



Axiom Housing Association Limited

Corporate Strategy 2015-2020

Supporting - Corporate Objective
To build our COMMUNITY
COMMITMENT

Level 1

POLICY
Equality & Diversity

Approved - 19 March 2015

Last health checked 1 May 2016

Next full review due – 1 May 2017

Approving Body: Board of Management

Service Owner: Chief Executive

Aim

Axiom is committed to treating everyone we house, provide services for, employ and work with fairly and with respect.

Recognising that our customers have different cultures and needs we are committed to promoting fairness, working towards eliminating discrimination and prejudice, and celebrating diversity. We will do this by taking into consideration the differing aspects of all sectors of society when planning and delivering services.

We recognise that people can be disadvantaged and treated unfairly because of class, colour, beliefs, religion, race, ethnic or national origin, disability, gender, age, sexuality, gender reassignment, marital status and health. We aim to make sure that no one is treated unfairly or less favourably for these reasons or for any other reason that cannot be justified.

We promote an organisational culture which understands and values diversity and the contribution of all people; which seeks to remove barriers to equality; and which ensures equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded into all aspects of service planning and delivery. This policy applies to all residents, service users, applicants, staff, Board members, contractors, partner agencies and the general public.

The Equality and Diversity Strategic Group meets on a quarterly basis and is comprised of staff and residents who work alongside one another to oversee the implementation of this strategy and the annual action plan.

A. Equality, Diversity, Human Rights and Opportunity

1.0 EQUALITY

1.1 Axiom is committed to preventing discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, age, ethnic origin, disability, religion or belief, status as a carer or offending background.

1.2 Axiom will comply with all legislation on discrimination and equality.

2.0 DIVERSITY

2.1 Diversity is about valuing people as individuals.

2.2 Axiom recognises that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas and a different approach which can make the way it works more efficient, creative and innovative.

- 2.3 Axiom recognises that inequality does not just come from gender or ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability, age or religion or belief. Individuals are also disadvantaged by inequality of social class, where they were born or their family's circumstances. Axiom seeks to redress social inequality by putting in place actions to reverse under representation of specific groups amongst its employees, volunteers, board members and clients.

3.0 HUMAN RIGHTS

- 3.1 The core principles of human rights are dignity, fairness, equality and autonomy. Human rights help individuals to flourish and fulfil their potential through: being safe and protected from harm, being treated fairly and with dignity, living the life they choose and taking an active part in their community.

- 3.2 Axiom recognises the individual's human rights.

4.0 OPPORTUNITY

Equality of opportunity is about valuing the difference between people in a way that allows them equal access to the opportunities and services offered by society or an organisation.

This may require special provisions or adaptations to be made to ensure the individual is able to have equality of opportunity.

5.0 EXPECTATIONS

- 5.1 Axiom expects all employees to cooperate with measures introduced to ensure equality of opportunity and increase diversity.

Our Commitment

1. Ensure we are complying with legislation and regulatory requirements (as detailed in appendix 1) and proactively develop and adopt good practice.
2. Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is led by the Chief Executive.
3. Retain an E+D portfolio holder on the Board of management
4. Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded into all our activities and into core competency requirements of all our employees.
5. Strive to provide services that are delivered to excellent standards for all.
6. We will make reasonable adjustments to its premises and working practices to ensure employees can take a full and active part in its work.
7. Deliver and regularly review our equality, diversity and opportunity service plan.

8. Seek to understand who our existing and future residents and service users are and provide a range of services to meet their needs and expectations.
9. Understand the composition of our Board and staff; and have an understanding of the people and communities Axiom serve.
10. Develop partnerships which support the implementation of this policy.
11. Commit resources and provide training to support our commitment.
12. Raise awareness of our services with people and local communities particularly those where we have identified under-representation.

Our approach

Providing housing and services

1. Work with others to identify gaps and develop new services which meet the people's needs within the communities and geographical area that we work in.
2. Make our services accessible – this principle is incorporated into other key policies. In particular we:
 - Ensure our premises and services comply with the 2010 Equality Act.
 - Provide a forum (the Disability User Group) in which people living with disabilities can offer guidance on the way in which our services can be more accessible.
 - Take account of protected characteristics, literacy and health.
 - Aim to communicate clearly.
 - Facilitate ways in which people can understand the information we provide.
3. Keep up to date information about individual residents and service users and use this to tailor and develop services.
4. Take steps to monitor satisfaction from residents and service users who fall within minority/disadvantaged groups.
5. Take steps to ensure our contractors, suppliers and partners are aware of, and comply with, our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Developing policies and procedures:

1. Review our policies and procedures regularly.
2. Have a Disability User Group.
3. Produce an annual E&D report and publish on our website.
4. Monitor progress every six months
5. Carry out Equality Assessments on selected policies, functions and services.
6. Be proactive in identifying the need for new policies and practices to reduce disadvantage

Allocations and lettings:

1. Work with our partners to endeavour that allocation schemes are fair and accessible.
2. Review methods to advertise our properties.
3. Gather diversity information as part of the letting process for all new residents.

Tenancy and estate management:

1. Undertake regular census surveys of our residents to map their needs to enable us to align our services with their requirements.
2. Have a policy and procedures which deal with harassment of all kinds.
3. Have service standards that take diversity, vulnerability and/or harassment into account.
4. Have arrangements and resources to assist individuals to access aids and adaptations.
5. Have property standards that take user needs and disability into account.

Care and Support to vulnerable people

Have policies and related procedures on:

1. The provisions of care and support to Vulnerable People
2. Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

Resident and service user inclusion

1. Have a Resident and Service User inclusion policy.
2. Include actions within our service plan that aim to increase inclusion from under represented groups.
3. Work with residents and service users to positively promote awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion.
4. Work with members of Axiom Residents' Forum to ensure that they promote and work within the principles of this policy.

Staff Recruitment and retention

1. Develop practices that seek to employ, support and retain the best people and to reflect the communities we work in
2. Develop a safe and accessible working environment that values individuals' identities and cultures
3. As part of our approach we
 - have policies and procedures on dealing with harassment and discrimination
 - ensure that we comply with the principles of equal pay
 - provide staff with appropriate on going training, information and guidance to ensure that they comply with legislation and our policy

4. Monitor the make up of our staff by protected characteristics and compare the composition with the communities Axiom serve.

Governance

1. Retain an E+D portfolio holder on the Board of management
2. Monitor the composition of our Board, staff, tenants and service users; and compare with the communities Axiom serve.
3. Operate a fair and open Board member recruitment process.
4. Provide all Board members with appropriate on going training, information and guidance to ensure that they comply with legislation and our Equality and Diversity policy.

Monitoring and reporting

Within key policies, include the requirement to monitor outcomes about residents/service users/ applicants by protected characteristics.

Monitor all satisfaction surveys by the nine protected characteristics.

Provide reports and improvement plans to the Board of Management twice a year, including reports on staff data.

The Equality and Diversity Strategic Group monitor our Equality and Diversity Service Improvement Plan every quarter.

This policy is subject to an annual health check by the Equality and Diversity Strategic Group to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and is reviewed fully every 3 years.

Appendix 1

Legislation

The policy reflects the following legislative requirements:

- The Equality Act 2010

Regulation

This policy takes the following into account

- The Equality & Human Rights Commission (Guidance for Social Housing Providers)
- Standards required by our regulators (the HCA and CQC).