



## Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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Date next review due	July 2018
Appendices	1. Guidelines on our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion

### 1 Policy

Our policy is to treat all customers as individuals and seek to tailor our service to their specific needs.

We will treat all employees, customers, volunteers, partners, contractors and suppliers fairly regardless of the any protected characteristic, offending history, HIV status, working pattern, caring responsibilities, trade union activity or political beliefs, class – or any other feature. We will treat all people with dignity, courtesy and respect.

Our aim is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by [Our Values](#), are embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all of our employees, customers, volunteers and partners.

[Our Values](#) highlight that we welcome and promote diversity. We are committed to promoting equality, fairness and inclusiveness in the provision of our services, free from unlawful discrimination.

## 2 Procedures

**We expect all our staff to promote the spirit – not just the letter of this policy.**

**2.1 Everyone working for SYHA has a personal responsibility** for implementing and promoting the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in their day-to-day dealings with customers, colleagues and partners.

All employees, including volunteers, are expected to behave in a way that is consistent with this Policy and have a part to play in challenging discriminatory acts including bullying and harassment towards themselves and others. If you witness a discriminatory incident at work, you have a duty of care to others to report such behaviour and practice. Inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable and any breach or alleged breach of this policy will be taken seriously, investigated fully and may result in action under one or more of the organisation's harassment, disciplinary, grievance or whistleblowers procedures. In serious cases such behaviour may constitute gross misconduct and may result in dismissal, or even criminal prosecution.

2.1 The **Board** are responsible for ensuring SYHA is compliant with relevant legislation and that all initiatives and changes take in to account the impact of our actions on all diverse groups. The Board Champion for equality, diversity and inclusion will take the lead role for this.

2.2 The **Directors Team** are responsible for ensuring the implementation and full compliance with the Policy within their respective area of responsibility, including;

- Ensuring that diversity is incorporated into our Corporate and Departmental Annual Plans.
- Championing diversity across SYHA and in their dealings with external partners and stakeholders.
- Promoting an environment free from discrimination, bullying and harassment, and tackling behaviour which breaches this.
- Ensuring that appropriate diversity data is collected and used in service planning.
- Acting as a role model for staff.

2.3 **Line managers and especially Departmental Managers** have a vital role in managing the day to day operations of the Association and contributing to the development of future strategy. Their role is key to embedding diversity across SYHA including:

- Ensuring that diversity is incorporated into team and project service plans.

- Ensuring equality of access to appropriate development and training to enable employees to meet their objectives and better understand their responsibilities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Building a workforce which is representative of the communities in which we work by encouraging recruitment from groups currently under-represented in the Association, and at specific levels within SYHA.
- Ensuring that the impact on all groups / diversity characteristics are considered for all new projects, policies and services and when reviewing existing ones. This should be done in a proportionate manner and action taken to mitigate any negative impacts identified. See guidance on [equality impact assessments](#)
- Collating diversity information for use in service planning and providing information to the Diversity Action Team, HR Team & Performance Management Team as required.
- Championing diversity across SYHA and in their dealings with external partners and stakeholders.
- Challenging discriminatory acts including bullying and harassment.
- Acting as a role model for staff.

2.4 **All staff**, including volunteers, will demonstrate **our commitment** by:

- Promoting equality of opportunity and diversity within the communities in which we work and with all our partners and employees.
- Treating our customers, colleagues and partners fairly and with respect.
- Consulting with our customers, colleagues and partners about the services we provide.
- Dealing with complaints, including those of harassment and domestic violence, quickly and effectively.
- Ensuring that all customers have fair and equal access to all our services.
- Recognising and valuing the differences and individual contributions that people make.

### 3 Communication

3.1 The updated Policy is available to all staff via SYnet.

- 3.2 The updated Policy is available to customers, stakeholders and others via our website.
- 3.3 A copy of this policy will be shared with our main contractors who we expect to mirror (or exceed) our own approach.

#### **4 Training**

- 4.1 All new employees will receive training on our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy as part of their induction, within three months of their start date.
- 4.1 Employees and Board members will receive refresher training at least every 3 years. Our Organisational Development Manager is developing refresher training tailored to the needs of each team/department. This will be self-guided study (including team discussion, e-learning etc.), monitored centrally and driven through line management; to be completed by March 2016.

#### **5 Consultation**

- 5.1 All staff were canvassed for views / suggestions on how our existing policy could be improved via Core Brief in October 2011.
- 5.1 Various Officers were consulted on the draft version before the final version was approved by the Board in 2012. And in 2015 Diversity Action Team members were consulted plus various other Officers, including the Organisational Development Manager.
- 5.2 This Policy is aimed at our staff. After consultation with Caroline Hubbard, Housing Manager (Customer Services and Involvement) & Jean Sowley, LiveWell User Involvement Coordinator, in 2012, it was decided not to consult with customers.

#### **6 Standards & Legislation**

- 6.1 The Equalities Act 2010.
- 6.2 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012.
- 6.3 Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework Core Standards; especially those related to fair access, fair exit, diversity and inclusion.
- 6.4 Health & Social Care Act 2008, Care Quality Commission and contractual standards.

#### **7 Equality & Diversity Impact – considerations / assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed in 2012. Our target audience is all customers and staff. We anticipate that all customers and staff will be impacted on positively. The likely impact of this Policy alone is considered low. Applying the principles contained within this policy in all aspects of our work will enhance the impact.

## **8 Cost Implications**

There are no additional cost implications arising out of the updating of this Policy. Training costs are already incorporated within our overall training budget.

## **9 Monitoring**

- 9.1 Performance is monitored by the Diversity Action Team (DAT), a sub-committee of the Board. The DAT acts as a steering group to ensure that SYHA's values in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion are translated into standards, targets and practice; and that we are compliant with relevant legislation and our own policies.
- 9.1 The DAT underpins SYHA's commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion. The team is chaired by the Board Diversity Champion and is made up of Directors and/or senior management from each business area.
- 9.2 An annual report is submitted to the Board which includes a summary of our performance: this will include specific reference to customer complaints, anti social behaviour issues or staff grievances based on diversity characteristics.
- 9.3 Our Organisational Development Manager monitors that line managers have arranged diversity related training for new starters, within three months of the start date.

## Appendix 1

### Guidelines

#### **Our approach to equality**

Our aim is to create equality of opportunity for everyone whilst recognising that some people face barriers that others do not. We want to give all people equal opportunity to access our services and jobs.

Equality is about ensuring that people are treated in a non-discriminatory way and challenging behaviours that could be regarded as inappropriate or unfair.

The Equalities Act 2010 recognises the following nine ‘protected characteristics’ – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

#### **Our approach to diversity**

Diversity is about recognising and valuing individual differences and including everyone – as employees, customers and partners.

A diverse workforce or community can include many types of difference. These can be demographic differences such as age, race, gender, ethnicity; or differences such as education, work patterns, job role or psychological differences in personality, attitudes and beliefs.

We all help to make up the diversity within our communities and workplace and we all belong to a number of overlapping groups at any one time. Whilst some differences remain constant e.g. ethnic origins, others may change over time e.g. age, marital status, job role, caring responsibilities, disability.

Diversity is not just about responding to legislation - many aspects of diversity are not covered by current equal opportunities legislation. Neither is it about creating a level playing field and treating all people the same. Diversity is about acknowledging difference and treating everyone fairly – taking into account those differences. In other words diversity is relevant to everyone and includes everyone.

#### **Our approach to inclusion**

As part of our 2015-16 Strategic Plan we want our customers to Settle at Home: part of this is to promote financial and digital inclusion for our customers. As part of Sustaining our Business we need to deliver our Digital Journey Project to improve our website and social media offer for our customers.

At SYHA we understand that people come first and that the provision of good quality affordable homes can make a huge difference to the lives of individual and families. Good housing enables people to have access to schools, hospitals and job markets, key factors in combating inequality and poverty. It helps to promote community cohesion and social inclusion allowing people to live independent lives within the community, secure from harassment and abuse.

As an employer SYHA is committed to building and maintaining an inclusive organisation that recognises and values the inherent worth and dignity of each person. We aim to foster mutual respect and understanding amongst staff and encourage each individual to strive to reach their own potential. All our staff have the right to perform their work free from discrimination, harassment and bullying and any other form of unwanted behaviour.