



# Equality & diversity policy

## 1. Purpose and scope

Selwood Housing is committed to and value diversity in the way that we run the organisation and deliver our services. We ensure that equality of opportunity and commitment to diversity are integral to all of our activities.

We recognise that there is a strong business case for this and are committed to it; both within the communities we work in and with employees we employ. Unless tenants and customers are treated fairly and feel valued, they will be less likely to engage with us. Employees will feel less than fully committed and may under perform. Diversity builds on equality, and evidence indicates that organisations that are serious about diversity show better overall performance.

There are three broad strands supporting the case for going beyond the requirements of legislation and introducing equality and diversity policies: people issues, market competitiveness, and corporate reputation. We recognise these and by following those strands find it easier to comply with increasingly complex legal obligations and embed equality and diversity into our culture.

Equality is essentially about creating a fairer society, where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, to participate fully in the economic and social life of the community and to have access to the services that they need. We recognise the role that we have to play to make this happen and we're committed to doing so. Equality is supported by legislation designed to address unfair discrimination.

Equality is often summarised in terms of equal access, equal treatment and equal outcomes; or creating equal life chances for all.



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Diversity is about recognising and valuing differences in their broadest sense. It is about creating a society that respects and values differences. There cannot be equality of opportunity if differences are not recognised and valued in this way. Diversity principles accept that the mixture of people and their cultures and experiences should be harnessed for the benefit of everyone.

We recognise the diverse population we serve, and our wide workforce demographic; as such, we are committed to promoting diversity and equality of opportunity as an employer and as a provider of services. The link between quality service delivery to the diverse community and the quality management and development of employees is intrinsic to our good employment practices and our company values

This policy sets out our approach to equalities and diversity.

The policy will be reviewed every three years, although it is not a static document. It is responsive to both changing regulation and the environment in which we operate and must be subject to regular review.

We have decided not to publish separate equality policies for race, disability and gender. We believe that equality & diversity are crosscutting and to deliver separate policies for specific groups removes the nature of social inclusion. Therefore, we have included all legal obligations within this one document.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating discrimination. We will do this by ensuring that our practices reflect relevant employment legislation and good practice and that employment decisions are based upon the completion of a full and fair recruitment process. We are also committed to encouraging diversity amongst our employees to reflect the community we serve.

This policy applies to all employees within Selwood Housing.

Selwood Housing is committed to creating and sustaining an environment where our workforce believes in our values and demonstrates conduct and behaviours that reflect those values.

As such, this policy has been drafted to take account of values we stand by and the behaviours we expect from all employees.



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The board of directors has corporate responsibility for ensuring that this policy underpins all aspects of Selwood Housing's work.

The group chief executive has responsibility for developing organisational values and culture in which this policy can operate effectively and for ensuring that it is implemented.

All employees of Selwood Housing have a responsibility to apply this policy. Selwood Housing expects a personal commitment to making this policy effective and setting an exemplary standard for all our partners and stakeholders. This policy does not give contractual rights to individual employees. The company reserves the right to alter any of its terms at any time, although we will notify you in writing of any changes.

## 2. Underpinning principals

Selwood Housing's approach to equality and diversity is based on these policy principles and sets out the ways in which the group will make sure that this policy is incorporated into all its activities by:

- Promoting the mainstreaming of equality and diversity into organisational activity.
- Identifying barriers to employment across all the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010
- Ongoing development of equality and diversity training programmes for board directors, employees, tenant groups and contractors.
- Working closely with the wider community to develop involvement and partnership working.
- Aligning the equalities policy with the corporate plan and aims.
- Developing our equality monitoring, through involvement activities and recruitment.
- Reviewing its existing services and developing new services in accordance with the aims of this policy.
- Aiming to have a board of directors and workforce, which generally reflect the communities we serve.
- Actively encouraging people from diverse backgrounds and those from under-represented groups to take part in governance.



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- Learning from its partners, regulators and other organisations how we can deliver better services by valuing diversity.
- Observing the principles of this policy in its procurement, contracting, partnering activities and where necessary enforcing them.
- By listening to its employees and using their knowledge to develop services that advance equality and respect diversity.

## 3. Policy details

### 3.1 Selwood housing as an employer

Selwood Housing seeks to ensure that our working environment is one that respects and includes everyone and that no employee, contractor, temporary worker, agency worker, or job applicant receives less favourable treatment. This is on the basis of the protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief or no belief, sexual orientation, transgender.

The company will ensure that the very important work that needs to be done in relation to equality & diversity will be driven by the HR team, enabling our employment practices to be in line with both our duties under the law and our values.

As well as our legal duties, our desire is to be seen as an outstanding employer who recognises the value a diverse workforce can bring both employees and service users. With this in mind, we will strive to go beyond our legal duties and look to implementing practices which are 'good practice.'

The success of this policy relies on the understanding, commitment and support of all employees and it is important that everyone takes account of the policy when managing employees, applicants or dealing with each other.



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Employees will be treated with respect equally and fairly in recruitment, selection, promotion, training and career development. Individuals will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their abilities and merits in relation to the requirements of the job. We will take account of employees who have identified support needs to ensure equality of opportunity. They will be given an equal opportunity to use their ability, to progress and to fulfil their potential within the organisation.

Selwood Housing welcomes its legal duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination. We see these laws not as a hindrance, but rather as a lever to enable us to develop excellent working environments. This policy must be considered when:

- recruiting employees.
- making decisions about work related opportunities, promotion and reward.
- managing performance, appraisals, development activities and access to training.
- dealing with requests for flexible working and career breaks.
- dealing with requests for paternity leave.
- managing pregnant workers and those with dependent care responsibilities.
- making selections for redundancy.
- awarding pay.

Selwood Housing will not tolerate employees committing any act of unjustified or unlawful discrimination, or allow discrimination to occur without taking appropriate action, and our employees are governed by both their own professional codes of conduct and our policies, values and behaviours.

### **3.1.1 Training, education & development**

Selwood Housing is committed to the personal development of every employee. All employees will be supported to undertake the training and development they need to help them achieve and maintain high standards of performance throughout their career and will be given encouragement and support to achieve their full potential.



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We will work towards making sure that all our managers and employees are aware of diversity issues and will have the necessary training and advice available to them. The training will be supported with visible and strong leadership at board level.

We will evaluate our equality and diversity training programme on a yearly basis. If there is evidence to show that the training needs to be changed, we will take action to ensure that this happens.

## **3.2 Selwood housing as a service provider**

Selwood Housing is part of a varied community, which includes people from a wide range of groups, living and working in both towns and rural areas. It values and appreciates diversity in the way that it is run and delivers its services, and strives to ensure that its services remain consistent, targeted and provides value for money.

### **3.2.1 Access to services**

The company will monitor applications for housing or services, and the results of these applications, to ensure that services are available to everyone who is eligible. If required, we will, where possible, adapt services to meet the needs of our customers.

Our target will be to ensure that people who are applying for services are accessing those services equally by monitoring, with sensitivity, outcomes and applications by age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief or no belief, sexual orientation, transgender. Where groups within the community are under-represented in accessing services we will, wherever practicable, take active steps to promote accessibility for that group.



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Selwood Housing is committed to ensuring that tenants, other customers and potential customers can communicate with us. We use a variety of methods to ensure this:

- Both service requests and complaints can be made in writing, telephone, e-mail, fax or in person.
- A telephone interpreter service is available on request.
- Our employees offer home visits to those people who may find visiting our offices difficult.
- Where permission has already been given, we will discuss a tenant's tenancy, repair or rent issues, for example, with a third party. This could be a friend, family member or agency acting on their behalf.
- We are committed to a policy of equal access to information. We will provide information and documents in a range of formats such as braille, large print, easy read, text messages, audio and translated for limited English speakers on request.
- We will aim to tailor services for individual needs where possible.
- We will respond to specific needs when it is cost effective for us to do so.

## **3.2.2 Service delivery**

Selwood Housing will explore how independent surveys can be used to monitor its services, to ensure that all groups find them equally accessible and are equally satisfied with our service delivery.

We will ensure that feedback about our services is statistically reliable by using samples selected on a transactional basis. If we subsequently learn that any of our service users are less satisfied, we will consult them about improving the service.

## **3.2.3 Opportunities for involvement**

We will actively encourage people from all groups to be involved in monitoring and improving our services.



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Our target will be to ensure that every tenant has an opportunity to comment on services in a way that is meaningful to them, and that consultative bodies and focus groups are as diverse and inclusive as possible.

## **3.2.4 Regulation and Benchmarking**

Further to our value of being 'customer focused' our aim is to ensure that our tenant groups are representative of the community we serve. Where people want to actively participate but are excluded or disadvantaged we will, wherever possible, work to remove the obstacles for their involvement, and assist them in developing their skills, knowledge base and expertise.

Our target will be to comply with regulatory requirements and good practice and to equal other organisations, which are recognised to be performing well in achieving equality and diversity.

## **3.3 An overview of the law**

It is unlawful to discriminate in providing goods, facilities or services to the public on the grounds of age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief or no belief, sexual orientation, transgender.

Discrimination in providing services means:

- refusing to provide a service
- providing a lower standard of service or
- offering a service on different terms than you would to other people

There are specific laws, which relate to the work of Selwood Housing and how we conduct our core business in relation to equalities & diversity. We will comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. We also expect our contractors and their sub-contractors to comply with all current equality legislation.





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We will continue to comply with the following relevant pieces of legislation:

- 1 The Employment Rights Act 1996
- 2 The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA)
- 3 The Housing Act 1988
- 4 The Housing Act 1996

## 3.4 Disability

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate, directly, indirectly, by association or perception against disabled people, people who have had a disability, or people associated with someone who has a disability in a number of areas including, employment, access to goods and services, education and transport.

We aim to:

1. Maintain our positive about disability in employment accreditation by ensuring that all disabled applicants who meet the minimum requirements of a role are interviewed and recruited on merit.
2. Create a culture based on accurate knowledge and positive attitudes, to increase understanding of, and address the barriers that affect the experiences of disabled people.
3. Work to ensure that disability equality is embedded into the mainstream of all organisational activity.
4. Working with disability groups we'll promote a positive view of people with disabilities by involving them in the way services are planned, delivered and improved.

## 3.5 Race

The Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that race includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. A racial group can be made up of two or more different racial groups.



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Objectives and targets relating to our statutory duties will be integrated into the Selwood Housing's strategic and operational business plans, and will be cascaded to managers and employees at all levels.

Selwood Housing will take race equality considerations into account in its day-to-day work, which covers service delivery, policy making and employment.

As part of our ongoing commitment to provide a service to all communities, we will seek to:

1. Provide services to tenants and other customers and an environment for employees that is free from both direct and indirect discrimination and ensure that no employee is victimised for asserting their rights under the act.
2. Ensure that the provision of quality service is readily accessible to people of all ethnic backgrounds and cultures and that the needs of individuals are respected.
3. Ensure that race equality is embedded in all policies throughout Selwood Housing and that a robust monitoring system is in place for both service provision and employment practice.
4. Recruit employees that are representative of the population that we serve.
5. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training and development, and support to enable them to provide a culturally sensitive service.
6. Work in partnership with representatives from the different communities from within the area.



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## 3.6 Gender

Discrimination on the basis of gender is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

It is acknowledged that men and women have different needs and that in both the workplace and as service users they can experience unfair and unequal outcomes.

Selwood Housing will be proactive in promoting gender equality, with a focus on outcomes and process by:

1. Providing services to tenants and other customers and an environment for employees that is free from both direct and indirect discrimination and ensure that no employee is victimised for asserting their rights under the act.
2. Ensure that gender equality is embedded in all policies throughout Selwood Housing and that a robust monitoring system is in place for both service provision and employment practice.
3. Recruit employees that are representative of the population that we serve.
4. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training and development, and support to enable them to provide a culturally sensitive service.

## 3.7 Transgender equality

The Equality Act 2010 does not require a person to be under medical supervision to be protected by legislation. The act defines a transgender person as someone who proposes to, starts to or has completed a process to change his or her gender. Someone who decides to live permanently as a member of the opposite sex but does not go through any medical procedures is covered by the Equality Act 2010.

We are committed to ensuring that transgender tenants and other customers and employees, in common with all others, are entitled to live and work in an environment free from discrimination, bullying or harassment.



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Selwood Housing strives to promote equality for all users of our services, employees and members of the community. The following objectives are intended to support and complement this framework:

1. Ensure that the provision of quality service is readily accessible to transgender people, either pre-operative or post-operative and that the needs of individuals are respected.
2. Ensure that gender equality is embedded in all policies throughout Selwood Housing and that a robust monitoring system is in place for both service provision and employment practice.
3. Recruit people that are representative of the population that we serve.
4. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training and development, and support to enable them to provide a gender sensitive service.

## **3.8 Religion, belief or no belief**

It is unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of religion or belief, directly or indirectly; or to harass or victimise somebody because they have made a complaint or intend to, or if they give or intend to give evidence concerning a complaint of discrimination. This applies to all aspects of employment (recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, terminations and training) and vocational training. The Equality Act 2010 covers religious/belief or no religion/ belief. It sets out that belief must have a clear structure.

Selwood Housing has identified key areas for improvement. These are:

1. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training, development and support to enable them to be aware of new and existing religious communities in our area.
2. Ensure that an individual's religious belief does not prevent them from accessing any of the group's services by involvement activities.
3. Engage with religious communities and their representatives.



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## 3.9 Sexual orientation

The Equality Act 2010 make it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sexuality, directly or indirectly; or to harass or victimise somebody because they have made a complaint or intend to, or if they give or intend to give evidence concerning a complaint of discrimination. This applies to all aspects of employment (recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, terminations and training) and vocational training.

Selwood Housing has identified key areas for improvement in the way we consider deliver our services in relation to sexual orientation. These are:

1. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training, development and support to enable them to be aware of issues relating to lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in our locality.
2. Ensure that an individual's sexual orientation does not prevent them from accessing Selwood Housing's services.
3. The need to engage with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities and their representatives.

## 3.10 Age

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of age when providing services. It is also unlawful to discriminate against workers, employees, job seekers and trainees because of their age. The act covers recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, terminations and training.

The Equality Act has removed the compulsory retirement age for employees unless it can be objectively justified.

Selwood Housing recognises the contribution that older and younger workers can make to an effective and productive organisation.

As part of our commitment to combat age discrimination, we have prioritised the following key areas:



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1. Become more aware of people's attitudes in relation to age discrimination.
2. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training, development and support to enable them to be aware of issues relating to age.
3. Ensure that an individual's age does not prevent them from accessing any of the group's services.
4. Consider options such as retaining and retraining older employees.

### **3.11 Marriage or civil partnership status**

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of marriage or civil partnership directly or indirectly; or to harass or victimise somebody because they have made a complaint or intend to, or if they give or intend to give evidence concerning a complaint of discrimination. This applies to all aspects of employment (recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, terminations and training) and vocational training.

Selwood Housing has identified key areas in the way we deliver our services in relation to marriage or civil partnership. These are:

1. Become more aware of peoples' attitudes in relation to marriage and civil partnership.
2. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training, development and support to enable them to be aware of issues relating to marriage and civil partnership.
3. Ensure that an individual's marital or civil partnership status does not prevent them from accessing Selwood Housing's services.



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## 3.12 Pregnancy & maternity

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity directly or indirectly; or to harass or victimise somebody because they have made a complaint or intend to, or if they give or intend to give evidence concerning a complaint of discrimination. This applies to all aspects of employment (recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, terminations and training) and vocational training and to the delivery of our services in relation to pregnancy and maternity. These are:

1. Become more aware of people's attitudes in relation to pregnancy and maternity.
2. Ensure that employees are given the necessary training, development and support to enable them to be aware of issues relating to pregnancy and maternity.
3. Ensure that an individual's pregnancy or maternity situation does not prevent them from accessing Selwood Housing's services.

## 4. Signposting

Other policies or documents which you might find useful are:

- Recruitment & selection policy
- Capability policy
- Code of conduct policy
- Disciplinary policy
- Grievance policy
- Dignity at work policy
- Expectant mothers & parents Leave policy
- Flexible working & leave policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Whistleblowing for Tenants Policy
- Selwood Values and Behaviours Guide



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## Internal group policies – provision of services

- Anti-social behaviour policy
- Rent & other charges management policy
- Child protection policy
- Lettings policy
- Assignment and mutual exchange policy
- Succession policy
- Local offer
- Compliments and complaints policy
- Repairs policy
- Lone working policy
- Health and safety policy
- High-risk register policy
- Confidentiality and data protection policy
- Claims and goodwill, regulatory and statutory payments policy
- Asbestos policy
- Asset management policy
- Assets/sewage policy
- Decent homes policy





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## Decision-making record

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting / Minute Reference</b>	<b>Version / Amendment</b>
1 July 2008	Board meeting B/117/08	Version 1
October 2010	Policy and equality impact assessment submitted to Executive Team	
1 February 2013	Policy and equality impact assessment submitted to the leadership team	Reviewed version
24 June 2014	Policy review and amendment by head of service – to reflect group changes	Amendment
31 October 2015	Policy tidy up – house style & removal of outdated plans & reference to equality impact assessment	Amendment
6 June 2018	Exec team approval	Amendments
July 2018	Minor formatting changes and inclusion of values.	