors will review the strategy every year
- Our senior management team will receive six monthly reports on progress against the strategy's equality and diversity action plan

- HFI's equality and diversity forum, chaired by our chief executive and having representation from all divisions, monitor operational progress on a quarterly basis, and
- We will involve other stakeholders in monitoring and reviewing this strategy. To do this, we will use a range of methods including tenant and resident groups, surveys and questionnaires, performance data and mystery shopping.

Equality and diversity action plan

Our equality and diversity action plan will be revised annually to reflect the priorities of the strategy document. The plan clearly identifies the actions we are taking to continue to comply with equalities legislation as well as with achieving the requirements set out in the Equality Framework for Local Government.

How will we know our equality and diversity strategy is successful?

- We receive positive feedback from our customers and staff.
- All sectors of our community are represented on our resident consultation forums.
- Our workforce at all grades and levels reflects the equalities profile of the community we serve.
- Other ALMOs and partners look to us as a leader on equality and diversity.