



Equality and Diversity Policy

1 Purpose

Core to our values at Reside is that we focus on people, are responsive to people and collaborate together. Social inclusion is core to our purpose and we are committed to providing housing solutions for people with support needs. We endeavour to promote and ensure equality, diversity and inclusion across and throughout our business, for both our staff and tenants. We recognise that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work. We also recognize that our tenants are of varying background and represent a broad spectrum of needs. Reside aims to be an inclusive employer and landlord, where diversity is valued, respected and built upon, our aim is to recruit and retain a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve, where no one is disadvantaged.

2 Scope

This policy applies to tenants, employees, workers and job applicants, it also applies to board members, external contractors who represent Reside and wider stakeholders we partner with. Conduct both in the workplace and outside of the workplace that is related to Reside's work (e.g. at meetings, social events and social interactions with colleagues) or which may impact on Reside's reputation (e.g. the expression of views on social media contrary to the commitments expressed in this policy, that could be linked to Reside) will be held to this standard.

Reside will ensure all necessary steps are taken to ensure good performance and appropriate behavior in all activity. Any issues that arise with regards to equality or diversity will be taken very seriously and managed in accordance with this and wider organisational policies.

3 Definitions

Equality means the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities. Achieving equality can be described as breaking down barriers, eliminating discrimination both direct and indirect, ensuring equal opportunity and access for all. Equality is based on a belief that nobody should have poorer life chances because any of their characteristics, where they come from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with one or more of the 9 protected characteristics have experienced discrimination.

Diversity can be described as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. Equality is the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and of different genders, sexual orientations, and abilities etc. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions. Celebrating diversity is based on a belief that diversity drives cultural, economic, and social vitality and innovation – which will benefit and enrich Reside.

Equality and diversity are not interchangeable but are interdependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued, harnessed and taken account of.

Further relevant definitions are included in the glossary of terms.

4 Duties

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Reside's duty is to ensure that tenants, employees, workers and job applicants are treated fairly in an environment which is free from any form of discrimination with regard to the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (includes colour, nationality and ethnic origins)
- religion and or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

All data collected in terms of the above will be stored in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

5 Process

Our commitment and duties need to be implemented in each aspect of Reside's activity; as an employer, landlord and partner. We make a commitment to consider the impact of our activities and actions, policy statements and choices and create a positive culture, where necessary we will undertake formal equality impact assessments, but in addition we will ensure this is always present in our decision making processes. Both board and management sign off processes will be used to ensure those designing processes are subject to scrutiny on this issue.

As an employer committed to equality and diversity, we recognise that success depends on creating a working environment that supports the diverse makeup of our staff, underpinned by supportive employment policies and procedures throughout the employee lifecycle including recruitment practices, access to training and development, performance management, an equal pay environment, fair rewards and benefits practice, and opportunities for progression and promotion. In addition we recognise everybody's right to work in an environment free from bias, harassment, discrimination or discomfort based on a person's gender, characteristics, preference, age, religion or disability. Our employment practices are fully documented in our employee handbook, kept up to date and guided by people experienced in legal HR practice.

We will celebrate and actively promote a range of cultural events and be responsive to staff ideas about creating a positive organisational culture. Equality law recognises that bringing about equality for disabled people may mean changing the way in which employment is structured, the removal of physical barriers and/or providing extra support for a disabled worker, which is something Reside is committed to providing should it be needed.

Recruitment at Reside will not be influenced by any of the protected characteristics or other characteristics of individuals, appointments will be made on merit, following a fair recruitment process designed to empower people to demonstrate their competences for the role.

We are committed to helping employees fulfil their potential at work whilst finding the right work/life balance; Reside has a flexible working policy and provides opportunities to work part time and job share where possible. We are also committed to supporting employees with family commitments, such as by offering family friendly initiatives, e.g. salary sacrifice scheme as a flexible way to meet childcare costs, more of which can be found in our Staff Handbook. All of Reside's policies are designed to promote equal opportunity and protection against discrimination for both employees and customers.

Reside are committed to ensure that our staff treat everyone equally and fairly, and aim to train all our staff in equality and diversity best practice including on the unconscious bias that people hold to raise awareness and we have an aspiration to eliminate it from our work and processes.

As a landlord we are equally committed to promoting and ensuring equality and diversity for our tenants and the support providers we work with. Housing with Reside will not be dependent on, or influenced by any of the protected characteristics or other characteristics of individuals, but will be provided to those with support needs in line with our remit. It is Reside's duty to make reasonable adjustments where requested and to make sure that, disabled tenants have access to all amenities. Reside do everything we can to ensure that we cater to the tenants individual needs and requirements as part of the service we provide.

Our Business Development team and Surveyor ensure that they provide a bespoke service with our tenants in mind, tenants are kept at the forefront of every project and property invested in to ensure our housing offer meets tenants' needs. Our Tenant Support team and dedicated Tenant Support Officers ensure that tenants are supported throughout their tenancy including if they should require a move or further adjustments. Our Maintenance Team and Operatives carry out visits and ensure the properties are well looked after, allowing the tenant to be stress free and confident in Reside services. Further to this Reside's tenancy agreement contains obligations which tenants must comply with regarding their behaviour to others.

As a partner, Reside seek to work with organisations and contractors which also hold our values, we work with many small contractors and partners who may not have a policy approach to equality and diversity but we will always make our expectations of appropriate behaviours clear and brief contractors on any particular requirements in communicating with our tenants. We also follow up each repair for a response on satisfaction with the repair and the contractor which gives us real time feedback on any issues or concerns. In addition we will take a positive approach to reporting any safeguarding concerns raised by our teams.

6 Implementation and Monitoring

Equality & Diversity are an integral part of Reside and something we pride ourselves upon; as a growing housing provider we are still improving our methods of recording and monitoring as we continue to expand. This includes implementing a new housing management system and HR software that will allow us to gather and record information more consistently. This information will be used to inform and improve our housing and employment practices, for example by having better records of communication preferences, and being able to consistently monitor any trends in recruitment practices to adjust and enhance our approach.

We see feedback as important:

- Annually we hold a Staff Away Day which allows all staff the opportunity to network with each other and discover more about other areas of the organisation. We encourage staff to be vocal about their vision of Reside and any changes they wish to see.

- We conduct a Staff Survey (annual/bi-annually) the results of which are used to measure whether the aims of this policy and our standards are met as well as develop an understanding of areas in which improvement may be needed.
- Our tenants and their views are important to us therefore we conduct an annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey to understand not only ways that we can improve the service but also how our tenants are feeling. We use the results to tailor the service provided and ensure that all tenants are treated fairly and equally.

Annually a people report is taken to the board and we aim to increase the level of analysis available based on demographics and protected characteristics. We will consider ways in which data, as it becomes, more available, can also be shared with staff and staff groups for commentary and challenge.

Where possible, Reside capture applicants' diversity demographics as part of recruitment processes. Promotion opportunities will be monitored to ensure equality of opportunity at all levels. If any discrimination or disparities are identified as a result, we will take corrective action to eliminate it.

Internal complaints and grievances will also be recorded and monitored in accordance with policy, to determine if there are any reoccurring issues or if any pattern is found. If this is found to be the case and discrimination of any sort is taking place, it will be investigated and an outcome will be reported.

We also have an exit interview when staff are ready to move on and use their experiences within Reside to improve what we do.

7 Training and Support

Reside are committed to ensuring all employees receive the training they need to undertake their role and demonstrate our values, including on what is not acceptable. Equality and diversity training is integral part of Reside's induction e-learning programme. Managers will ensure that all new entrants are made aware of this alongside the full staff handbook which includes management of bullying and harassment, and signposting to the Whistleblowing policy.

Reside's staff have access to a wide range of e-learning in line with our training policy are able to request specialist training or training for their individual development through the process.

As Reside is such small organisation we encourage and support our staff in becoming members of groups and networks which will enable them;

- to learn and subsequently shape the culture and behaviors demonstrated at Reside and;
- to promote a work environment in which all staff feel supported and valued, whilst enabling them to fulfil their potential and contribute to the benefit of the service and our tenants
- to challenge discrimination and to positively promote equality
- to ensure that good practice and initiatives to promote equality and inclusion are shared
- to provide a forum for discussion and debate which draws on knowledge and experience
- to act as a driving force to promote continuous practice improvement
- to develop and coordinate an action plan for positive change and ensure policies are inclusive
- to provide a place for staff to receive peer support

Management have regular team meeting with their staff and 1:1s in which they remind staff of Reside's values and policies in line with equality and diversity. These meetings allow staff an opportunity to discuss any areas that may be concerning to them and/or ways in which to improve. Any issues raised will be recorded and escalated via the appropriate channels.

8 Legal Requirements / Reference

This policy reflects Reside's responsibility for Equality and Diversity obligations to its staff and tenants. In doing so it takes into account the Human Rights 1998, Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation, i.e. Care Act 2014, the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. Other issues are also addressed under our Safeguarding policy, where we take the responsibility to report any concerns about the behaviour towards vulnerable persons very seriously.

The Equality Act 2010 is promoted by Reside and we agree with the principles laid out, *Adjustment for Disabled Persons* is the forefront of the service that Reside provide, we pride ourselves on providing housing solutions for people with support needs.

Human Rights Act 1998 - Articles 6, 8 and 14 are the most likely to be relevant to Reside and its tenants and these are set out in the glossary in annex A.

We are a registered social housing provider and therefore have a legal required to provide a service to the national standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing whilst maintaining Equality and Diversity. We are registered with the Housing Ombudsman to provide access to complaints escalation and review.

9 Linked policy and procedures

Staff handbook
Safeguarding Policy
Whistleblowing policy
Tenant satisfaction survey process
Staff satisfaction survey process
Decent Homes Standard
Data protection and GDPR policies

Annex A – Glossary of terms

Article 6 - Human Rights Act – Right to a Fair Trial

This is an absolute right. Everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing, before an independent and impartial tribunal, within a reasonable time. This right applies where someone's private rights are at stake, such as in contractual or property disputes. It also applies to criminal trials. The right to a fair hearing means, broadly, that a person should be given the opportunity to participate effectively in any hearing of their case, and to present their case in conditions which do not place them at a substantial disadvantage when compared with the other party in the case. For example, a person who is subject to a decision-making process in relation to a possible eviction should have access to an interpreter, if necessary. Decisions should be given with reasons. Article 6 is likely to be particularly relevant in review or appeal proceedings which would determine a tenant's rights. However, it may not be necessary for decision-making to fulfil all the conditions of a 'fair hearing' if a person has access to a subsequent appeal process which would satisfy these requirements.

Article 8 – Human Rights Act: The Right to respect for their private and family life also the right to respect for their home and correspondence

'Private life' has a very wide meaning. People should be able to live in privacy and be able to live their life in the way that they choose. Their personal information should be kept private and confidential. The right to respect for a person's home is not a right to housing, but is a person's right to access and live in their home without intrusion or interference. The right to respect for family life includes the right for a family to live together. You should take positive steps to prevent other people seriously undermining a person's home or private life, for example, through serious pollution or anti-social behaviour. Article 8 is a qualified right. This means that you cannot interfere with the right, for example by forcing people to leave their homes, unless you are acting in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic wellbeing of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. You must be acting in accordance with the law and there must be no less intrusive way of achieving your objective.

Article 14 – human Rights Act: The Right of Protection from Discrimination

This means that everyone must have equal access to the other rights contained in the HRA, regardless of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political views or any other personal characteristic. For example, the HRA means that a gay couple has to be treated in the same ways as a heterosexual couple in relation to the right to succeed to a tenancy. In order to gain protection under Article 14, the treatment complained of must relate to one of the other Convention Rights, but it need not amount to a breach of that other right. Article 14 is a qualified right. A difference in treatment can only be justified if there is a good reason for the treatment and if it is proportionate in the light of that reason. Article 14 does not list the 'legitimate reasons' which would justify a difference in treatment.

Unconscious bias

Unconscious biases, otherwise known as implicit biases, are inherent or learned stereotypes about people that everyone forms without realising it.

Direct discrimination

Less favourable treatment of a person compared with another person because of a protected characteristic. This may be their own protected characteristic, or a protected characteristic of someone else, eg someone with whom they are associated. It is also direct discrimination to treat someone less favourably because the employer wrongly perceives them to have a protected characteristic.

Disability

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Sometimes people are treated as having a disability where they do not meet these criteria (e.g. asymptomatic cancer and HIV).

Disabled person

Someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Sometimes people are treated as having a disability where they do not meet these criteria (e.g. asymptomatic cancer and HIV).

Disadvantage

A detriment or impediment – something that the individual affected might reasonably consider changes their position for the worse.

Discrimination arising from disability

When a person is treated unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of their disability, eg an employer dismisses a worker because of the length of time they have been on sick leave. The reason the worker has been off sick is because of their disability. If it is objectively justifiable to treat a person unfavourably because of something arising from their disability, then the treatment will not be unlawful. It is unlikely to be justifiable if the employer has not first made any reasonable adjustments. The required knowledge is of the facts of the worker's disability but an employer does not also need to realise that those particular facts are likely to meet the legal definition of disability.

Indirect discrimination

Where an employer applies (or would apply) an apparently neutral practice, provision or criterion which puts people with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage compared with others who do not share that characteristic, unless applying the practice, provision or criterion can be objectively justified by the employer.