

Equality and Diversity Charter and Priorities to support it

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Appendix 1 Our resident profile

(This is updated every quarter so is not attached to this document)

Appendix 2 Action plan

(This is a working document, updated every Quarter so is not attached to this document. It sets out the actions to support our priorities).

Equality means- everyone having the same chances to do what they can. Some people may need extra help or support to get the same chances.

Diversity means- a mix of different people- for example- men and women, people of different races or ages and so on.



1. Introduction to Phoenix

Phoenix was created in 2007 following a stock transfer by Lewisham Council and a positive ballot of residents. We own and manage 6,300 homes, almost all of which are located in the Lewisham wards of Bellingham, Whitefoot and Downham.

Tenant campaigners in our area had heard about the community gateway model at a housing conference and were attracted by the idea of a resident-led and resident-owned housing association.

Our community gateway model places residents at the heart of both decision making and scrutiny. We are led by our residents and we encourage tenants and leaseholders to get involved in a wide range of consultative groups that play a key role in steering our future direction and how we allocate our resources. We also offer shareholding membership to residents, giving them a stake in the organisation.

We were named the UK's 3rd best landlord in a nationwide housing poll in 2014 in recognition of the success of our model and how it is helping to realise our vision of creating a better future for our community in south Lewisham.

We are now one of four community gateways and see ourselves as part of a wider co-operative and mutual housing movement across England and Wales.

Our vision is

“To Work together to build a better future for our Phoenix Community”



2. Why are equality and diversity important to Phoenix?

The world, the country, our area and the Phoenix Community is becoming more and more diverse. To build on our successes to date, deliver our vision and be fair in everything we do we need to understand differences and provide the right kind of opportunities to everyone we serve or who joins our organisation.

By doing this we aim to:

- Make sure all applicants, residents, staff, volunteers and other customers are treated fairly, free from direct or indirect discrimination on any grounds.
- Tailor our services to meet current and future needs.

We expect our partners, contractors and anyone who works alongside us to aim to achieve this, too. This is because we believe that only by fully embracing equality and diversity will we be able to deliver our overall vision.

Principles of equality and diversity have already helped us on our journey and will continue to guide us along the way. For example we will:

- Know our residents and other customers better and be able to tailor our services to meet their needs.
- Be able to respond to changes in society and our community.
- Attract and retain talented staff and volunteers who represent our community.
- Create inclusive working environments and governance structures where everyone can personally contribute.
- Meet our regulatory and legal requirements.

To help us plan ahead and learn from what we already do our board has agreed we should adopt the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIoH) Equality and Diversity Charter.

3. Equality and Diversity Charter

At Phoenix Equality and Diversity-

- Is driven from the top.
- Informs our plans.
- Shapes our culture (the way we do things around here).
- Is supported through staff training, development and engagement.

At Phoenix-

- We know who our residents are.
- We involve residents in shaping and scrutinising our services.
- We represent and support the communities which we serve.

To support this Charter there are examples of what we must demonstrate. We have adapted these slightly to make them more relevant to Phoenix. This is included in section 5, alongside the priorities we will carry out to support the Charter.

4. How the priorities to deliver the Charter have been developed

The priorities to deliver the Charter have been developed by a working circle of staff sponsored by the Customer Services Director. To develop it the group assessed what we do now and what we need do in the future. It considered:

- Resident and staff feedback.
- Our area and the profile of our residents and staff.
- Good practice from literature and organisations that represent protected groups.
- Some other strategies.
- A toolkit published by HQN (Housing Quality network).
- The law and our Regulatory Framework.

Included in the priorities and action plan are the ideas, suggestions and feedback from staff (through focus groups) and residents at link events and the festival. The Gateway Committee and Residents Policy Working Group considered the Charter in section 3 and made suggestions about the things we need to do to make sure we deliver it.

5. What does following the Charter mean we must do and what are our priorities?

Inclusive resident leadership and organisational culture

Equality and diversity is driven from the top

We must demonstrate:

- There is strong leadership from our board, board champion(s), chief executive, executive team and management team endorsing a strategic commitment to equality and diversity across all of the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation; and to supporting an understanding of the role of human rights in housing and the impact of socio-economic discrimination for our community.

To support this we will:

- Review the role of board and staff champions and the Executive Lead for E&D. (Supporting, challenging, setting the culture that E&D is everyone's responsibility, monitoring these priorities); provide external support and training as needed.
- Promote the Charter Marks for E&D we hold and decide if we need to work towards others.

Equality and diversity informs our plans

We must demonstrate:

- Equality and diversity lies at the heart of our corporate planning process and informs our investment decisions, how we design and deliver value for money services, how we procure services; and how relationships with partners, suppliers, contractors, residents, customers and our community is sustained.
- We undertake equality impact analyses which show how equality and diversity informs our plans. The equality analyses are transparent, monitored, reported and acted upon.
- We are committed to on-going improvement in providing fair and accessible services to our existing and future residents and customers.

To support this we will:

- Record our staff time and budgets responding to and promoting E&D to check what difference we are making and learn from it.
- Clarify and monitor E&D expectations of partners and contractors. Ensure all policies, plans and Board decisions include Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to check we are not unlawfully discriminating.
- Set our E&D commitments in all our key strategies and plans e.g. procurement, community regeneration.
- Set a programme of Equality Impact Assessments across Phoenix and ensure Community Centres and the Green Man have Equality Impact Assessments.
- Consider socio-economic discrimination and how we tackle this through our engagement with residents and community regeneration.

Equality and diversity shapes our organisational culture (the way we do things around here)

We must demonstrate:

- Equality and diversity informs recruitment and staff development - the staff we employ represent the communities we serve. Diversity is represented at all levels of the organisation and our staff in their diversity say they are satisfied with working at Phoenix.
- Our commitment to equality and diversity is public, clear and transparent – all language, imagery, policies, procedures and publicity are inclusive and representative of our diverse communities. Information is provided in alternative or accessible formats where this is required
- We communicate a zero tolerance approach to discriminatory attitudes or practice from staff, partners, contractors, suppliers, customers and from individuals in our community.

To support this we will:

- Link our values (4 C's- Community, Consideration, Collaboration and Customer) and our plans to embed them, more to E&D.
- Work on understanding better how fairness drives staff and resident satisfaction.
- Review our staff code of conduct and dignity at work policy.
- Celebrate successes related to E&D and continue to hold E&D awareness events with staff and residents.
- Promote E&D- by talking, posters and events throughout the year; not just in the autumn during E&D week or at the E&D event for residents.
- Identify and take actions to tackle under-representation in use of our services, who we employ and who applies to work or use our services.

Equality and diversity is supported through staff training, development and engagement

We must demonstrate:

- Staff at all levels are supported to gain appropriate knowledge and skills to deliver equal services to our staff and our customers in their diversity.
- Staff in their diversity have an opportunity to shape and influence the delivery of fair and accessible services.

To support this we will:

- Refresh our approach to training and raising awareness and link more to our values (4 C's- Community, consideration, collaboration and communication).
- Review our approach to induction on E&D for board members, staff, volunteers and residents.
- Support staff and board champions for E&D through training and or mentoring to play an active role in promoting equality and diversity and supporting change. Include tips on how to tackle behaviour or actions that do not promote an inclusive workplace or risk discriminatory actions being taken.

At Phoenix we serve involved and empowered residents and customers in our community

We know who our customers are

We must demonstrate:

- We proactively use resident profiling to develop insight information to help us develop fair and accessible services.
- Staff and residents clearly understand how resident profiling can improve our organisation and where service improvements have been made – we will share our successes.
- We will develop our capacity to understand and respond to the housing needs and aspirations of migrants and new arrivals in the communities which we serve.
- We will develop our capacity to understand and respond to the housing needs and aspirations of future residents and customers in their diversity.
- Customer insight information is regularly reviewed, monitored and refreshed and measured against our corporate plan and priorities for equality and diversity.
- Resident profiling is informed by best practice, is undertaken confidentially and in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

To support this we will:

- Increase our resident profile which is up-to-date and maintain it. We will concentrate on increasing the data we hold on our residents with a disability because our data in this area is lower. We will explain when we are collecting it how we will store it and use it to tailor our services.
- Continue to log how and when we use profile information, more accurately, so we can use it to celebrate success and learn.
- Explore differences in satisfaction between different groups of residents and take action to ensure everyone has the same chance of using our services.

We involve our residents in shaping and scrutinising services

We must demonstrate:

- We actively encourage and proactively seek the involvement of residents in their diversity across all nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in the shaping and delivery of fair and accessible services
- We provide structures, resources, training and capacity building opportunities for residents to enable them to contribute to delivery of fair and accessible services
- We effectively empower our tenants to scrutinise, monitor and review our services for equality and diversity - we provide our customers with regular, robust and appropriate information in accessible formats which have been agreed with them and residents are encouraged to challenge our performance in relation to equality and diversity. We will report to our residents and customers on our progress

To support this we will:

- Continue to complete Equality Impact Assessments of residents who are involved to check they are representative of all residents and take action on the results (for example by doing more outreach work to increase the involvement of under represented groups).
- Consider how we consult people with different protected characteristics.

We involve our residents in shaping and scrutinising services

- Consult with community groups and groups who represent different groups in our community and work with them to ensure our services are not directly or indirectly discriminating against anyone.
- Work with residents to complete Equality Impact Assessments and identify actions needed (for example in the Policy Working Group, Communications Group, Gateway Committee and Scrutiny Panel).

We represent and support the communities which we serve

We must demonstrate:

- We build visible links with local, diverse and representative community groups and community advocates to strengthen our relationships with the communities which we serve and to build trust
- We work openly with partners and other service providers in the community to ensure that our services are representative and diverse and to ensure that the diverse customers whom we serve are safe and secure in their homes and communities.
- We will work with the communities which we serve and with community partners to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups within the communities which we serve
- We will work with the communities which we serve and with community partners to eliminate discrimination, tackle harassment, hate incidents and hate crime and domestic violence.

To support this we will:

- Aim to ensure our staff, volunteers involved residents and Board reflect the makeup of our community. Take actions to encourage involvement from under represented groups.
- Complete an Equality Impact Assessment of recruitment.
- Promote our employee assistance scheme to all staff so anyone who needs external support or advice about any equality or diversity issues (in or outside work) can obtain impartial and independent advice or support.
- Consider the impact of socio-economic discrimination and working with others e.g. the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), residents and other community groups seek to address it.
- Consider how to respond to findings of any equality Impact assessments which show not all groups are using all of our services.
- Continue to provide specific services to groups of residents to enable them to enjoy their homes and community as well as to access our services. E.G. large print letters, Aids and Adaptations, handy person services, internal decorations.



6. Our legal and regulatory requirements

The Equality Act 2010 introduced new equality strands and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act that simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for everyone to understand.

The Act protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society. It seeks to outlaw unlawful discrimination against a person, or group of people, because of:

- Race.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation (whether being lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual).
- Disability (or because of something connected with their disability)
- Religion or belief.
- Being a transsexual person (this is where someone has changed, is changing or has proposed changing their sex – called gender reassignment in law).
- Having just had a baby or being pregnant.
- Being married or in a civil partnership.
- Age.

These areas of diversity are known as the protected characteristics.

Phoenix is subject to the general public sector 'equality duty' within the act because we carry out public functions. This means that we must, as a minimum, have due regard to the following when we are carrying out our work:

- The need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment.
- The need to advance equality of opportunity.
- The need to promote good relations and positive attitudes.

This is called our equality duty.

The Act explains that having due regard to promoting equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

As a provider of social housing, we work in a regulated sector. Our Regulator specifies requirements of registered providers through its Regulatory Framework. The Framework includes a standard on Tenant Involvement and Empowerment which includes a section related to equality and diversity:

Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

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

Understanding and responding to diverse needs

Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.

When we were considering our legal and regulatory framework we decided it would be helpful to identify priorities to help us meet our equalities duty to each of the nine protected groups as well as the standards in the Charter. We will include these in our action plan.

7. Responsibilities and Monitoring

Everyone at Phoenix has a responsibility for delivering the priorities to support the Charter. To help achieve this it is helpful to set our responsibilities and monitoring arrangements.

Responsibilities

The Board- is responsible for making sure that this Charter is delivered and will monitor performance annually. The Board appoints Equality Champion(s) to promote equality and diversity amongst board members and support Phoenix to meet the Charter and our equality and diversity requirements.

The Executive Team- has overall responsibility for delivering the key actions set to support the priorities in the Charter.

The Director of Customer Services- has a specific responsibility to chair the Equality and Diversity Working Circle and sponsor the monitoring and delivery of the action plan to support the Charter.

Managers and other staff- are responsible for actively championing and promoting equality and diversity in all areas of their work, and for delivering the action plan.

The Equality and Diversity Working Circle is responsible for promoting and monitoring the priorities to support the Charter and making recommendations for future priorities. The Circle is sponsored and Chaired by the Director of Customer Services and has set a Terms of Reference which outline out how it works.

Monitoring

A report on performance against the Charter will be provided to the Board annually.

Board Equality Champions and the Gateway Committee will receive regular updates and help shape how we meet the priorities.

The Equality and Diversity Circle will monitor progress at least once every Quarter.

Updates and successes will be communicated to staff through the intranet and team meetings.

Updates and successes will be communicated to residents by our web-site, community news through working groups and at events.

8. Definitions

Definitions

Equality means- everyone having the same chances to do what they can. Some people may need extra help or support to get the same chances.

Phoenix must consider how services, jobs and the money we spend support equality. This is called an **Equality Duty**

Reasonable adjustments- these are changes Phoenix must make so disabled people can do something. E.g. sending information in ways people can easily use, like in large print.

Diversity means- a mix of different people- for example- men and women, people of different races or ages and so on.

Discrimination- when someone is treated worse than other people because they have a protected characteristic. For example because of their age, gender, race, having a baby or just having had a baby, being married or in a civil partnership, being a transsexual person, having a disability or their sexual orientation.

Dual discrimination- when someone is treated worse than other people because of a combination of two things; for example age and race.