



ST LUKE'S HOUSING SOCIETY
MCMASTER HOUSE

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

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Other related policies:	Allocations and Lettings. Anti-Social Behaviour. Compliments and Complaints; Domestic Abuse; Safeguarding Adults, Support Planning, Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

1. Overview

This policy outlines St Luke's Housing Society's approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

We are committed to putting equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do.

2. Policy Objectives

As a small provider of housing, rather than simply stating that we take our responsibility to EDI seriously, we want to demonstrate how we put our words into practice.

We are proud of our diverse community and strive to be an inclusive organisation that celebrates and reflects the lives of our staff, board and residents.

At St Luke's Housing Society, we understand that everyone who contributes to our small community and organisation is an individual, with individual needs,

hopes and dreams. Each of us has had individual life experiences that impact and shape our lives.

These experiences are informed by the culture in which we grow up, our gender, age, religion and sexuality, our belief systems, any physical or invisible disabilities and our mental and physical health.

Diversity within our community and our association is fundamental to our business and service delivery. We take EDI seriously, as differing perspectives foster understanding, improvement, and creativity, enabling us to provide a more inclusive service to residents, staff, and organisations we work in partnership with.

At St Luke's Housing Society, we appreciate the critical role that our staff, tenants, contractors and wider community play in our success and acknowledge the richness of our diverse society. We are committed to fulfilling our legal obligations by actively promoting equal opportunities for all groups and fostering an inclusive environment that empowers everyone to thrive.

We are committed to upholding the Equality Act 2010, aimed to protect people from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in the workplace and in wider society, covering nine protected characteristics:

- Race, ethnicity and/or nationality.
- Religion, beliefs.
- Disability (Physical or Mental)
- Age
- Gender
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and/or maternity.

St Luke's Housing Society understands that people may be discriminated against for reasons other than the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. We are fully aware of our legal and moral duty to protect other groups and will challenge discrimination and injustice where practical and appropriate. These groups may include:

- Social/economic group
- Class
- Appearance
- Political preferences
- Parental/Caring responsibilities.
- Part-time workers.
- Spent convictions / historical criminal record.
- Membership/non-membership of a trade union.
- Any other matter that would cause an individual to be discriminated against or treated unfairly.

The responsibility for the Policy lies with the Board and the Head of Operations. All our staffs have a responsibility to make sure they adopt this policy and its principles in their day-to-day work.

From providing accommodation, related services, governance and recruitment, we will aim to ensure we do not discriminate, we treat everyone fairly and we respect their human rights.

3. Regulatory and Legal Framework

St Luke's Housing Society is subject to the Equality Act 2010 and we have a legal obligation to uphold these principles:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Nurture good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

St Luke's Housing Society's equality commitment goes much further than our legal obligations; we aim to tackle prejudice and promote an understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion.

We believe that it is important for our tenants, board and committee members, contractors and staff to reflect the communities in which we work. In achieving these aims, we will comply with the current equality legislation and regulatory requirements.

4. Policy Details

General

We will not treat anybody applying for housing, receiving services or working for us less favourably than anyone else, due to a protected characteristic.

We will take positive action when we need to, to allow members of underrepresented groups with a protected characteristic to receive equality of opportunity in housing, services and work.

Members of the board, committees, and Tenant groups will role model and champion our commitment to equal opportunities. Following our equal opportunities policy is essential for Tenants' associations to be recognised.

All main contractors, consultants and other agencies we hire must adhere to our Equal Opportunities Policy.

If we discover unlawful discrimination by contractors or suppliers, or other agencies we may work with, we will take action, and where necessary, we may review or seek to terminate our agreements with them, or follow their own complaints process.

We will take effective action to tackle victimisation and harassment, and we will always adopt a victim-centred approach.

To make sure people have equal access to services, we will provide an interpreter service and translate policies and documents where essentially required to meet people's needs.

We aim to ensure that our services are accessible by providing various methods of contact. Where services are not accessible, we will look to put things in place to ensure individuals are able to access our services more easily.

5. Housing and Services

In providing services to our Tenants, we will:

- Ensure our properties are let through the use of fair processes, adopting the relevant housing letting systems to prevent prejudice or discrimination.
- Make sure we deal with complaints promptly, fairly and without discrimination
- Respond to reasonable adjustment requests in a timely and proactive manner, considering our duties as a landlord under the Equality Act and implementing agreed adjustments where practicable to do so.

Further information regarding our approach to complaints handling can be found in our Compliments and Complaints Policy and associated guidance from the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

6. Employment

When we recruit and work with our staff, we aim to:

1. Make sure we recruit the best staff for the job.
2. Make sure no applicant or staff receives less favourable treatment than another due to a protected characteristic, and, wherever possible, support them with the help they need to reach their full potential
3. Make sure all staff are trained effectively to ensure they can co-operate with this policy
4. Carry out training on complaints handling with consideration to EDI.
5. Take appropriate action against anyone who breaches this policy.

7. Workplace and Tenant Reasonable Adjustments

Definition

A reasonable adjustment is a change that must be made to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to:

- a colleague's disability when doing their job
- a job applicant's disability when applying for a job
- a disabled Tenant when receiving a service

8. Legal Responsibilities

St Luke's Housing Society has a legal requirement to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010, which stipulates that where a disabled person is put at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people, employers and service providers are under a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent this.

In addition to fulfilling our legal obligation, St Luke's Housing Society is committed to maintaining a high standard of accessibility and experience for all our staff and tenants. We should therefore extend our approach to reasonable adjustments to embrace not just disability, but any special need or circumstance.

9. Tenant and Staff Profiling

To ensure this policy is operating effectively and the organisation is providing a fair and equitable service we will use Tenant profiling and insight information.

This information will be used to ensure we continue to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, all other equality legislation and the General Data Protection Regulation. Ongoing monitoring will allow us to take appropriate action to tackle discrimination, victimisation or harassment and promote equality of opportunity.

10. Objectives

- We can design and maintain services that meet the diverse needs of our tenants.
- Encourage a strong ethos from our trustees and staff for equality & diversity, and improve outcomes and service delivery for our tenants and staff
- Develop tenant profiling information to check that we are complying with our aims and policy.
- All St Luke's Housing Society staff to understand equality & diversity issues that relate to their delivery of service and their rights and responsibilities as staff.

- Community engagement and satisfaction.
- Responsive services that tenants can access easily.

We will comply with equality legislation and work towards developing mechanisms to challenge and tackle discrimination when providing housing and support services.

When recruiting staff, we comply with all equality legislation.

We will treat people fairly and equitably to improve equality of opportunity for our staff, tenants and trustees.

11. Breaches of this policy

We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with following our Human Resources Policy, Anti-social Behaviour Policy, Unacceptable Behaviour Policy (Tenant) or Compliments and Complaints Policy.

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments where appropriate. Failure to make a necessary reasonable adjustment resulting in disability discrimination may amount to a breach of this policy, resulting in disciplinary proceedings.

If a staff member believes that they have suffered discrimination, they can raise this in writing to the Head of Operations or the Chair of the Board. If they feel this has not been resolved, they can raise a formal grievance. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

If a Tenant reports or complains of experiencing discrimination by St Luke's Housing Society, the issue will be investigated following the Complaints Policy and dealt with appropriately.

There must be no victimisation or retaliation against Tenants who complain about discrimination. However, should we have reason to believe that a false claim has been made, we will consider this to be a breach of the Tenant contract and deal with it under the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and/or Unacceptable Behaviour Policy.

12. Equality, diversity and inclusion

This policy aims to ensure that St Luke's Housing Society is fully compliant with its legal obligations and puts equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of all of its working practices.

The policy allows us to consider the needs of all individuals in their day-to-day work, in developing our policies, in service delivery and in relation to all our staff, trustees and residents.