

Equality & Diversity

S T R A T E G Y



mhs
homes group

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INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



Certificate number 3338/06



mhs
homes group

Passionate about People, Neighbourhoods and Enterprise

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Foreword

mhs homes is fully committed to working in partnership with residents, communities and local groups to ensure that the services we provide are inclusive and match the diverse needs and expectations of our customers.

Ensuring we are an organisation that embraces and values diversity is a priority for **mhs homes** and this strategy clearly defines **mhs homes'** commitment. I look forward to seeing the continuing changes to our organisations' culture and the new directions we will be taking as a result.



Ashley Hook, Housing Director

Equality & Diversity Strategy

This strategy is a statement of **mhs homes group's** commitment to equality and diversity.

Equality and diversity is integral to everything that we do. We believe that excellent customer service means providing a service that is accessible and desirable to all, that the promotion of equality and diversity is essential to our core business and that a diverse client base requires us to value those differences.

This strategy defines how the **mhs homes group** will achieve it's goals; however it is flexible and will adjust to the changing needs of the community and the organisation.



Purpose

- To make public our statement of commitment to equality and diversity
- To become an organisation that is inclusive and draws strength from its differences
- To improve the quality of life of all our customers and staff
- To mainstream equality and diversity so that it is embedded in our day to day work
- To monitor progress against our objectives

Context

Diversity refers to the range of individual differences amongst people and their varying needs and preferences. In order to provide an excellent service we must take account of these differences. This strategy has been developed for the benefit of all our customers.

The strategy was developed in line with the **mhs homes group** equal opportunities policy and takes into account the following legislation and regulations

- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Equality Act 2006
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Equality Act 2006 (Access to goods services and facilities)
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation 2003
- The Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2006
- CRE Code of Practice
- Housing Corporation Regulatory Code and Good Practice Notes 4 and 8



Corporate Objectives

The **mhs homes group** aims to achieve excellence in all its activities and an absolute commitment to equality and diversity is key to this. The development of this strategy will enable **mhs homes**:

- To deliver a high standard of service.
- To provide services that are sensitive to differences in need.
- To recognise the diversity, support multiculturalism and to foster good relations between local communities.
- To take positive action to address existing disadvantage and encourage a more inclusive society.
- To tackle discrimination.

The Directors Team will have overall responsibility for the strategy and at ground level the Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator will monitor the day to day implementation.

Performance will be monitored via a yearly diversity action plan which outlines the objectives and the timetable for achieving them.

The key areas of focus are as follows;

Governance

mhs homes believes that strong leadership is essential in all areas of our work and this should be demonstrated to staff and customers through decision, strategy and policy.

We will;

- Work towards ensuring that our Board recruitment processes are equitable.
- Promote Board membership opportunities as widely as possible especially to customers.
- Provide regular, accurate and clear information to the Board on our performance in equality and diversity.
- Address equality and diversity as part of the induction and training of new Board members.

Absolute commitment to equality and diversity.



Lettings

In letting properties **mhs homes** operates a policy that seeks to be transparent, equitable and accountable for the benefit of individuals and the community. We will;

- Monitor performance and regularly review the way in which we let our properties to ensure that is accessible to all individuals and communities.
- Endeavour to offer choice in meeting all customers' needs and aspirations.
- Work in partnership with appropriate organisations to provide housing that meets all customers' needs, including the best use of homes with aids and adaptations.

Employment

Staff at **mhs homes group** play an active role in improving our performance in equality and diversity. It is essential that the organisation offers equality of opportunity in recruitment and development. We will;

- Actively investigate new ways in which to advertise careers within the **mhs homes group** to attract a wider and more diverse workforce.
- Have regular reviews to ensure compliance with best practice and current legislation.
- Analyse the workforce, promotion and job applicants according to ethnic origin, gender and grade.
- Provide training for all new and existing employees and board members to raise awareness of equality and diversity and enable them to work and deliver services in a non discriminatory way.
- Develop a network of diversity champions within the organisation.
- Address equality and diversity as part of the induction process.



Customer Involvement

mhs homes group understands that to achieve true customer satisfaction we need to respond positively to the comments of those who receive our services. To ascertain a true indication of what all our customers want we will;

- Offer a variety of ways for customers to become involved that suit all customers in particular those that are under-represented.
- Create opportunities to work with minority groups and similar organisations and therefore promote services to our minority customers.
- Encourage greater involvement by minority communities in residents groups and tenant consultation.
- Adopt methods of tenant consultation that will encourage BME customers and other minority groups' involvement.
- **mhs homes group** will consult with minority communities to identify areas for development, even though those areas may lie outside of the current stock profile.
- Be sensitive to the needs of different groups when planning and organising events.



Customer Satisfaction

All customers should receive excellent customer service and the **mhs homes group** is committed to ensuring that staff deliver services in a professional manner and respond to the needs of each customer. We will;

- Develop a comprehensive customer profile.
- Conduct an annual satisfaction survey using STATUS methodology.
- Monitor customer satisfaction in our key service areas.

Service Delivery

We recognise that it is in the best interests of the organisation for services to be developed and delivered in a way so that customers can make informed choices. We will;

- Identify key service areas to be monitored, set targets and regularly review these areas to monitor progress.
- Ensure that we publicise our housing services broadly and with a variety of techniques to ensure that minority groups and individuals are aware of our role and the services we offer.
- Recognise the importance of being able to facilitate translation and instant access to appropriate community languages, and ensure this service is offered.
- Look for opportunities to work in partnership with other organisations to improve outcomes for our customers.



All customers should receive excellent customer service.

Anti-Social Behaviour and Harassment

mhs homes group's strategic approach is to reduce harassment and incidences of anti-social behaviour. However, customers should feel assured that all cases of harassment will be taken seriously and dealt with competently. We will;

- Operate a victim centred approach to harassment. We will ensure that we demonstrate that we deal with potential cases of hate crime in a professional and proactive way.
- Monitor reports of harassment and anti-social behaviour and ensure summaries are delivered to the board.
- Pursue a policy that accepts that a racial incident is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.
- Not tolerate harassment of staff and will fully support any member of staff who is subject to abuse from tenants or members of the public and take appropriate action.



Contractors, Consultants and Suppliers

It is important that **mhs homes group** achieves equality and diversity in all our activities. This means ensuring that all those who complete work on behalf of the organisation demonstrate and adhere to our defined policy. We will;

- Ensure a commitment to equality and diversity is a key prerequisite for all contractors, consultants and suppliers that wish to be added to our Approved List or to bid for work with the **mhs homes group**, in accordance with our Procurement Strategy.
- Ensure that consultants, contractors and suppliers are aware of our equal opportunities policy and that they will be expected to adhere to it.
- Develop standards to be met by contractors, consultants and suppliers.
- Develop systems to monitor the performance of contractors, consultants and suppliers.



mhs homes group's strategic approach is to reduce harassment.

Commitment

The equality and diversity strategy is only part of what we believe will be a continuous and evolving journey. Its development is a reflection of the **mhs homes group's** continuing work to develop a culture which values all sections of the community and the contribution each individual can make to our work. We believe that by keeping equality and diversity at the heart of our services, we will meet the needs and aspirations of all our customers.

Equality and diversity are central to our core values as an organisation and we are committed to achieving equality of opportunity in all we do.

The Medway Community

As a social housing provider the **mhs homes group** provides homes and services to a wide range of people including some of the most disadvantaged sections of the community. Below is a summary of the Medway community as an illustration of the context in which we deliver our services. (figures provided by 2001 census)

Age range

Age range	Medway	UK
0-14	21.1%	18.9%
15-24	12.7%	12.3%
25-44	30.2%	29.2%
45-64	23.4%	23.8%
65+	12.6%	15.9%

Gender

Gender	Medway	UK
Males	49.3%	48.6%
Females	50.7%	51.4%

Ethnicity

White British	White Irish	White Other	White & Black Caribbean	White & Black African	White & Asian	Other mixed origins	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian origin	Caribbean	African	Other Black origin	Chinese	Other ethnic group
92.24	0.93	1.45	0.35	0.09	0.42	0.22	2.02	0.39	0.23	0.31	0.36	0.27	0.07	0.42	0.23
87.0	1.3	2.7	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.3	2.1	1.4	0.6	0.5	1.1	1.0	0.2	0.4	0.4

Disability

Disability	Medway	UK
Persons aged 16 – 74 : Economically inactive: Permanently sick / disabled	4.03%	5.30%

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URDU:

یہ دستاویز اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہو، یا اگر آپ کو ترجمان کی خدمات چاہئیں تو براہ مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کیجئے۔

HINDI:

यह दस्तावेज़ यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा या अन्य रूप में चाहिये, या आपको आनुवाद-सेवाओं की आवश्यकता हो तो हमसे संपर्क करें

GUJARATI:

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજ બીજી ભાષા અથવા રચનામાં જોઈતો હોય, અથવા જો તમને ઇન્ટરપ્રિટરની સેવાઓ જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક સાથો.

PUNJABI:

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਸਮਝਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਚੰਗੇ।

TURKISH:

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