

Southway – The Fair Way

Promoting Equality, Valuing Diversity

Single Equality Scheme 2017 – 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

This Single Equality Scheme sets out Southway's commitment to **promoting equality and valuing diversity**, in our role as a service provider and as an employer.

The Scheme defines our aims and objectives regarding equality and diversity and explains how we will go about achieving these.

If you would like a copy of this document in your own language please email r.eden@southwayhousing.co.uk or call 0161 448 4200

If you require a large print or audio version of this document please contact Richard Eden on r.eden@southwayhousing.co.uk or call us on 0161 448 4200

It aims to ensure that:

- All customers, employees and partners are fully aware of Southway's commitment to promoting equality and valuing diversity and what they can expect from us in this regard
- All employees and partners understand their role in helping us to achieve our equality and diversity objectives
- Southway is fully compliant with all legislative and regulatory requirements

Strategic Objectives

Corporate

- For all of our employees, Board members and contractors to actively promote equality and value diversity
- For equality and diversity to be embedded across all of our policies and activities

Fair Access

- For fairness in the way our services are allocated and delivered
- To provide facilities and information which all our customers can access
- For our communication and correspondence to be easy for our customers to understand

Fair Treatment

- For customers to feel they are treated with respect
- For customers to feel that our services meet their individual needs

Community Cohesion

- For cohesive communities in which all residents feel that they are included and treated with respect
- For anti-social behaviour, hate crime and domestic abuse to be seen as unacceptable within our communities

Customer Involvement

- For a diverse range of tenants to be involved in what we do, so that a variety of perspectives can be taken into account

2. SOUTHWAY'S APPROACH: PROMOTING EQUALITY AND VALUING DIVERSITY

Southway's primary purpose is to provide high quality affordable homes in desirable neighbourhoods where people are happy to live and have the opportunity to achieve their potential. We also have a wider purpose which is to make best use of our resources to achieve our social and community objectives.

It is therefore central to our purpose to provide services which are inclusive and accessible, to work with our customers and promote positive relations within our neighbourhoods, and to support disadvantaged and vulnerable members of the community. This is embodied in our vision and values.

Our Vision :

We will work in partnership with others to make south Manchester a place that people are proud of – a safe place where people choose to live, work and play.

Our values:

Shape how we do things. We are committed, ambitious, inclusive, collaborative and accountable.

In Southway's role as an employer, being fair and inclusive is equally important, for the benefit of our employees, our customers and the business.

We believe that:

- ✓ If staff are treated fairly they are more likely to feel engaged with Southway and its objectives, and satisfied in their work.
- ✓ If difference is respected, creativity and innovation can flourish and strong professional relationships can grow
- ✓ If the workforce is diverse, a wide range of experiences and perspectives can inform the development and delivery of services, leading to improvements.

3. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY BASIS

The Equality Act 2010

This Scheme is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act places a general duty on all organisations carrying out a public function to seek to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity and;
- Foster good relations, tackle prejudice and promote understanding

The Act defines four types of unlawful discrimination: direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation (see separate Guidance Note).

The equality duties concern discrimination against a person or group of people because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnerships
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion
- Sex, and
- Sexual orientation

The protected characteristic of disability applies to a person 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.

Southway will also have regard to socioeconomic status. This characteristic was previously covered by legislation and is still central to Southway's values and objectives.

Homes and Communities Agency Standards

The Homes and Communities Agency requires that registered providers shall:

- Treat all tenants with fairness and respect, and
- Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Everyone working for and with Southway is responsible for promoting equality and valuing diversity.

All staff members are responsible for ensuring that:

- They have a clear understanding of Southway's approach to equality and diversity and what is expected of them,
- All colleagues and customers are treated fairly and with respect; and
- Their manager is informed of any instances in which discrimination may have occurred, whether wittingly or unwittingly.

However, some specific roles and responsibilities are set out here.

The Board provides strategic leadership to the organisation and has ultimate responsibility for approving and monitoring the implementation of this Single Equality Scheme.

The Executive Group is responsible for ensuring the relevant aspects of this Scheme are implemented within each Directorate and is accountable to the Board for delivery of the Scheme.

The Chief Executive is the executive lead on equality and diversity and is responsible for ensuring the Board receives an annual report on delivery of the Scheme.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that Southway's approach to equality and diversity is embedded within each service area, and for promoting the importance of equality and diversity within each team.

The Staff Equality and Diversity Group is made up of members drawn from each service area. It is responsible for championing equality and diversity across the organisation, scrutinising policies and services whilst supporting managers to improve them, and monitoring progress against the aims set out in this scheme. The Group is also responsible for the delivery of the Action Plan accompanying the Scheme.

Suppliers, contractors and consultants that work for Southway must share our commitment to equality and diversity. Contractors must have in place and adhere to equality policies and procedures which comply with our approach.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Corporate

We aim:

- For all of our employees, Board members and contractors to actively promote equality and value diversity.
- For equality and diversity to be embedded across all of our policies and activities.

What we do

Our workforce

- Induct and train all our employees to fully understand our commitment to equality and diversity and their role in this.
- Make sure that staff, Board members and contractors are fully aware of the different ways in which unlawful discrimination can occur and take steps to ensure that policies, procedures and practices do not lead to unlawful discrimination.
- Provide information about equality and diversity to employees through the Staff Handbook, factsheets on our intranet and various other means.
- Undertake awareness raising activities throughout the year, including 'Bitesize Sessions' with external speakers, to provide new information and ensure employees keep equality and diversity in mind.

Decision making

- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on all relevant policies, services and changes.
- Highlight equality and diversity impacts in all Board reports, to ensure the Board takes these into account.
- Report to the Board annually on the delivery of this Scheme and on diversity profiling and performance.

Service delivery

- Monitor and raise awareness of activities to improve equality outcomes through Team Performance Statements completed by every team annually.
- Have a staff Equality and Diversity Group, to champion equality and diversity issues and advise and support colleagues where issues arise.

Staff

We aim:

- To encourage a diverse range of applicants for staff, Board and contractor roles.
- To have a representative workforce.
- For all staff, Board members and contractors to feel that they are treated fairly and with respect.

What we do

Recruitment and Staff Profile

- Record and monitor diversity data relating to applicants, employees and Board Members.
- Take positive action to try to achieve a better balance where there is evidence of underrepresentation of a particular group.
- Advertise all jobs as widely as possible.
- Guarantee interviews to any applicant who has a disability and meets the minimum requirements of the job.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to take up a job or continue to work for the organisation*.
- Conduct fair, competency based selection processes.

*This includes, where it is reasonable to do so:

- Changing the way things are done.
- Making changes to the built environment.
- Providing auxiliary aids and services.

Performance Management, Development and Progression

- Manage and promote staff based on their skills, abilities and performance.
- Use our 'How We Work' performance management framework, to ensure a fair and consistent approach.
- Give employees the opportunity to meet with the relevant manager to discuss internal vacancies.
- Monitor the diversity profile of employees in the higher pay grades.

Staff Treatment and Satisfaction

- Have clear policies on leave and time off, and flexible and home working, responding to needs arising through pregnancy, maternity, adoption and parenting, and needs arising due to disability and ill-health.
- Have clear policies on Conduct, Bullying and Harassment, and Grievance, and deal with any issues promptly and consistently.

- Conduct a staff satisfaction survey every other year and assess the results of this based on various diversity strands.

Fair Access

We aim:

- For fairness in the way our services are allocated and delivered.
- To provide facilities which all our customers can access.
- For our information and communication to be easy for our customers to understand.

What we do

Services and Facilities

- Allocate our properties using a transparent policy based on housing need.
- Focus on our customers in the planning and delivery of all our services.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to gain access to services*
- Have accessible offices and community centres, including providing ramps, lifts, hearing induction loops and clear signage.

*This includes, where it is reasonable to do so:

- Changing the way things are done.
- Making changes to the built environment.
- Providing auxiliary aids and services.

Information and Communication

- Produce our policies and other documents in Plain English, and where necessary provide short, easy to read summaries.
- Have an accessible website, including enabling translation, modification of text size, and audio content.
- Respond to special communication requirements, for example based on disability or language.

This includes:

- Offering documentation and correspondence in different languages and formats such as braille, large print and audio.
- Being flexible in the way we communicate with tenants, such as face-to-face in our office or their homes, by telephone or written communication.
- Providing translation services over the telephone and face-to-face.

Fair Treatment

We aim:

- For customers to feel they are treated with respect.
- For customers to feel that our services meet their individual needs.

What we do

Disadvantaged and vulnerable tenants

- Provide equipment and adaptations and concessionary services to support tenants to stay in their homes, based on clear policy.
- Have various services, strategies and policies specifically aimed at supporting disadvantaged tenants including; welfare advice, financial inclusion, employment and training, and health and wellbeing.
- Have various services, strategies and policies specifically aimed at supporting vulnerable tenants, including tenancy support, hoarding and mental health projects, and our Age Friendly Strategy.

Tenant Satisfaction

- Conduct a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey every other year.
- Regularly survey our tenants' satisfaction with particular services.
- Assess and monitor satisfaction statistics by diversity characteristics and take action where there are anomalies or issues.

Community Cohesion

We aim:

- For cohesive communities in which all residents feel that they are included and treated with respect.
- For anti-social behaviour, hate crime and domestic abuse to be seen as unacceptable within our communities.

What we do

Neighbourhoods and Communities

- Take an active role in neighbourhood management, through our community centres and Green Spaces Strategy as well as our core services.
- Undertake a range of community investment activities to support and strengthen our local communities.
- Work in partnership with and support local community groups and organisations.

Anti-Social Behaviour, Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse

- Have clear policies and procedures in place, including strong partnership working and case management.
- Act as a Reporting Centre for hate crime.
- Undertake awareness raising activities with our staff and tenants.

Customer Involvement

We aim:

- For a diverse range of tenants to be involved in what we do, so that a variety of perspectives can be taken into account.

What we do

- Have a Customer Involvement Strategy and Policy which helps us to deliver all of the customer-focussed objectives of this Scheme.
- Focus on involving hard-to-reach or under-represented groups.
- Ensure involved customers are aware of the importance of appropriate conduct and equality and diversity considerations.