



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Definitions:

Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it recognises that their needs are met in different ways.

Diversity is the acknowledgement and respect of differences within and between groups of people. Equality is the framework that enables opportunity, access, participation and contribution that is fair and inclusive.

Introduction:

Aster Group will provide leadership and accountability and will promote equality and diversity in everything it does including, but not limited to, the following services and activities:

- Service delivery;
- Lettings;
- Access to information and advice;
- Community development
- Resident participation;
- Resident satisfaction;
- Asset management
- Complaints;
- Dealing with incidents such as harassment including incidents of domestic violence;
- Development and regeneration
- Procurement and supply;
- Governance;
- Staffing and employment

Policy:

- Seek to provide services, employment and a working environment that is equally accessible to all its stakeholders without discrimination or prejudice on any grounds including a person's:
 - Age
 - Carer's responsibility
 - Complex Needs
 - Cultural background
 - Dementia
 - Disability
 - Ethnic origin
 - Gender

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- HIV or AIDS condition
 - Learning disability
 - Level of literacy
 - Marital status
 - Mental Health
 - Mobility
 - Nationality
 - Race
 - Religious faith and beliefs (or absence of religious faith and beliefs)
 - Sexual orientation
 - Transgender
 - Unrelated criminal activities
- Agree and apply performance criteria, including statistical analysis, external audit and customer and employee surveys to ensure adherence to this policy.
 - Recognise the benefits brought to Aster Group by a diverse workforce which understands the needs of and serves a diverse community.
 - Oppose and seek to redress both direct and indirect discrimination of any kind.
 - Support Board members, employees and customers who challenge inappropriate behaviour
 - Adhere to The Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing (2006), and the principles expressed in guidance issued by any regulatory bodies or by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, seeking to:
 - Meet and exceed statutory and regulatory responsibilities
 - Positively influence the practices of key stakeholders and partners with whom the Group works.
 - Make clear reference to equality and diversity issues where appropriate in the business plans, strategies and policies of Group companies.
 - Deal promptly, firmly and consistently with any cases of discrimination or harassment reported by customers or employees.
 - Provide sufficient resources to ensure that this policy is effectively implemented.

In the provision of services:

- Deliver a high standard of service to all customers
- Deal fairly and equitably with all customers
- Provide services that are suitable for and sensitive to the diverse needs of customers
- Provide information in a format which suits the needs of individual customers
- Ensure that all employees are aware of and abide by the principles of equality and diversity
- Consider the principles of equality and diversity in the design of new services and facilities

In the employment of staff:

- Provide equality of employment opportunity by maintaining fair recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that the best person is appointed to a vacancy
- Ensure recruitment advertising is brought to a diverse range of potential applicants

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- Strive to recruit employees who reflect the diversity of the communities which are served by Group companies
- Treat all employees on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities, making any reasonable adjustments necessary to enable them to do their job.
- Provide equality and diversity in training and development opportunities which is accessible to all.

In the employment of contractors and consultants

- Require contractors and consultants employed by the Group to implement the principles of equality and diversity.
- Provide advice to contractors and consultants to enable them to understand the principles of equality and diversity and comply with Aster Group’s policy.
- Ensure that contractors and consultants are accountable for any failure on their part to comply with Aster Group’s policy.
- Work with our contractors and consultants to encourage them to recruit employees who reflect the diversity of the communities in which they work.

In determining the composition of the Boards

- Advertise widely when recruiting to fill vacancies for Board members
- Seek to recruit Board members who reflect the diversity of the communities which are served by the Group

Performance Standards:

- Alleged breaches of this policy are treated with the utmost seriousness.
- Board members, employees and customers understand that they will be supported if they challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- Board members, customers and employees receive sufficient, appropriate training in equality and diversity issues.
- Appropriately trained Equality and Diversity Champions are identified from across the Group and meet at least four times a year.
- The ‘six strands’ (gender, race, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation) are used as the basis for monitoring performance which is reported annually to Board members and customers.
- Information relating to our customers is updated regularly.
- Lettings to black and minority ethnic households are recorded monthly and reported to the Tenant Services Authority through Continuous Recording (CORE) lettings logs. This, and other relevant information, is also reported to the Boards in the quarterly Management and Performance Briefing.
- The ‘Positive about Disabled People’ Standard is achieved and maintained for all companies within Aster Group.
- The effect on equality and diversity issues is included in impact assessment of any business activity and is integral to the planning and development of new services and facilities.

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- Customer and employee feedback regularly reviewed to ensure no social or ethnic group is disadvantaged by our ways of working
- Vacancies for members of the Group's Boards are publicly advertised

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