



# FAIRNESS STRATEGY

Our approach to mainstreaming Equality and Diversity

## COVERAGE

This strategy applies to all members of the Accord Group.

## LINKS TO OTHER ACCORD GROUP STRATEGIES/POLICIES

This Strategy links to all policies, guidelines and procedures from all service areas, including the key ones listed below:

- HR Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- Corporate Social Responsibility Policy
- Customer Insight Strategy
- People Strategy
- Volunteer Strategy
- Jobs and Skills Strategy
- Welfare Reform Strategy
- Scrutiny (Get In: sight) Strategy – Customer Representatives' forum
- Youth Engagement Strategy

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## **MISSION & VALUES**

Our Vision is one in which people have more choice about their homes, the services they receive, and where people can be involved in developing their communities. It is a future where quality is being continuously improved.

### **OUR MISSION**

The Accord Group makes a difference. Our customers get value for money, excellent services, quality, innovation and a sense of belonging. We do this by empowering our talented people and engaging our residents to give an outstanding service, all in all giving a great customer experience!

We constantly monitor our services to ensure that they are of the highest quality and we ask for feedback from our customers to make sure that we are clear about how our services are received. We also look for new opportunities where we believe we can offer something new and improved. We have created partnerships and alliances with other organisations, groups and businesses to combine our skills, products and much more so that we can be as efficient as possible. The organisations which make up the Accord Group are part of a family rather than any hierarchy. They are empowered to run their own affairs, independent, yet helping each other and providing multiple solutions. In a word we are a community, with shared ideas, values, interests and goals. The proof of our success is real and tangible.

### **OUR VALUES**

#### **Putting People First**

People matter. We respond to need and promote choice by listening to our customers to deliver the housing, care and services that they want.

#### **Excellence through Innovation**

We provide outstanding services by constantly seeking new and better ways to enhance our neighbourhoods and safeguard our environment.

#### **Making a Difference**

Our goal of changing lives for the better underpins everything that we do. We help people to shape their destiny and realise their potential.

#### **Committed to Communities**

Working with partners to build sustainable and cohesive communities is at the core of our work. We celebrate diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all.

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

This section provides a **brief** summary of impact assessments and any other key considerations made in the formulating of this strategy.

### **Value for Money**

Value for money isn't all about saving money – it is about investing in the right services to meet customers' needs. The added social value of our inclusive approach is part of tendering for contracts, procuring new business and awarding contracts to others, as it links to our corporate social responsibility policy.

### **Customer Engagement**

Customer Insight is a key driver to ensure that services are delivered to the right customers in the right way. As with all strategy reviews, customer scrutiny forms part of the development of this Strategy.

## **Fairness**

The purpose of this Strategy is to create an inclusive approach to embed fairness, equality and diversity into the day to day work of the Accord Group. It is applicable to all services provided by the Group and its employment practices. All the organisations and teams that are part of the Accord Group will adopt it. This Strategy describes the principles and ethos of how we will work to mainstream fairness into all our work. Workable analyses of significant new policies or reviews will be part of this process, including equality and diversity, environment and value for money impacts.

## **Sustainability**

Fairness should be part of everything we do so it is not an add-on, nor should it create any additional environmental impact. Use of integrated IT to identify an individual's needs, vulnerabilities or risks saves on travel time and wasted journeys if contractors and other colleagues are armed with information relevant to an individual when placing works orders, making home visits and communicating with customers.

## **FAIRNESS STRATEGY AIMS**

The Accord Group hopes to bring this strategy alive by making it something that people believe in. We aim to make fairness something we live by, recruit by and measure by. It is part of our moral compass. We are committed to developing an organisational culture, which values people as individuals, recognising the contribution each person can make.

We will treat all people fairly and with respect, recognising and responding to their individuality. We will:

- Focus on the needs of each individual in providing employment, homes and services
- Listen to and understand our colleagues and customers, asking people what help, support and/or guidance they feel they need to access our services
- Ensure our people treat each other and our customers with respect to build the trust, care and commitment necessary to deliver an excellent service to all
- Monitor and demonstrate how successful we are in acting fairly, making a difference and in meeting the needs of our local communities
- Always aim to exceed the requirements of the law and our regulators
- Only work with contractors and other partners that share our values

## **THE REASONS FOR MAINSTREAMING FAIRNESS – OUR STRATEGIC AIMS**

Housing providers occupy a pivotal role not only as service providers but also as community anchors with an influential and long-term stake in the local communities which they serve. We have a unique role to play in challenging prejudice and combating discrimination, whilst providing opportunities for people from different backgrounds to mix and form the positive relationships necessary for a community to be cohesive and resilient.

## **WHY HAVE A FAIRNESS STRATEGY?**

We are firmly committed to the principles of equality and diversity. Research shows that diverse organisations are more productive and innovative, offering better opportunities for engagement with customers and colleagues, and more targeted services. We believe it really does matter for four main reasons:

- 1. Business reasons**
- 2. Legal and regulatory reasons**
- 3. Moral reasons**
- 4. Personal reasons**

## Business reasons

The business case is made up of interlinked elements:

- **Changing society** - the world in which we live is changing and barriers are coming down; superdiversity exists in many neighbourhoods and people are complex individuals whose needs change. The “you can’t put me in a box” approach. A forward thinking organisation must recognise and respond to these changes in order to survive
- **Reputation and credibility** – inclusive work environments encourage loyalty, teamwork and maximise personal contributions. Being able to evidence inclusivity is frequently a requirement when tendering for contracts
- **Recruitment and retention** – inclusive workplaces become employers of choice in competitive markets, attracting and retaining the best talent and reducing staff turnover
- **Competitive edge** – diverse teams bring different talents, can recognise the diverse requirements of and attract new customers and diverse teams can spot new markets
- **Risk aversion** – tribunals have personal, reputational and financial cost implications
- **Customer service excellence** - if we don’t know who our customers are and how to take account of their diversity, or their additional or specific needs, or are ignorant on disability or cultural awareness, our organisation will not be able to provide a good quality service

## Legal and regulatory reasons

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of different anti-discrimination legislation, to offer protection to people who share nine “protected characteristics.” These are:

**Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation**

We must, as a minimum, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations and positive attitudes

In terms of consumer protection and co-regulation, the emphasis from the Regulator is on stronger partnerships between providers, governance and customers, placing responsibility on us to support customers in their diversity to shape and scrutinise service delivery, holding boards to account.

## Moral reasons

The moral reasons are straightforward - the Accord Group has a long-standing commitment to fairness and social justice and one of its values is to celebrate diversity and promote equality of opportunity for all. It is therefore the right thing to do.

## Personal reasons

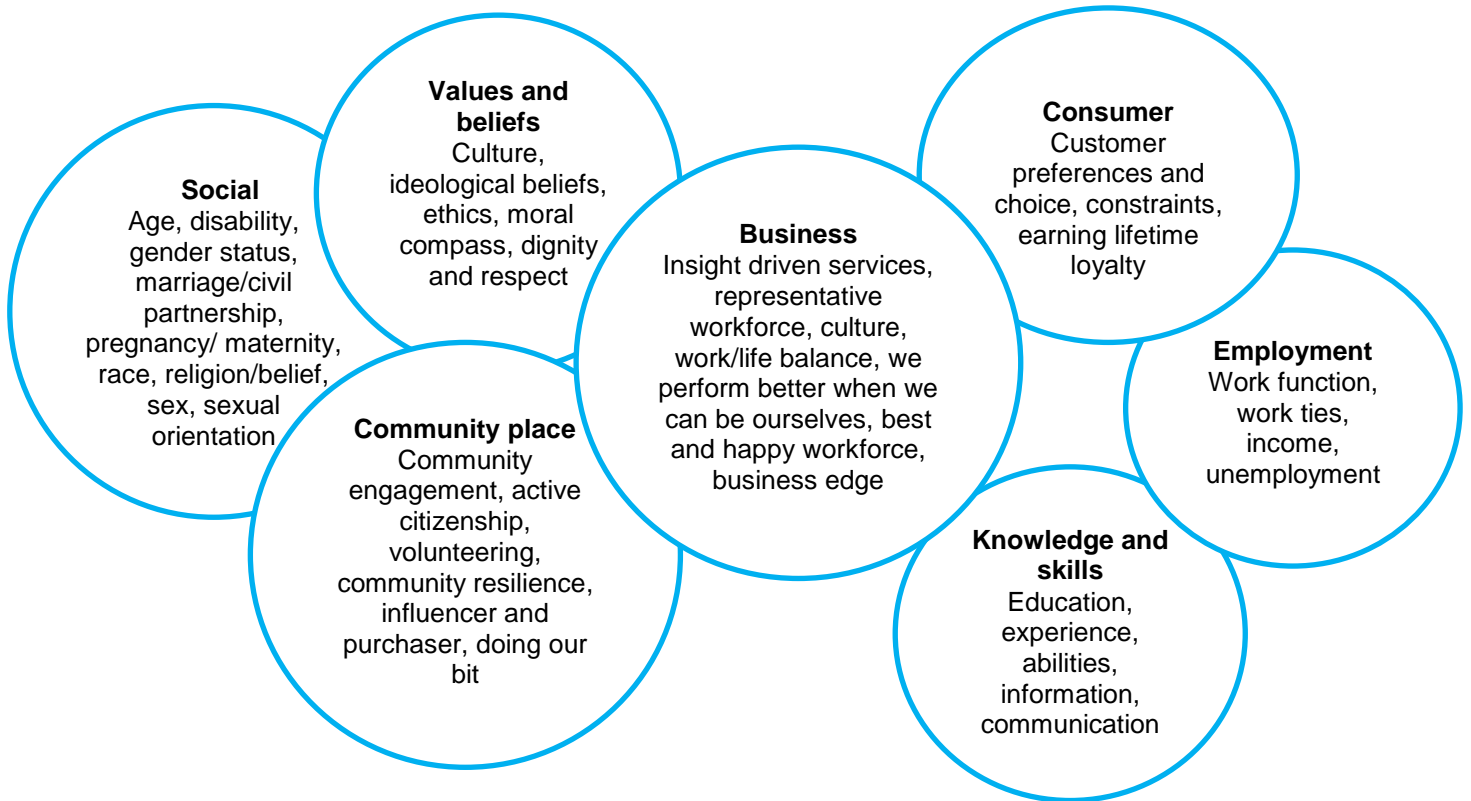
There is also a personal set of reasons why fairness should matter to us all:

- We are all human beings and expect to be treated with dignity and respect
- We each have an old and young person within us
- We all perform better when we can be ourselves
- We know that disability is an inclusive club and as we get older, we are more likely to join

As a Group, we are also committed to tackling economic inequality by recognising one of the major factors that affects our customers - poverty - focusing on how we can better strategically target resources to help those that are most disadvantaged. We therefore feel it essential to mention our aims around mitigating the effects of welfare reform changes, addressing

unemployment and improving the financial and digital inclusion of our customers within this Strategy.

## SO....FAIRNESS IS MORE COMPLEX THAN 9 PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS



## WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

We have signed up to the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Equality and Diversity charter. This enables us to focus on:

- **Who we are** : inclusive leadership and organisational culture
- **Who we serve** : involved and empowered customers in the communities where we work

## REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

We will regularly review and update our Fairness Strategic Aims to ensure that it meets new legislative requirements and reflects our commitment to achieving an inclusive society.

## THE PLAN

The action plan follows the themes of "who we are" and "who we serve". Responsibility for delivery of the action plan is designated to specific individuals or other theme groups within the organisation. It is important to remember that this is a mainstream activity. Every person within the Accord Group has a responsibility to support and assist in ensuring the Strategy is delivered effectively. The Fairness Steering Group will have overall responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategy and scrutinising and collating delivery outcomes, engaging champions of fairness across the Group to promote and celebrate our activities.

## SERVICE STANDARDS

There is a service standard on fairness agreed by customers.