

# Diversity, and Inclusion (D&I) Policy

## 1 Purpose

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing (MTVH) is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all areas of our work and practice and to create and maintain an inclusive organisational culture which embraces and values diversity. Our aim is to provide a healthy environment for everyone to feel safe, valued and where they are treated fairly and with respect.

In implementing this policy, we will be compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 and ensure we are doing all that we can promote a culture of dignity and respect and to eliminate unlawful discrimination in all aspects of our work. We will continuously seek opportunities to promote best practice and meet our obligations as an employer and service provider.

## 2 Scope

The policy and accompanying procedures apply to:

- Residents who live in accommodation owned or managed by us.
- Customers we deliver community-based services to or that we may encounter in our work.
- All colleagues, including agency, bank workers, students, peer mentors and volunteers.
- Consultants, contractors, suppliers.
- All Customer Groups, Board Members, Stakeholders/Partners commissioned by us.

We expect organisations that work with us to have their own equality and diversity policies and be able to demonstrate how they put them into practice.

## 3 Policy Statement

We promote an inclusive environment for everyone to feel they can be their true self and are:

- Treated fairly
- Respected for who they are
- Accepted for who they are and able to express who they are
- Shown kindness and compassion
- Empowered and enabled
- Encouraged and supported
- Afforded dignity, free from abuse, discrimination, and harassment

MTVH will ensure that its approach whether with colleagues, residents, or members of the public, reinforces the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, respect, equality, and inclusion for all.

## 4 Definitions

There are nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 from discrimination. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnership status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation



Discrimination can take the form of discrimination by association – where discrimination takes place against someone because they are associated with a person who possesses a protected characteristic.

Discrimination can take place against an individual because others think they possess a protected characteristic – perceptive discrimination.

Harassment can also take place by a third party – where partners, suppliers or customers direct offensive behavior or comments at colleagues.

At MTVH we have a no tolerance stance towards all forms of discrimination or harassment.

## 5 Our Approach

### 5.1 Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan

This will focus on the key actions that we identify are required to continue to address gaps and to develop the way in which we deliver services equitably to residents, other customers, and colleagues. The Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed annually and owned by the Head of Diversity and Inclusion with governance from the organisation's Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group.

### 5.2 Provision of Services

In providing and managing housing and delivering services to customers, we will ensure equality of opportunity in relation to the quality of housing, access to housing, policies relating to harassment and nuisance, provision of services and complaints.

We will endeavor to ensure that all written material is clear, simple and jargon free. In preparing written material we will ensure that the content is open and inclusive and does not discriminate against any group or individual.

We will be mindful that people are different and take account of these differences when helping and advising our residents and will try to understand better who our customers are so that we can provide appropriate services which are easily accessible.

We will engage in regular consultation with service users and encourage customers to be involved in our activities to ensure that services are responsive and reflect the diversity of need.

### 5.3 Procurement and Contracting

We will ensure that all contractors, consultants, and partners are aware of the importance of diversity and inclusion and will be required to provide a copy of their Diversity Policy and to demonstrate how they comply with their policy. We will help them to understand the diverse needs of our customers in order that they are better equipped to provide an efficient service to our residents and service users.

### 5.4 Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment decisions will be based on the merits and abilities of candidates alone; equality and diversity practices will be integrated into every stage of the recruitment and selection process.

Recruitment panels should where possible reflect diversity in respect of, amongst other things, age, gender, race, and ethnicity. Unconscious Bias (UB) Awareness training is in place for all with recruitment responsibility.

## 5.5 Learning and Development (L&D)

Diversity and Inclusion training is mandatory for all colleagues and essential for Board Members. Access to training and professional development opportunities will be given to all colleagues according to their job role and in agreement with their manager.

## 5.6 Colleague Wellbeing

MTVH will deal with complaints of discrimination and harassment with care and sensitivity. Allegations or complaints will be taken seriously and acted on through our Grievance Procedure which is clearly signposted to colleagues.

Individuals are afforded flexible working or time off for religious festivals, observance, and practice where this does not adversely impact on the organisation's needs.

Flexible working options are available and reasonable adjustments can be made to support all Colleagues.

## 6 Responsibilities and Accountability

The Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a duty to ensure that the policies and practices of MTVH reflect the Diversity, and Inclusion Policy. The Chief Executive is accountable to the Board in this regard.</li> <li>Delegates to each Executive Director, specific responsibilities for making sure that the Diversity, and Inclusion Policy is implemented effectively in their functional areas. They are accountable through the Chief Executive to the Board for ensuring that service standards, planning and service delivery take account of diversity issues, that where relevant, impact assessments are carried out and that outcomes are monitored effectively.</li> </ul>
All Managers and Team Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colleagues and volunteers receive appropriate training and understand their responsibilities</li> <li>They take diversity issues into account in decision making and service planning by carrying out, where appropriate, impact assessments</li> <li>They analyse access to, and satisfaction with the services under their control</li> </ul>
All Colleagues and Volunteers	<p>Have a duty to uphold the Diversity, and Inclusion Policy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acting and always behaving in a way that supports the aims of the policy</li> <li>Treating all residents, colleagues, customers and members of the public with respect.</li> <li>Challenging discrimination or bringing suspected breaches to the attention of a manager</li> </ul>

## 7 Background legislation

This policy has been written to ensure that MTVH comply with all the relevant Legal and Regulatory frameworks including:

- Equality Act
- Human Rights Act

## 8 Our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

In implementing this policy MTVH will not discriminate against any Colleague, Customer, or Stakeholder on the grounds of their gender, sexual orientation, gender reassignment status, identity, ethnic origin, age, religious belief, disability, marital status, and pregnancy/maternity



## 9 Key Policy Information

Policy Owner	Director of Corporate Affairs and Diversity & Inclusion
Author	Head of Diversity and Inclusion
Approved by	Exec Team
Effective from	November 2024
Approach to review	This Policy & associated Procedures will be reviewed in line with legislation, regulation and operational need. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to Customers and Colleagues.
<p>This is a controlled document maintained on electronic media. When appearing in paper form it should be checked against the master copy held by MTVH to verify that this is the current version.</p> <p>Any printed copies shall be considered uncontrolled.</p>	