

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

At home with
LOCAL  **SPACE**

2021 - 2025



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1. Foreword

Founded in 2006, Local Space specialises in providing housing for the homeless. By 2021 we have grown and now own properties in 19 boroughs, working predominately in East London where a diverse range of people from across the world make their home. Our principal partner is the London Borough of Newham (LBN), where we own in excess of 1300 homes. LBN is the most diverse borough in London and the U.K *

The high need for temporary accommodation is documented in Newham's Homelessness Review 2020 as follows.

"The rate of households in temporary accommodation in Newham is the highest in London with 48 per 1,000 contrasting against 17 per 1,000 in London overall. Between 2011 and 2018 the number of Newham households in temporary accommodation rose by more than 120%, a far steeper increase than across London or in England".

The need for our services has never been greater. The other boroughs where we have active growing relationships are the London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) where we own in excess of 300 homes and the London Borough of Hackney (LBH) where we increased the number of homes we own to over 100. We have also started working with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) where in 2021 we secured 63 homes for customers.

Other boroughs where we own more than 100 homes are the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, the London Borough of Havering, and the London Borough of Redbridge.

Our Board would like the EDI strategy to tackle inequality and bring about fairness where we have influence. We are aware of the challenges faced by our customers, and we are committed to providing people with first class services. We are proud of the investment we make to our homes, although we know that there is always more we can do.

This strategy is aligned with **our mission to work together to provide quality and safe homes for those in need**. This places customers at the heart of everything we do, delivers quality services in an innovative way, and respects the partners that work with us. Our values are the golden thread throughout our work and our aspirations.

One of our customers who moved into a newly refurbished home, said they would:



"100% recommend Local Space. The works inside the flat have done wonders and made it a home for me".

Another customer said:

"Becoming a Local Space customer has been 'like winning the lottery. I value the cleanliness and quality of your refurbished homes, your respectful and effective repairs service".

2. Statement of Intent

The Local Space EDI strategy ensures the Board can provide clarity to its customers, our people, and key stakeholders on its approach and its role in dealing with inequalities in how it operates.

The Board's commitment is demonstrated through approving the relevant policies and procedures for customers and staff, for example in staff recruitment and customer engagement. This will be monitored through performance indicators aligned with the EDI strategy that will be published on an annual basis.

The Board expects that the EDI strategy will be aligned with Local Space's corporate values and objectives that demonstrate to our customers, staff, and business partners, such as our contractors and local authorities, that we are committed to being a fair organisation that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion as a housing provider and employer.

Our EDI strategy is underpinned by our intention to make a difference to our culture that demonstrates our people first approach. This is first and foremost demonstrated and experienced by our customers and workforce.



3. Governance Structure

Our Board

Our Board provides top level leadership, to support and scrutinise Local Space in line with the National Housing Federation's code of governance.

Housing Regulator

The Housing Regulator ensures housing providers are viable, efficient, and well-governed. Housing providers need to validate that they can deliver homes that meet a range of needs. The new code of governance explicitly includes equalities and how it is reported to the Board.

Our Customers

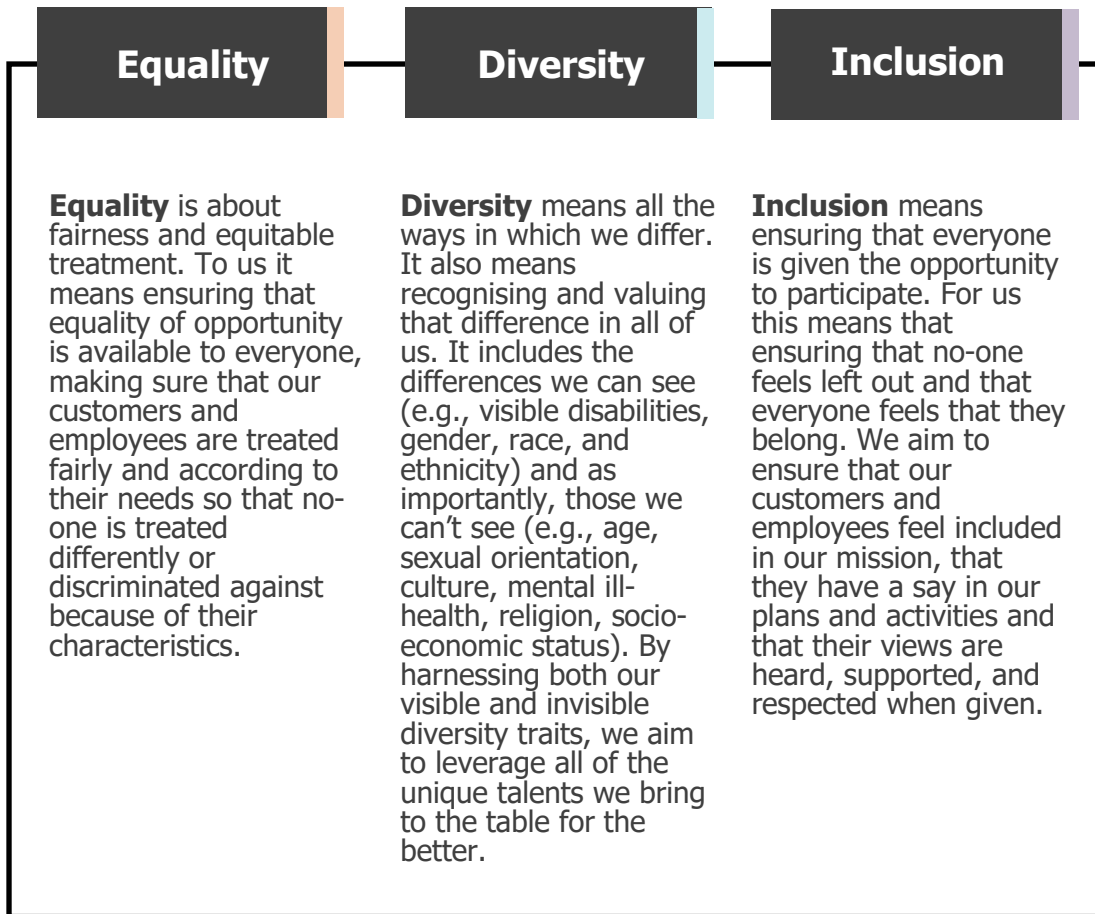
People and their families that live in our homes, should expect to be treated with fairness and dignity, in a safe and well-maintained home. Representation here is important. Local Space must demonstrate that it recognises that as service providers we understand the diversity of our customer base, understand our customer profile, and deliver services that reflect our customer's specific needs and requirements.

Our Workforce

Our people implement our services. Our workforce should expect to be treated with respect, to feel listened to, to be given the tools to do their jobs, and feel they are supported and appreciated by our leadership. Our workforce and leadership aspire to reflect the diverse makeup of our customers and demonstrate a people first culture.



4. What is EDI & Why is it Important to Local Space?



Understanding fully that equality, diversity, and inclusion is important and to appreciate that we all have a different part in enabling Local Space to achieve and perform at its best. This should allow us to meet the needs of our customers and enable our staff to be the best version of themselves.

We understand that EDI is complex. We know that people experience the world differently based on their overlapping identities, e.g., a person who identifies both as Black and disabled. As we implement this strategy, as an organisation we will consider advantage and disadvantage not through one 'diversity' lens (i.e., identities) at a time but through a range of intersectional lenses so that we can better understand how advantage and disadvantage impacts on individual people. At Local Space we want to tackle structural barriers that may act against our EDI ambition, for example poor policies that affect some groups more than others, or managers not effectively dealing with inappropriate behaviours such as micro aggressions.

Local Space has a strong set of corporate values. Those values support our vision, shape our culture, and describe what makes us unique. The importance of the EDI strategy is that it allows a foundation that enables us to make decisions and work with our customers and colleagues and stakeholders guided by a golden thread that ties Local Space together. It links corporate vision to our values and explains how we will achieve our actions with fairness, with respect and with collaboration.

Our focus is clear; our external focus is our customers, and our internal focus is our workforce, and these are inextricably linked. Our customers and our staff cannot be separated. Our customers come first, and our staff come first; dissatisfied staff cannot provide good customer services and ensure customer satisfaction. Local Space has adopted a People First framework, to begin a transformational cultural shift through using the same language to self-improvement, leadership development and creating customer loyalty through actions. We are clear this is the beginning of our journey, and this EDI strategy is integral to embedding and building on our people first culture.

5. Corporate Objectives, Our Values & EDI

Corporate Objectives 2020-25

Homes that people want to live in

Our properties are let to the homeless as temporary accommodation, we aim to ensure that the standards of our homes are the same as homes designed for longer term use, particularly as many of our customers stay in our home for an average of between 5 to 7 years.

Services that our customers are happy with

This means continually improving the customer experience, such as getting repairs right first time.

Being a successful and well-managed social housing business

Ensuring that as a well-run business we can continually raise standards by reinvesting in our homes and in our staff.

Beyond bricks

We need to develop initiatives that help support our tenants over and above a place to live, for example supporting our customers pay their rent on time and provide support in maximising their income.

Our Values

People First

This is a people focused business providing services to people from people. Our EDI strategy supports people first.

Integrity

It matters that we act with integrity in all our dealings. We treat people with fairness, respect and in a trustworthy manner.

Encouraging Creativity

Our staff are our greatest resource and are our ambassadors. Our staff know they are making a difference to people's lives.

Partnership

We recognise that partnership working is about joining forces with others to stretch our resources further and achieve more than we could have done alone.

EDI: Customer & Workforce Focus

underpinned by representation & leadership

Our Customer engagement is focused on our customers experiencing quality services from us, from their contact with us on tenancy issues to repairs. We seek to improve our customers' wellbeing and quality of life, through easy to use and even-handed service delivery.

As a good employer, we are committed to genuine employee engagement where staff are listened to, by creating a culture where our expectations are fair and reasonable, and that difference is valued through an inclusive working environment.

Underpinning our ability to be a good service provider and employer is building a diverse workforce that is representative of our customers. EDI must be led by a committed Board who will support workforce capacity and leadership so we can be an exemplar social housing provider by working together.

Many of our customers will have come to live in our properties by finding themselves homeless; to support their tenancies and enable them to build a sustainable quality of life, we will target our most vulnerable tenants that are more likely to suffer from inequality & exclusion.

6. Customer Inclusion & Engagement

Our Purpose & Ambition

In 2020 we reviewed our Corporate Plan and agreed our ambition to be a People First organisation for our customers, putting them at the heart of everything we do. Since then, everything we aim to achieve is designed to improve our services to our customers, from repairs to the quality of our customer's experience.

We own a range of homes, many of these provide temporary accommodation, as well as a portfolio of keyworker housing. Our first priority is to improve the lives of our customers from our directly managed homes, then work closely with our local authority partners who manage the remainder of our homes to positively support the experience of all our tenants who live in the flats and houses we own.

We aspire to achieve customer loyalty from all those that live in our homes, so that everyone has access to quality, fair and accessible outcomes regardless of tenure. We appreciate this is a big ambition.

The Covid-19 pandemic not only shone a light on inequalities in health and housing that exist in society and within communities but also had a disproportionate impact on Black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) people and on disabled and elderly people.

All of this has emphasised the importance of our listening, understanding, and responding to tenants needs. It's very important that our customers understand we are fully aware of issues that affect them because we care.



Customer Inclusion & Engagement

Our Customer Engagement

The Local Space Customer Engagement Strategy provides our framework for involving customers. It clearly sets out the importance of engagement, and our customer surveys show the value our tenants put on being listened to.

The strategy outlines the scope of engagement, keeping our customers informed, using customer feedback, consulting with customers e.g., the Tenant's Panel. We work together with Customers, including the Chair of the Tenants Panel who regularly attends Board away days and meetings and actively participates in all discussions. Customers gave their input on our rebranding and building our new website, which was fully implemented in 2021.

70% of tenants from our directly managed home are from BAME backgrounds. Our engagement strategy commits to regular diversity and inclusion focus groups to get feedback first-hand on how we are doing to help inform our services, actions, and plans.

We have invested in our technology and in 2021 launched My Account, giving our tenants a customer portal to have access to their tenancy, pay their rent and communicate repairs. Our customers fully tested My Account before it went live. We communicate and get feedback on major investment in our homes, i.e., windows, roofs, and doors and installing boilers, kitchens, and bathrooms.

To support our communities, all our customers will benefit from our plans to switch to upgrading our homes as part of its carbon neutrality initiative. We have allocated £1m per annum in our stock to bring tenants homes up to a higher standard for energy efficiency. This is a total of £10m in the financial plan from 2022/23.

The actions we take here in our EDI Strategy and in our Customer Engagement Strategy will allow us to improve our services to our customers and to improve their lives whilst providing good quality, sustainable accessible and affordable homes.

What we Aim to do

- ◇ Hold customer experience groups to ensure that the services we provide are user friendly and inclusive of needs.
- ◇ Analyse customer data to help identify and adapt to the needs of our customers and reshape our services to accommodate those needs.
- ◇ Continue to provide training that enables our customer facing staff to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of our customers.
- ◇ Measure the Social Impact of our work.
- ◇ Review our key service areas to identify and address potentially negative equality impacts on underrepresented groups

7. Employee Inclusion & Engagement

Our Purpose & Ambition

We aspire to bring out the best in people. To achieve this, it's important that our approach is inclusive. We know that colleagues who feel they belong are committed and less likely to leave the organisation.

We understand that perceptions of discrimination and of not belonging are stressors and barriers to trust. Our ambition is for all employees to feel included. That will mean supporting, understanding, and adjusting where necessary to accommodate a broad range of needs.

Clearly, we want to encourage applications from a diverse pool of talent, but we also want to be clear that the ability to work flexibly is very important to us.

We think that every role at Local Space should be able to provide flexibility, and we challenge our managers to accommodate a level of flexibility for everyone whilst putting our customers first.



Employee Inclusion & Engagement

Our Employee Engagement

We use the results of our six-monthly health check surveys, and regular staff focus groups to assess our employees' sense of belonging. Our digital engagement tool, SnapComms, enables us to get feedback from staff on a wide range of issues, including evaluating our training initiatives.

Unconscious bias training, designed to give insights into their own bias, was delivered to the Board, the executive team and all our staff. This will be refreshed regularly. Following the Black Lives Matter campaign, an independent review was undertaken with staff, asking staff to reflect on where they believe we are since the worldwide focus on equalities, diversity, and inclusion. The outcome of this work was shared with the executive team and as a result refresher unconscious bias training was provided for staff in 2021.

We also ran multi-cultural working practice workshops to raise awareness of working with people from multiple cultures and to help understand the impact on communication and behaviour. Respectful conduct training has also been provided, including a focus on micro-aggressions, exploring behaviours that give offence, e.g., hot-button language, email aggression and behaviours.

We commissioned our two-year People First programme run by Franklin Covey, creators of the 'Habits of Highly Effective People'. This has been delivered in two phases, phase 1 aimed at senior managers and phase 2 included all staff. The purpose of this work is so that a common experience and language could be embedded into our culture, to improve communication and performance. The People First programme focuses on self-reflection, unconscious bias, accountability, creating customer loyalty and improving the customer experience.

On-going reviews of policies and procedures will be designed to strengthen equalities in employment practices reflecting the commitment outlined in our EDI strategy.

What we Aim to do

- ◇ Provide our employees with the training and resources they need to support our drive for diversity excellence.
- ◇ Ensure that our support is tailored, advised by our occupational health providers, to people with conditions, such as dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and dyspraxia.
- ◇ Consult with staff on creating specific employee resource groups e.g., gender, BAME, disabled, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans employees.
- ◇ Expand our current engagement and communication interventions to include an annual wellbeing survey to assess our employees' sense of belonging, this will also enable us to better assess hidden mental health issues.
- ◇ Review our flexible working initiative and monitor how it is being received by our staff.
- ◇ Integrate diversity training into our procurement and customer service.

8. Strategic Themes: Representation & Leadership

Our Purpose & Ambition

We are committed to using new and innovative approaches and believe that diversity drives innovation and creativity in all aspects of successful business. The more diverse we are as an organisation, the more creative we will be in understanding and finding solutions to meet our customer needs.

39% of our workforce is white British, and 61% of our workforce are BAME or white other, 57% of our staff are women, 11% of our workforce have a disability and 5.5% of our workforce are LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans).

Our commitments and actions here are aimed at creating a diverse workforce and, importantly, one which reflects our customer base. 70% of customers living in our directly managed homes are BAME and 72% are women. We want to improve our BAME workforce profile within management and senior management positions.

We know that the key to change is leadership. Leadership starts with our Board and senior management team. We believe that all staff have a leadership role and that we need to support and empower leadership to create a culture that is diverse and inclusive, which all our workforce should contribute to building. We also want to act as a role model, which is experienced through our interactions with our customers and workforce.

We have begun a journey of training our people and senior managers; however, we recognise more work needs to be done with our customers to get a more informed picture of how customers perceive our services and be able to more meaningfully measure whether our workforce initiatives are making a difference to our customers.



Representation & Leadership

A Representative Workforce Serving Our Diverse Communities

It is important that we target our work by ensuring it is informed by the right data to drive our goals. For example, two thirds of our workforce is between 45 and 66 years old and a third of our workforce is between 55 and 66 years old. We should ensure that we have a diverse talent pipeline and that we give ourselves the best opportunity to have the best people working with us at all levels.

Our ambition is to build a workplace that provides visibility of the career pathways available to those who'd like to progress and one that provides opportunity for progression for our people at all levels. We have started with our senior leaders and asked that they provide active leadership in embedding equality and diversity into every aspect of Local Space.

We will work with our suppliers to build stronger and substantial relationships through our shared values on diversity and inclusion. Although EDI is now a conscious component of the internal leadership training that we provide, we feel it's important for our colleagues at every level to demonstrate leadership and for our customers to understand how our leadership ambitions will benefit them.

We will ensure that our senior leaders provide active leadership in embedding equality and diversity into every area of Local Space's operations.

What we Aim to do

- ◇ Analyse our employee profile and put positive action plans in place to address areas of under representation including senior leadership, against our customer profile. Review our recruitment data to understand trends and highlight any potential issues in recruiting diverse talent so that we can address them. Implement positive action measures on BAME and disability recruitment.
- ◇ Look for opportunities to take on work experience and interns to broaden scope of potential people who would want to work at Local Space and in housing.
- ◇ Create opportunities to engage with people from different backgrounds. Identify where we can design career paths which allows careers to be tracked and which clearly articulates career trajectories to entry roles into Local Space, accessing professional training and achieving senior positions.
- ◇ Continue to deliver a platform that is aimed at tackling unconscious bias and structural barriers to building an inclusive culture and build confidence in the workforce to explore career progression within Local Space and articulate their experiences.
- ◇ Promote and embed equality and diversity into every aspect of our business by continuing to provide effective training to our leaders and our employees. Ensure that our senior leaders have diversity objectives aimed at tackling unconscious bias and structural barriers to career progression within Local Space.
- ◇ Create opportunities to engage with people from different backgrounds. Promote our approach to Diversity and Inclusion and Corporate Responsibility and ensure all our stakeholders are aware of the importance of EDI to us. We will seek to gain an assurance from our stakeholders that they are committed to EDI and if we see actions or behaviours, such as discrimination, that are not in line with our EDI commitment this could put our business relationship at risk.

9. Delivering Our Strategy

Monitoring Our Progress

Everyone at Local Space has personal responsibility for EDI in each of our areas of work. However, our desire for leadership and commitment in EDI starts at the top. Our Board has overall accountability for the delivery of our EDI strategy. That means that our Board will monitor progress on this strategy and play its part in advancing our inclusion agenda over the next 3 years. We'll ensure that the Board receives regular progress reports throughout the year.

The delivery of our equality actions will be overseen by our Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NRC) to enhance and challenge our strategic commitments to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Additional resources will be needed to contribute to the delivery of the plan and achieve our ambitions.

Spotlight on the NRC

The NRC will help us take an overview on EDI issues relating to customers, employees, and as appropriate stakeholders. EDI will be added to the NRC agenda, and it will meet as often as necessary to focus on monitoring progress on delivery of the EDI strategy.

The NRC will oversee the delivery of the EDI strategy and action plan and makes sure Local Space meets its legal and regulatory requirements by:

- helping promote equal opportunities
- ensuring the customer services we provide are fair and accessible to everyone
- helping to eliminate unlawful discrimination
- helping to create a more inclusive workforce

The NRC consists of 4 Board members, including the Chair of the Committee, and attendance is normally two officers, the Corporate Services Director, and the Company Secretary. It is proposed that for discussions concerning the EDI strategy the committee will include attendance of the Chair of the Local Space Board, the Chief Executive, and the Operations Director. As well as sharing good practice and keeping up to date with external best practice, we will set our baseline. We'll start by:

- using our data to review and baseline our current EDI position
- developing our EDI business case and strategy and set diversity ambitions
- promoting our planned EDI approach to embed our commitments and accountability

What we Aim to do

The NRC will review the action plan for this strategy, update objectives and make sure that progress is being made. The EDI work focused by the NRC will be reported to the Board on a regular basis. The EDI updates overseen by the NRC will form an annual report to the Board.



10. Our Four-Year Road Map

Foundation: 2021/22

Review Equalities Strategy 2016 – 2019 and agree a revised EDI strategy that is fit for purpose against our new code of governance. **Completed.**

Commission data sets for our directly managed homes, we will need to source expertise and capacity; this will inform future decision making. We have data sets on workforce to enable us to review our EDI position. **Completed.**

Identify what resources we need to support our EDI strategy ambitions. Staff have been consulted and have received regular training concerning EDI. **Completed.**

People processes (sourcing, attraction, recruiting, promoting) through an EDI lens has been reviewed and consider what resources are needed to help deliver our targets. **Partially completed**

We now carry the Disability Confident symbol, disability training dates are confirmed in the first quarter of 2022 and our commitment to offer an interview to a disabled person who meets the essential requirements of the job will be implemented in March 2022. This includes up-dating our recruitment procedure. **Partially completed.**

Year 1: 2022/23

Promoting our planned EDI approach and embed our commitment.

Agree the annual EDI KPIs that will be reported to the Board for our customers and workforce.

Set aspirational diversity targets and agree actions for addressing underlying reasons for representational disparity that affect our customers.

Commit our senior leadership to lead actions on EDI in each of their areas of responsibility.

Continue to improve and embed employee diversity confidence through training, development, and education

Make an inclusive culture part of our brand and promote it widely.

Year 2: 2023/24

Create a culture where it is normal to raise the question of unfair treatment constructively.

Incorporate diversity and inclusion objectives into business plans.

Review/evaluate our interventions in supporting representational disparity that affect our customers, e.g., identifying where there is a lack of engagement and accessing technology.

Create succession plans for underrepresented groups
Review measurable outcomes against our EDI actions in years 1 and 2. This aims to improve leadership and promote better outcomes.

Develop an EDI framework for working with our suppliers and contractors.

Year 3: 2024/25

Demonstrate that we have taken an active leadership role on EDI in the areas we operate in and have evidence of this through our profile within the housing sector.

Evidence and take measures that we have a workforce that is representative of the areas we operate in Year 3.

Review & evaluate the success of our EDI strategy and set new a programme of objectives for the next 3 years, 2025/26 – 2027/28

Establish, embed and lead:

our roadmap to success to establish accountabilities and belonging

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