

Report to Resources Committee

23 February 2016



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**Title:** Equality and Diversity - Update

**Report of:** Customer Support Manager

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**Purpose of Report**

1. To provide a summary of Equality and Diversity work within the organisation in the third 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 31 December 2015, the profile of our tenants (19,072 tenancies) was as follows:
    - 59.2% female
    - 3.6% under 25, 40.4% are over 60
    - 3.2% Black Minority Ethnic (BME) with highest proportion Black or Black British African
    - 27.6% of households have at least one person indicating they have a disability, the highest reported as mobility and mental health

### **Training and Guidance**

11. In December 2015 Involvement and Diversity Officers attended the annual Stonewall conference held in Edinburgh. This provided the opportunity to meet with other practitioner's and share best practice. The draft Single Equality Inclusion scheme was circulated to partners for comment and the work around Hate Crime with Gem Arts was also circulated and received very positive feedback.
12. Involvement Officers attended the North East Equality and Diversity Network for Housing Practitioners meeting. The group shares information and best practice around embedding Equality and Diversity with employees and customers.

### **Single Equality and Inclusion Scheme**

13. Work has continued on the Single Equality and Inclusion scheme and a draft version was circulated for comment to customers at the Involvement Service Improvement Group in November 2015 and the LGBT Network. The scheme includes reference to the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. It has also been expanded to include reference to digital and financial inclusion information and hate crime.
14. The draft version was also shared with external organisations including Newcastle LGBT Federation during Hate Crime Awareness week and Stonewall at their annual conference in December 2015.
15. The final version is attached for your information. It will be produced as a leaflet and launched with partners such as Northumbria Police, Safer Gateshead team and involved customers. A copy of the leaflet will be provided to all customers and also made available on the Company's website and social media.

## **Hate Crime**

16. The partnership with Gem Arts and Gateshead Council's Safer Communities team to deliver an arts project, "We Stand Together" around hate crime was completed.
17. Year 8 and 9 students from Joseph Swann Academy produced a poster campaign and Heworth Grange Comprehensive produced a piece of animation which both portray clear messages about hate crime. The aim of this work is to increase awareness and understanding of the impact of hate crime and encourage sharing around peers and family members.
18. The work produced was launched during National Hate Crime Awareness Week at the Police Commissioners event in October and was discussed more widely with Joseph Swan Academy year 9 pupils at their school assembly as part of National Anti-Bullying week. This provided an opportunity to emphasise that hate crime is not just physical attacks but also verbal abuse around the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. An involved customer from the Disabled Persons Housing forum also attended and was able to share her own experiences of hate crime and the impact it had on her day to day life.
19. The project was shortlisted for two awards at the end of last year:
  - IARS Research & Youth Leadership awards 2015 (runner up)
  - Positive Social Behaviour Order Awards 2015 (shortlisted)

## **Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Equality**

20. We have continued to undertake a range of activities to make the organization more LGBT inclusive, both as an employer and a service provider.
21. Following feedback from customers the LGBT Network was opened up to include partners. In addition to customers the group now includes representatives from, Northumbria Police, Gateshead Council and Northern Lights Church. The group has received a presentation and made comments on the draft Hate Crime strategy from the Safer Gateshead Team and helped to review the Single Equality Inclusion scheme.
22. We continue to be a member of Stonewall and are currently reviewing the actions required to submit our entry to the Workplace Equality Index.
23. We followed up contacts made at the Stonewall conference in December including the Policy and Contractual lead for Tesco Bank who has offered to share information around inclusive employment contracts.
24. Contact has also been made with Cestria Housing who were recently ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in index of diversity friendly employers (National Centre for Diversity) with a view to sharing best practice.

## **Young People**

25. In July 2015 we worked in partnership with The Wise Group to deliver an initiative called Talent Match which aims to get young unemployed people into work or further training. Of the five who completed the course, two are now in full time employment and one is planning to commence a full time college course. One

attendee was accepted onto a training course with Rolls Royce but subsequently withdrew and one stopped engagement with the Wise Group.

26. We are currently in discussion with providers of Talent Match and other providers of employability schemes with a view to delivering a further course in 2016.17. A further update will be provided at the next committee meeting.
27. In November 2015 a third breakfast club supported by TGHC was launched in partnership with the Greggs Foundation at Barley Mow Primary School in Birtley. This follows the launch of breakfast clubs at Brandling Primary School in Felling and Parkhead Community Primary school in Winlaton.
28. On average 112 pupils attend the breakfast clubs per day and feedback from Head teachers at the three schools has been very positive. They have highlighted significant benefits including:
  - Improved attendance
  - Positive impact on those with a history of lateness.
  - Increased concentration in class
  - Provided an opportunity for improved interaction with parents.
29. Our partnership work with Newcastle Eagles continued in September 2015 with another programme of Hoop's for Health workshops, targeting primary schools across Gateshead to deliver key messages around health and stereo-typing in the community.
30. Up to the end of quarter 3, workshops were delivered in eight primary schools to 414 year 5 and 6 pupils. Workshops will be delivered to a further 3 schools in quarter 4. The workshops cover general 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.
31. All schools that participate in the Hoops for Health programme take part in a basketball playoff competition at Gateshead Leisure centre. This is attended by the Customer Involvement team and will provide an opportunity to gain further feedback from teachers and pupils. The winners of the Gateshead play off will go through to a school final held at Sports Central in Newcastle.
32. We have confirmed with the Eagles that we will be able to continue to support their work in Gateshead schools during 2016.17

### **Link to values**

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

### **Impact on tenants**

34. 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**

35. 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**

36. 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**

37. 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**

38. 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.
39. 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**

40. 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.
41. 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**

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

### **Consultation carried out**

43. Progress on equality issues are provided to the Involvement Service Improvement Group (SIG), Disabled Persons' and BME Housing Forums.
44. Consultation continues to take place with a focus group of customers to review the Single Equality Scheme and produce an updated version.

### **Recommendation**

45. 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 2015/16.