

Report to Resources Committee

18 November 2015



Title: Equality and Diversity - Update

Report of: Managing Director

Purpose of Report

1. To provide a summary of Equality and Diversity work within the organisation in the second quarter of 2015/16.

Background

2. The Company continues to place equality and diversity at the heart of everything it does with one of our values being 'inclusive, valuing diversity'.
3. Our Single Equality Scheme provides the overall approach to the Company's work on equality covering both the organisation as an employer and service provider.
4. The scheme and associated actions help to ensure that we are meeting our requirements under the Equality Act 2010.
5. The Company contributes to the wider equality agenda in Gateshead as a member of Gateshead Council's Corporate Equality Working Group, ensuring that the Company is contributing to the equality objectives set by the council.
6. An Equality and Diversity Report is produced annually setting out our key achievements and demonstrates how we are working in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Knowing our Customers

7. We continue to collect a range of information about our customers to ensure that we understand the makeup and needs of the communities we are working in. This information is used in a range of ways including:
 - Tailoring service delivery or helping to forecast need for services in the future
 - Targeting customer groups to promote specific services
 - Measuring and comparing satisfaction with services across different groups
 - Communicating with individual customers in the most appropriate method.

8. Information is collected from the outset of someone applying to be a tenant and followed up at sign up and then periodically during their tenancy. This ensures that the information we hold is accurate.
9. The information collected includes the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act as well as information on communication and contact preferences. In order to help us prepare for issues such as digital inclusion and Universal Credit we have also started to collect information on access to the internet and use of bank accounts. This information will be reported to a future committee as the level of data held increases.
10. As at 30 September 2015, the profile of our main tenants (19,134 tenancies) was as follows: -
 - 59.1% female
 - 3.5% under 25, 40.3% are over 60
 - 3.2% Black Minority Ethnic (BME) with highest proportion consistently Black or Black British African
 - 27.8% of households have at least one person indicating they have a disability, the highest reported continuing to be mobility and mental health
 - 16.68% (3,192) customers have told us that they have mobility issues followed by 5.95% (1,138) customers informing us they have a mental health disability.
11. We have now collected information from over 40% of customers on sexual orientation and religion which will allow us to start using this information to monitor and compare services. We will continue to collect this information through the methods outlined previously to increase the data held. From the data provided we know that: -
 - 8,363 customers have declared their sexual orientation, 1.98% (166) of which have indicated that they are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual
 - The highest proportion of our tenants have indicated that they are Christian (58.50%), followed by 1.84% stating they are Muslim. 11.52% of tenants have stated they have no religion.

Training and Guidance

12. Involvement and Diversity Officers attended the Equality and Diversity Exchange meeting in July and received information about data protection awareness and an Islamic awareness session.
13. Involvement and Diversity Officers attended WRAP training, which focussed on the 'Prevent' aspect around terrorism and helped to raise awareness of how and why some people are targeted to carry out attacks, and gave information on potential warning signs to be aware of among our customers.
14. In September, Involvement and Diversity Officers and other employees within the company attended a conference about Safeguarding Adults to gain further knowledge and best practice on how to engage with our vulnerable adults. As a result, further research we have conducted shows that 161 customers have told us they have difficulties with reading, writing or numbers, or a combination of these. As these people are more likely to require our support, for example with

arranging appointments, we will continue to look into how we can further support them to ease this process for them.

15. During this period, Neighbourhood Relations Officers (NROs) delivered Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) training to front line staff. Training focussed on the developments of MASH in terms of supporting and enhancing our approach to safeguarding vulnerable victims of anti-social behaviour (ASB). In particular victims of domestic abuse and hate crime including those with mental health problems.
16. The Housing Options Mental Health Link Workers at Gateshead Council raised awareness within the company for officers to make referrals for customers with secondary mental health problems, for example psychosis and schizophrenia. Referrals are made to help sustain tenancies and support the most vulnerable customers or housing applicants.
17. Training has been delivered to staff around the use of the Customer Assessment tool, which helps to identify vulnerabilities of customers and establish whether they were specifically targeted on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation.

Single Equality Scheme

18. A focus group of customers continues to meet regularly to produce the above scheme, which will be known as the Equality and Inclusion Scheme, and now includes information around hate crime as well as digital and financial inclusion.
19. The document will be a smaller version than the current one to support the company's values around value for money, with more information available on our website.
20. The finalised document will be brought to a future committee at year end for approval.

Hate Crime

21. During this period we have continued to work in partnership with Gem Arts and Gateshead Council's Safer Communities team to deliver an arts project around hate crime, which included an animation and poster campaign. The campaign is called 'Cut it out'.
22. The final drafts of the work were shared with our customers in the Involvement and ASB Service Improvement Groups, Disabled persons' and BME housing forums. Customers felt the work produced was very positive and were encouraged to see young people getting involved in this area of work.
23. The artwork will be launched during Hate Crime Awareness Week in October and the animation also features on our website. We will continue to promote this work at various events we attend to raise awareness of this issue.
24. An annual review of our Hate Crime Policy and Procedures has also been undertaken with partners and customers from ASB Service Improvement Group; Disabled Persons' and BME Forums. The revised policy and procedure includes

updates on; radicalisation, extremism, hate crime and details on the safe places initiative for customers with a learning disability to report hate crime incidents.

Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Equality

25. We have continued to undertake a range of activities to make the organisation more LGBT inclusive, both as an employer and a service provider.
26. In September an Involvement and Diversity Officer attended training held by Stonewall about how to be a role model for LGBT employees.
27. We also continue to be a member of Stonewall and are actively working on recommended actions following last year's submission into the Workplace Equality Index. As a result we have deferred our entry until 2016/17, to ensure recommended processes are implemented accordingly.

Young People

28. In July we worked in partnership with The Wise Group to deliver an initiative called Talent Match which is a lottery funded project and aims to get young unemployed people into work or further training.
29. We targeted our tenants who are under 25 and were claiming full or partial housing benefit via a range of ways including a postcard, email or text message. Five people attended the session on the day.
30. A session was organised and designed to be fun and in an informal setting, to encourage greater participation and positivity among the attendees. The session included: -
 - A talk by the representative of The Wise Group, to explain what ongoing support they can offer to help people into work and/or training
 - A talk by an Involvement and Diversity Officer to highlight the opportunities available at the housing company to get involved and help shape services
 - A motivational speaker sharing their experiences and challenges faced to get to where they are now
 - A range of team building exercises designed to motivate each other and create positive thinking among them.
31. Following the session, follow-up work has highlighted that those who attended the session have continued to engage with the lead facilitator to receive help with further training and employment. Progress of individual attendees is shown below: -
 - One attendee has gained employment in security, and was supported by getting help towards the cost of his uniform.
 - Another attendee is receiving support to link in with the organisation 'Generator' which helps young musicians in developing their potential in this industry. She is also receiving support to find part time work in the meantime and helping to develop her CV.
 - Two customers attended a two week level 2 course with Rolls Royce in Production Manufacturing Operation through their education team which at the end leads to a job with Proctor and Gamble.

- Another has a job in a care home but The Wise Group representative is going to continue to keep in touch with her in case other potential opportunities become available that may suit her.
32. We will continue to engage with The Wise Group to monitor the progress of these attendees. Should funding remain available we will look to deliver further sessions and report to a future committee.
33. In September a breakfast club was launched in partnership with Greggs at Parkhead Primary School in Blaydon. This school identified a need for this service and it is recognised that many of our properties are in the surrounding area. Approximately 50 places have been utilised at this club.
34. Research carried out by Greggs into practical experience of the effects of breakfast clubs has shown the following positive benefits: -
- Improved attendance and punctuality
 - Improved behaviour
 - Children complete more tasks and behave better
 - Concentration and achievement at schools
 - Longer-term benefits for memory and cognition
 - Strengthening of school/parents relationship
 - Opportunity for children to meet and communicate with others in a social setting
 - Help for parents to take on training or work.
35. A further breakfast club will be launched at Barley Mow Primary school in November and will be reported at a future committee.
36. Partnership working with Newcastle Eagles began in September with another Hoops for Health project, targeting primary schools across Gateshead to deliver key messages around health and the community.
37. Workshops will be delivered to year 5 and 6 pupils and will cover fitness, no-smoking, healthy eating and stereotyping. The stereotyping workshop has been adapted this year to incorporate more group discussion with initial feedback being very positive.

Link to values

38. This report relates to the Company values of being: -
- Fair
 - Customer focused
 - Open and honest
 - Inclusive, valuing diversity
 - Passionate about what we do.

Impact on tenants

39. 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

40. 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

41. 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

42. 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

43. The Single Equality Scheme provides a focus for our approach to being an equal opportunities employer and service provider, promoting equality in relation to access to goods, facilities and services and helping us to ensure that no individual or group experiences direct or indirect discrimination.
44. 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.

Health Implications

45. The Company's approach to equality and diversity, embedded within everything that we do, will ultimately have a positive impact on people's health and overall wellbeing.
46. 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

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

Consultation carried out

48. Progress on equality issues are provided to the Involvement Service Improvement Group (SIG), Disabled Persons' and BME Housing Forums.
49. Consultation continues to take place with a focus group of customers to review the Single Equality Scheme and produce an updated version.
50. The Involvement SIG, BME and Disabled Persons' housing forums were consulted on the final drafts of the artwork produced by the young people as part

of the project carried out with Gem Arts, with customers reporting this as a positive piece of work.

Recommendation

51. 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 second quarter of 2015/16.