



Single Equality Scheme 2020-2023

Valuing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

1. Introduction

This Single Equality Scheme sets out Southway's commitment to promoting and valuing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, in our role as a community based housing provider, and as an employer.

The Scheme defines our vision, aims and objectives regarding equality, diversity and inclusion and explains the steps we will take to achieve these.

2. Single Equality Scheme – Our Approach

2.1 The long term vision of Southway Housing Trust is to create “Thriving Communities”

This vision is underpinned by our values - we are **Caring, Committed** and we will be **Successful Together**

A key objective for us is to “use our skills and resources to address inequality, reduce poverty and improve lives in our diverse communities. We support, advise and enable people to achieve their potential and live well”.

Our Single Equalities Scheme underpins our vision and is central to our work with our customers to ensure we are both inclusive and accessible.

As an employer, being fair and inclusive is equally important and we believe that staff treated fairly, and with respect, are more likely to feel engaged with Southway and its vision and values and have increased job satisfaction.

Our SES **Vision** is that **equality, diversity and inclusion** are central to everything we do.

Our **Aims** are:

- To understand the diverse needs of our customers and communities and provide truly accessible and inclusive services.
- To have a diverse workforce with a wide range of experiences and skills where difference is respected and valued.
- For our Governance structures to fully reflect the diversity of the communities where we deliver services.

Priorities and Actions

Our Single Equalities priorities and the action plan that we use to monitor these has been set using the following themes from our Futures Strategy of:

People, Homes, Neighbourhoods, Well Managed and Financially Strong and Staff

The main commitments and activities that we will carry out in support of these themes are:

People – We Will:

- Regularly collect customer data and then use it to inform the way we deliver services so that they are responsive to diverse needs.
- Carry out a survey of our tenants at least every two years so that we understand their views and use these to inform what we need to focus on and how we deliver our services
- Deliver a bespoke service to our older customers that enables them to age well and reduce isolation and loneliness.
- Provide advice and support to tenants to maximise their incomes and support people to move into work.
- Deliver a tenancy support service to help people with complex needs to sustain their tenancies
- Conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) on all relevant policies, strategies and services, to reduce the risk of these disadvantaging any protected group.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable disabled people to gain access to services; for example, providing hearing induction loops and clear signage.
- Promote digital inclusion and provide opportunities for more people to get on line.

Homes – We Will:

- Allocate our homes to people using a clear lettings policy based on housing need.
- Carry out adaptations and other adjustments to homes to enable people to live independently in their homes.
- Build homes that meet the needs of people throughout their lives
- Provide at least two fully accessible homes at each new build development
- Make homes affordable by having a range of different types of tenures including social rent.
- Reduce the cost of running homes by providing energy efficient products and energy advice.

Neighbourhoods – We Will:

- Have a strong presence in our communities to support people to live well and safely, working in partnership with local community groups, the Police and other agencies.
- Act as a Reporting Centre for hate crime and deal quickly and effectively with anti-social behaviour, hate crime and domestic abuse.
- Deliver community investment activities that support people to move into work, improve their financial resilience and reduce poverty.
- Use our Customer Voice strategy to engage with different communities and target our work at under-represented groups.

Well Managed and Financially Strong – We Will:

- Sign up to the CIH Equality and Diversity Charter, carry out a self-assessment and put in place improvement actions
- Benchmark our Equality and Diversity outcomes against Greater Manchester data
- Deliver the MIND action plan
- Highlight equality and diversity impacts in all Board reports, to ensure the Board can take these into account when making decisions.
- Report to the Board annually on the delivery of this Scheme
- Produce our policies and other documents in Plain English and where relevant provide short, easy to read summaries.
- 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.
- Sign up to the commitments within the Armed Forces Covenant
- Have an accessible website that enables translation, modification of text size, and audio content.

Staff – We Will:

- Encourage and work with our local customers to apply for employment and apprenticeships within Southway
- Induct and train all our staff so that they fully understand our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and the importance of this to their ways of working and behaviours.
- Undertake awareness raising and training activities.
- Record and monitor diversity data relating to job applicants, employees and Board Members.
- Take positive action to try to achieve a better balance where there is evidence of under representation of a particular group in certain roles or at certain pay grades.

- Guarantee interviews to any applicant who has a disability and/or is an ex member of the armed forces and meets the minimum requirements of the job.
- Conduct fair, competency based selection processes based on skills and ability.
- Manage and promote staff based on their skills, abilities and performance.
- Conduct a staff satisfaction survey at least every two years and assess the results of this based on various diversity strands.
- Have clear transparent information available to staff on the type of data that we hold, and why we hold it

3. Stakeholder Responsibilities

- 3.1 Everyone working for and with Southway should be responsible for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and have a clear understanding of Southway's approach and the need to be fair, equal and respect differences.
- 3.2 Managers will lead by example demonstrating the behaviours expected of all staff.
- 3.3 Specific roles and responsibilities

The Board provide strategic leadership to the organisation and has overall responsibility for this Single Equality Scheme and ensuring that our actions and plans are effective and are focussed on the right things.

The Chief Executive is the executive lead on equality, diversity and inclusion and is responsible for providing assurance to the Board that it is being effectively delivered.

The Equality and Diversity Core Group – a small group of staff led by the Chief Executive who take responsible for setting the Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan and then lead on its delivery.

Suppliers, contractors and consultants that work for Southway must share our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. Where suppliers provide services directly to our customers then they must comply with our policy and procedures.

4. Legislation, Regulation and Best Practice

- 4.1 The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate, victimise or harass any person who holds one of the following protected characteristics:
- Age
 - Disability
 - Gender re-assignment
 - Marriage and Civil Partnerships

- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion
- Sex, and
- Sexual orientation

4.2 The Act also 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

4.3 Socio economic status was not included in the 2010 Equality Act as a protected characteristic. However, given the levels of poverty and disadvantage in our communities Southway will include this within our Action Plan as a priority.

We will therefore work to address inequality, reduce poverty and empower people to achieve their full potential and live well.

We will also have full regard to intersectionality and the fact that disadvantage is increased where people hold more than one of the protected characteristics and will reflect this in our work with our customers and our staff.

4.4 The Regulator of Social Housing requires Southway, as a provider of social and affordable housing, to comply with its Consumer Standards; this includes:

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

5. **Related Strategies:**

Futures Strategy
 Community Investment Strategy
 Customer Voice Strategy