



South Tyneside Council's  
Housing Company

# Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

**April 2022**

Lead officer:	Nyomi Winter
Date agreed:	<i>Agreed March 2022</i>
EIA completed:	21 12 21
Review date:	March 2026

## **1. Introduction**

South Tyneside Homes (STH) operates as an Arm's Length Management Organisation and was established in 2006, and currently manages and maintains approximately 16,000 properties on behalf of South Tyneside Council. South Tyneside Homes are also a significant employer across the region, with over 600 staff split across the directorates.

The Board agreed a new Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan in February 2022. Our staff are highly motivated and dedicated to deliver our new vision of "Providing excellent services and quality homes where customers feel safe and supported".

To meet the new Delivery Plan and to achieve the agreed strategic objectives, we recognise that equality, diversity and inclusion sits at the heart of everything we do.

## **2. Context**

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy has been developed taking into account the following:

- The profile of our staff, tenants, the housing register and the Board
- Legislative responsibilities
- Feedback from an external review into our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion

## **3. Strategic Aims and Objectives**

The vision for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is:

"Achieve and embed equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in everything South Tyneside Homes does."

This strategy underpins this by having four objectives that are outlined below:

- Deliver inclusive and accessible services to customers
- Provide inclusive opportunities for resident involvement, with diverse views shaping decision making
- Be an inclusive employer that can recruit and retain a diverse workforce
- Have a diverse Board that demonstrates a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

In developing these aims and objectives we consulted with the following people and groups:

- STH's Senior Management Team
- All managers
- All staff

- We held a session with the staff feedback forum
- We held a meeting with our involved tenants
- We carried out a survey with customers

We have aligned our priorities on equality, diversity and inclusion to our strategic objectives.

## **4. Strategy**

### **4.1 Deliver inclusive and accessible services to customers**

At the heart of being able to provide quality homes, sustain tenancies and neighbourhoods and provide great customer service is the need to be able to deliver inclusive and accessible services. We need to know who our customers are, what their needs are and be able to respond appropriately. We need to ensure we carry out pro-active monitoring of each service area by protected characteristic and carry out robust Equality Impact Assessments. We need to ensure that staff are provided with guidance to be able to deliver accessible and inclusive services to meet the needs of residents.

### **4.2 Provide inclusive opportunities for resident involvement, with diverse views shaping decision making**

Listening to our customers is one of our key company priorities, but we recognise that for this to be effective we need to ensure that we hear from a diverse range of customers and use this to both develop our service provision and tailor services to meet individual need. Within this objective we have set out a range of actions to increase the number of customers who are actively involved and that this is representative of the local community.

### **4.3 Be an inclusive employer that can recruit and retain a diverse workforce**

To achieve our strategic objective of being an Employer of Choice, it is essential that we are an inclusive employer that is attractive to applicants from diverse backgrounds and that a diverse workforce wishes to continue working for us. We will implement a range of actions to support this. This strategy links closely with our People Strategy.

### **4.4 Have a diverse Board that demonstrates a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion**

To achieve our strategic objective of being well governed, it is important that we have a board composition that is representative of the local community and can bring

a diverse range of views to decision-making. The Board sets the culture of the organisation and will be responsible for overseeing the company's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and ensuring that it is embedded in all activities of the company.

## **5. Monitoring and Review**

Detailed progress against the strategy will be reported to the Housing and Corporate Services Committee. A high-level summary of progress will also be provided to the Board of South Tyneside Homes bi-annually as part of the Delivery Plan.

Progress against the outcomes and measures of success will also be monitored to determine whether we are achieving the priorities set out within the strategy.

## 6. Action Plan

<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Deliver inclusive and accessible services to customers</b>	
<b>Link to STH Strategic objective:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide quality homes</li> <li>• Sustain tenancies and neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Deliver great customer service</li> </ul>	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date to be completed by</b>
Analyse and report on new census and implications for service delivery	Corporate Business Manager	Q3 2022/23
Develop an Inclusive Services Policy to provide guidance to staff on identifying and supporting vulnerable customers	Corporate Business Manager	Q3 2022/23
Raise awareness of hate crime reporting procedures	Community Safety and Tenancy Enforcement Manager, with support from Communications and Marketing Specialist	Q3 2022/23
Review use of interpreting services for speakers of other languages and develop supportive documents to ensure staff are confident in using these	Communications and Marketing Specialist	Q4 2022/23
Ensure that accessibility tools on the website and other arrangements for reducing communications barriers are effectively promoted	Communications and Marketing Specialist	Q4 2022/23
Embed the delivery of communications campaigns around key diversity dates and events on social media	Communications and Marketing Specialist	Q4 2022/23
Increase use of imagery that is representative of our diverse customers in communications materials	Communications and Marketing Specialist	Q4 2022/23
Carry out an accessibility audit of offices	Building Managers	Q4 2022/23
Develop a programme for ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are up to date	Corporate Business Manager	Q1 2023/24
Carry out accessibility audit of communal buildings	Assistant Head of Asset Management	Q2 2023/24

Review options to ensure customer profile is easily visible on ICT systems	ICT Manager	Q2 2023/24
Ensure customer profiling is up to date, can be broken down by protected characteristics and this data is analysed and acted upon	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2023/24
Develop practical guidance to support staff	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2023/24
Develop diversity monitoring for complaints and compliments	Customer Service Manager	Q4 2023/24
Carry out good practice research into community cohesion	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2024/25
Review good practice and our current approach to procurement to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion requirements are included within specifications and actively monitored as part of contract monitoring	Heads of Services, with support from STC Procurement team	Q4 2024/25
Review the costs and benefits of accreditations relating to EDI	Head of Corporate Services	Q4 2024/25
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service planning is informed by up-to-date diversity information</li> <li>• Customers with protected characteristics feel as satisfied with our services as those without protected characteristics</li> <li>• Customers feel their differences are embraced by us as a company</li> <li>• Improved corporate reputation as a company that cares, listens and acts</li> <li>• Increased engagement and positive comments on social media</li> <li>• Clear approach to vulnerable customers</li> </ul>	
<b>Measures of success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in TSM: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods by diversity strands</li> <li>• Percentage of communal areas that are fully accessible</li> <li>• Complaints received, resolved, upheld or not upheld by diversity strands</li> <li>• Proportion of complaints about discrimination or unfair treatment</li> <li>• Proportion of people supported to maintain tenancies by diversity strand</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of communication activities and tracking of reach, impressions and engagement for targeted campaigns</li> </ul>
--	---

<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Provide inclusive opportunities for resident involvement, with diverse views shaping decisions</b>	
<b>Link to STH strategic objective:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Engaging with customers to improve services and influence decisions</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date to be completed by</b>
Improve involvement recruitment processes to attract both a greater number and diversity of customers to get involved which is more closely aligned to customer demographics (including targeted campaigns where required)	Service Improvement & Performance Officer (Involvement)	Q4 2022/23
Develop comprehensive mechanisms to measure the impact of resident engagement on both a local and corporate level	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2022/23
Improve communication to give effective, timely and appropriate feedback to customers to demonstrate that we actively listen to their views	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2022/23
Provide EDI briefings to involvement groups	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2022/23
Effectively train staff to recognise the benefits of resident engagement and the importance of listening to a diverse range of views, to develop and improve service delivery	Service Improvement Officer (Involvement)	Q4 2022/23
Develop “Involvement Champions” across the organisation to ensure involving residents is at the forefront of delivering services, ensuring a diverse range of views are captured	Service Improvement Officer (Involvement)	Q4 2022/23
Seek opportunities to communicate with customers by	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2022/23

accessing existing Borough-wide networks including 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector organisations such as Inspire (CVS) and other local diversity groups		
Explore ways to enhance communication methods to ensure customers are aware of what is happening in their local area and information suits customers' varying needs and preferences	Assistant Head of Housing (HAM)	Q4 2022/23
Explore best practice and identify opportunities to improve the way we engage with customers and enhance the 'menu' of engagement opportunities so that customers can give their views in ways which suits their needs and preferences	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2023/24
Deliver new opportunities and empowerment programmes for residents to support more effective engagement and give residents the tools to influence and hold STH to account	Corporate Business Manager	Q2 2023/24
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of "involvement champions"</li> <li>• Diverse customer views are provided to the Board to enable effective decision making</li> <li>• Improved communication with residents</li> <li>• Increased number of customers actively involved, with a range of opportunities to meet needs</li> <li>• Satisfaction that they are listened to is high across all demographics</li> </ul>	
<b>Measures of success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of partnerships with existing networks</li> <li>• Increase of residents who feel listened to (Regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measure)</li> <li>• Increased number of engagements via social media channels</li> <li>• Implementation of new involvement opportunities (closed Facebook group)</li> <li>• Diversity of involved residents matches the profile of the local community</li> </ul>	



<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Be an inclusive employer that can recruit and retain a diverse workforce</b>	
<b>Link to STH Strategic Objective:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Employer of choice, efficient and well governed</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date to be completed by</b>
Develop a Hybrid Working Policy	Head of Corporate Services, with support from South Tyneside Council's HR Team and Health and Safety	Q1 2022/23
Actively promote the government childcare scheme to support staff to meet the costs of childcare	Corporate Business Team	Q2 2022/23
Review current workspaces to include areas for collaborative work and to provide appropriate rest areas	Heads of Service	Q2 2022/2023
Develop procedures for collecting, updating and using workforce profiles and to consider 'positive action measures' for attracting and retaining diverse staff	Head of Corporate Services, with support from South Tyneside Council's HR Team	Q3 2022/23
Review the flexible working policy (once the government legislation has been published)	Head of Corporate Services, with support from South Tyneside Council's HR Team	Q3 2022/23
Promote the current policies available to support staff, including the Carers Policy, Menopause Policy and Domestic Abuse Policy	Corporate Business Team	Q3 2022/23
Develop practical guidance and decision-making framework for managers on reasonable adjustments to support their staff	South Tyneside Council HR team with support from Corporate Business Team	Q4 2022/23
Increase mental health awareness across the organisation with more mental health training delivered to management and staff	Chair of the Wellbeing Group, with support from STC Health and Safety	Q4 2024/25
Consider additional measures that could be offered to support staff as part of the Absence Management Policy Review	South Tyneside Council HR Team	Q4 2022/23
Revise the carers policy that recognises the needs of people; with diverse responsibilities such	Corporate Business Team with support from South Tyneside Council HR Team	Q4 2022/23

as caring for parents, children and people with disabilities		
Develop a strong training offer for employees around EDI to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and have opportunities to build skills	Corporate Business Manager with support from South Tyneside Council Workforce Development	Q4 2022/23
Analyse whether we have any other pay gaps by diversity strands	Corporate Business Manager with support from STC HR	Q4 2023/24
Review the recruitment and selection policy to ensure our approach can attract the best candidates to vacancies and is inclusive	South Tyneside Council HR Team	Q4 2022/23
Establish whether more jobs could be advertised as open to flexible/part time/job share	Head of Corporate Services	Q4 2022/23
Carry out annual staff satisfaction survey broken down by protected characteristics	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2022/23
Establish EDI Inclusion Group chaired by executive level manager	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2022/23
Improved marketing of South Tyneside Homes as an employer of choice and to reach a higher number of potential employees, including those from diverse backgrounds	Corporate Business Team	Q2 2023/24
Target apprentice recruitment to address underrepresentation in our staff profile	Corporate Business Manager with support from Workforce Development	Q2 2023/24
Implement Gender Pay Gap report actions	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2023/24
Promote staff benefits to attract wide range of candidates	Corporate Business Manager	Q4 2023/24
Review our current offer for reward and recognition and the benefits and discounts that are offered to staff (including the long service offer)	Head of Corporate Services, with support from South Tyneside Council's HR Team	Q4 2023/2024
Ensure there is clear reference to reasonable adjustments in HR policies (build into review process for each policy at next review)	South Tyneside Council HR Team	Q4 2024/25
Consider progression to level 3 of the Government's Disability Confidence Scheme	Head of Corporate Services	Q4 2025/26

<p><b>Outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an increase in the quantity and quality of job applicants</li> <li>• Reduced staff turnover</li> <li>• Improved staff morale</li> <li>• Improved staff wellbeing</li> <li>• More hybrid and flexible working arrangements available to staff</li> <li>• A more diverse and representative workforce</li> <li>• Staff have the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of the business now and in the future</li> <li>• Supportive and flexible networks across the organisation</li> <li>• Improved sickness rates</li> <li>• Processes for welcoming and making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff are robust</li> </ul>
<p><b>Measures of success</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The staff turnover rate</li> <li>• The amount of job applications received</li> <li>• Staff wellbeing levels from the annual staff survey</li> <li>• Staff morale levels from the annual staff survey</li> <li>• A year on year reduction in the gender pay gap</li> <li>• The number of staff working across flexible roles, with a more equal split of male and female staff working flexibly</li> <li>• The number of staff that are from different demographics across the workforce</li> <li>• Increase in staff that are happy with the training opportunities at STH (leavers survey)</li> <li>• Increase of staff that believe they have the correct training to do the job to the standard required</li> <li>• Profile of diversity balance at different grades across STH</li> <li>• Proportion of staff having received EDI training/briefing within the last 2 years</li> </ul>

<b>Objective:</b>	<b>Have a diverse Board that demonstrates a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion</b>	
<b>Link to STH Strategic objective:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Employer of choice, efficient and well governed</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Date to be completed by</b>
Develop a succession plan that supports the Board in becoming representative of the local community	Head of Corporate Services	Q1 2022/23
Appoint both an executive and Board sponsor for EDI	Director of Housing and Corporate Services	Q2 2022/23
Establish EDI reporting framework, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pro-active diversity monitoring to SMT, Board and committees</li> <li>• Legislative requirements</li> <li>• Progress against objectives, actions and equality impact assessments</li> </ul>	Head of Corporate Services	Q3 2022/23
Develop a training plan for the Board on EDI, including as part of induction and refresher training	Head of Corporate Services	Q3 2022/23
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board increasingly representative of the local community</li> <li>• The Board actively consider equality and diversity implications as part of every report</li> </ul>	
<b>Measures of success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity profile of the Board</li> <li>• with the NHF Code of Governance</li> </ul>	