



PEAKS & PLAINS
Housing Trust

The Trust

Equality, Diversity
& Inclusion
Strategy

Version number: V1

Effective Date: April 2022

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APPENDIX 1 – ACTION PLAN 2022-23

1. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 1.1. Peaks & Plains Housing Trust operates predominantly in the Cheshire East area (Macclesfield and the surrounding area) but we also provide homes in parts of Cheshire West and in the High Peak area.
- 1.2. There is diversity within the areas where we operate and populations change, generally more quickly than data on them can be collected or recorded. Our strategy will need to be able to respond to those changes and is guided by principles rather than by population statistics. Currently, the area served by Cheshire East Council has a population which is generally older and less ethnically diverse than other parts of the North West and England as a whole, levels of limiting long term illness, health problems and disability are reported as marginally lower than other parts of the North West and comparable with the rest of England.(Source: CEC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy). Obviously, facts and figures for such an area can hide more local differences and there are a range of other individual characteristics which contribute to the diversity within the local communities.
- 1.3. We do not currently have a full picture of the diversity amongst our tenants nor how that compares with the wider community but we have action underway to address that and are making good progress. This is the main reason why this strategy and our action plan sets our direction and priorities for the next 12 months only. In a year's time we will have significantly better information on which to base the next phase of our strategy, but we think that is important to state the principles behind our strategy, our vision and our key aims now, to demonstrate our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 1.4. There is plenty of research which shows that people who live in social housing experience significant inequalities and disadvantage in comparison with people living in other sectors. For example, there are proportionately more people with disabilities living in social housing than in other tenures (National Housing Federation 2020 Insight Review). By having an effective strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion we believe that we can make a positive difference to the life experiences of our customers and communities, through the way we work with them and through improved services and the way we provide these services.
- 1.5. The same NHF research highlights the disparities between those living in social housing and the workforce and leadership of organisations which provide those homes, for example, in terms of the proportion of women and those from non-white ethnic backgrounds. We believe that this situation presents opportunities for us as we welcome people from a diverse range of backgrounds and people who can bring different skills and perspectives to benefit both our effectiveness and our long term relationship with our customers.

- 1.6. The Trust's agreed purpose is to **help improve lives**. We recognise that if we fail to address issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, our ability to fulfil this purpose is undermined. We can address this directly through the way we provide services to individuals and the way that staff are treated. The Trust can play a part in communities, helping to encourage inclusion, tackle anti-social behaviour which is rooted in prejudice and discrimination etc. and we are committed to building constructive relationships with local and other relevant organisation who can contribute to this work.
- 1.7. The Trust knows that taking a positive approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is essential to support our strategic priorities, which are:
- Be a great landlord – this requires customers to be treated fairly and treated well.
 - Be a resilient business – we need a wide range of skills, ideas and perspectives.
 - Create great places to live – we want residents to feel safe, respected and included.
- 1.8. There is plenty of evidence to show that real commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion can improve the overall success of an organisation, for example, by attracting talented applicants from a wide range of backgrounds and communities. Employees who feel valued and respected in the workplace are more likely to perform effectively and want to stay with the organisation. A diverse workforce and Board will also bring different perspectives and ideas which can benefit the organisation and its customers. Most importantly, we also believe that a positive commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion - backed up by action - is the right thing to do and reflects the Trust's values.
- 1.9. We see equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as being fundamental to providing great customer service, which is what we aim to do. Our EDI strategy also complements the Trust's other strategies, in particular, our Customer Voice Strategy, our Vulnerable Persons Strategy and our People Strategy. Work which is being carried out or is planned to implement those strategies will help us to achieve our EDI aims set in this document.

2. WHERE WE WANT TO BE – OUR VISION

- 2.1. The Trust's vision is:

to be and to be seen as an organisation that:

- understands and values the diversity of our customers, communities and staff;
- provides services fairly and flexibly in a way which recognizes and respects this diversity; and
- as an employer, promotes inclusion, embraces diversity and creates an atmosphere in which our staff can thrive and others want to join.

- 2.2. We recognise that we are some way from being that organisation. This one-year strategy and the associated action plan will enable us to build firmer foundations on which we can rapidly increase our understanding of our customers, communities and workforce. We will then use this information to set better informed priorities, action plans and, where appropriate, targets for the longer term to help us to achieve the aims set out in this document.

3. LEGAL & REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1. Our strategy is set in the context of a range of legal and regulatory requirements which are designed to prevent discrimination and promote equality in communities and in the workplace.
- 3.2. The main, but not the only relevant legislation we need to take into account is the Equality Act 2010, which makes it unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise an individual who possesses a protected characteristic. Organisations that “exercise public functions”, which includes the Trust, are required to:
- Eliminate discrimination
 - Advance equality for all the protected characteristics (see definitions)
 - Foster good relations, tackle prejudice and promote understanding
- 3.3. We believe that our policies, working practices and actions enable us to meet those legal requirements but we can do better. This strategy is intended to move the Trust to become a more active promoter and enabler of equality, diversity and inclusion through the services we provide and the working environment and culture we have.
- 3.4. The Regulator of Social Housing’s Consumer Standards require providers, such as the Trust, to:
- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
 - treat all tenants with fairness and respect
 - demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.
 - demonstrate how they respond to tenants’ needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.
- There are other more specific requirements relating to specific service areas.
- 3.5. The National Housing Federation’s 2015 Code of Governance, which is the code the Trust has adopted to follow, expects housing associations to demonstrate that *“There is fairness and equality of opportunity and a recognition of diversity in all aspects of the organisation’s governance”*.

The National Housing Federation’s 2020 Code of Governance expects housing association boards to demonstrate:

“a clear and active commitment to achieve equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the organisation’s activities, as well as in its own composition”, to have “policies and statements which meaningfully demonstrate this commitment” and to set priorities and objectives for the organisation to achieve. It expects boards to seek regular assurance about how these commitments and objectives are being delivered in practice and to track progress against the priorities it has set. It also expects each organisation to annually publish “information about its work to deliver these commitments and objectives, and the progress it has made”.

The Trust is working towards meeting the requirements of the NHF 2020 Code.

4. DEFINITIONS

Equality, diversity and inclusion are different but need to be acted on together.

- 4.1. **Equality** - Equality is about ensuring everybody has an equal opportunity and is not treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics.
- 4.2. **Diversity** - Diversity is about taking account of the differences between people and groups of people and valuing those differences.
- 4.3. **Inclusion** - Inclusion is about embracing all people irrespective of their individual characteristics or needs and ensuring that everyone feels respected, valued and heard.
- 4.4. **Protected Characteristics:** These are the characteristics which are specifically referred to in the Equality Act 2010 i.e.
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender re-assignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership status
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
- 4.5. **Customers:** In this strategy we mean our tenants and their households, leaseholders, those who use the services we provide and those who apply to live in homes we own and manage.
- 4.6. **Stakeholders:**
In this strategy we mean individuals, organisations or groups who have an interest in our activities and/or on whom our activities have an impact, who we may wish to influence and/or who may wish to influence the Trust and/or who may be able to support the Trust to achieve its objectives.
- 4.7. **Insight:** In this strategy we mean the information we have about our customers' and workforce characteristics and views and the analysis and use of that information.

5. PRINCIPLES

- 5.1. The Trust's Strategy is underpinned by the following principles.
 - **Fairness and accessibility** – in our services, our recruitment and our workplace(s)
 - **E,D & I will be considered at the start** – of policies, of projects, of consultation etc.
 - **Effective use of data** to inform what we do
 - **Respect for individuals** – data analysis is useful but we must still listen to individual needs & perspectives
 - **Valuing & investing in effective training and awareness** for our staff and our Board

- **Hunger for learning** – listening, training, learning from mistakes - help us improve
- **Zero tolerance of discrimination and hate** – backed up by resources & action
- **Having a positive, open & inclusive culture**
- **Commitment to promote what we stand for & what we do**
- **Being positive about collaboration** and working with partners – to understand & address needs, to understand how we are perceived by others
- **Clear and active leadership** which reflects and promotes our commitment to equality, diversity & inclusion

6. AIMS OF OUR STRATEGY

The aims of our strategy relate to six themes, which are outlined below. We will agree action plans to help us to achieve these aims over the coming years and to embed a positive approach to EDI across the Trust. Our first action plan will set out what we intend to do in the first year to contribute towards achieving these aims. We will then review our progress and set a longer term strategy and action plan.

6.1. Leadership & Governance

- To ensure the Trust's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to this strategy is clear to customers, staff and the wider community.
- To have the diversity of the communities in which we work reflected on the Board, its committees, leadership teams and other employees across the Trust.
- To have effective structures, processes and consultation which enable diverse views and perspectives to shape our priorities, strategies, priorities and plans.

6.2. Customer Insight & Feedback

- To understand the diversity of our tenants and how this relates to the diversity of the wider community and of our workforce.
- To have a diverse range of customers involved in shaping the design and delivery of our services, removing barriers to involvement wherever we can.
- To learn from customer feedback to improve how we recognise and respond to diverse needs and being able to show when and how we have done this.

6.3. Flexibility & Range of Services & Accessibility

- To use that insight to plan and tailor services and action in response to needs and to be able to show when and how we have done this.
- Have services and policies which recognise different customer needs and preferences and be flexible enough to provide services in a variety of ways to meet these needs.
- To have skilled and well trained staff who can recognise different needs and who are empowered to meet different needs in different ways.
- To provide good quality homes – both existing and new – which meet a variety of needs and preferences.
- To enable customers to contact us and access services in a range of ways which suit them.

6.4. **Working for Peaks & Plains Housing Trust**

- To attract, recruit and retain staff from diverse backgrounds that reflect the communities in which we work.
- To have recruitment and employment policies and practices that are demonstrably fair and transparent and which promote a diverse and inclusive workplace culture where all staff can thrive.
- To have staff who are well trained and aware of issues of equality, diversity and inclusion and who demonstrate that in the way they treat others.
- To have staff who are confident to challenge any unfair, discriminatory, non-inclusive behaviours or practices in the workplace or in our service to customers.

6.5. **Collaboration**

- To have and help to build strong local partnerships which help us to identify key issues and to plan and make improvements.
- To involve key stakeholders in reviews of our equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and in assessments of its effectiveness.
- To contribute to the creation of safe, sustainable and cohesive neighbourhoods and communities, effectively responding to issues such as hate crimes.

6.6. **Promotion & Publicity**

- To understand how our customers and others see us in terms of how we respond to equality, diversity & inclusion.
- To publicise the Trust's action, plans and achievements in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion to customers and other stakeholders.
- To become recognised as a landlord, service provider, employer and partner that effectively supports and achieves equality, diversity and inclusion.

7. **DATA PROTECTION**

7.1. We recognise that to effectively tackle inequalities and discrimination and to address inclusion, we will need to gather personal information, much of which may be considered sensitive (not only in the technical sense of data protection legislation). We will, of course, comply with the law and personal information will be handled confidentially, fairly and in line with the law.

7.2. We will ensure that when we collect this information, we will explain its purpose and an individual's rights about what can be done with the data. By explaining our use of personal data we aim to increase the proportion of those tenants and employees and others who will share information about themselves and trust us to use that information to make improvements and to keep it safe.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1. The Board is responsible for:

- Approving the strategy.
- Demonstrating, individually and collectively, a clear and active commitment to equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the Trust's activities.
- Monitoring overall progress with the strategy and related action plans.
- Reviewing the strategy and its effectiveness.

8.2. Executive Management Team is responsible for:

- Demonstrating, individually and collectively, a clear and active commitment to equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the Trust's activities.
- Leading the implementation of the strategy.
- Reporting annually to the Board on the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy and progress with the action plan.

8.3. Heads of Service & Managers are responsible for:

- Demonstrating, individually and collectively, a clear and active commitment to equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of the Trust's activities.
- Leading their teams and managing implementation of actions which support the strategy.
- Identifying staff training and support needs in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion and the services they provide and ensuring that these are addressed.

8.4. All Staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring they have read and understood the strategy.
- Acting in line with the principles set out in the strategy in the course of their work and their interaction with customers, colleagues etc.
- Participating in training provided for them about equality, diversity and inclusion

9. MONITORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STRATEGY

9.1. We will review progress with the actions set out in the action plan after year 1, this review will include an assessment of the impact of these actions. We will consider whether key performance indicators and/or clear targets for the next stages in our strategy will assist us in achieving our aims.

9.2. We will involve others in the assessment of the strategy's effectiveness.

9.3. We will produce and publish a summary report each year outlining what we have done during the year to demonstrate our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The report will be published on the Trust's website.

10. REVIEW

- 10.1. The strategy will be reviewed initially after one year. Subsequent reviews will take place at least every three years.
- 10.2. The review of the strategy will involve customers and partners.

11. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- All policies relating to services to customers
- All staffing policies
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Board & Committee Member Code of Conduct
- National Housing Federation Code of Governance (2015 & 2020)
- Peaks & Plains Housing Trust Corporate Action Plan

12. STRATEGY INFORMATION

Strategy Name:	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy
Status:	
Approved by:	PPHT Board
Drafted By:	Jen Hayball, Governance Manager
Date approved:	29 th March 2022
Next Review Date:	March 2023

APPENDIX 1 – ACTION PLAN