



Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy

Policy Category	Corporate
Policy Reference Number	HG_GRP_COR_192
Version Number	3.1
Date Effective From	July 2023
Applicable to	All colleagues, volunteers and temporary/agency workers
Policy Owner	Director of People & Corporate Services
Policy Author	Head of Human Resources
Approved by	Director of People and Corporate Services (reported to Board July 2023)
Equality Assessment	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy EA completed June 2023
Next review of policy due	July 2026
Distribution	Internal: All colleagues, volunteers and temporary/agency workers communicated via Home World Intranet and Workplace External: Summary on Home Group website. Full policy available on request to Home Group policy team
Key search terms	Equity Diversity Inclusion and Belonging; EDI&B; Equality; Diversity; Inclusion; Belonging
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the full version history of this policy, click HERE Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy or saving it on shared/ individual drives. All policies and supporting resources can be found under 'Policy and Procedures' on the intranet. Printed and saved versions may quickly go out of date- contact policy@homegroup.org.uk for support and advice

We are profoundly passionate about Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and belonging here at Home Group, and we have a deep sense of pride in challenging inequality in all its forms.

We do not accept, nor tolerate, harassment or discrimination of any kind and where we see it, work fearlessly to eliminate it and take the appropriate formal action to deal with it.

Equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging are incredibly important to us and we will not shirk our responsibilities in creating an inclusive, diverse organisation that is void of harassment and discrimination and is right for every colleague and customer.

We're proud of the culture we've created, where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and with respect and our policy sets out challenging targets that we're dedicated to achieving, also outlining the steps we will take to make that happen!

We will take action to remove barriers faced by people from different groups, providing:

- fair access to our services;
- fair outcomes for the people using our services; and
- fair opportunities to participate and be involved in shaping our services.

We will work closely with our customers, colleagues and communities to make sure we deliver our services in a way that meets their needs.

We will promote equity, value diversity, and encourage inclusion and belonging, in everything that we do, and through everyone we work with.

We will call out bias, challenge our thinking and behaviours, and share our experiences.

And we will listen to, support and champion the needs of underrepresented colleagues and customers.

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging are fundamental to the way we work at Home Group.

They're embedded into our culture and values, and this document outlines how we will work continuously to build and maintain an equitable, fair, diverse, inclusive environment with a sense of belonging for all.



Mark Henderson
Chief Executive
Home Group

1.0 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging policy statement

At Home Group we recognise and celebrate our individual differences; we believe each uniqueness builds the strongest of teams. We are proud to be committed to ensuring equity, diversity, fairness, inclusion, and belonging is embedded in everything we do. It's one of our cultural golden threads running from our strategic goals and values right through to the customers we support and communities we serve.

We strive to continually enhance our diverse makeup of colleagues to maintain a strong, safe and positive culture where everyone can be their 'best self' and feel that sense of belonging. Everyone has a part to play and an opportunity to flourish, they can always speak out and have a voice that's listened to. We know that's when we collectively deliver the best outcomes for our customers.

Our approach will always reflect, and sometimes go above and beyond, the best practice principles that are set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the National Equality standard for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

1.1 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging; what does it mean to us?

Equity	Quite simply, equity is about treating people fairly; this is not the same as treating everyone in the same way. We absolutely believe no-one should experience less favourable treatment, discrimination or be at a disadvantage. Everyone should have the same chances and opportunities and we must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances
Diversity	Recognising, respecting, and celebrating the differences in each of us. The many parts of a person's character and identity make them unique and collectively, that's what makes us brilliant! Examples of the things that make up diversity are: age, appearance, ability, disability, life experiences, job role, health, background, gender, family, friends, sexual orientation, religion, belief, values, culture, race, national origins, marital status...and many other things.
Inclusion	Creating an environment where everyone feels safe, valued, and involved. We understand someone's differences, so they are included in a way that suits them and they are treated fairly.
Belonging	It's the level of inclusion people feel in their environment – it is feeling heard, supported, respected and given equal opportunities to participate and contribute.

Below are the nine characteristics protected in the Equality Act 2010, and informed by definitions from the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#). We don't put people into boxes or use labels to define

people at Home Group as we know that everyone is unique, multifaceted, and people's expression and celebration of their uniqueness is rightly self-defined. People will of course often have more than one protected characteristic.

Protected characteristic	Definition
Age	'Age' refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 18 years' old) or ranges of ages, (for example 65 to 80 years' olds).
Disability	Someone has a disability they have a physical and/or mental disability which has a long-term and significant impact on their ability to carry out typical day-to-day activities.
Gender reassignment	This is where someone is proposing to undergo; are undergoing; or have undergone the process (or part of the process) to reassign their gender by changing physiological or other attributes of their sex.
Marriage and civil partnership	Marriage is a union between a woman and a man, or between a same-sex couple. Couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'.
Pregnancy and maternity	'Pregnancy' is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. 'Maternity' refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth
Race	Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality (including citizenship).
Religion or belief	'Religion' refers to any religion, including the lack of religion (e.g. atheism). 'Belief' includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect someone's life choices or the way they live for it to be included in the definition.
Sex	Being a man or a woman; a girl or a boy. The Equality Act 2010 defines sex in binary terms linked to biological characteristics, however we know that people also may self-define using non-binary and gender diverse terminology.
Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or any sex, no sex, for example being asexual, bisexual, gay, heterosexual, lesbian, pansexual, polysexual etc.

The Act makes it against the law for people to be treated unfairly in relation to the protected characteristics. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination, including harassment or bullying behaviour in relation to any of these characteristics or otherwise.

Information about different types of discrimination can be found in our supporting resource ['Discrimination: Not in our Home!'](#)

1.2 Legal and Regulatory Requirements

We have legal responsibilities and regulatory requirements that we must meet in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion; a brief summary of these are listed below. We see these as a minimum standard to be achieved and we will take action to exceed these standards where our customers and colleagues agree that it is important for us to do so.

The legal and regulatory requirements we follow:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Act 2010, including Schedule 149 (the public sector equality duty) • Statutory Code of Practice: Services, Public Functions and Associations • Statutory Code of Practice: Employment • Statutory Code of Practice: Equal Pay • Human Rights Act 1998 • Gender recognition act 2004 	
The responsibilities we are accountable for under:	
Social Housing Equality Framework (England)	All registered providers are required to treat all customers living in our rented and supported properties in England with fairness and respect and demonstrate that we understand the different needs of our customer. This includes in relation to the protected characteristics and customers with additional support needs.
Regulatory Standards for social housing in England	Including requirements around fair allocation of housing, tenant involvement and empowerment, keeping neighbourhoods safe and tackling anti-social behaviour as monitored by the Regulator of Social Housing in England
Scottish Social Housing Charter (November 2022)	Requirement for Home Group to provide all aspects of its housing services in Scotland so that every customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and received fair access to housing and housing services, as monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator.
Care Quality Commission (England)	Registered services are required to ensure that services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care that is personalised to individual needs and preferences – as set out in The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 and Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009
The Care Act 2014	The Act brings care and support legislation together in England into a single Act with a new wellbeing principle at its heart. It aims to make care and support clearer and fairer and to put people's wellbeing at the centre of decisions. It also underpins safeguarding adults in England.
The Mental Capacity Act 2005 / The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) / Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000	Designed to provide a legal framework for making decisions for people who lack mental capacity to make a specific decision for themselves at the time they need to make it.

1.3 Human Rights policy statement

At Home Group we are committed to protecting the human rights of all our colleagues and of everyone who receives direct or indirect services from us. As a responsible, ethical organisation, we fully support the principles of the Human Rights Act and all associated legislation. Our responsibility for human rights encompasses:

- Our offices and services - we will uphold the human rights of all employees, visitors and contractors at our offices, services and when we operate in the communities in which we serve
- Our rented and supported properties- we will uphold the human rights of customers living in properties owned or managed by Home Group
- Our supply chain — it is our aspiration to ensure that working conditions throughout our supply chain meet internationally accepted standards of human rights and working conditions

This policy statement has been developed with reference to the following documents:

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015
- The Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code
- Human Rights At Home: Guidance for Social Housing Providers (Equality and Human Rights Commission)

Key principles:

Child Labour	We will not employ workers under the legal minimum age for work as stipulated by the Employment Act 2008.
Forced Labour	We will not make use of any forced labour or debt-bondage labour in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015
Discrimination	We will not discriminate against any person based on their protected characteristics, and will uphold Article 14 of the Human Rights Act 1998 in respect of protection from discrimination.
Discipline	We will not employ, or allow to be employed, any form of corporate punishment, physical coercion or verbal abuse. Any disciplinary matter will be dealt with through formal procedures.
Working Hours	Working time directives will be adhered to as per the Working Time Regulations 1998 with opt-out clauses publicised to colleagues.
Remuneration	Wages paid for standard working hours will meet or exceed the minimum wage or living wage levels as appropriate.
Tenancy Management	We recognise Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 respecting a tenant's right to private life, family life, and the home and will not tolerate any forms of human trafficking or forced labour within our properties.

2.0 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Guiding Principles

We are fully committed to building and maintaining a diverse workforce, which better represents the communities we serve and creates a workplace where every colleague feels a sense of belonging and can be their true self. One of our key strategic goals is to create a vibrant, customer focussed organisation and be a true exemplar of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

We know that having a diverse workforce will support us in achieving our strategic goals, and for us it starts with addressing the lack of representation by hiring, retaining and progressing talent from under-represented groups.

We aim to achieve this by:

- Developing a group wide Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging action plan on an annual basis, reviewing this each year and reporting the outcomes to the Executive and the Board;
- Extensively involving customers and colleagues in identifying priority actions within the plan which is reviewed annually in collaboration with our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging steering group;

- Ensuring the Board, Executive and the Leadership team are accountable for the embedding of our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging approach and for monitoring our performance;
- Collecting, reviewing, and measuring data and the voice of our colleagues on a regular basis so that it informs us of our performance in relation to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging and our goals;
- Encouraging our leaders to access their colleague diversity data to drive progress and be accountable;
- Working closely with our operational people managers to identify opportunities within their teams, that will help us achieve our ambitious diversity targets – supporting positive action where appropriate;
- Regularly reviewing Human Resources policies and data to ensure there is learning and we take targeted action where necessary;
- Adopting the Rooney rule, which means ensuring all leadership and executive roles have at least one Multicultural candidate shortlisted for interview;
- Ensuring all leadership and executive roles have at least one female candidate shortlisted for interview;
- Supporting all recruiting managers in undertaking interviews and assessments fairly so as to avoid unconscious biases in their decision making – utilising the recruitment digital learning module;
- Taking all reasonable steps to ensure our partners, suppliers and groups connected to Home Group are actively committed to our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging principles;
- Actively encouraging our colleagues and customers to engage in shaping the organisation and its services;
- Undertaking equality impact assessments, which shows how equality and diversity informs our business objectives and the equality analysis are transparent, monitored, reported and acted upon;
- Regularly refreshing our mandatory Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging learning portfolio and challenging our thinking;
- Having a culture which takes diversity seriously and regularly assesses the performance, by using the Great Place to Work survey, which repeatedly scores over 90% for all questions relating to diversity. Another mechanism, which shows our commitment to creating an environment where diversity is encouraged and celebrated, and everyone can be their true self.

2.1 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan

Our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging action plan focuses on four key strands: Multicultural, Disability, Gender and LGBTQplus (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer). We like to quality check the work we do, and regularly self-assess our progress against the National Equality Standard (NES), which is a government backed, industry recognised national standard for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. The best practice framework is designed to assess an organisations proficiency against all areas of diversity as defined by the Equality Act 2010.:

The National Equality Standard assess organisation against 35 competencies within seven key categories:

- Core Components - culture, engagement and communications
- Your Talent – recruitment & onboarding, career progression
- Your Business – strategy, governance
- Your People – mental Health & Wellbeing, adjustments & accessibility
- Your Leadership – inclusive leadership, senior level scrutiny
- Your Relationships – customer insight, supplier relationships

- Review & Measurement – pay gap, data analysis

We've recently achieved the NES accreditation and you can access the National Equality Standard, by clicking [here](#)

2.2 Role of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group

To support our commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and belonging within Home Group, we have created a steering group of dedicated representatives from across the business. The purpose of the group is to meet quarterly to review progress against the annual plan, look at the colleague profiling data and agree actions. The group also drive successful diversity communication campaigns and use it as a voice for colleagues to channel their feedback through the group.

Representatives for the steering group, ranging from colleagues to senior management and customers work together to drive forward Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging work across Home Group by working with network groups (encouraging strong ally-ship), stakeholders, and other customers to initiate and drive the success of our diversity agenda.

The colleagues we employ and the communities we serve are more diverse than ever. That is why we want our organisation to go the extra mile to champion and embed equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging in everything we do – that is in the way we work with each other, in the way we work with our customers and in the way we seek to create positive outcomes within complex and challenging environments.

We feel proud of our approach to diversity, but we pledge to be open to challenging ourselves, our colleagues and customers to ensure that we continue to celebrate the richness that true diversity brings!

2.3 Network Groups

Equality Diversity and inclusion is ever evolving which challenges our thinking and approach and our Network groups are the enablers around bringing the Steering Group to life. We know how important shadow of a leader is and that is why all of our Network groups have executive representation. The following network groups exist within Home Group;

- disABILITY
- Multicultural
- Women of Home Group
- Partners in Pride
- Pride at Home
- Peer Support Groups

Colleagues perform better when they can be themselves, and that is why we know it is crucial to have the right support networks in place, where colleagues can go to for confidential support or to celebrate success as a collective. Ally-ship is a key element of the network groups and strengthens our approach.

Our network groups are a safe place for colleagues to obtain guidance and share experiences with an objective of supporting one another.

We've also a number of action panels, led by our network groups to support colleagues on issues relating to their protected characteristic in an informal and supportive way sharing their own lived experiences.

CEO and Executive sponsorships are key to the success of the Networks groups. It reinforces the importance of needing such groups to support colleagues and all of our network groups follow the same underlying principles; to 'champion, engage and challenge'.

2.4 Data

Equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging is recognising that every one of us is different, and tailoring services to respond to individual needs across all of the protected characteristics.

Carrying out data analysis enables us to build an environment where both colleagues and customers can be their true selves, identifying where we have underrepresented groups, and empowers us to take positive action as well as engage in initiatives such as the Rooney Rule and the [Leadership 2025 Five Point Plan](#) (set up to create a more ethnically diverse leadership across the housing sector). Data is also used to analyse aspects of the colleague lifecycle in recruitment, internal promotions, and Grow our Own initiative employee relations cases, learning and development, along with turnover so that we can assess any trends and take action as needed.

We set ourselves challenging targets and report these annually in our corporate reporting, the table below shows our ambitious 2025 targets:

Protected Characteristic	Target April 2025
Disability	8%
Multicultural – Group wide	22%
Multicultural – SMT, BMT and Exec	8%
LGBQ+	8%

We comply with our legal duty and undertake annual gender pay gap reporting, but we don't stop there, we also do an annual ethnicity pay gap report too. The outputs allow us to develop our leadership programmes to focus on underrepresented groups and success in this area will support our gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

3.0 Terminology reference

The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

Direct discrimination	treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay.
Indirect discrimination	a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.
Harassment	this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.
Victimisation	retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Disability discrimination	this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability
----------------------------------	--

4.0 Supporting documents

In order to comply with Home Group's approach to **equity, diversity, inclusion & belonging** and achieve the standards set out above, the relevant processes and policy compliance notes must be followed in line with stated roles and responsibilities. Colleagues should refer to our internal index for the full list of supporting documents.

5.0 Version history

Version Number	Effective Date	Amendment made by (name & job title)	Version approved by (name & job title)	Description of Changes
V1.0	Dec 2014		Board	Final version approved at Board
V1.1	Dec 2014			R192a Roles and Responsibilities version updated
V2.0	January 2016			Updated to reflect move from Social Housing Equality Framework to CIH Equality and Diversity Charter
V2.1	April 2018	Employability Manager	Director of People	Annual review of content to reflect up to date wording and tone of voice. Rebranded on to new policy template. Desktop review only. Standard 5 amended to reflect GDPR.
V2.2	May 2019	Senior Administrator	Director of People	Added Human rights legislation into section 1.5
V2.3	June 2019	Policy Manager Compliance Business Partner	Director of People	Desktop review- full review to take place 2020. Updated terminology to reflect the equality act 2010. Removed reference to legal and regulatory requirements that are no longer a specific requirement.
V3.0	June 2020	HR Manager	Director of People	Full review with colleagues and customers input Reworded sections to align with HG tone of voice Developed HG ED&I guiding principles Inserted info about our data and targets agreed by Board Added in a section about the role of the steering group and our network groups
V3.1	June 2023	Head of HR	Director of People & Corporate Services	Full review with colleague and customer input. Added in alignment to the NES framework Renamed to Equity, Diversity, inclusion and Belonging policy