



How to...

*mainstream equality and
reflect diversity*



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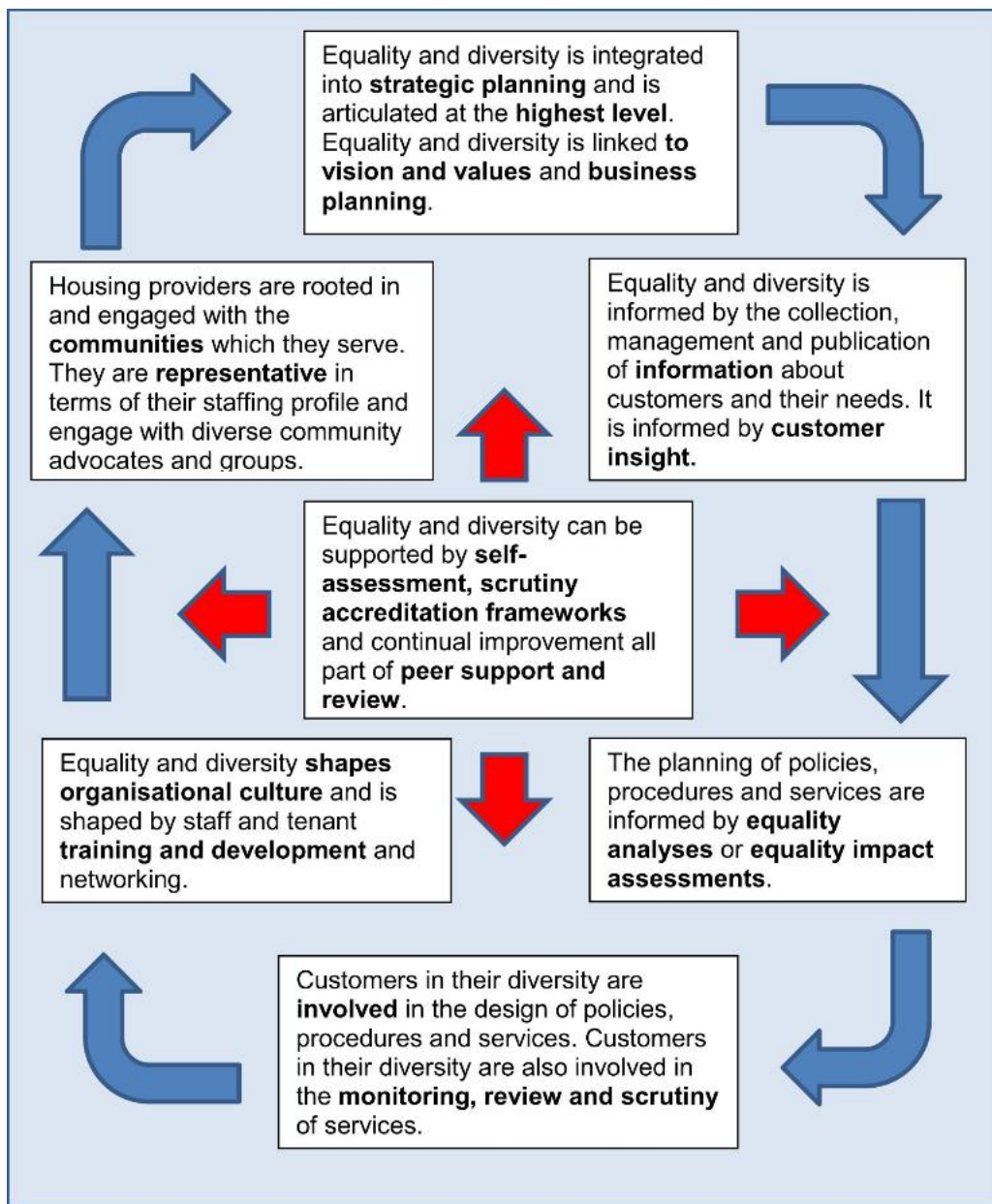
How to... mainstream equality and reflect diversity

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What is mainstreaming?

Mainstreaming equality and reflecting diversity means incorporating equal opportunities and an awareness of diverse service provision into all actions, services and policies from the strategy and planning stage right through to delivery and review.

It is based on the principle that equality and diversity are an integral part of service delivery rather than something separate or an adjunct to the business.



Drivers for mainstreaming?

There are a number of important drivers for mainstreaming equality and reflecting diversity in the housing industry:

1. **The Equality Act 2010:** brought together a range of different anti-discrimination legislation to offer protection to people who share 'protected characteristics' in the provision of goods, facilities and services and in employment.

Protected characteristics include: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

2. **Consumer protection and co-regulation:** the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) [co-regulatory approach](#) to consumer protection emphasises stronger partnerships between landlords, governance and customers. There is a responsibility for providers to support tenants in their diversity in shaping and scrutinising service delivery and in holding boards and councillors to account.
3. **Customer insight:** housing providers need to develop a more detailed and sophisticated understanding of the diversity of their customers and how to use information gained from customers in an effective way to ensure the right services are delivered to the right customers in the right way.
4. **Business drivers:** housing providers are diversifying their businesses and service offer. This could include developing housing products for market rent; or developing or supporting other services such as employment and enterprise. This will increase the need for greater awareness of the diversity of communities and how diverse aspirations impact on customer expectations.
5. **Equality and diversity and the challenge of localism:** the Localism Act 2011 has aimed to devolve powers from central government to local authorities and communities. A more localist approach invites service providers to consider the needs and aspirations of diverse groups and individuals in the communities where they work.

Mainstreaming equality and reflect diversity in housing - the journey

Mainstreaming equality and reflecting diversity requires a number of components which we shall consider and illustrate here:

1. **Strategically driven:** equality and diversity should be strategically driven. It should inform business objectives, service design and delivery; and be driven from, and accountable to, the governing board and senior management team.

Learning from others

Homes in Sedgemoor has an Executive Champion and a Board Champion for strategic direction. Their chief executive is also the joint chair of the Southern Equality and Diversity Forum which meets regularly with other housing professionals, Housing Diversity Network and CIH to benchmark and share best practice.

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2. **Equality analyses and equality impact assessments:** these tools provide ways of considering the effect of policies, actions and services on different groups. Effective equality analyses will integrate with mainstream organisational policy and service development, focus on clear equality outcomes and identify necessary actions, create a chain of accountability, will be supported by training, will record outcomes, offer opportunities for service users to engage with the process in their diversity; and will be monitored and reviewed. For further information, download [How to... undertake an equality analysis](#).
3. **Informed by diversity monitoring and customer insight:** to do this correctly, organisations need to be clear about why they are recording equality and diversity data and how this information will drive service improvements. It should be supported by staff and tenant training so different stakeholders understand why equality and diversity data is business critical and be monitored and reviewed. All equality and diversity data should be treated in the strictest confidence and used for the purposes for which it is collected. For further information, visit: www.guardian.co.uk/housing-network/2011/sep/09/data-protection-poor-policies-housing-associations
4. **Involve diverse customers in service design, delivery, review and scrutiny:** the involvement of staff and service users in their diversity is vital if housing organisations are going to foster a culture genuinely open to equality and diversity.

Housing Diversity Network – Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) practice

The **Golden Gates Housing Trust** (GGHT) Working Together Group (WTG) is made up of 23 members. Members cover all nine protected characteristics and are staff, customers, residents and also community groups or advocates of vulnerable or protected groups. Each protected or vulnerable group has a champion acting on their behalf which keeps the group in mind when consulting on documents etc. The group meets once every two months and its main aims are to integrate equality, diversity and inclusion into all GGHT's services and also to aid community cohesion.

Learning from others

Wolverhampton Homes has a number of fora which support equality and diversity and service delivery. They inform, advise and assist Wolverhampton Homes and help meet its legal obligations. The Equalities and Diversity Steering Group:

- ensures effective delivery of the Single Equalities and Cohesion Plan
- ensures Wolverhampton Homes maintains excellence against the Social Housing Excellence Framework (SHEF)
- ensures Wolverhampton Homes continues to self assess our performance against national equality and diversity standards.

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5. **Staff training and development:** training and development for staff on equality and diversity is important to both empower staff and provide them with the Skills to make equality and diversity an integral part of their approach to customers. Tenants and residents involved in service design, delivery, scrutiny and review should also be offered opportunities for training and development. Training and development opportunities should be systematic, regularly reviewed and updated and be engaging.

Housing Diversity Network – Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) practice

Forum Housing Association's Equality and Diversity Training Booklet 'Living Inclusive Lives' was developed in 2011. This learning tool is completed by all staff and more recently the booklet has been given to volunteers, casual workers and board members to complete. When staff complete the booklet they undertake an assessment and the marking criteria has been designed by the Staff Equality and Diversity Group. The success of the booklet is its interactive format with some sections specifically designed for discussion in performance reviews and team meetings while other sections are activities, which can be used with residents.

6. **Supported by positive action:** the Equality Act 2010 enabled employers to put into place positive action measures where they can demonstrate that employees, applicants or board members who share a particular protected characteristic experience disadvantage connected with that protected characteristic; or where participation is disproportionately low.

Learning from others

Genesis explored how to use mentoring and coaching as part of a programme of positive action to increase the number of women in senior positions. For further information, visit www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Learning%20today%20leading%20tomorrow/17%20Glass%20ceiling%20Genesis%20Shergill.pdf

7. **Enhanced by procurement:** services provided to communities can be geared towards diverse needs and requirements through procurement. This can ensure that contractors and suppliers operating in diverse communities support equality and diversity objectives including employment and training.

Places for People - procurement strategy

Places for People have introduced a procurement strategy which fully embraces the business case for equality and diversity. They have a new code of conduct which embraces Social Value and Corporate Responsibility. They have revised equality and diversity assessment criteria in PQQs so that they are more outcome focussed and relevant to current businesses and they provide Business Diversity Health Checks to support new contractors in meeting contract requirements.

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8. **Supported by equality and diversity frameworks, business diversity health checks and accreditation schemes:** there are a number of equality and diversity frameworks which can support housing providers mainstream equality and reflect diversity, e.g. the Stonewall Workplace Equality Framework, HDA's DNA programme or LGA's SHEF programme.

Equality and diversity: CIH charter for housing

CIH has developed an equality and diversity charter which helps organisations identify outcomes for a fair and accessible housing service. For further information visit:

www.cih.org/equalityanddiversitycharter

Places for People - Business Diversity Healthchecks

Equality and diversity can also be supported by external diversity healthchecks. **Places for People** deliver an innovative self-assessment programme called the Business Diversity Health Check which is a useful tool for housing organisations, contractors and partners to review and improve their approach to equality and diversity.

'This was one of the best training courses I have ever been on. The atmosphere was very relaxed and I was able to focus and participate fully' Aaron Property Services.

'Time to explore the subject in a positive and professional manner' Castle Rock Edinvar Scotland

'The Business Diversity Health Check day provided a sharp focus for our staff at all levels to identify our successes and build on these in the future. Above all it motivated our staff and improved our relationship with our client, as well as providing us with excellent evidence for future PQQ's, bids and tenders'. The Gas Company, Hull.

The Health Check goes beyond 'tick boxes' and checklists to explore what you do and why it makes a difference to your customers, colleagues and partners. It covers best practice, service standards, regulation, codes of practice and legislation, and risk management.

The programme is fast moving and cost effective yet flexible and powerful. It starts with some pre-course work followed by an interactive five-hour workshop run by some of the sector's leading equality and diversity experts.

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Housing Diversity Network: Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA)

Housing Diversity Network (HDN) has launched its Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) programme. The accreditation process invites external experts made up of HDN Associates and multi-skilled housing and equality professionals to provide external assessment of an organisation's approach to equality and diversity. Organisations are assessed under three broad strands including the impact on businesses, customers and communities.

For further information, visit: www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk/training/dna-diversity-network-accreditation/

9. **Supporting staff and resident networking:** many housing providers are establishing diversity networking groups as a means of improving employee relations and improving staff satisfaction and ensuring more inclusive policies, procedures and services. For further information, download [How to... use diversity network groups to improve services](#)
10. **Celebrating diversity:** a culture of equality and diversity is best supported where it is seen as fun and engaging by staff, tenants and residents. This offers a non-threatening approach to exploring new ideas and generating a better understanding of diverse aspirations and needs.

Housing Diversity Network – Diversity Network Accreditation (DNA) practice

Golden Gates Housing Trust (GGHT) has a timetable of monthly themes which are decided at the end of each year for the coming year. The timetable is agreed upon taking into account priorities. For example, February is LGB month. This has included LGB lunchtime learning session for staff and customers. Champions within each office volunteer to wear the Stonewall T-shirts throughout the month. The Executive Management Team also wear the Stonewall T-shirts to act as positive role models in senior roles. An LGB Surgery is held in which staff are asked for ideas on how to make GGHT a more positive service provider and employer. At the end of the month, GGHT holds Rainbow Day. This year there was a Rainbow Day bake sale to raise funds for the LGB customer group – all cakes baked by the customer group. Stonewall called LGB Month 'Inspiring'.

Mainstreaming equality and reflecting diversity at Places for People – tips for success

- build and demonstrate effective and meaningful engagement with equalities groups/ consultative bodies
- ensure that good risk management strategies and practice is in place
- assess local needs through research and evaluation - don't make assumptions
- stress the business case and don't use legal requirements as a big stick
- ensure that everyone in the organisation is responsible for incorporating equality principles in their day to day activities. Ultimately mainstreaming equalities is about building in, rather than bolting on at the end
- consult with relevant groups and organisations on your plans and strategies and potential actions
- make sure that action planning involves the allocation of resources to deliver monitor and evaluate customer satisfaction and complaints by equality strand and use outcomes to assist with future planning and evidence gathering
- invest in making sustainable links with those groups who are under represented in the community
- show evidence of partnering with equalities groups, including the delivery of outcomes
- promote positive attitudes through actions - actions speak louder than words
- provide good quality information on needs at equality strand level when it is timely to do so and useful
- include the development of robust monitoring and review systems on equality related actions - it is likely you will have more information for some groups than others
- carry out equality analyses for all relevant policies and strategies and demonstrate where this has happened and what actions have flowed through as a result
- deliver on the findings of equality analyses
- integrate equality analysis action points from associated strategies and plans, e.g. allocations, homeless strategy, facilities management, etc
- ensure that staff get relevant and useful training in equal opportunities
- make equality and diversity fun, celebrate successes and build confidence.

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Useful resources and information

Tenant insight - a toolkit for landlords

[www.housemark.co.uk/hmresour.nsf/lookup/TenantInsightToolkit.pdf/\\$File/TenantInsightToolkit.pdf](http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmresour.nsf/lookup/TenantInsightToolkit.pdf/$File/TenantInsightToolkit.pdf)

The business case for equality and diversity

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-business-case-for-equality-and-diversity-a-survey-of-the-academic-literature

Diversity events at Cotman Housing

Contact Jane Warnes Jane.Warnes@cotman-housing.org.uk

Places for People Equality and Diversity Services

Places for People provide a range of equality and diversity services bringing you solutions that improve customer service and drive business efficiencies, including:

- Business Diversity Health Checks
- Expert advice and consultancy
- Equality analysis workshops
- Resources and tools for change management and engagement

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