


Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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 Glen Oaks HOUSING ASSOCIATION	Policy number:	G14
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Our Vision, Mission Statement and Values

Glen Oaks' vision statement '**Where Communities Thrive**' and our mission statement '**Our aim is to provide good quality affordable housing and an excellent service. We will encourage resident participation and work with other agencies to regenerate our community**' provide the foundation for Glen Oaks Housing Association's commitment to its residents and the communities they live in.

This commitment is also demonstrated in the Association's values which were agreed following discussions with the Board and staff. Glen Oaks' values are fundamental to how we carry out our day-to-day activities.

Our values are:

respectful

we trust and respect our customers and each other

dedicated

we will give 100% commitment to our work

transparent

we will be open and honest about what we do

aspirational

we will strive to achieve the best we can for our communities

Equality & Diversity Statement

The Association is intent on ensuring people or communities do not face discrimination or social exclusion due to any of the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Association will regularly review this document for equal opportunities implications and take the necessary action to address any inequalities that result from the implementation of the policy.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Glen Oaks Housing Association is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all tenants, customers and employees. We respect and value the diversity of groups and individuals that we interact with and the benefits this can bring. We will take appropriate action to ensure those who may otherwise be excluded, feel included.
- 1.2 This policy outlines our intention to fulfil our aims of providing opportunities for all sections of the community, develop and enhance sustainable neighbourhoods and provide an enjoyable working and living environment which is free from harassment and discrimination.
- 1.3 The policy aims to ensure that Glen Oaks Housing Association promotes equality, fairness and respect in all of its actions as a social housing landlord and employer of choice. We will ensure that employees and Board members are aligned in their understanding and equipped to deliver a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion.

2.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 2.1 This policy is underpinned by both the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 which incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic British Law.
- 2.2 The Human Rights Act 1998 sets universal standards to ensure that a person's basic needs as a human being are recognised and met, and it is unlawful for an organisation to act in a way that is incompatible with the Act.
- 2.3 We adopt a human rights approach in our work through treating individuals with fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy whilst also safeguarding the rights of the wider community when developing policies and procedures and carrying out our functions.
- 2.4 Glen Oaks will not unlawfully discriminate against, on the grounds of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.5 This policy is not restricted to just these protected characteristics. We also recognise that factors such as socio-economic status and background,

including income, education, employment, and social supports can impact on an individual's life experiences, their ability to access opportunities and their sense of inclusion. We will take this into consideration wherever appropriate, including in our approach to providing employment, training and volunteering opportunities, and identifying and developing service improvement initiatives.

2.6 We will also comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Standards for Governance and Financial Management:

Standard 5.3 - The Registered Social Landlord (RSL) conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity:

- *The RSL pays due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and human rights, and foster good relations across the range of protected characteristics in all areas of its work, including its governance arrangements.*

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all individuals working with Glen Oaks including permanent, temporary, fixed term employees and agency workers, Board & Service Improvement Group (SIG) members.

3.2 The policy also applies to stakeholders – this includes contractors, consultants, tenants, customers and other service users.

3.3 This policy should be understood in conjunction with our:

- Equality & Diversity Action Plan – this sets out how we will deliver on our equality objectives.
- Dignity at Work Policy – this sets out how we will ensure employees are treated with dignity and respect
- Staff & Board Code of Conduct and SIG Terms of Reference – this sets out how employees, Board & SIG members are expected to behave.
- Staff Training & Development Policy – this sets out our approach to training

4.0 Policy aims

- 4.1 This policy will cover the specific areas of governance, service delivery, access to information and advice, housing provision, procurement, working for Glen Oaks, dealing with harassment, and complaints.
- 4.2 It will be supported by relevant strategy documents and action plans, and be embedded within all of our policies, processes and procedures to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion, and the human rights of individuals, become fully integral to who we are and what we do.
- 4.3 We will ensure our policies and strategies reflect our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion by completing equality impact assessments as part of the process of policy and strategy development.

5.0 Governance

- 5.1 Board members will provide oversight in relation to this policy and ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives. However, we expect everyone in the organisation to embrace and adhere to the ethos and requirements of this policy at all times.
- 5.2 We fully acknowledge the benefits of having a diverse membership to hold us accountable for our performance and activities. We will maintain arrangements for monitoring the characteristics of our members and actively explore opportunities to promote membership to under-represented groups. We are also committed to ensuring the diversity of our Board reflects that of the membership and, more broadly, of the communities we serve.

6.0 Service delivery

- 6.1 We will better understand the needs of all our customers through providing a range of opportunities for customer involvement and feedback. These opportunities will be designed with inclusiveness and accessibility in mind, and aim to cater for individual preferences where possible.
- 6.2 We will ensure that all services are accessible to the individuals and communities we serve. In providing these services, we will endeavour to act in a non-discriminatory manner at all times, taking positive action to engage with those that might otherwise be excluded. We will do this by:

- Reviewing how tenants and customers access our services
- Engaging with organisations that can assist us to communicate more widely
- Reviewing customer service standards
- Ensuring our communication style is fit for purpose
- Developing our staff and equipping them with the skills, knowledge and abilities to deliver the services needed.

7.0 Access to information and advice

7.1 We will ensure all information is available to tenants and customers through our website, social media, hard copy publications and correspondence, in a way that is inclusive and meets their needs. We will routinely ask customers for their communication preferences and make a range of options available such as braille, audio or through written correspondence in large text.

8.0 Housing provision

8.1 The right to adequate housing is a basic human right recognised by law and we will provide housing that is warm, affordable and meets the needs of the people in our communities.

8.2 Action will be taken to try and ensure that housing is accessible to the specific needs of individuals and that it can continue to meet these needs as they evolve over time.

9.0 Procurement

9.1 Glen Oaks uses contractors, suppliers, consultants and agencies to ensure its services are delivered speedily, to a high quality and in the most cost-effective manner.

9.2 We will promote equality within our approach to procurement in the following ways:

- Contractors and suppliers of services will comply with the Association's equality and diversity requirements.
- We will provide guidance, advice and training to contractors and suppliers on equality and diversity issues where appropriate
- We will ensure that community benefits are written into larger contracts

- Complaints against external organisations will be monitored through our Complaint Handling Procedure. Any allegation of discrimination or harassment will be taken seriously and fully investigated.
- Contractors and suppliers will also be expected to take prompt and appropriate action against any member of their own workforce found to be in breach of this policy.

10.0 Working for Glen Oaks

- 10.1 We understand the importance of developing a diverse workforce and Board that represent the communities we operate in and a culture that instils a sense of belonging, authenticity and trust. We will promote fair and equal access to our job opportunities for existing and future staff.
- 10.2 We will raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion and provide training so that employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge to support the delivery of this policy.
- 10.3 We will ensure that no existing or prospective employee, Board member or other volunteer receives less favourable treatment due to a protected characteristic. We will also make or provide reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- 10.4 We will take all reasonable actions to ensure that every employee or Board member treats everyone with respect and dignity whilst carrying out their duties.

11.0 Dealing with harassment

- 11.1 We endeavour at all times to provide a work and living environment that is free from discrimination and harassment.
- 11.2 All employees, Board members, volunteers, consultants and contractors are expected to adhere to the principles of this policy. All claims of harassment and discrimination will be fully investigated in a sensitive and appropriate manner.
- 11.3 Where tenants or members of the public report cases of harassment, the relevant policies and procedures will apply, including the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

- 11.4 Glen Oaks is committed to challenging domestic abuse. We will assist and support employees who want help in addressing such problems. We will also use all available powers to deal effectively with incidents of domestic abuse caused by or affecting our tenants.
- 11.5 Employees will be made aware that conduct outside of work may lead to investigatory and disciplinary action if it is in breach of the Code of Conduct.

12.0 Complaints

- 12.1 We aim to deal with complaints from employees and customers fairly, professionally, and respectfully, regardless of their personal characteristics.
- 12.2 To enable all tenants and customers to have equal access to our complaints policy, we will accept complaints, compliments and general feedback in any form.
- 12.3 We will endeavour to provide practical assistance where required to anyone who wishes to make a complaint, and remove any barriers that may prevent them from doing so.

13.0 Equalities data collection

- 13.1 Glen Oaks will collect data for all the protected characteristics for the following groups:

- Employees
- Job applicants
- Existing tenants
- Housing applicants
- Board members
- SIG members

Analysis of this data will be incorporated in the annual business planning process and will be used to inform our decision-making and service design.

- 13.2 To ensure we are respectful of privacy, data will be collected anonymously and on a voluntary basis. We will carry out an equalities data collection exercise at least every three years to ensure that our information is up-to-date and relevant.

14.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions will apply:

- 14.1 **Diversity** - valuing individual differences. Glen Oaks is committed to valuing and managing people's differences to enable all employees to contribute and realise their full potential. We recognise that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences can bring fresh ideas and perceptions that will benefit us and our customers.
- 14.2 **Equality** - making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but recognises that their needs are met in different ways.
- 14.3 **Inclusion** – all people have the right to be respected and appreciated as valuable members of the Glen Oaks team. In an inclusive working environment all individuals are treated fairly and with respect, have equal access to opportunities and resources and can contribute fully to the organisation's success.
- 14.4 **Protected characteristics** – equality focuses on those areas covered by the law and described as the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 14.5 **Direct discrimination** –treating someone less favourably than others based on a protected characteristic.
- 14.6 **Indirect discrimination** – when there's a working practice, policy or rule which applies to everyone in the same way, but it has a worse effect on some people than others.
- 14.7 **Harassment** – conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment. The intention of the perpetrator is irrelevant, it is the impact on the individual that determines whether harassment has taken place.

- 14.8 **Victimisation** – treating someone less favourably and discriminating against them because they have pursued or intend to pursue their rights relating to alleged discrimination, complained about the behaviour of someone harassing them or given evidence in someone else’s discrimination complaint.
- 14.9 **Positive action** – addressing imbalances in the workforce by encouraging members of under-represented groups to apply for jobs. Positive action may be applicable in setting equality targets.
- 14.10 **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** – where arrangements disadvantage an individual because of a disability and reasonable adjustments are not made to overcome the disadvantage.
- 14.11 **Associated discrimination** – where a person is treated less favourably as a result of being associated with a person who holds a protected characteristic.
- 14.12 **Perceptive discrimination** – where a person is discriminated against because the discriminator **thinks** the person possesses that characteristic.
- 15.0 Monitoring the Policy**
- 15.1 Responsibility for monitoring the application of this policy will rest with the Chief Executive.
- 15.2 Equality & diversity monitoring reports in relation to lettings, racial harassment, governing body membership and staffing will be reported annually to the relevant Sub-Committee.
- 15.3 The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there is a significant change which requires attention.

