trust

Affordable homes.
Exceptional care.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

(2020-2024)

Promoting Equality
Respecting Diversity
Embedding Inclusion

Trust Housing Association

Leaders in Diversity

EDI Strategy Message from CEO

Trust has completed its previous EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) strategy and we have accomplished most of what we set out to do. The EDI strategy is designed to deliver our vision for helping to create a more equal society which respects diversity and embeds inclusion and we aspire to lead the way in achieving this.

In the course of delivering our last strategy we have gone through the process of Leaders in Diversity accreditation twice and each time we have been able to show evidence of our ongoing commitment to delivering equality within Trust. I am aware that the strategy itself can remain just a document if not followed up with an active action plan. Our revised EDI action plan is derived from gaps being identified and fed back by our staff, tenants and other stakeholders in the course of implementing the EDI strategy.

The EDI Working Group helps to drive the equality agenda forward and monitors its progress.

Whilst rightly proud of our Leaders in Diversity accreditation I am not complacent in believing we have achieved and done all that was required to do; there are areas of work which would benefit from new thinking and approaches. I am committed to delivering fair and equal services for tenants and to ensuring we do all that we can to secure the welfare of staff and we will continue to keep these values at the heart of everything we do at Trust.

Rhona McLeod

Chief Executive

Introduction

Trust has been leading the housing sector on the delivery of equality and diversity for over 10 years. It started its Investors in Diversity journey with the National Centre for Diversity in 2011. Trust became the first housing association in Scotland to achieve Investors in Diversity accreditation in 2012, followed by Leaders in Diversity in 2015. It has since been reaccredited in 2017 and most recently in 2019.

The journey with the National Centre for Diversity has been vital in involving staff at all levels, tenants and stakeholders.

The Equality Act 2010 is very clear about what it expects organisations to do, but legislation can only be meaningful if it is delivered with clear objectives, commitment and if it has a positive impact on the culture of the organisation. This new EDI strategy will continue to deliver on many aspects of the previous strategy with any new areas of work identified at a national level. It takes account of areas of work we are already delivering but with an added focus on certain aspects of the equality strands which need more work to make an effective difference.

Trust is committed to maintaining its Leaders in Diversity status by producing pioneering work, which is seen as an example of good practice, influencing change and promoting equality in Scotland. We will progress from our strong foundations and support our staff to do their jobs, and our customers to access our services, without barriers. Our services are fair and equal, and our stakeholders and partners not only acknowledge our commitment, but work with us in the delivery of our EDI strategy.

The purpose of the EDI strategy and action plan continues to deliver on sound foundations and incorporates new actions with a focus on mental health and communication.

We understand and acknowledge that during the period of strategy implementation there may be new emerging issues which could require attention, planning and delivery. We will keep an open mind on new initiatives or requirements needing attention to ensure that these can be integrated into the strategy and delivered.

Leadership

Leadership is key to the successful delivery of the EDI agenda, and plays a vital role in recognising and facilitating it across Trust's functions, both as employer and as service provider. The Board and senior leadership will ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is central to the business and planning and that it is embedded in our core strategy, policies and procedures.

We will ensure that the Board and Executive Team show leadership and commitment to advance equality and challenge inequality and that they have the responsibility to lead, learn, understand and support the delivery of this strategy. An annual report will be presented to the Board outlining progress made and actions taken to advance EDI, in line with our recognition as LID in Scotland.

Accountability - impact, monitoring

Our strategy for the next four years aims to build on the progress made and focus on areas which have been identified from surveying our staff and customers. It sets out our approach to EDI, both as an employer and service provider . It also sets out how we plan to meet our equality duties and includes areas of work around the 'PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS'. Human rights are considered in everything we do, including delivering services, developing policies, employment and working with stakeholders.

A strategy can only work when actions are taken to deliver its vision. We will ensure that the strategy is delivered, that its impact can be measured, and that progress can be monitored with evidence that it is doing what it says.

All strategic goals will be delivered with clear actions, specific gaps identified in the Leaders in Diversity survey will be addressed and new approaches considered as part of the wider housing, care and equality sector.

We will analyse and monitor the information held to identify any underlying trends arising from staff and tenants' surveys and feedback and use this data in both monitoring and proactive interventions.

To deliver the strategy, a four-year action plan will be produced, monitored by the EDI Working Group. Progress against this strategy and action plan will also be reported to the Board on

Training / understanding / message

The Equality Act 2010 puts responsibility on the organisation to ensure that a person who falls into any of the nine protected characteristics is not discriminated, harassed or victimised.

Equality and Diversity training is a vital part of developing an inclusive culture in the organisation. Unconscious bias training as part of EDI training has been helping staff to examine their biases which they are unaware of as individuals.

Mandatory EDI training has been the most effective tool to inform staff of the equality legislation, what it means to them as individuals and their responsibility towards others. It sends a clear message to all that Trust is committed to equality. There is an equality training guide for staff to refer to at any time.

We will continue with our programme of ensuring that staff are trained in recognising and responding positively to equality and diversity issues.

We have also been raising awareness with tenants on equality legislation and tour commitment to equality by holding EDI information sessions. These deliver a clear message about their rights to access equal services and to make Trust more aware of any barriers they face in accessing information and services. The sessions also emphasise our commitment to ensuring that no one should be harassed or discriminated in any of our housing.

Customers

Good quality service delivery is of utmost importance, as is ensuring that customers are involved in shaping the design and delivery of high quality, accessible and continuously improving services. Our award-winning Customer Involvement and Influence Strategy ensures that customers are involved and listened to, and , we aim to engage directly with under-represented customers who face barriers due to communication, physical or a mental health condition.

We will collate disability data on both the physical and mental health of customers and take account of areas which need action by different departments to improve their quality of life.

We will take account of tenants' surveys and informal feedback which will provide the insight to develop and design services. We will ensure that and there are tailor-made interventions to be responsive to any identified needs. Customer groups receive EDI training to develop their understanding of the equality legislation which can help in supporting inclusive services.

Staff

Staff are the most important part of the delivery of a strategy and it is crucial that staff buy in to the strategy and believe in it. The strategy message is the centrality of creating and sustaining an environment for staff which is inclusive, supportive and which upholds the values of dignity and respect for all. We will address equality matters in relation to organisational policy and compliance, employment and training. The equality issues in relation to staff and employment will continue to be monitored to ensure that we are following the legislation and good practice and we will look at any feedback from both the staff surveys and various other sources.

Equality Champions: in order to take the implementation and support for advancing EDI, we will provide training and appoint EDI Champions. It will help highlight that the responsibility for EDI must be recognised across the Association with all staff working together to improve culture and practice.

There are some specific areas which we will focus on in the delivery of this strategy; these are not exclusive but will require focus as new activities highlighted in recent times.

We will provide information and develop policy and practice in supporting staff on issues of:

+ Domestic Abuse
+ Menopause

Communication

Inclusive communication is one of the most important areas of work in devising an inclusive strategy as it gives people a voice by removing any barriers they face. Trust is committed to breaking down barriers in accessing services and promotes equal opportunities for all staff.

Happy to Translate continues to remain our pioneer tool in helping with language barriers, not only for Trust, but for organisations throughout the UK. We will continue to update our records of communication barriers faced by our tenants and put practices in place to overcome them.

We will take a proactive approach in ensuring that tenants understand that it is their legal right and they should be able to receive support in whatever format they need. We will continue with the delivery of information in large font, braille, community languages or in any format that will help.

We will invest and improve facilities for people who are deaf or hard of hearing so that they can fully participate in small or large meetings and conferences. We will also focus on making our communication as straightforward and easy-to-understand as possible, so making it more accessible to everyone.

Influence

As recognised Leaders in Diversity and an example of good practice we will continue to consider new and emerging themes that need to be addressed by the strategy.

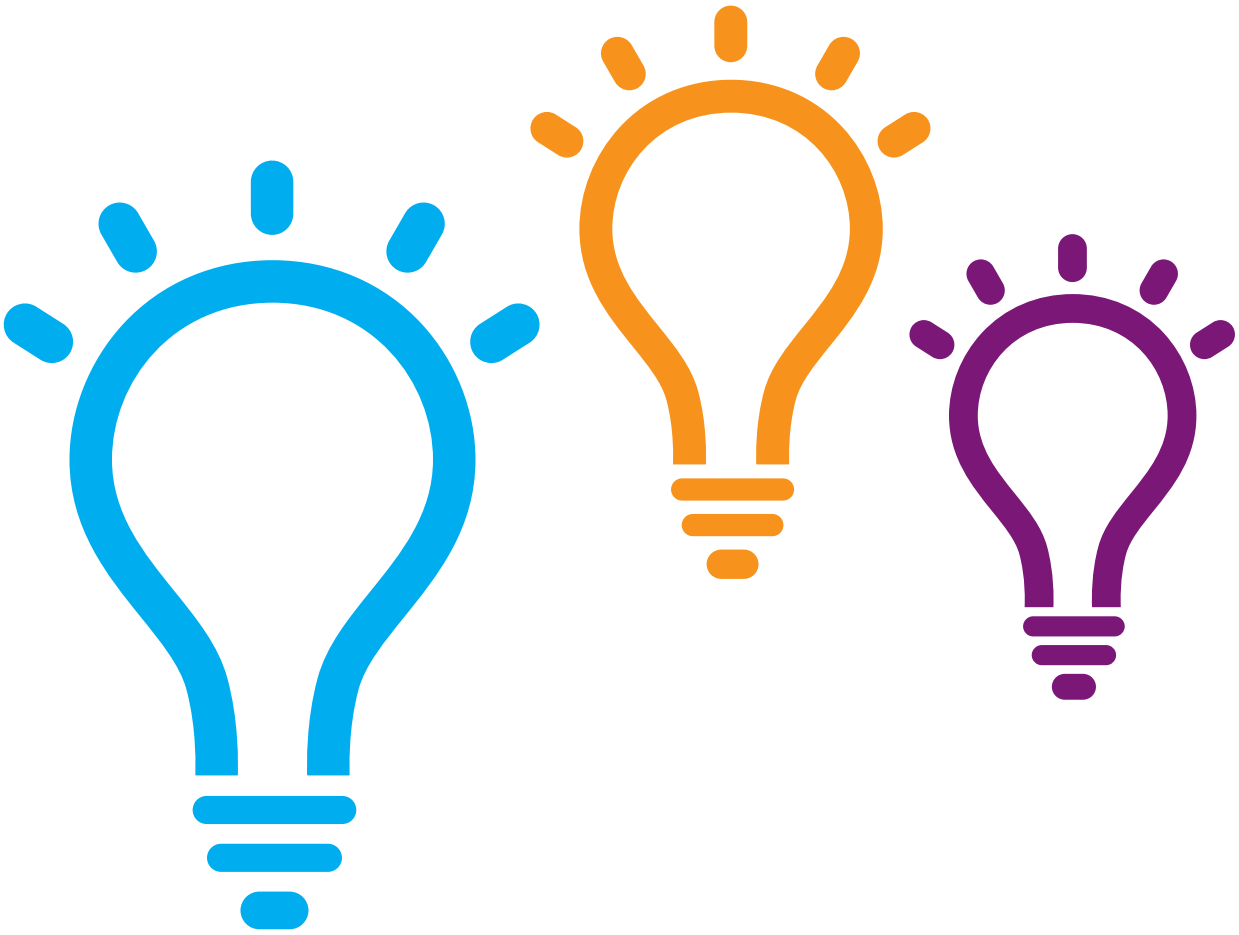
As an Influencer we want Trust to be recognised as an organisation with a strong and visible commitment to EDI internally and externally. We will continue to participate in local and national strategies to improve equality of opportunities and to remove barriers by working with the Scottish Government, public sector and community organisations.

Procurement

We are keen to progress with embedding EDI in procurement to ensure its processes are fully inclusive. Our revised procurement strategy will be updated with new approaches to EDI.

Trust has started on the journey of involving contractors and consultants and external stakeholders in our commitment to EDI and defining their role in supporting our vision.

The EDI Manager will continue to facilitate formal progression of the EDI policy, practice, compliance and reporting of progress.



Disability - Physical & Mental Health

Our commitment has driven the development of some new approaches and initiatives over the years. For example, we are working with See Me on raising awareness on mental health and working with Action on Hearing Loss on the delivery of information and support for those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

We will carry out a second survey on mental health with See Me and develop a revised action plan to continue to deliver on our commitment to supporting staff and looking after their wellbeing.

We have signed up to the Healthy Working Lives accreditation as it will help us to deliver on our commitment to staff welfare and wellbeing. We have a Healthy Working Lives Group which coordinates actions and approaches.

We will support customers to help them ensure that staff and contractors providing services for people with disabilities are aware of their specific needs, and what can be done to meet them. We will assess how we best support people with a disability to improve their standard of living and participation.

Data Collection

In keeping with the wider drive to improve data on staff and customers across Scotland, Trust has started collating disability (physical and mental health) data on tenants. We will analyse the collected data and findings will be shared across departments to ensure services are improved to reflect the needs of tenants.

The collection of data related to our workforce and tenants with protected characteristics is an important area which we would like to take forward in the course of delivering this strategy. We understand that data analysis is important to identify and address gaps.

EDI is integral to all Trust does, therefore, this strategy provides a framework to support all policies and procedures. It is a part of - and links with - HR, employment and customer service strategies and policies.

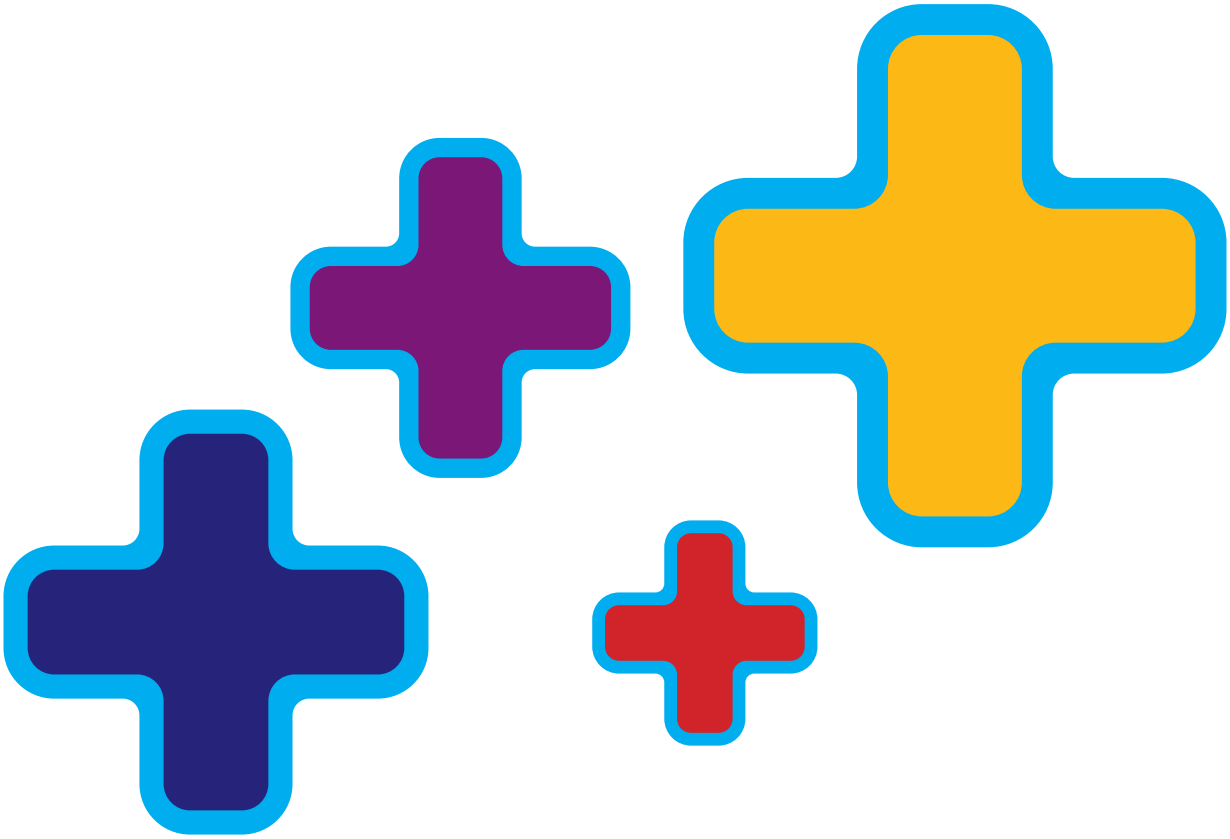
This information can be made in Braille, tape, large print and community languages.

To request a copy please contact 0131 444 1200

If you want to find out more about our EDI Programme, you can contact Rohini Sharma Joshi, our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager:

E-mail: rsharma@trustha.org.uk

www.equalityscotland.com



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