

Report to Resources Committee

24 February 2015



Title: Equality and Diversity - Update

Report of: Involvement and Diversity Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide a summary of Equality and Diversity work within the organisation in the third quarter of 2014/15.

Background

2. The Company continues to place equality and diversity at the heart of everything it does with one of our values being 'embracing equality'.
3. Our Single Equality Scheme set out three broad aims for our approach to equality and diversity which are: -
 - Maintaining a corporate commitment to equality issues.
 - Working in partnership with customers and stakeholders to deliver equitable services and improve social cohesion in Gateshead.
 - Be an equal opportunities employer with a workforce which represents the community and is committed to equality and diversity.

Knowing our customers

4. We continue to collect a range of information from our customers to understand the communities we are working in and ensure that we can plan our services effectively.
5. In the latest assessment of Customer Service Excellence our approach to customer insight and using this information to shape and target service delivery was highlighted as an area of strength.
6. Information is collected initially through the housing application and this information is updated when officers come into contact with customers.
7. The summary of our main tenant profile as at 31/12/2014 December 2014 told us that of our 19147 tenancies: -

- 59% were female
 - 3.3% were under 25 and 17.4% were over 75
 - 29.1% of tenants have indicated they have a disability, with the highest reports of mobility issues and then the second highest being visual impairments.
 - 2.8% Black Minority Ethnic (BME) with the highest proportion consistently Black African
 - 0.9% of our tenants (168) have told us that their first language is not English
 - 43.9% of tenants have indicated their sexuality with 155 tenants stating that they are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.
 - 48.2% of people have provided information about their religion or belief. Whilst the highest proportion have indicated they are Christian, there are 155 who have indicated they are Muslim.
8. At the Board Meeting in November 2014, we reported information from our Let's Get Digital Survey which provided us with information about the access a sample of our tenants and leaseholders have to online services.
 9. Following on from this survey, we commissioned a customer insight project to look at information across all our tenants and leaseholders to develop a better picture of how ready our customers will be to access online services, and in particular to be able to apply for Universal Credit when this is rolled out.
 10. We are due to receive the report of this work in mid-February, the results of which will be reported to a future meeting of Customers and Communities Committee.

Equality and Diversity Training

11. In the last quarter we have begun the refresh of all employees equality and diversity e-learning. In order to ensure that employees understand the legislation and their role in ensuring we are promoting equality and diversity, the training is mandatory every three years.
12. All employees are required as a minimum to complete the Equality and Diversity Essentials module, whilst there is an additional module, Managing Diversity which managers must also undertake.
13. Completion of the training is monitored and any areas for further development or guidance will be followed up after this. All employees are expected to complete the training by the end of March 2015.

LGBT activity

14. The company recently received the results of this year's Stonewall Workplace Equality Index which measures how LGBT inclusive organisations are.
15. The framework for the index was revised this year which has seen the company fall in the index, scoring 79 out of 200 this year, compared to 128 out of 200 last year. Whilst this may seem like a significant drop, this has been discussed with our Stonewall Workplace contact who has confirmed that following the update of the framework this has happened across the majority of organisations submitting information.

16. A meeting has been set up with Stonewall on Friday 13 February 2015 to get specific feedback about our submission and identify an action plan to improve for 2015/16. Further information will be brought to a future meeting of this committee.
17. In the last quarter, the LGBT Network has continued to meet to develop its workplan and develop a branding for the group. The group is now named Gateshead Rainbow Forum and will be working with the company to look at topics including hate crime and working with our contractor Mears.

Working in Partnership with Customers and the Community

18. We have continued to work with partner organisations to promote equality issues within the community.
19. In October 2014, an Older Persons Event was held to recognise Older People's Day. This event brought over 100 residents from sheltered schemes and children from 3 primary schools together to take part in a range of activities including Rookie Golf. There was a range of information and advice available for older people on the day as well to take away from organisations including the housing company, Alzheimer's Society and Gateshead Older People's Assembly.
20. October also marked World Mental Health Week. This is an area of increasing significance to the company with more tenants and leaseholders indicating they have mental health needs. The company attended an event in Trinity Square which brought all organisations who offer some support or advice to people with mental health issues together.
21. In November 2014, the Company attended and supported an event to mark White Ribbon Day, The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls. The event, organised by Tyneside Women's Health saw a number of speakers raising awareness of domestic violence issues as well as a range of stall holders providing information about the services and support they can provide.
22. We have continued to work with Newcastle Eagles on the Hoops for Health Programme, working in seven primary schools during the last quarter with session delivered on healthy eating, physical activity and stereotyping. This programme will conclude at the end of March.

Future Equality and Diversity Activity

23. We will be using the findings of the Customer Insight project on Digital Inclusion to understand what targeted activities we need to undertake, ensuring that we are taking steps to help tenants and leaseholders get online.
24. Following development of the company's five year plan, we will be working with tenants and leaseholders to develop our Equality and Inclusion strategy.
25. We have held initial discussions with a local organisation Tyne Trans, about how we may be able to work together to understand some of the issues that affect our trans tenants and deal with issues effectively.

Link to values

26. This report relates to the following Company values: -

- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Being motivated, trained, and committed
- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Caring and respecting
- Embracing equality
- A commitment to all our employees.

Impact on tenants

27. Through ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of how we deliver services, it ensures that we provide services based on a sound understanding of the needs and priorities of our customers.

Risk Management Implications

28. Not meeting the requirements of current and new diversity legislation has been identified as an operational risk for the Company, which if breached could lead to significant financial loss and risk of reputation. Regular monitoring and reporting on our progress helps to ensure that we continue to meet our requirements.

Financial Implications

29. There are no financial implications directly relating to this report. There is an allocated budget to progress equality and diversity work within the Company. Any future financial implications would be reported to this committee.

Equality and Diversity Implications

30. This report relates to our approach to equality as a whole, ensuring that we are considering the impact on our employees and customers of the decisions we take.

Value for Money Implications

31. Carrying out equality analysis when planning a project or service delivery allows us to identify any issues at the outset and find solutions where possible, rather than having to make potentially costly changes retrospectively. Having a detailed customer database of our tenants and leaseholders characteristics and needs helps ensure that this can be done effectively.

Health Implications

32. A number of the initiatives included within our overall approach to equality has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of either employees or customers.

Environmental Implications

33. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Consultation carried out

34. Progress on equality issues are provided to the Involvement Service Improvement Group and the Disabled Persons and BME Housing Forums.

Recommendation

35. The views of the committee are sought on whether it is satisfied with the progress activity relating to Equality and Diversity carried out in the third quarter of 2014/15.

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