



Equality and Diversity Annual Report

2012 - 2013



Foreword

Welcome to the Equality and Diversity report for 2012/13. Embracing equality has been central to the way we have delivered services over the last year, considering the needs of our employees and customers in the decisions we have made.

This report highlights some of the work we have undertaken to support our priorities and those of Gateshead Council. This is an ongoing process and we continue to focus on providing a workplace where employees feel comfortable to be themselves, performing to the best of their ability and to provide services which meet the current and future needs of our tenants and leaseholders.

In the current economic climate where resources are increasingly pressured this can be difficult, however this simply highlights the reason for keeping equality in the forefront of our minds, to ensure that we continue to look for potential impacts of our decisions on our communities and the people who work for us. To do this we need to continue to collect and update quality data so we understand the people working at the housing company and we have a true picture of the communities we serve.

You will find in this report, some of the highlights of this year as well as some of the activities we will focus on in 2013/14.

Jon Mallen-Beadle
Managing Director and Corporate Lead for Equality

Introduction

Embracing Equality has been a company value for a number of years now and reflects the approach the organisation takes to consider equality throughout the business.

The Single Equality Scheme placed a wider focus on equality, embedding this into each service area rather than it being something which stands alone. The three main goals of the scheme are:

- Maintain a corporate commitment to equality issues
- Work in partnership with customers and stakeholders to deliver equitable services and improve social cohesion in the borough
- Be an equal opportunities employer with a workforce that represents the community it serves and is committed to equality and diversity.

The Managing Director is the Corporate Lead for Equality and regularly communicates messages to the company on key activities.

The Resources Committee receive a quarterly Equality update report which summarises our activities and any relevant legislative changes or best practice. This ensures that we continue to be monitored and challenged to improve.

Legislation and Regulation

In the last year, the Equality Act, and specifically the Public Sector Equality Duty has come into the fore with the Government instigating a review of the duty to determine whether it is operating as intended. Whilst the outcome of this review is still unknown, there remains a requirement for public organisations to have due regard to equality and the need to advance equality in our practices. This is central to the way that services are delivered and decisions are taken to introduce, change or withdraw services.

Example: Welfare Reform Equality Impact Assessment

Over the last 12 months there has been significant work involved in preparing the organisation and affected tenants for the changes to benefits being introduced through Welfare Reform. A working group was set up in the company to oversee this area and discuss the potential impact and any associated actions. To support this area, an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken. This looked at the breakdown of who was due to be affected by the under occupation rules and whether there were any specific groups who would be more likely to be affected and therefore potentially require additional information or support. It was recognised in particular that disabled tenants who have a spare room for storage of equipment and those who have properties with major adaptations for their disability would be affected by these changes. As a result, the Advice and Support officers attended and provided information to a range of disability groups including Gateshead Council's Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Partnership (PDSI) and have provided advice on applying to the council's Discretionary Housing Fund for support.

This is an area that is continuously evolving and as a result, the equality implications of the changes are considered as part of this process.

In addition to the Equality Act, the Involvement and Empowerment standard of the Homes and Communities Agency's regulatory framework also places a requirement on landlords to 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

What did we do in 2012/13?

These are just some of the highlights of our activities over the last year.

April – June

- Raised awareness of the Single Equality Scheme and our equality goals at a range of events attended as part of Opportunity Knocks.
- Supported Carers Week in June, working with Gateshead Carer's Association to host an event for local employers and encourage them to sign up to the 'Gateshead Carer Friendly, Employer Charter Mark'
- Equality and procurement officers from the company attended an event hosted by Assessment North East and the Equality and Human Rights

Commission called 'Buying Better Outcomes' designed to help identify the equality requirements of public organisations when procuring goods and services.

- Hosted a joint forum of the Disabled Persons Housing Forum and BME Housing Forum supporting Gateshead Together Week.
- Attended events to mark National Refugee Week.
- Targeted customers to inform them about the last opportunities to access free insulation in their properties through our partnership with Gateshead Council and Gateshead Warmzone, recognising that our most vulnerable customers are also the ones who would benefit most from improving their insulation and thus reducing their fuel bills.

July - September

- Supported Newcastle Pride in July for the 5th consecutive year, sponsoring and attending the event, gathering information on experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender friendly workplaces and landlords.
- Held drop in events in Keelman House and Blaydon office with Gateshead Carers to provide advice and support to employees who are carers within the organisation.

October – December

- Supported the North East Equality Awards, co-sponsoring an award for Equality in the Housing Sector for contractors.
- Issued the prepopulated customer profile form with the rent statement to collect missing profile information and ensure the information we hold is correct.
- Took part in an event called 'Dignity in Gateshead' aimed at providing information about the Dignity in Gateshead Charter which includes some key principles to be applied across service delivery
- Provided training and support to our Health and Wellbeing Advocates.

January - March

- Received our results for the Stonewall workplace equality index.
- Held our equality event for contractors 'Equality and Diversity: It Pays to Know'
- Carried out an exercise to gather profile data on leaseholders and those who sublet their properties.
- Held our customer training course 'Understanding our differences' for involved tenants including new TALISMAN members



How are we doing?

The next sections of this report show the work we have been carrying out and how this fits with progressing our three goals.

Maintain a corporate commitment to equality issues

During this year we began our review of the Single Equality Scheme to update this and ensure that the goals we had set out continue to be the relevant priorities for us as both an employer and service provider. To date we have had discussions with customers about the current scheme identifying a number of areas where this needs to be updated. We will conclude the review in 2013.

Commitment to equality within the organisation continues to start from the top with our Managing Director also identified as the Corporate Lead for equality. This sends out a clear message that it is taken seriously as an organisation and is reflected in messages regarding activity and events that the company supports.

Board members receive information on the equality implications of any report being presented either to the main Board or to one of our committees to ensure that this forms part of the decision making process.

In addition to this, Resources Committee, consisting of a number of Board Members have responsibility for overseeing our activity and progress around equality. The quarterly update report provides information on key activity as well as providing any information on legislative changes or best practice which has an impact on the organisation, our employees or our customers.

We also place a requirement on our contractors to follow our equality principles and values and to demonstrate to us how they are meeting the requirements of the public sector equality duty.

Example: Equality and Diversity: It Pays to Know

Since the Single Equality Scheme was put in place, we have worked to strengthen our procurement practices around equality, reviewing the questions asked in the tendering process to ensure that the systems are robust and ensuring that organisations who are contracted to work with us, work to our values and principles.

Procurement processes in 2012/13 highlighted an issue with some organisations failing to meet the criteria of the equality sections or simply failing to provide any responses in pre-qualification questionnaires. This highlighted a gap in the understanding of private organisations of what the equality legislation meant to them and what was expected of them when working with us.

This has started a process of the company working more closely with both our direct contractors and their sub-contractors to help them understand the Equality Act, what this means to them and what we expect once they are working on contracts directly or indirectly contracted by the housing company. In March 2013, we invited representatives from a range of organisations to attend an event

called 'Equality and Diversity: It Pays to Know'. Over 35 attendees came to the event, held in partnership between the housing company, Gateshead Council and Assessment North East.

This event gave attendees an overview of the duty and its requirements and provided a chance for the organisations to discuss the barriers they face and how we can support them to overcome these. A particular success of the event was bringing organisations of different sizes together ranging from sole traders to large companies. This helped provide each other and the company with an understanding of how this can affect their level of knowledge and their ability to influence equality practices.

Comments from attendees including 'Well worth the experience', 'Enjoyable and informative' and 'Good to understand the legal requirements, challenges and how to overcome these'

Involvement, partnership and access

Knowing our customers

In order to make sure that we are providing the most appropriate services to our tenants and leaseholders, we need to make sure that the information we hold is correct and up to date.

For a number of years we have been collecting information at any opportunity where we have contact with tenants. This is a key performance indicator for the company, and forms part of the information used by Gateshead Council to monitor our performance.

At the end of this year (31 March 2013) we had 19867 tenancies with:

- 526 BME tenants, with the majority being Black African
- 712 tenants under 25
- 3449 being over 75
- 5659 tenants have told us they have a disability, with mobility difficulties and mental health difficulties being the highest proportion
- 7017 tenants have indicated their religion or belief with 4748 of these declaring that they are Christian.
- 6335 tenants have declared their sexuality with 117 stating they are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.
- 1017 stated that they required information in a specific format, specifically with 861 stating they require large print.

This year we recognised that the information we held relating to leaseholders was significantly lower than that relating to tenants. In order to address this we commissioned a targeted exercise by an external organisation to collect some of the missing information. This exercise also encouraged leaseholders who were subletting their properties to gather information from their tenants, particularly in relation to disability to identify any issues that may arise or cause potential access issues.

Involving customers in shaping and scrutinising our services

We have worked with tenants and leaseholders during the year to influence and shape how our services are delivered. Our service standards for involvement include ensuring that our involved customers represent the community we serve. In order to measure this, we monitor our database of involved customers compared to our overall customer profile.

Specifically our Disabled Persons Housing Forum and BME Housing Forum have met quarterly to discuss the way services are provided and identify ways in which we can improve access to these services. In particular one of the issues the groups have focussed on this year is information regarding hate crime reporting, to understand the trends and issues faced by particular groups.

In July 2012, the TALISMAN, the company's independent tenant and leaseholder scrutiny panel presented their first report on anti-social behaviour to the Customers and Communities Committee. As part of this review, the panel considered the support provided for vulnerable customers and how their needs are taken into account. In particular the review highlighted the Customer Assessment Tool as an excellent tool for identifying the needs of the individual and the impact the anti-social behaviour is having on them.

We have continued to deliver our customer training course 'Understanding Differences in People' to involved customers to give them an understanding of equality, recognising stereotyping and how to ensure that everyone is given the appropriate respect during customer meetings. This ensures that all customers feel welcome and able to contribute in involvement sessions.

Supporting Local Communities

The company's Community Fund supported by Mears and Local Environmental Services provides cash and in kind support to a range of community groups for projects that make a difference for the communities we work in.

Groups are encouraged to make applications to the fund during the year and are successful where the projects can demonstrate that they will either:

- Support people to overcome disadvantage
- Create stronger communities
- Make Gateshead an even better place to live.

Some of the groups and activities we have supported during the year include:

- Activities to progress Gateshead Youth Assembly's Child Poverty Action Plan
- ICT equipment was supplied to Birtley Community Association to provide access to computers and the internet for local residents.
- The Older Persons Assembly was provided with funding to support their development of friendship groups to reduce social isolation in older people.
- FIFI International African Youth project was provided with funding for their Eat Together Project which includes a programme of events to encourage youngsters to learn about food and where it comes from.

Partnership working and supporting victims of anti-social behaviour

In order to work towards our equality objectives and those of Gateshead Council, we regularly work in partnership with other organisations.

In particular this year we have worked to help achieve the Safer Gateshead priority of 'Protecting & Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities'. Specifically in the last year we have supported 6 victims of hate crime and 83 victims of Domestic Abuse with security measures to help them feel safer in their homes. In addition we have made 1751 referrals to other agencies where we have identified that our customers experiencing anti-social behaviour require additional support including Victim Support, Safer Families and Housing Options.

We have played an active role in the Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group, working to deliver on the priorities of the Hate Crime Strategy for Gateshead. In particular this group has been focussing on promoting hate crime awareness and improving confidence from groups where it is known that reporting has been typically low. This includes Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender customers and disabled customers. We have raised awareness through our forums and through our attendance at Newcastle Pride. In total this year 59 hate crime incidents were reported to the housing company compared to 49 in the previous year. This reflects the efforts that the company in partnership with Gateshead Council and other organisations have made to increase reports.

Example: Hate Crime Training – Extremist Groups

Community Engagement Officers from South Tyneside & Gateshead Area Command were invited during April to deliver a presentation to Neighbourhood Relations Officers on extreme right wing groups and the threat which their activities pose to community cohesion. The presentation also cover radicalisation issues amongst all communities and built on previous training delivered on the Prevent agenda.

Following their attendance on the training Neighbourhood Relations Officers delivered a briefing to all neighbourhood housing offices. It is hoped that this will empower frontline officers to swiftly recognise stickers, graffiti or signage which may be a prelude to more confrontational activity or be designed to provoke a response from the local community.

An equal opportunities employer with a workforce that represents the community it serves and is committed to equality and diversity

Health and Wellbeing

In the last year we have built on the previous success of health and wellbeing initiatives to continue to be a positive employer and provide a working environment where employees feel they can be themselves and work to their full potential.

A series of 'Wellbeing at Work' sessions were held in the first half of the year including introductory sessions for any employees to support their own personal health and wellbeing. Following this, a programme of full day sessions were

made available for any employees who felt they would benefit from more in depth guidance and advice.

All employees were invited this year to attend a session called SUMO (Shut Up – Move On). This was a joint initiative with Your Homes Newcastle aimed at equipping employees with skills to deal effectively with challenges faced in the workplace and at home.

To support the company's overall approach to health and wellbeing, we also appointed a number of Health and Wellbeing Advocates from across different areas of the organisation. The advocates have received a range of training to support them in their role to be able to support and signpost employees with health and wellbeing concerns as well as leading on a number of wellbeing initiatives during the year.

Training

We recognise that training and raising awareness is key to ensuring that our employees understand our equality principles and that this is reflected in their behaviour.

Our e-learning programme 'Equality and Diversity Essentials' which introduces everyone to the concepts of equality and diversity and provides an overview of the main legislation and its practical implications. All employees undertake this training on their first day within the company and as a minimum of every 3 years after this. In addition to this a supplementary package called 'Managing Diversity' is provided to all managers to understand the key role they play both in recruitment and managing situations in the work place.

A number of mental health awareness raising sessions for managers were held this year. The aim of the training was to help managers to recognise the symptoms of mental health problems within their employees. The course also provided the tools and advice on how to provide initial help and how to guide a person towards appropriate professional help.

Employees also undertook an e-learning training programme on Data Protection during the year. This training provided an overview of the rules and legislation surrounding data protection and the information we hold. The training concluded with a test with a minimum requirement to pass, thus ensuring that the employee had demonstrated their understanding of their role. This is particularly important to provide reassurance to employees and customers that people know how they are meant to handle this information.



Where will we be focussing our efforts in 2013/14?

In order to ensure that we continue to deliver on our values to embrace equality, there are a number of actions we will be undertaking this year.

- Conclude the review of the Single Equality Scheme
- Following a number of changes to the membership of the board, an equality workshop will be provided to support them in their role to challenge and question equality information provided as part of reports presented for decision making.
- We will continue to work with our main repairs and maintenance contractor Mears and other contractors to progress activities around equality and demonstrating compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- We will ask employees to complete The Sunday Times and 100 Best Companies Engagement Survey to gauge levels of staff satisfaction and engagement within the company.
- We will enter the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index to measure our progress in LGBT equality.
- We will review and update our Domestic Abuse Policy and deliver an updated training programme
- We will review Hate Crime training in partnership with Safer Gateshead Partnership
- We will monitor the impact of the under occupancy rules on affected tenants and support them to access the appropriate advice and information.

Contacts

For further information please visit: www.gatesheadhousing.co.uk/equality

If you would like to discuss anything in this document or have an issue relating to our approach to equality and diversity please contact:

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Performance Framework

Customer Profile of main tenant as at 31/03/2013

Gender	Total	%
Female	11602	58.40%
Male	8265	41.60%
Total	19867	

Age	Total	%
No Date of Birth	3	0.02%
16 - 24	712	3.58%
25 - 39	4116	20.72%
40 - 49	3499	17.61%
50 - 59	3395	17.09%
60 - 74	4693	23.62%
75 and over	3449	17.36%
Total	19867	

Ethnicity	Total	%
Asian Or Asian British Bangladeshi	12	0.06%
Asian Or Asian British Indian	11	0.06%
Asian Or Asian British Other	106	0.53%
Asian Or Asian British Pakistan	14	0.07%
Black Or Black British African	184	0.93%
Black Or Black British Caribbean	6	0.03%
Black Or Black British Other	29	0.15%
Chinese	21	0.11%
Mixed Other	24	0.12%
Mixed White & Asian	20	0.10%
Mixed White & Black African	9	0.05%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	6	0.03%
Other	84	0.42%
Refused	17	0.09%
Unknown	42	0.21%
White British	18968	95.47%
White Irish	28	0.14%
White Other	259	1.30%
Blank	27	0.14%
Total BME	526	2.65%
Total	19867	100.00%

People of a disability	Total	%
Yes	5659	28.48%
No	14114	71.04%
Not disclosed	6	0.03%
Refused	15	0.08%
Unknown	73	0.37%
Total	19867	100%

Special Requirements	Total
3RD_PARTY	18
AUDIO	48
BRAILLE	4
LARGE PRINT	861
LIP READER	6
OTHER_LANGUAGE	17
BSL INTERPRETER	17
TRANSLATION	24
TYPETALK	22
Total	1017

Faith or Religion	Total	%
Buddhist	8	0.04%
Christian	4748	23.90%
Hindu	3	0.02%
Humanist	18	0.09%
Jewish	2	0.01%
Muslim	96	0.48%
No religion	952	4.79%
Other	1189	5.98%
Prefer not to say	219	1.10%
Sikh	1	0.01%
Blank	12631	63.58%
Total	19867	100.00%

Sexuality	Total	%
Bisexual	52	0.26%
Blank	12830	64.58%
Gay Man	38	0.19%
Gay Woman / Lesbian	27	0.14%
Heterosexual / Straight	6218	31.30%
Prefer Not To Say	702	3.53%
Total	19867	100.00%

Use of Support Services

Language line calls	Total calls
Albanian	0
Arabic	0
Bengali	0
Cantonese	0
Chinese	0
Czech	0
Farsi	6
French	0
Hindi	0
Korean	0
Kurdish	0
Latvian	0
Lithuanian	0
Mandarin	19
Polish	9
Portuguese	0
Punjabi	0
Russian	0
Serbian	0
Slovak	0
Sorani	0
Somali	0
Spanish	0
Swahili	1
Tamil	0
Thai	0
Tigrinya	0
Turkish	0
Urdu	0
Total	35

BSL Interpreters	6
Face to Face Interpreters (other language)	4

Satisfaction Information from Annual Survey 2013

		Response rate	Satisfaction with overall services	Satisfaction with home	Satisfaction with neighbourhood	Satisfaction that rent and service charges are VFM	Satisfaction with opportunities to participate	Satisfaction with views are taken into account
	Total responses	1266	88.70%	87.50%	87.30%	85.60%	73.60%	73.90%
Ethnicity	BME	1215	80.77%	64.29%	67.86%	71.43%	60.71%	73.74%
	Non BME	28	89.09%	88.13%	87.67%	85.91%	73.73%	67.86%
Gender	Male	629	91.23%	85.78%	86.31%	83.20%	74.12%	72.52%
	Female	637	86.28%	89.12%	88.17%	87.96%	72.70%	74.88%
Disability	Yes	528	91.01%	90.29%	89.73%	88.89%	74.81%	76.67%
	No	730	87.15%	85.44%	85.32%	83.49%	72.40%	71.11%
Age	under 25	4	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	25.00%
	25-55	260	79%	75.49%	74%	68.34%	62.26%	59.53%
	Over 55	999	91.14%	91.13%	90.95%	89.97%	75.41%	77.72%

Employee Information as at 31 March 2013

		% of company employees	% of Board members	% of top five per cent earners	% of new employees	% of employees ending their employment
Ethnicity	Total count	322				
	BME	3.73%	14%	0	0	6.25%
	Non BME	96.27%	86%	100%	100%	93.75%
Gender						
	Male	42.24	53%	73.68	33.33	56.25
	Female	57.76	47%	26.32	66.67	43.75
	Not known	0		0		
Age						
	under 25	5.90		0		
	25-39	31.99	20%	31.58	100	50
	40-49	22.98	47%	52.64		18.75
	50-59	27.33	33%	15.78		6.25
	60-74	11.80				25
	75+	0				
	Not Known	0				
Disability						
	Yes	11.18	18			9.38
	No	88.82	82		100	90.62
	Not known	0	0			

		% of company employees	% of Board members	% of top five percent earners	% of new employees	% of employees ending their employment
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual	0.62	Not collected			
Religion or Belief	Gay man	0.31				
	Gay woman/lesbian	0				
	Heterosexual/Straight	57.14		73.68	83.34	62.50
	Prefer not to say	5.90		10.53	16.66	12.5
	Not known	36.03		15.79		25
	Buddhist		Not collected			
	Christian	45.34		47.36	33.33	40.62
	Hindu					
	Humanist					
	Jewish					
	Muslim	0.31				
	Sikh	0.31				
	Other	0.93			33.33	6.25
	No religion	20.19		21.06	33.33	15.63
	Prefer not to say	12.11		15.79		15.63
	Not known	20.81		15.79		21.87

