



Report to Resources Committee

3 May 2016

Title: Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2015/16

Report of: Customer Support Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with a draft of the Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2015/16 for approval.

Background

2. Equality and diversity is at the heart of everything the company does, as highlighted in the company value of 'Embracing Equality'.
3. The company's Single Equality Scheme brings together all areas of our approach to Equality and Diversity in one document, providing a clear outline for all employees, customers and Board Members.
4. The Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 places an expectation on public organisations to publish key equality information on employees and service users.
5. The company produces a report annually summarising key activities undertaken to provide a public account of how we are progressing equality and diversity for tenants, leaseholders, employees and stakeholders. This report supports our compliance with the equality duty.

Summary

6. The draft report covers the financial year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and is attached at the appendix to this report. The report covers a number of areas including:
 - Information on the legislation and regulation on equality and diversity
 - Highlights of our activities during each quarter of 2015/16
 - Information on our review of the Single Equality Scheme
 - Monitoring information on our customer profile, satisfaction information, employee and board information
 - Our focus for equality in 2016/17

7. Subject to approval of the draft report at this committee, the report will be designed and made available on our website and will be issued on request.

Link to values

8. This report relates to the Company values of being: -
 - Fair
 - Customer Focused
 - Open and Honest
 - Accountable
 - Inclusive, valuing diversity
 - Innovative
 - Passionate about what we do

Impact on tenants

9. Equality legislation expects public organisations to ensure that tenants have access to clear and transparent information to understand how we are working to progress equality.
10. Access to clear information enables tenants and leaseholders to hold us to account and challenge us where appropriate to improve services.

Risk Management Implications

11. 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.
12. The annual report fulfils the requirements of the specific duties contained within the Equality Act to provide certain equality information to demonstrate that organisations have complied with the general duty. Although as an arm's length management organisation, the company is not considered a listed body, it is considered good practice for us to follow these principles. This report sets out the activities we have undertaken to ensure that we comply with the legislation.

Financial Implications

13. The Head of Corporate Services confirms that any costs arising from this report can be met from existing budgets. There is an allocated budget to progress equality and diversity work within the company. Any future financial implications will be reported to this committee.

Equality and Diversity Implications

14. 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. The annual report sets out how we are currently achieving this and how we plan to progress it in the future.

Value for Money Implications

15. The actions outlined in this report help us to understand the specific needs of our customers and employees and respond accordingly. This results in value for money savings by getting things right at the outset rather than having to amend or correct service provision in the future.
16. The annual report is made available on the company website and printed on request rather than issuing hard copies to ensure that it provides value for money.

Health Implications

17. The annual report highlights support provided by our Human Resources team to our employees. We recognise that having healthy, positive employees contributes significantly to providing the best possible service to our customers.

Environmental Implications

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

Consultation carried out

19. The draft of this report will be reviewed by the Involvement Service Improvement Group to agree the designed version to be placed on the website.

Recommendation

20. The committee is recommended to approve the draft Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2015/16.

Foreword

Welcome to the Equality and Diversity report for 2015/16. The Gateshead Housing Company continues to put equality and diversity at the heart of the way we deliver services and this is reflected in one of our company values - 'Inclusive, valuing diversity'.

This report highlights some of the activity we been involved in over the last 12 months to support our equality priorities and those of Gateshead Council.

Our aim is to make equality part of our everyday work, to ensure that we remain focussed on providing a workplace where employees feel comfortable to be themselves and to provide the best service to our customers. It is also about understanding the communities in which we work to ensure that our services are tailored to those needs.

In the last year we have reviewed our Single Equality Scheme with customers and partners and the scheme will be relaunched in May 2016 as the Equality and Inclusion Scheme. The key to successfully achieving our goals and objectives is through the commitment of all our employees and partners. I am pleased that the activities in this report reflect that continuing commitment.

You will find in this report, some of the highlights of this year as well as some of the priorities we will focus on in 2016/17.

Jon Mallen-Beadle
Managing Director and Corporate Lead for Equality

Introduction

The Public Sector Equality Duty puts a requirement on the housing company to ensure we meet the obligations of the Equality Act 2010

Our Single Equality Scheme which has been in place for a number of years sets out how the organisation will work to ensure that equality issues are considered throughout the work of the business and that we provide an open and inclusive workplace for employees.

During 2015/16 we reviewed the scheme with involved customers to ensure that it links clearly to the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. It has been renamed the Equality and Inclusion Scheme to ensure that social inclusion is a key priority.

The scheme sets out three clear goals to ensure that our services are accessible, fair and equal. They are:

- Maintain a corporate commitment to equality issues
- Work in partnership with customers and stakeholders to deliver accessible services and improve community inclusion
- Be an equal opportunities employer with a workforce that represents the community

The Managing Director is the Corporate Lead for Equality and regularly communicates messages to the company on key activities through Core Brief and weekly HomeWork. The Resources Committee has a responsibility for overseeing equality in the organisation and receives a report at each meeting which summarises work undertaken. The committee also receives any updates or changes to legislation or best practice which may affect the way we work.

The activities set out in this report demonstrate how we are working to ensure that we are meeting these requirements.

What did we do in 2015/16?

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

April – June

- Attended TPAS Northern Region awards ceremony and won the ‘Excellence in Co-regulation’ award.
- Joint LGBT / Disabled Persons Housing forum/ / BME housing forum to review existing Single Equality Scheme.
- Raised awareness of International Day Of Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) via intranet (internal) Facebook and Twitter (external)
- Attended a World Mental Health workshop as part of World Mental Health Day. To share information with other housing providers and services around support available for customers.
- Involvement and Diversity Officer attended ‘Support Your Trans Staff’ training event.

July - September

- Supported Newcastle Pride in July for the 8th consecutive year, sponsoring and attending the event, gathering information on experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender friendly workplaces and landlords.
- Attended North East Equality and Diversity Network meeting, sharing best practice and experiences of how to keep equality and diversity top of the agenda.
- Worked with Trading Standards & National Illegal Money Lending Team to raise awareness of loan sharks and to report crime directly with vulnerable customers in their homes on Springwell.
- Attended North East Equality and Diversity Network Event meeting, sharing best practice and experiences. Established links with Cestria Housing who are nationally recognised as a diversity friendly employer.
- Met with Craig Bankhead from the Older Persons’ Assembly and discussed proposals for a community café at Deckham Community Centre.

October – December

- Attended launch of the 3rd Breakfast club at Barley Mow Primary School.
- Attended Positive Social Behaviour Order awards at the Baltic for the “We Stand Together” project.

- Involved Customers Christmas Party – attended by involved customers from SIG’s and forums and discussed priorities for 2016/17.
- Attended Heworth Grange and Joseph Swan school assemblies with involved customer to discuss impact of Hate Crime.
- Attended LGBT Federation – Hate Crime Awareness event with involved customers and MEARS. Shared best practice including the ‘We Stand Together’ DVD.
- Attended Northumbria Police Hate Crime and Race Equality Conference during Hate Crime Awareness week.

January – March

- Delivered 12 Energy Best Deal sessions to 109 customers as part of approach to tackling issue of fuel poverty and supporting financial inclusion strategy.
- Achieved re-accreditation of Customer Service Excellence, including seven areas of compliance plus.
- Attended Eagles school basketball play-off final at Gateshead Leisure Centre to gain feedback from pupils and teachers about Hoops for Health programme.
- Delivered an Understanding Differences in People course to customers as part of the Moving Forward programme.
- Met with East Durham Homes to discuss support for vulnerable customers attending involvement events.
- Shortlisted for TPAS Excellence in Equality and Diversity award – ‘We Stand Together’ poster campaign and DVD
- Met with Cestria Housing a Leader in Diversity champion to discuss best practice and learning.

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 have continued to maintain our commitment to equality, demonstrated through a range of activities undertaken.

As the Corporate Lead for Equality, our Managing Director ensures that it is clear that our commitment to this comes from the top.

All service areas are expected to consider the equality implications of the decisions they are making and this is reflected in the reports provided to Board or committees, where a section on equality implications is required. This ensures that any impacts can be reflected on and mitigating action put into place where possible.

In order to ensure that we maintain our commitment and our knowledge of recent events and best practice in equality and diversity, we are members of the Housing Quality Network’s Equality Exchange. This is a network of organisations with a focus on equality and diversity, gaining access to a range of specialists in the area for advice and

guidance and in addition will ensure that the company receives briefings on any key case law or developments.

Customer Service Excellence

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a standard which was introduced by the government in order to ensure that services are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering. Fundamentally they expect organisations to put customers at the heart of service provision. The company was most recently accredited with the CSE Standard in January 2015 and in January 2016 the Annual Review Year 1 assessment was carried out.

The company was assessed as meeting the standard in all areas of the assessment. In particular, seven areas were highlighted as positive practice (compliance plus), two more than in the original assessment.

It was identified that we have an excellent insight into our customers and potential customers and continue to use these insights effectively to understand their diverse needs. It was further highlighted that we use this information to selectively target and support individuals to ensure they are able to sustain their tenancies particularly against the backdrop of welfare reform.

The work of our involved customers through forums including Disabled Persons, LGBT and BME was highlighted by the assessor in terms of helping to identify barriers to accessing services and more generally contributing to improving the wider community. Our partnership work with organisations such as the Newcastle Eagles to deliver the Hoops for Health program which includes a session on stereotyping was also highlighted as positive practice.

Partnership work with customers and Stakeholders

Knowing our customers

A key element to our approach to equality is to ensure that we hold detailed, up to date records on our customers. This ensures that we are able to provide services in the appropriate way, both by tailoring a service individually where necessary but also to create plans for how services should be provided in the future.

Our approach to this is called 'Knowing your customer' and this is supplemented by our housing system providing a summary sheet of key information for front line officers to consider when dealing with a tenant or leaseholder. For example this flags up to us if they need an interpreter if their first language is not English or if they have a disability which may need consideration in any works being carried out to the property.

In addition to this, we collect other information for monitoring purposes which can be used to compare satisfaction, service take up or complaints by people who share a protected characteristic.

We continue to collect this information at each available opportunity starting from the housing application form, at sign up and periodically after this.

Involving customers in shaping and scrutinising our services

We have continued to work with tenants and leaseholders during the year to ensure that they play a key role in developing and influencing the way we deliver services. We place an emphasis on monitoring the diversity profile of our involved residents to aim for a representative selection of people engaging with us.

In particular, through our Disabled Persons Housing Forum, BME Housing Forum and LGBT Network, residents work with officers on service provision. Members from all three groups played a key role in developing the new Equality and Inclusion Scheme. Members also participated in the partnership work with GEM Arts, Safer Gateshead and local schools around Hate Crime awareness. A customer from the DPHF attended school assemblies to share personal experiences. The success of this project has encouraged additional members of the forum to volunteer to share their own personal experiences of Hate Crime and participate in future events. Members of the DPHF linked with Northumbria Police to suggest ways that Hate Crime reporting could be made more accessible for Disabled People.

In addition to this, Service Improvement Group members and customers who had attended the 'Checking our services (mystery shopping)' training undertook mystery shopping exercises. This involved them contacting other customers to gather feedback about the provision of the HomeLoan facility, decoration vouchers and replacing certain items once a property becomes void eg, toilet seat. This resulted in helping to make significant savings in the repairs budget.

The LGBT Network reviewed our membership of Stonewall and entry to the Equality Index Programme. They considered alternative accreditation schemes that cover all nine protected characteristics which make up the Equality Act 2010.

In addition to our organised groups, we also attend a range of existing sessions and drop ins taking place across Gateshead to offer support, information and advice.

We continue to provide training to involved residents on equality to ensure that our events are an open and inclusive environment. TALISMAN members have had the opportunity to undertake our e-learning course 'Equality and Diversity Essentials' or have attended our diversity course delivered through the Moving Forward programme 'Understanding Differences in People'.

Supporting Local Communities

In the last year we have supported a range of community groups through the company's Community Fund, supported by Mears and Local Environmental Services. The fund provides cash and in kind support to 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 priority was given to projects that:

- Help tenants of The Gateshead Housing Company and their families overcome disadvantage by mitigating the impacts of welfare reform including areas of fuel and food poverty, as well as building the capacity of individuals;
- Create stronger communities by supporting community groups who are undertaking an asset transfer;
- Improve the health and wellbeing of young people and the elderly;

- Actively promote volunteering as a way to bring people together and deliver services in the borough.

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

- Gateshead Clubhouse to improve facilities for customers. The clubhouse provides a user led mental health Community hub.
- Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly – to fund a healthy eating initiative.
- Chopwell and Blackhall Mill Live at Home Scheme – to support a community and social lunch club service.

We have continued to work in partnership with the Greggs Foundation and now support the delivery of breakfast clubs at three primary schools, Brandling Primary, Parkhead Community and Barley Mow. Our support helps ensure that children get access to a breakfast at the start of the school day. The feedback from those schools shows how this partnership directly benefits the young people, from improvements in concentration and communications during lessons to a healthier diet.

Partnership working and supporting victims of Hate Crime

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

We continue to work with partners to help achieve the Safer Gateshead priority of 'Protecting & Supporting Vulnerable Victims and Communities'.

A specific area of focus during 2015/16 has been tackling Hate Crime. We completed the review of our Hate Crime policy and procedures with customers. We also worked with the Council's Community Safety team and customers to review their Hate Crime Strategy. We supported a number of events during Hate Crime Awareness week to raise awareness and promote the reporting of hate crime. These included attending a Northumbria Police Hate Crime and Race Equality conference and the LGBT Federation Hate Crime awareness event with customers.

We worked in partnership with involved customers, GEM Arts and pupils from Heworth Grange Comprehensive and Joseph Swan Academy on an art project to raise awareness of Hate Crime. This work has been regionally and nationally recognised and was shortlisted for two awards and runner up at the IARS Research & Youth Leadership awards 2015.

We continue to provide training for employees on Domestic Abuse which now includes Honour Based Violence, Forced Marriage and the MARAC referral process. In the last year we had set a target in line with our partners to increase the number of domestic abuse incidents reported with an aim to make people feel comfortable and confident to report incidents when they occur.

In the last year 312 incidents were reported compared to 275 in the previous year, demonstrating the impact of the work we have carried out.

We have provided training to managers on our Domestic Violence Employee policy and we have established ten work based domestic and sexual champions. We continue to support Safeguarding arrangements for both adults and children.

An equal opportunities employer with a workforce that represents the community.

We are focussed on providing a workplace which is open and fair, recognising the strengths that a diverse workforce can bring.

All managers involved in recruitment are required to undertake a two day Recruitment and Selection Course to ensure that selection activities are consistent and fair. In addition to this, an HR representative supports the appointing officer through the recruitment process.

In addition monitoring is undertaken of both those applying for vacancies and those successful in being offered employment and is reported quarterly to Resources Committee as part of the HR Update. This helps us identify if there were any trends in terms of particular protected characteristics being unsuccessful at interview stage or if there was an increase in leavers who share a protected characteristic.

HR provides 121 confidential support to employees in the workplace. This can be for a range of issues such as confidence building to apply for jobs. For more serious issues such as mental health we provide employees with an occupational health service.

We continue to provide work placement opportunities for Gateshead residents particularly those who are under-represented in our work force. We also provide employment advice and support to residents through an Employment Advisor working closely with our Rent and Income team.

Where will we be focussing our efforts in 2016/17?

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.

- Launch the Equality and Inclusion Scheme and promote to customers and employees.
- Review our Involvement structures to ensure they continue to provide opportunities for a wide range of customers to scrutinise and influence service delivery.
- Work with Housing services transferred to the Company to ensure our approach to Equality and Diversity is understood and embedded in practice, and in turn adopt areas of good practice from their knowledge and experience.
- Work with Construction Services in advance of the transfer of Repairs & Maintenance from Mears to ensure that they and other contractors demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Work with partners and colleagues to support the Financial and Digital Inclusion agenda
- Continue to ensure that we collect and update customer profiling information so that we have good quality data to be able to understand our customers and anticipate the impacts of any decisions we make.

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 31/03/2016

Gender	Total	%
Male	7749	40.74%
Female	11262	59.22%
Unknown	7	0.04%
Total	19018	100%

Age	Total	%
No Date of Birth	-	-
16 - 24	687	3.61%
25 - 39	4035	21.22%
40 - 49	3160	16.62%
50 - 59	3441	18.09%
60 - 74	4547	23.91%
75 and over	3148	16.55%
Total	19018	100%

Ethnicity	Total	%
Asian Or Asian British Bangladeshi	15	0.08%
Asian Or Asian British Indian	10	0.05%
Asian Or Asian British Other	125	0.66%
Asian Or Asian British Pakistan	19	0.10%
Black Or Black British African	219	1.15%
Black Or Black British Caribbean	6	0.03%
Black Or Black British Other	25	0.13%
Chinese	20	0.11%
Mixed Other	30	0.16%
Mixed White & Asian	20	0.11%
Mixed White & Black African	13	0.07%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	6	0.03%
Other	105	0.55%
Refused	48	0.25%
Unknown	104	0.54%
White British	17845	93.83%
White Irish	38	0.20%
White Other	370	1.95%
Total BME	613	3.22%
Total	19018	100.00%

People of a disability	Total	%
Yes	5330	28.03%
No	13572	71.36%
Not disclosed	4	0.02%
Refused	38	0.20%
Blank	74	0.39%
Total	19018	100%

Information Formats special requirements	Total
3rd Party contact	19
Audio	33
Braille	4
Large Print	681
Lip Reader	5
Other Language	18
BSL Interpreter	10
Translation	17
Type talk	15
Total	802

Faith or Religion	Total	%
Buddhist	15	0.08%
Christian	5489	28.86%
Hindu	5	0.03%
Humanist	18	0.09%
Jewish	2	0.01%
Muslim	174	0.91%
No religion	1109	5.83%
Other	2301	12.10%
Prefer not to say	245	1.30%
Sikh	-	-
Blank	9660	50.79%
Total	19018	100%

Sexual orientation	Total	%
Bisexual	64	0.34%
Gay man	56	0.29%
Gay woman/Lesbian	42	0.22%
Heterosexual/Straight	8159	42.90%
Prefer not to say	760	4.00%
Blank	9937	52.25%
Total	19018	100%

Use of Support Services

Language line calls	Total calls
Albanian	1
Arabic	5
Bengali	0
Cantonese	1
Chinese	2
Czech	0
Farsi	1
French	0
Hindi	0
Korean	0
Kurdish	0
Latvian	0
Lithuanian	0
Mandarin	0
Polish	6
Portuguese	0
Punjabi	0
Russian	0
Serbian	0
Slovak	0
Sorani	0
Somali	0
Spanish	0
Swahili	0
Tamil	0
Thai	0
Tigrinya	1
Turkish	0
Urdu	0
Total	17

BSL Interpreters	4
Face to Face Interpreters (other language)	7

Board Information as at 31 March 2016

		% of company employees	% of Board members	% of new employees	% of employees ending their employment
Ethnicity	Total count				
	BME		93%		
	Non BME		7%		
Gender	Male		50%		
	Female		50%		
Age	under 25		0%		
	25-39		0%		
	40-49		21%		
	50-59		36%		
	60-74		43%		
	75+		0%		
Disability	Yes		29%		
	No		71%		
	Not known		0%		

		% of company employees	% of Board members	% of top five per cent earners	% of new employees	% of employees ending their employment
Sexual Orientation	Bisexual		Not collected			
	Gay man					
	Gay woman/lesbian					
	Heterosexual/Straight					
	Prefer not to say					
	Not known					
Religion or Belief	Buddhist		Not collected			
	Christian					
	Hindu					
	Humanist					
	Jewish					
	Muslim					
	Sikh					
	Other					
	No religion					
	Prefer not to say					
	Not known					