



Diversity and Inclusion in Service Provision

Policy and Toolkit

Date	April 2017
Status	Final
Lead Officers	Pam Walton & Lucy Malarkey
Next due for review:	2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy on diversity and inclusion outlines our commitment to ensure that our services to staff, customers and the wider community are relevant, responsive and sensitive to individual needs and that they do not discriminate, that they treat people with fairness and respect and that they seek to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The communities in which we work are diverse and we therefore have a broad customer profile reflecting this diversity.
- 2.2 As a social housing provider we are required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and we need to be able to demonstrate that we are giving due regard to the three aims of the general equality duty element of the Public Sector Equality Duty in respect of our public functions. Our regulator also requires us to treat our customers with fairness and respect and to tailor our services to meet their needs
- 2.3 There is a strong business case for our commitment to diversity and inclusion in service provision. At its heart, equality, diversity and inclusion is about knowing our customers and tailoring our services to meet their individual needs. Collecting and using customer profiling information to give us a good knowledge base means we can then use it to tailor and develop our products and services, to inform equality analysis, maintain customer satisfaction and drive service improvements

2.4 To be strong and successful, our communities also need to be cohesive. A zero tolerance approach to hate incidents, along with support for victims and programmes for perpetrators, are a key part of this. Engaging with city wide equality networks is important, and our own community engagement activities are also vital in helping to foster good relations between different groups, bring people together and improve understanding and mutual respect.

3.0 Scope of the Policy

Gentoo Group	√
Gentoo Homes	√

It applies to:

General needs rented properties	√
Supported Housing	√
Sheltered Housing	√
Leasehold/Shared ownership	√
Rent to Buy properties	√
Market rented properties (domestic)	√
Temporary accommodation	√
Stock owned but not managed by the Group	√
Communal areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties	√
Commercial property	√
Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party	√
Garages and outbuildings	
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc)	
Curtilage	

4.0 Links to organisational goals

- 4.1 Our vision and values set the direction and culture of the Group. They ensure that the business is aligned around the desire to create sustainable homes and communities and to improve the lives of our customers. The vision and values ensure that all of our people understand Gentoo’s ethos and are clear about what is expected of them and the contribution they can make.

Vision:

Great Homes- Strong Communities – Inspired People

Our vision at Gentoo is about strong communities and inspired people and we fundamentally believe that inclusive communities are stronger and that our staff can be more inspired in a workplace that enables them to be themselves.

Values:

Do the right thing
Make a difference
Work together
Keep learning
Give all you’ve got

Do the right thing – this is about ensuring we minimise the risk to the organisation by complying with our statutory and moral obligations.

Make a difference and work together – this is about us all playing a part and ensuring barriers to inclusion in society and in the workplace continue to be removed. It is about doing our bit to help to make a significant difference by raising awareness of inequality, challenging prejudice and promoting inclusive attitudes and behaviour.

Keep learning – this involves finding different and innovative ways to increase awareness and understanding around diversity and inclusion, so that our staff are engaged, and want to learn about difference, and are equipped to apply and share their knowledge in the wider community.

Giving all you've got – this requires an organisational culture that understands the value of the uniqueness of individuals, and which cultivates individual attitudes and behaviours which demonstrate this. It is also about a recognition that people can only bring their whole selves to work and perform to the best of their ability if they feel comfortable to be themselves, and know that their unique individual contribution is welcomed and valued.

- 4.2 This policy operates within our Vision and Values and links to the Customer Strategy and People Strategy and the Diversity and Inclusion in Employment Policy

5.0 Regulation and Legislation

- 5.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Services will ensure this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice. The legislation and regulation applicable to this policy is

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Consumer Standards

6.0 Our Policy Statement

6.1 We are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation and in seeking to create inclusive workplaces and inclusive communities we will:

- treat everyone fairly and with respect
- ensure our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers
- ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal opportunity to access our services
- welcome and value difference, and not tolerate bullying, harassment or intimidation of any individual or group
- challenge the behaviour of those who do not uphold our values and go against our principles, and reconsider our continued relationship with any such person or organisation

7.0 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Deputy Director of Operations. Accountability lies with the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

7.2 Responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with every employee of Gentoo.

8.0 Escalation

- 8.1 Where a Board has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with this policy, they must escalate these concerns to the Deputy Director of Operations.
- 8.2 Where a member of staff has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with this policy they must escalate these concerns through their line management structure and ultimately to the Group Executive Team
- 8.3 Where a member of staff continues to have concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with this policy they should refer to the Group whistleblowing guidance

9.0 Monitoring and review

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed every 4 years or in line with business need
- 9.2 The Deputy Director of Operations will be responsible for monitoring implementation of the policy. Service leads will be responsible for implementation within their service areas.
- 9.3 The key performance indicators (KPI) which will inform this policy are:
- STAR data in respect of customer satisfaction with our service provision, disaggregated by core protected characteristics
 - Complaints data, disaggregated by core protected characteristics

These KPI's will be included in Customer Service reports to Operations Committee.

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We are committed to the principles of diversity, equality and inclusion and to delivering excellent service ensuring all of our customers, internal and external, are treated fairly and with respect. We oppose all forms of discrimination and recognise that discrimination creates barriers to achieving equality for all people. We will ensure that our policies and procedures remove unnecessary or unlawful barriers and we will take action should any discrimination be identified. We are committed to working with our staff, customers and partners to develop and deliver excellent services that meet the needs of everyone in those areas in which we work.

Our Staff

- All members of staff will receive training in issues of diversity and inclusion, in order to provide excellent customer service.
- Training will be provided as part of the induction process for all new starters.
- Further training courses will be provided as part of the Training Planner and staff will be required to refresh their knowledge.
- Managers will be provided with specific training about creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace and inclusive and responsive services.
- Information will be made available on our intranet for staff and via the internal communication channels in existence.

- Staff will be supported, and reasonable resources provided, to enable them to tailor their service delivery and implement this policy.
- We will operate a zero tolerance approach in implementing this policy and disciplinary action will be taken in the event of non-compliance.

Our Customers

- Customer profile data will be collected and stored on our housing management systems to facilitate the tailoring of services to meet individual needs.
- We will provide inclusive customer involvement opportunities.
- We will provide accessible information for customers.
- We will provide a range of options for customers to communicate with us that are sensitive to the needs of different protected characteristics. For example the option to choose an interview with a staff member of the same sex, or with a member of staff who has personal experience, knowledge or understanding of LGBT issues.

Our Partners and Suppliers

- We will work with our partners and suppliers to ensure they are taking into account the needs of all sections of the community when providing services on our behalf.
- We will encourage partners and suppliers to contact us should we be able to provide assistance in relation to this agenda.

- We require those who supply us with goods and services to sign-up to our diversity and inclusion commitment.
- Our formal procurement process will include a weighting in relation to diversity and inclusion.

Protected Characteristics

We recognise our responsibilities in respect of each of the nine protected characteristics, as specified in the Equality Act 2010. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

- We will not treat anyone less favourably because of a protected characteristic and some of the services that we provide are designed to meet the specific needs of different groups; for example supported housing schemes for young people and adapted properties for people with disabilities.
- We will provide training and guidance for staff, Board members and our involved customers on each of the protected characteristics.
- We will collate the protected characteristics profile of our customers to inform service provision and strategic direction.
- We will require Equality Assessments which consider all protected characteristics to be carried out on all policies.
- All Board reports must consider and note diversity and inclusion implications.

- We will operate a zero tolerance approach in respect of bullying and harassment related to any protected characteristic in both our workplaces and communities.
- We will ensure our housing management procedures are inclusive and non-discriminatory, recognising and reflecting issues of concern for some protected characteristics. For example, hate incidents are given a high priority within our Community Safety Procedures.