

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Statement



Purpose

This policy statement sets out Connect's commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and when delivering services. This policy should be read in conjunction with Connect's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Equality, diversity and inclusion explained

Equality

Equality is about breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination and treating everyone fairly; it is not about treating everyone the same. It is also about ensuring no individual or group is disadvantaged by policies, services or employment practices.

Diversity

Diversity is about recognising that we are all individuals with different needs, qualities and strengths. By respecting, valuing and celebrating those differences, everyone's talents can be recognised and together, everyone benefits.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about engaging with people, making sure they can be themselves at work and creating an environment, in which everyone feels valued, respected and has access to the same opportunities.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of nine "protected characteristics", defined as:

- Age
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion and belief
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Race
- Sex (man or a woman)

We recognise that people face exclusion, discrimination and harassment as a result of any one or more aspects or perceived aspects of their identity (or by association with people with different characteristics), and these may include:

- Asylum status
- Domestic violence
- Social exclusion
- Language and literacy
- Offending history
- Poverty
- Low income and employment status

Indeed many people come to us because they have experienced discrimination and disadvantage in the housing and employment markets. We have the power to reduce some of those disadvantages by making our practices and services responsive to community and individual needs.

Policy Statement

Connect's vision is for 'a sustainable and just society where good homes, neighbourhoods and opportunities help people enjoy happy, healthy lives.'. We are committed to equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work and value the rich social and cultural diversity of our communities. We understand that the people who provide and use our services have diverse characteristics and different experiences, needs and aspirations.

One of our key values, underpinning our work, is to put people first - offering equal consideration to everyone and valuing the different contributions they make. We recognise the strengths and assets of people and places, supporting them to be the best they can be and create for themselves the lives and neighbourhoods they want.

We recognise the need to meet our statutory and regulatory responsibilities but also that equality, diversity and inclusion is an important aspect of our social purpose and is integral to our business.

We will ensure that everyone is treated fairly and without discrimination, and protect people from discrimination ensuring compliance with the Equality act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (General) 2011.

In providing services, employment, governance and procurement, we will actively promote equality and inclusiveness for all of our customers and staff and challenge discrimination and exclusion.

As part of our policy and strategy approval process equality impact assessments will be carried out to assess equality impacts and to identify any changes or improvements that need to be made.

All job applicants, applicants for Board membership, Board members, staff (including volunteers) and contractors receive a copy of this policy. All contractors are required to declare a commitment to this policy to retain a place on our approved contractors list. The policy is made available to customers via the website.

We will make sure that our services, workforce and governing body reflect the diversity of our local communities and that all of those with whom we work are aware of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

We will challenge and address discriminatory behaviour or acts of harassment by or towards customers, staff, Board members, or contractors. If such behaviour is encountered, we will take appropriate action which may include dismissal, termination of membership of the Association, removal from our approved contractor list or possession proceedings.

Responsibilities

Promoting equality and inclusiveness is core to our business.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of all of our Board members, staff and contractors working on our behalf to adhere to and implement this policy.

The Board and Leadership Team will visibly demonstrate its leadership in promoting an organisational culture which embraces equality, diversity and inclusion, and will ensure sufficient resources are directed to implementation.

The Leadership Team will lead and drive implementation of this policy and Connect's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

All staff, and contractors working for Connect, will take personal responsibility for implementing this policy and understanding that they can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the association, for any acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment.

REVIEW: This policy will be reviewed as required by changes in legislation or regulation and will also be considered by the Board at 3 year intervals as part of the review of equality, diversity and inclusion.