

Adopted November 2020



East Midlands Community Led Housing: Equality and Diversity Policy

Introduction / statement of intent

1. EMCLH is committed to providing equality of opportunity and promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of its practice, and to avoiding unlawful discrimination. This policy is the first step in putting this commitment into practice.
2. This policy covers all aspects of EMCLH practice: governance; recruitment and employment; and service provision.
3. EMCLH recognises its obligations to act within the law (Equality Act 2010 and related regulations)
4. Beyond that, EMCLH recognises the systemic disadvantage and discrimination experienced by communities with protected characteristics as defined in the Act and affirms its commitment to positive action to combat this in its work.
5. This policy sets the framework for EMCLH's practice; it requires EMCLH to identify, focus and prioritise specific tasks to be set out in an Action Plan to inform its work and how that work will be monitored and managed.

Purpose

6. The policy's purpose is to:
 - promote equality, fairness and respect for everyone associated with EMCLH, whether as a Board or staff member or as a recipient of our services;
 - promote EMCLH's commitment to act within the law;
 - affirm EMCLH's commitment to taking positive action to counter discrimination.

The Law

7. It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.
8. It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or service user in the provision of services or goods or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

9. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Governance

10. EMCLH seeks to build a Board whose membership is diverse. It commits to including collection of information from existing and prospective Board members as part of its regular skills audit. Results will be used to inform recruitment.

11. Board meeting arrangements will be flexible to take account of the circumstances of current and prospective members.

12. Expenses can be paid to Board members to facilitate their participation in EMCLH business – e.g. to cover travel; care of children and other dependents; documents in different formats.

Recruitment and Employment

13. EMCLH aims to 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.

14. EMCLH will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, disciplinary and grievance matters, and selection for redundancy. Job descriptions will avoid any unnecessary requirements (those unrelated to effective performance) that may otherwise have deterred applicants. EMCLH will base decisions on objective criteria. EMCLH will consider making reasonable adjustments in recruitment as well as in day-to-day employment matters such as requests for flexible working, dependency leave, provision of specialist equipment and similar matters.

15. EMCLH will review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them to take account of changes in the law.

Service provision

16. In its work with partners and groups to develop new housing or bring existing properties back into use EMCLH will always advocate for best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion.

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17. EMCLH is committed to making the information it provides (online; at training events; on paper) accessible to as wide a range of people as possible. EMCLH will take account of specific needs wherever practicable and recognise that this may involve additional expenditure.
18. EMCLH recognise the need for ongoing training for EMCLH Board and staff so that they are informed of current thinking and best practice; confident to promote it; and confident to recognise and challenge aspects of discrimination in themselves and in others where necessary.

Implementation

19. To make the ambitions of this policy a reality EMCLH will produce an annual action plan which will set out the steps to be taken by the Board and the staff and against which EMCLH will monitor our performance. The action plan will reflect our commitment to good practice. It will review the current situation (baseline); identify key issues for EMCLH; and set out actions to be taken, with KPIs and timescales. It will cover governance, employment and service provision.
20. The action plan will be an agenda item at every Board meeting, to ensure that the organisation gives appropriate priority and focus to this work.

Adoption date: November 2020

Review date: tbc

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APPENDIX

Extract from Leeds Community Homes 'Inclusion and Equalities Policy'

LCH values inclusiveness. This policy is here to define what it means in principle and guide what it looks like in practice.

Equality is fairness between all people. It means recognising and removing the barriers that prevent every member of a community from getting what they need, and creating fair opportunity for everyone to get what they want, regardless of race, sex, religion, faith, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and any other characteristic or circumstance that could lead to discrimination.

At LCH, this means proactively seeking to address all discrimination, recognising and removing any barriers our members or people involved in community led housing schemes may face to personal and social opportunity. Inclusion is the idea that everyone has the opportunity to access and experience what we offer at LCH. Inclusion means feeling that you are a valued part of the LCH community and you are given the highest level of support so that you can achieve your best.

At LCH this means we will ask every member of our community to respect all others, know their own rights and recognise their own role and responsibilities to ensure this is possible.

Equality and inclusion create more productive, talented, wealthy, creative, evolving communities. We believe that supporting equality and inclusion is a critical part of the LCH experience, in which our members shape their worldview and engage with the principles of citizenship and community.