



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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<b>Policy developed by</b>	Jo Tracey
<b>Consultations</b>	EMT, SMT, Board
<b>Associated procedure</b>	Not applicable

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# Introduction

At Connexus we work hard to make a big difference to our people. By our people we mean our customers and our colleagues. We are more than a landlord, we develop new affordable homes, we maintain and improve our existing homes and we deliver services which enhance the lives of our customers and our communities. We have over 10,000 homes and over 500 colleagues who support our customers and we want them all to feel a sense of belonging.

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 Connexus Homes Limited is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I). We are opposed to all forms of discrimination on the grounds of race, national origin, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, belief or lack of religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment status, being married or a civil partner, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- 1.2 We will increase our awareness and understanding of all forms of discrimination, so we can educate and raise awareness as a landlord, employer, contractor, partner and purchaser to help eliminate discrimination.
- 1.3 We want to make equality, diversity and inclusion pivotal to our way of working by being self-critical, looking at our practices and policies to ensure they constantly evolve. This will help to increase our understanding so we can raise awareness, take decisive action whilst developing action plans to ensure ED&I is current and integrated in our business.
- 1.4 Leaders in our organisation including the Chief Executive, Directors and Senior Managers will all actively participate in our ED&I activities and plans.
- 1.5 Scope: The policy applies to the whole of the Group. This means Connexus Housing Limited, (ultimate parent) and all of its subsidiaries.

## 2. Problem to solve

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires equal treatment in access to employment and private and public services, based on 'protected characteristics': disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic and national origin, colour and nationality), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership. In the case of disability, employers and service providers are under a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their workplaces to overcome barriers experienced by disabled people.
- 2.2 **Equality** is ensuring everyone is treated fairly and no less favourably regardless of their protected characteristics. Equality is not about treating everyone the same, but about making sure that people are given equal access to opportunities.
- 2.3 **Diversity** is what makes us different - age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, national background and life experiences, are examples of where difference can occur.

- 2.4 At Connexus we feel that recognising diversity is not enough; we need inclusion to ensure that diversity is actively celebrated and welcomed. Working collaboratively to harness and celebrate our diversity will benefit the organisation, those who work in it, customers who access our services, our communities and wider society. It allows everyone to feel included and part of a strong culture where people are proud to collaborate to help create environments where people have a sense of belonging and feel psychologically safe to be their true self.
- 2.5 **Benefits:** The benefits of this approach are numerous and well documented. It has been demonstrated consistently in many significant research exercises that organisations with a diverse workforce are better positioned to meet the needs of diverse customer bases, they see higher employee satisfaction and better decision making, leading to a cycle of increasing returns. This suggests that diversity beyond gender and ethnicity and race (such as diversity in age and sexual orientation) as well as diversity of experience (such as a global mindset and cultural fluency) are also likely to bring advantages.

### **Our Commitment**

- 2.6 Our aim is for our workforce to be representative of our customers and the areas we work in and for colleagues and customers to have a sense of true belonging where they are seen and valued for who they are.
- 2.7 Our Board, Executive Team and Senior Management Team will ultimately drive change linked to this policy, through discussion, ensuring relevant data is collected/analysed and developing and constantly reviewing our action plan. We believe this approach will help to create a culture where equality, diversity and inclusion are natural to all colleagues and stakeholders, as people's experiences and knowledge broaden about all difference within our society.

## **3. Method/s**

- 3.1 The Executive Team will play a key role in promoting, advocating and shaping the sense of belonging for all by helping to create our objectives and further action which is required, linked to our values - Passionate, Respectful, Involving, Determined and Effective. The Executive Team will participate in conversations to help them to understand how colleagues feel about issues so they can shape action in the workforce.
- 3.2 Colleagues will be invited to discuss key themes to create a discussion about good practice, barriers and initiatives that can help to raise awareness. The main aim is to advocate and champion all matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. To help to build this sense of true belonging, with a safe environment for conversations to take place, we will encourage conversations and education, based on acceptance, respect and trust.
- 3.3 We understand that it is no longer enough to simply not discriminate, we understand that we must step up and be anti-discriminatory. To support this, we will establish an allies programme.
- 3.4 We will use a heart, head, hand approach:



We will use real life examples to raise awareness and to support our learning. Our examples will include our colleagues, our customers and other people to illustrate the issues to best effect. This will stimulate emotion. We will not shy away from difficult subjects.



We will use the examples and stories to support learning conversations using the 'anti' rather than passive approach which will make the conversations more open and 'safe'. We will discuss how we feel and share our thoughts and experiences. We will not shy away from difficult conversations.



We will use the emotion and the learning and turn this into action. We will work together to talk, learn and celebrate, improving our position and taking positive steps, considering the role of champions, allies and the 'anti' approach. We will not shy away from this challenge.

### 3.5 Our Key Objectives

1. Encourage completion of diversity data declarations by both customers and colleagues, allowing us to use the data to identify barriers faced by certain groups, and develop data-driven insight to address them.
2. Create a working environment free from bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination, monitoring the proportion of people with protected characteristics within Employees Relations processes (grievances, disciplinary etc).
3. Review our Recruitment and Selection policy to ensure to it is inclusive. Increase understanding and knowledge of senior managers about unconscious bias particularly where they undertake recruitment and selection within their role.
4. Ensure all colleagues receive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training during their probation period and then regular refresher sessions. The refresher sessions will include topical issues to create an active discussion which educates by raising awareness.
5. Ensure we celebrate the good practice and work to continuously improve.
6. Carry out equality impact assessments on all policies and significant change programmes to ensure they deliver our ED&I objectives.
7. Collect, review, and measure data on a regular basis to inform us on ED&I performance including governance, recruitment, lettings, complaints and satisfaction.

## 4. Measurement

- 4.1 We will develop an action plan that will support a continuous evolution of our approach. This way we can ensure we are self-critical and allow our practices and policies to constantly progress developing further actions as necessary.

- 4.2 The OD Business Partner will take the lead and report on ED&I within the Group.
- 4.3 Increased number of colleagues and customers completing the diversity data declarations.
- 4.4 Increase in % of recruitment candidates and colleagues from BAME backgrounds.
- 4.5 All policies will have an equality impact assessment, that is regularly reviewed and where required updated.
- 4.6 All colleagues will have completed the required ED&I training.