



# **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Hill Homes is committed to genuine equality of opportunity and will value diversity in its role as a housing provider, care provider, employer and procurer of services.
- 1.2. Hill Homes believes everyone has the right to be treated fairly, with respect for their cultures and values and to feel safe and secure in their workplace, their own home and neighbourhood.
- 1.3. Hill Homes believes that each individual should be valued and treated with dignity and respect. We believe that negative behaviours like discrimination, harassment and intimidation undermine people's dignity and prevent us from achieving equality.
- 1.4. Hill Homes will demonstrate commitment and continuous improvement by:
  - considering equality and diversity in our work;
  - regularly analysing and reporting performance to the board; and,
  - encouraging our partners and contractors to follow best practice in equal opportunities in all their activities.
- 1.5. Hill Homes is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.
- 1.6. Hill Homes aims for our workforce, and boards, to be truly representative of all sections of society and our clients, and for each employee and board member to feel respected and able to give their best.
- 1.7. Hill Homes is committed against unlawful discrimination of board members, staff, clients, volunteers, visitors or the public.
- 1.8. This policy complements Hill Homes' Bullying & Harassment Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1. Hill Homes refers to the group of companies comprised of Hill Homes Housing Association, Hill Homes Care Ltd and Hill Homes Care Services Ltd.
- 2.2. For the purposes of this policy, "client" refers to both clients of Hill Homes Care Ltd and tenants of Hill Homes Housing Association.

2.3. The Equality Act 2010 defines protected characteristics as:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity leave;
- race, including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and,
- sexual orientation.

2.4. Diversity is about recognising difference. It is acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making and the workforce being representative of Hill Homes' clients.

2.5. Inclusion is where people's differences are values and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels:

- they belong without having to conform;
- their contribution matters; and,
- they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances.

An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

2.6. Hill Homes understands equality to be about fair and equal treatment but acknowledges the need to move beyond just treating 'everyone the same' to focus on improving outcomes to ensure meaningful, positive change. This may mean responding to individuals or groups differently to meet their needs or address differing levels of disadvantage and discrimination in an unequal society.

### **3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

3.1. Hill Homes considers that this Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy forms the rules and procedures by which it ensures it becomes, and remains, a more inclusive organisation, by promoting and implementing best practice.

3.2. The objective of this policy is to provide equality, fairness and respect for all:

- in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time;
- our clients to whom we deliver services;
- our volunteers;
- our clients' families; and,
- those who come into contact with our organisation.

- 3.3. All individuals must be able to safely and confidentially identify characteristics which they have that may influence the treatment they receive. This policy provides a framework for Hill Homes to establish procedures to enable this to happen.
- 3.4. The purpose of this policy is to ensure Hill Homes does not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics.
- 3.5. Hill Homes opposes and avoids all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

#### **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 4.1. Hill Homes will not tolerate any form of discrimination and is, therefore, committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination in all our policies, procedures and practices. We will make sure no person or group will be treated less favourably than any other person or group because of their individual characteristics.
- 4.2. Hill Homes encourages equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- 4.3. Hill Homes opposes and avoids all forms of unlawful discrimination in the workplace. This includes:
  - in pay and benefits;
  - terms and conditions of employment
  - dealing with grievances and discipline;
  - dismissal;
  - redundancy;
  - leave for parents;
  - requests for flexible working; and,
  - selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

#### 4.4. Hill Homes will create a working environment:

- free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination;
  - promoting dignity and respect for all; and,
  - where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- 4.5. Hill Homes will provide training for managers, and all other employees, about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.
  - 4.6. Hill Homes takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, clients, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

- 4.7. Complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- 4.8. Hill Homes will make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- 4.9. Hill Homes will promote equality of opportunity and welcome diversity in all aspects of its activities, including but not limited to:
  - allocations and lettings;
  - housing management;
  - repairs and improvements;
  - provision of care; and,
  - provision of information and advice.
- 4.10. Hill Homes believes that client involvement and engagement are at the centre of much of our work. We will provide a set of standards that summarise our commitments to clients and make these available via our website.
- 4.11. We will work towards ensuring that our services are accessible to our clients. We will recognise people's cultural and language needs and services will be provided that are appropriate to those needs. We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure services are accessible to everyone who needs them and see alternative methods of service delivery for disabled people where barriers may exist.
- 4.12. Hill Homes will ensure that the way in which we procure our services and supplies does not discriminate unlawfully, directly or indirectly, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.13. Hill Homes will only work with contractors who can demonstrate they comply with acceptable equality and diversity standards. We will incorporate equality and diversity considerations into all stages of the procurement process.

## **5. LEGISLATION, REGULATION AND GUIDANCE**

- 5.1. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone.

## **6. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 6.1. All declarations of characteristics made to Hill Homes will be treated confidentially, with the information only available to essential personnel.

6.2. All employees and board members have the right to make a complaint and know it will be dealt with promptly and fairly. All issues raised will be dealt with confidentially.

## **7. MONITORING AND REPORTING**

7.1. Hill Homes will monitor the make-up of the workforce, and board, regarding information such as:

- age;
- sex;
- ethnic background;
- sexual orientation;
- religion or belief; and,
- disability

in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

7.2. Once employed, we will monitor equalities in:

- promotions;
- disciplinary action;
- training;
- salaries;
- staff in senior positions.

This will enable Hill Homes to build up a demographic picture of its workforce and highlight any areas where we are under-represented, or areas that may require improvement.

7.3. When an employee leaves, we will conduct an exit interview to monitor the reasons so that we can act on any problem areas. We will report to the board on any areas of concern.

7.4. We will set targets, and measure performance, on lettings to diverse groups.

7.5. We will undertake annual satisfaction surveys to measure:

- tenant satisfaction with their home and housing support;
- client satisfaction with their care and support services.

7.6. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice.

7.7. Hill Homes' board will review the assessment annually, considering and taking action to address any issues.