

Equality & Diversity Policy

2014 – 2021

Document control

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1	Feb. 13	Governance & Compliance Officer	Conversion of existing policy into current template and track future revisions from this point forward
2	Sep. 14	Governance & Compliance Manager	Policy Updated to reflect current best practice

1. Introduction

This policy applies to Livv Housing Group, Livv Maintenance Limited, Livv Homes and First Ark Social Investment Fund (operating as Livv Investment).

This policy should be reviewed alongside our Equality Scheme – The Mix.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 We are committed to developing an equal and diverse culture where people are valued and respected from all sections of society. We therefore oppose any form of discrimination in service delivery and employment practice. The policy sets out our commitment to eliminating unfair discrimination from all aspects of work and service delivery and will therefore ensure there are mechanisms in place for implementing, monitoring and co-ordinating progress towards the achievement of equality.

This will be done through our equality and diversity scheme, 'The Mix' and action plan.

3 Policy Detail

3.1 The Legislative Framework

The Equality Act 2010 streamlined previous legislation on equalities. The act aims to help us understand and address the needs of both our employees and customers. The Equality Act 2010 defines 9 'Protected Characteristics' which means that people who have one, two or more of these characteristics are protected by the law when receiving goods or services and in employment.

The policy adopts these characteristics or groups and we oppose any form of discrimination our customers or employees may face because they have one or more of these characteristics. The 9 characteristics are;

- **Gender** – Being a man or a woman
- **Religion (including lack of religion)** – religious beliefs affect your life choices and the way you live
- **Age** – refers to a person of a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18-30 year olds)
- **Disability** – A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
- **Ethnicity** – includes race, colour, and nationality or national origins
- **Sexual Orientation** – Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

- **Gender Reassignment** – The process of transitioning from one gender to another
- **Pregnancy & Maternity** – Maternity refers to the period after birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context.

The Equality Act 2010 also protects people who experience direct discrimination or harassment because they are associated with a protected characteristic, (i.e. family, friends, and carers of a disabled person who is perceived to be a disabled person).

In addition to the protected characteristics set out specifically in The Equality Act 2010, we recognise that some people experience disadvantage due to their socio-economic circumstances, employment status, class appearance, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or with aids, or any other matter which causes a person to be treated with injustice. Our approach to Diversity aims to be **pioneering** and exceed our legal duties to comply with current legislation. We are **bold** in our commitments which extends to being proactive in ensuring that everyone who we work with is treated **fairly** and with **respect**.

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 enshrines in UK legislation the European Convention on Human Rights. We will emphasise the importance of adhering to the core principles of The Human Rights Act and will raise awareness of the key articles amongst staff, partners and customers.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

Livv Housing Group is subject to the public sector equality duty when carrying out duties related to its role as a social housing provider. There are two aspects of the public sector equality duty which we must comply with:

The General Duty, which states:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under The Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The regulations impose just two specific duties:

- To publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the equality duty
- To set themselves equality objectives

Compliance with both the general and specific duties will be supported by 'The Mix', our Equality & Diversity Scheme.

3.2 The Scope of the Policy

This policy cuts across everything we do and aims to prevent unlawful discrimination across all areas of our business, which includes:

Our role as a Pioneering Leader in Diversity:

- We will act as a leader by tackling discrimination and embracing diversity within our business, the sectors we work in and the communities in which we serve
- Ensure our policies, procedures and how we do business are free from discrimination
- Achieve and retain external recognition for our approach to diversity
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments for new policies and approaches to delivering services
- Use our partnerships effectively to promote, support, and maximise the impact of diversity themed services (examples include, anti-social behaviour services, domestic violence & harassment policies)
- Improve equality across the facilities management and construction industries
- Ensure that our procurement and tendering services are fair and accessible

Our role as an Employer:

- Embed a positive culture that embraces diversity
- Ensure a regular programme for Equality & Diversity training is in place for governors, leaders and all employees
- Ensure that our recruitment, training and promotion opportunities are free from discrimination and promote equality
- Monitor our recruitment, training, workforce profile and employee satisfaction by equality group
- Take a zero tolerance approach to the harassment, victimisation or bullying of staff by customers or colleagues
- Support applicants and employees who require reasonable adjustments to their workplace
- Ensure our employment opportunities create opportunities for under-represented groups

As a service provider we will:

- Recognise that people come from different backgrounds and have different needs that a 'one size fits all' approach cannot be adopted to meet diverse needs fairly
- Ensure that the services, offices, facilities and venues we provide or use are, as far as is possible, accessible to all including those with different physical abilities and cultural differences
- Provide information and access to service through a variety of channels and alternative formats including: braille, large print, access to British sign language interpreters or language translators
- Ensure that the way we communicate is clear and easy to read or understand
- Adopt a zero tolerance approach to the harassment, bullying or victimisation of customers and fully investigate allegations or concerns through our appropriate policies and procedures
- Monitor satisfaction with our services by the protected characteristics groups
- Involve customers and service users in the design and delivery of services, striving to have representative groups involved
- Ensure that effective safeguarding procedures are in place to enable effective referrals where there are safeguarding concerns
- Support our older customers to maintain independent living

Further details on what we want to achieve in each of these areas can be found in 'The Mix' equality and diversity scheme.

3.3 How discrimination can take place

We recognise that discrimination can take a number of forms:

Direct discrimination happens when we treat someone less favourably than another person because of a characteristic they have, for example, because they are a woman.

Discrimination by association happens when someone is unlawfully discriminated against because they are associated with someone who has a particular characteristic, for example, the parent of a disabled child.

Discrimination based on perception. The law also protects people from being unfairly discriminated against because someone thinks they have a characteristic, for example, if someone thinks a person is gay and so treats them unfairly because of this, whether or not they are gay.

Indirect discrimination happens if we apply a requirement that does not seem to be discriminatory, but it ends up negatively affecting a particular group and we cannot justify the requirement.

Discrimination arising from disability happens when someone is treated less favourably because of their disability.

Harassment is offensive, unwanted behaviour that is intimidating, threatening or disturbing when directed at someone because of a characteristic they have or are thought to have. Harassment can be verbal or physical.

Victimisation is when a person is treated less favourably because they have pursued or it is suspected they will pursue their rights under this policy.

We are opposed to all types of discrimination. We will abide by the relevant legislation, regulation and best practice to ensure our services and employment practices are fair and inclusive and contribute to the development of good relations between and within our diverse communities.

4 Implementation

4.1 We are firmly committed to equality and diversity. To ensure delivery of this policy 'The Mix' equality and diversity scheme and action plan has been produced, this sets out clear actions and targets in relation to all aspects of the service and identifies individuals or groups who will be responsible for delivery.

4.2 *The action plan will seek to ensure that the business, its employees, its partners, the community of Knowsley and the group's contractors, partners and suppliers all have a clear role to play in the effective delivery of The Mix*

4.3 An Executive Champion and Equality and Diversity Board will be appointed by the Board. The Executive Champion will lead on equality and diversity and sit on the Equality and diversity Champions Group which consists of staff from across the business. This group will assist the Chief Executive on equality and diversity issues, make recommendations and changes according to best practice and monitor targets and action plans associated with The Mix Scheme.

5 Equality & Diversity

5.1 This policy sets out our commitments to equality and diversity in detail.

6 Responsibility

6.1 Everyone has a role to play in creating The Mix, specifically:

- The Group Common Board and subsidiary board members who have a responsibility to ensure The Mix underpins all aspects of the groups work.

- The Executive Director for Business Transformation and the Chief Executive have overall responsibility for developing an organisational culture in which The Mix policy can operate and will ensure its implementation.
- Managers are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the policy within their own teams ensuring their staff are aware of and understand this policy and how it relates to their day-to-day jobs.
- The Equality and Diversity Champions Group will monitor The Mix action plan and wider Equality and Diversity issues, both internally and externally. The Governance and Compliance Team has responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of The Mix policy and supporting the implementation of the action plan across the business as required.
- All staff, managers, board members and contractors also have a responsibility to familiarise themselves with The Mix policy, adhere to it and inform management where it is apparent that The Mix policy is not being adhered to.
- If any employee is concerned about any non-compliance with this policy they should contact their manager or HR. They also have the option to use the procedures identified in the Whistle Blowing policy.

7 Consultation

7.1 Consultation on The Mix has taken place with a wide variety of customers. In addition to this, we have spoken to managers and staff, board members and partners and agencies we work alongside in our communities. We have also drawn on satisfaction and complaints information to identify any differences between different groups of customers.

8 Monitoring and Review

8.1 The Chief Executive is the designated member of staff with overall responsibility for co-ordinating the equality monitoring system and producing an annual report for the Board.

8.2 We have produced an Action Plan which sets out practical targets and ambitions for developing The Mix. This will be monitored by the individual managers responsible for actions and the Equality and Diversity Champions Group.

8.3 Targets will be set for employment and service delivery and will be monitored via the balanced scorecard. Progress against these targets will be monitored and actions taken as appropriate to demonstrate continuous improvement.

8.4 We will monitor, where relevant, each of the 9 protected characteristics to ensure the highest possible standards of equality and fairness take place in both service delivery and employment. We can then identify any differences in access to service and satisfaction and identify ways of targeting under-represented groups. Employees will be given clear responsibilities with regard to monitoring.

9 **Associated Documents**

The Mix Equality and Diversity Scheme

The Mix Leaflet

All policies which relate to public functions carried out by Livv Housing Group and any company acting on behalf of Livv Housing Group

All HR policies

Whistle Blowing Policy