



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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| Approved by SMT | 29 th February 2024 |
| Approved by Committee | People, Remuneration and Culture 8 th May 2024 |
| Effective date | 8 th May 2024 |
| Review date | 31 st May 2027 |
| Policy developed by | HR and OD Manager |
| Consultations | Customer Group OMT Colleague Engagement Groups |
| Associated procedure | N/A |

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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 and take decisive action 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 **Inclusion** -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 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 actions. 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 Our Commitment to EDI is underpinned by our PRIDE values which will be used to promote inclusive and respectful behaviours. We will do this through a behaviour framework that outlines the standards and behaviours we expect of all colleagues. It is everyone's responsibility to advocate for an inclusive work environment, especially leaders in the organisation who can influence and role model the desired behaviours.
- 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. We will use our Colleague Forums to support discussion and advancement of EDI.

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.

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. Ensure our Recruitment and Selection policy and practices are inclusive and increase our hiring managers understanding of unconscious bias within recruitment.
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.
8. Actively work to manage and reduce our gender pay gap
9. Report on our ethnicity pay gap

4. Measurement

- 4.1 We will develop actions 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 We will increase the number of colleagues and customers completing the diversity data declarations and use this data to support improvements to services.
- 4.4 We will increase the % of recruitment candidates and colleagues from diverse backgrounds and will monitor the data to support any actions for improvement.
- 4.5 All of our policies will have an equality impact assessment, that is regularly reviewed and where required updated.
- 4.6 All of our colleagues will complete the required ED&I training.
- 4.7 Report on our gender pay gap with actions to reduce the gap.

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment Form



Equality Impact Assessment Form

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| Strategy / policy / procedure / service / function / project being assessed | Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and procedure |
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| Stage 1 Lead officer | Alex Layfield | |
| Date of assessment | 21 st March 2024 | |
| Date for next review | 31 st April 2027 | |
| Reason for assessment | Revised policy and procedure | |
| Agreed and signed off by lead officer's line manager | Manager's signature Carleen Martin | Date 21 st March 2024 |

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| Stage 2 | To promote a fair and inclusive environment, where all individuals are treated with respect. To prevent discrimination, harassment, and bias. | |
| Aims of the service / function / policy/project under assessment | To foster a culture of diversity and inclusion, where differences are valued. | |
| Main stakeholders / beneficiaries | All colleagues, customers, candidates and the general public. | |
| Who is likely to be affected by the service/ function/ policy/project? | All colleagues, customers, candidates and the general public. | |
| What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the service/function/policy/project? | EDI activities will be monitored through the People Strategy and EDI action plan. | |



| Stage 3 Collect and evaluate the evidence | | | | |
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| Key questions | Positive impact | Negative impact | No specific impact on any one group | Evidence |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on any racial groups? Describe how and which. | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on individuals where English is not their first language? Describe how and which. | | X | | Policy is written in English – where English is not a first language then colleagues may speak with HR for further assistance. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on women or men? This includes Transgender people / Trans people. Describe how and which. | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on people with disabilities? Describe how and which. | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on people of a particular age? (e.g. children, young people, older people). Describe how and which. | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |

| Key questions | Positive impact | Negative impact | No specific impact on any one group | Evidence |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on people with particular sexuality / sexual orientation? Describe how and which | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on people in terms of marriage/civil partnership status? Describe how and which | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on people with a particular religion or belief? Describe how and which | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Does the policy or service have a positive or negative impact on people in terms of pregnancy/maternity? Describe how and which | X | | | This policy aims to have a positive impact on all supporting that differences are recognised and celebrated. |
| Is it possible that the service/function/policy could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage those that do not have access to digital equipment? | | X | | Policy is accessible to all colleagues on the organisations intranet. Managers/HR can also provide hard copy to those who do not have access or have access difficulties. |
| Is it possible that the service/function/policy could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage or cause an individual/community financial hardship? | | | X | No Impact. |

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| Outsourced services | |
| If delivery of your strategy, policy, project or service is partly or wholly provided by external organisations / agencies, please list any arrangements you plan, to ensure that they promote equality and diversity. | Request copies of external providers of their own EDI policy. |
| Relations between different equality groups | |
| Does your assessment show that a policy, project or service may have a differential impact between any discrete groups? If yes, please explain how this issue is going to be tackled. | Yes – potential impact on our customers. Please see stage 4 for details of impact and action. |
| Stage 4 – Summary of replies from individuals and stakeholders consulted, including any previous complaints on equality and diversity issues about the policy or service | |
| Feedback from our customers through consultation, indicates that they feel this policy is aimed at colleagues within Connexus and not them and is therefore not easily accessible to them in this current format. | |
| Stage 5 – Options resulting from this equality impact assessment, including measures necessary to minimise or remove any adverse impact and better promotion of equality and diversity. Consider any alternative solutions | |
| We will work with the Communications team to provide information about our EDI policy and approach on our website in a way that is engaging and accessible for customers. The Policy document will remain in the Connexus approved format for internal use. | |
| Stage 6 – Arrangements for regular monitoring of the impact of the policy, project or service | |
| Policy will be reviewed in line with Connexus’ policy framework in April 2027. We will monitor EDI initiatives on an ongoing basis through EDI action and annual updates to SMT and the Board. | |
| Stage 7 – Any actions and outcomes, including how these are to be communicated both internally and externally as required | |
| Internally we will promote on Viva Engage and available on the intranet. Externally the communications team will provide information on Connexus website regarding our EDI position. | |