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| **Govan Housing Association Group** |
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| **Group Equality & Diversity Strategy**  **2021- 2024** |
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| **Govan Housing Association Group can provide this document on request, in different languages and formats, including Braille and audio formats.** |



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**1. Our Vision, Values & Strategic Objectives**

**1.1 Vision**

Our vision is to provide, manage and maintain affordable housing for people in housing need whilst aiming to be an innovative and responsive organisation, playing a leading role in the regeneration of Govan and continuing to improve the quality of life of our residents.

## 1.2 Our Values

Our values underpin all our activities, working practices and strategies as explained below:

* **Development –** we work hard to continually enhance our services and provide better quality homes and opportunities across the area.
* **Innovation –** we challenge ourselves and other towards excellence and innovation in all we do.
* **Value for Money –** we work hard to bring efficiencies and provide quality services that are cost effective and present value for money.
* **Equality -** we are all equal and different and we aim to provide inclusive environments for work and for living.
* **Responsibility -** we all take responsibility for our actions.
* **Social Impact -** we strive to ensure there is a positive social impact from our activities and work with others who share our aims.
* **Integration –** we are proactive in providing opportunities for people to engage with us and we work hard to understand how people feel as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
* **Transparency -** we wish to be open and honest about what we do and how we do it.
* **Youth Development –** we will endeavour to invest in community projects to ensure that young that young people thrive and develop in an environment where their aspirations are nurtured, they are encouraged to achieve the unexpected and they respect the Govan area as their home.

**1.3 Strategic Objectives**

The Association has 5 key Strategic Objectives which assist the Association in setting out how we plan to achieve our mission of **‘Moving Govan Forward’** as well ensuring our values are at that the forefront of delivering this.

There are a number of drivers which have a significant impact on the Association’s key objectives and priorities, more details of which are outlined in *Section 4 ‘Our Operating Environment’*. These areas are all taken into account so that we ensure that our business plan reflects the current operational environment and policy context in which we work.

This Equality and Diversity Strategy details our aapproach to ensuring Equality and Diversity underpins the delivery of the following strategic objectives.

**Services** – to provide excellent customer services & maximise value.

**Homes** – to build and/or acquire new homes to meet housing need & assist in economic growth & development in the community.

**Leadership** – to ensure the Group’s growth & viability is effective & lead by good governance & efficient financial, administration & personnel systems.

**People** –as a community anchor maximise consultation, participation, regeneration & community empowerment in the improvement & delivery of our services.

**Community** – work with partners to provide quality homes, good neighbourhoods, sustainable tenancies & community inclusion to enhance overall wellbeing.

**2. Purpose of the Equality & Diversity Strategy**

We are committed to ensuring that staffs, tenants, residents, Management Committee members and Board of our Subsidiary Govan Home Team, have the same opportunities regardless of their background.

We are committed to equality and diversity; this is underpinned by our vision, values and strategic direction which recognise the importance of incorporating a culture of equality and diversity.

This Strategy represents our commitment to promote equality in terms of the services we provide as a Registered Social Landlord but also as an employer.

We aim to embed equality and diversity in to everything we do, to ensure the delivery of excellent services to our customers and to promote Govan Housing Association and the Govan HOME Team as an employer of choice.

This Strategy will enable us as an employer, housing and service provider to:

● Treat all customers and colleagues fairly and with respect.

● Value, understand and respond to the diverse needs of individuals and communities.

● Foster effective community relations.

● Take proactive and reasonable steps to eliminate all forms of harassment, hate crime and discrimination.

● Ensure compliance with the relevant legislation as an employer, best practice standards as a landlord and also in the procurement of goods, facilities and services.

**3. What is Equality and Diversity?**

Diversity is defined as ‘difference’ - taking a representative sample of one hundred adults from the population it is likely we will find a wide range of individuals with different and diverse characteristics.

Diverse organisations recognise and embrace different groups and cultures of people within their communities, ensuring people are valued for their differences and by providing everyone with the opportunity to participate.

Equalities can be described as all the work individuals and organisations carry out to promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination. Equality is about recognising that inequalities exist and making sure that everyone is treated fairly.

Equalities work is wider than equal opportunities work; at GHA we believe the aims of equalities work are to make sure that:

● Equality is central to all policy development and practice.

● Employment and other services are genuinely accessible to everyone.

● Everyone has individual needs and the right to have these needs respected without discrimination.

● Discrimination is identified, challenged and stopped.

Overall, equalities are about developing a framework within which people are treated differently according to their needs but with equal respect and fairness.

**4. Commitments**

In developing our Strategy, we have not only focused on the need to comply with legislative and regulatory requirements and expectations, but also on the core values of the Association. It is about moving beyond compliance to delivering excellence on equality and diversity issues. Our Strategy is a commitment to:

● Provide accessible and appropriate services to all our customers tailored to meet their needs and shaped by their views.

● Equip our staff with the skills and knowledge that will help them reach their full potential, deliver our objectives and make equality and diversity central to everything they do.

● Provide comprehensive equality and diversity training and development to our Staff, Board, and CIGs in order to assist them with achieving our Equality and Diversity objectives.

● Tackle discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment in all its forms and providing support to victims.

● Support behaviour from our staff, customers, contractors and partners which complements our approach to equality and diversity. Where necessary, we will take action against people who fail to meet acceptable standards of behaviour.

● Value the diversity of all our staff and customers by creating an environment where everyone is respected and treated fairly. This includes our service delivery arrangements, equal pay and fair recruitment and employment terms.

● Use our influence and purchasing power to drive forward our vision, make equality a reality and help eliminate prejudice, discrimination and disadvantage;

● Monitor service usage and community/workforce profiling.

● Self assessment, Equality Impact Assessments and setting challenging equality objectives and targets in relation to employment and service delivery. We will also regularly monitor our progress and revise our targets to ensure we tackle identified inequalities.

● Fulfil all our statutory obligations and learning from the best with the aim of continually improving our approach to equality and diversity.

● Actively consult and engage with our staff, customers, partners and contractors to help shape our policies and improve the services we provide. This includes

● identifying and working with underrepresented groups whose needs may not be being met.

● Make equality and diversity central to everything we do by offering strong leadership, commitment and directing resources to support the work we do in this vital area of work

These commitments apply to our work as an employer, a service provider, contractor of services, funding body and our community leadership role. Our governing body members, staff and tenant representatives are all expected to support these commitments. We will encourage our partners and the contractors we use to do the same. We aim to embed Equality and Diversity throughout the organisation including the following areas of activity listed below.

**Service Delivery**

● By providing services which are accessible to all our customers.

● By using the Equality and Diversity profile information and other data we collect to specifically tailor our services to match the diversity profile of our customers.

● Updating our profile information regularly to understand the particular needs of our customers and to use it to inform how we provide our services

● Ensuring our communications and documents are available in a number of alternative and easy to understand formats which reflect the diverse needs of our customers.

● By developing ongoing direct and open communication with customers to ensure that our services are known, understood and accessible to all our customers, regardless of their communication needs

**●** By challenging all forms of discrimination where it is found in the community and the wider GHA area, including supporting victims of hate crime, domestic abuse, bullying, harassment and discrimination.

● Ensuring we are meeting the needs of our customers with a disability by reviewing how we deal with disabled aids and adaptations, and making changes as required.

**●** By fostering links with voluntary groups other community based organisations across the protected characteristics in advancing equality and achieving our equality and diversity objectives.

● Ensuring GHA is welcoming, open and inclusive to a diverse range of customers and that our premises are accessible to all.

**Strategic Planning and Governance**

● Leadership and strong commitment to our Equality and Diversity Strategy and objectives and the actions to deliver our objectives.

● Ensuring comprehensive profile information of our governing bodies and staff is obtained, and by setting targets where appropriate

● By providing governing body members with effective equality and diversity training to allow them to provide leadership on Equalities issues.

● Policies, procedures and strategies recognise the diverse needs and consider the impact they will have on our customers, staff and other stakeholders.

● Planned new policies or substantial changes to services take account of the equality impact upon customers before they are implemented.

**Procurement**

● Ensuring our contractors and partners are aligned with the equality and diversity objectives and strategic objectives of the Group.

● By having effective systems in place to monitor the performance of our contractors and partners in relation to equality and diversity issues.

● Using customer profile information to ensure that our contractors recognise the diverse requirements of our customers.

● By considering the equality and diversity commitment of contractors and partners in tendering and selection processes

**Staffing and Employment**

● Staff are recruited and promoted solely on the basis of their own merit, experience, ability and potential.

● By providing an environment appropriate to the needs of staff making reasonable adjustments and adaptations where appropriate.

● Promoting a culture that respects and values each others differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.

● By providing effective equality and diversity training to all staff.

**Performance Monitoring**

● Promoting engagement which recognises the diverse profile of our customers and developing new ways to consult with customers who are difficult to engage.

● By establishing a suite of effective indicators to measure performance against the objectives outlined in the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.

● Ensuring that Management Committee and the Board are regularly updated on outcomes of performance monitoring including recommendations and proposals for improvements against the Equality Action Plan targets and objectives.

● Customer and staff satisfaction surveys are analysed to measure satisfaction levels across diverse groups.

**5. Roles and Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of all employees and governing body members to mainstream equality and diversity, and to work towards embedding Equality and Diversity into everything the Group does. Overall key areas of responsibility for the implementation of the Strategy are outlined below.

**Management Committee Members**

● Have ultimate responsibility for Equality and Diversity within the Group.

● Will monitor to ensure that statutory and regulatory obligations are met.

● Set out the Group’s Equality and Diversity Strategy and ensure compliance is achieved.

**Chief Executive, Executive Management Team**

● Will implement the Equality & Diversity Strategy and Action Plan.

● Review progress of the Strategy against the Equality Action Plan.

● Ensure through the development of Equality Impact Assessments, that policies clearly identify any adverse Equality and Diversity implications against any protected characteristic.

● Ensure that adequate resources are available for implementation of the Equality and Diversity Strategy and for developing the organisational culture in which this Strategy can operate.

● Promote a working culture that respects and values differences, and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.

**Managers**

● Will promote a culture of Equality and Diversity for staff and communicate the importance of adherence to Equality and Diversity provisions.

● Implement the Equality and Diversity strategy ensuring all actions within the Strategy and Equality Action Plan are delivered.

● Ensure all aspects of their area of service comply with the GHA Equality and Diversity Policy and Equality and Diversity Strategy.

● Challenge discrimination in their area of service delivery.

**Staff**

● Will ensure that they comply with the principles, aims and objectives outlined in this Strategy in order to encourage diversity and eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment.

● Will promote equality and diversity and ensure that their actions do not contribute to the unfair or discriminatory treatment of others.

● Will challenge and report any unfair, discriminatory or otherwise unwelcome treatment to their line manager or the Director responsible for their business area.

● Will use tenant profiling data to proactively meet the needs of customers.

**Tenant Improvement Group and Registered Tenants Association**

● Members will comply with our Equality and Diversity principles and Equality and Diversity objectives as outlined in this Strategy.

● Members will promote equality and diversity and ensure that their actions do not contribute to the unfair or discriminatory treatment of others.

**Contractors & Partners**

● Will operate in accordance with our Equality and Diversity principles and Equality and Diversity objectives as outlined in this Strategy.

● Will operate in line with Equality and Diversity legislation.

● Demonstrate policy and procedures consistent with our Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy and to ensure that services are delivered in a way that is consistent with our equality & diversity key principles.

● Will have a workforce trained in equality and diversity issues.

● Will promote equality and diversity and ensure that their actions do not contribute to the unfair or discriminatory treatment of others.

**Equality and Diversity Working Group**

● Will act as Equality and Diversity Champions within the Group, with responsibility for promoting equality and diversity objectives across the nine protected characteristics.

● Will monitor the Equality Action Plan and will provide reports on the progress of the Action Plan to the governing bodies, Executive Team and Senior Management Team.

● Will establish links with groups across the nine protected characteristics and update best practice within equality and diversity.

● Will identify any key changes in equality and diversity legislation and will consider how these may affect the objectives and targets of the Equality and Diversity Strategy and Equality Action Plan.

● Will coordinate and develop a programme of equality and diversity training for staff, governing body members and other stakeholders.

**Customers**

● Will treat all other stakeholders with fairness, dignity and respect and avoid behaviours which are discriminatory.

**6. Legislative and Regulatory Requirements**

**The Equalities Act 2010**

This strategy has been produced in line with the Equalities Act 2010, which replaced previous equalities legislation and harmonised protection against discrimination for all groups protected by the legislation. The Act introduced the term ‘protected characteristics’ to describe the groups that are protected by the law. These are described by the Equality and Human Rights Commission: *New Equality Act Guidance Protected Characteristic Definitions:*

● Age – Refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18-30 year olds).

● Disability – A person has a disability of s/he has 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.

● Gender Reassignment – The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

● Marriage and Civil Partnership – Marriage and civil partnership means someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership with another person. Living together or engaged does not constitute a legal marriage or civil partnership. A marriage and civil partnership can either be between partners of the same or opposite sex. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

● Pregnancy or Maternity – Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby, maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for twenty six weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

● Race – Refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

● Religion and Belief – Religion has the meaning usually given it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including a lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

● Sex – In the Equality Act, sex can mean either male or female, or a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls.

● Sexual orientation – Whether a person’s sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or all sexes.

The Equalities Act 2010 places a general duty upon all organisations when carrying out a public function, and therefore applies to all services that we provide. The Group has a duty to ensure our activities actively seek to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.

In order to meet the general duty specified by the Equalities Act, the Group - when carrying out a public function - is required to identify and tackle persistent and long standing disadvantage within that function. The public functions carried out by us are extensive and encompass allocation of housing, rents, tenant consultation, development of policies, complaint procedures, repairs and many more facets of a registered social landlord.

**The Housing Scotland Act (2010)**

The Housing Scotland Act (2010) set out the provision for a Scottish Social Housing Charter to set outcomes and indicators for what a registered social landlord should be achieving. The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect in April 2012 and contains a specific equalities outcome:

“Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and received fair access to housing and housing services”.

GHA has an obligation to meet the Equalities Standard and outcome outlined in the Scottish Social Housing Charter and produce a return to the Scottish Housing Regulator from May 2014.

**Human Rights Act 1998**

The Human Rights Act 1998 provides for an individual to have the right to own and enjoy the ownership of property, the right to respect for private life, the right to respect for family life and the right for respect for your home. The Human Rights Act legislates to ensure the right not to be discriminated against with regard to any of these rights.

**Scotland Act 1998**

The Scotland Act 1998 provided a wider equal opportunities definition as:

“..the prevention, elimination or regulation of discrimination between persons on the grounds of sex and marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions..”

**7. Equality and Diversity Objectives**

In addition to the Group’s vision, values and objectives this Strategy sets out specific objectives for equality and diversity. These objectives will strengthen our performance and compliance with the Equality Act, enables us to focus on achieving specific outcomes, provides clarity on what we are aiming for and demonstrates our commitment to equality and diversity.

Our five Equality and Diversity Objectives and overall aims of the Strategy are as follows:

*●* ***We gather and maintain information to understand the needs of our customers and shape services to meet diverse needs.***

***● Our Management Committee, Govan Home Team Board, TIGs, RTO’s and staff demonstrate a clear commitment to equality and diversity.***

***● We offer effective ways for all of our customers to engage with us and customer feedback is used to review and develop services.***

***● Our services are accessible and responsive to the needs of our customers.***

***● We are a progressive organisation and our governance, leadership structures and workforce will broadly represent the diversity of the communities we serve.***

**8. Achieving the Equality and Diversity Objectives**

The Association plans to undertake an internal audit of our work to promote equality and diversity in the summer of 2021. The outcome of this assessment process will identify areas for improvement, these actions will be monitored and managed within the Association’s overall Assurance Acton Plan.

We recognise that this Strategy and Action Plan marks the beginning of our equality and diversity journey with a vision of achieving excellence in this area within three years.

We aim to imbed equality and diversity into the culture of the organisation by providing clear leadership within this area. An Equality and Diversity Working Group will be established, with representation across the organisation, including at least one member from the Executive Team.

We will also complete our tenant profiling exercise – an initiative which began in 2019. This project going forward will concentrate on capturing data initially from tenants and household members based primarily on the nine protected characteristics. The information from the campaign will be used to:

● Help with future planning of services that are appropriate to tenants needs.

● Ensure that future services are planned and delivered with a focus on equality, diversity and good relations.

● Involve tenants in having more of a say in the services we provide.

● Sign post tenants to other services that are available.

The actions we will take to achieve our Equality and Diversity objectives are outlined in the accompanying Action Plan. Progress against the Action Plan will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Working Group who will report to the Management Committee and the Executive Team.

**9. Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

This Strategy forms part of the core suite of business planning documents held and operated within Govan Housing Association and Govan HOME Team. As such, this Strategy will be monitored and assessed to ensure operation implementation, as well as to ensure it continues to remain strategically relevant and proportionate.

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