



# Aire Valley Homes Leeds Single Equality and Cohesion Strategy 2009-2012

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# Aire Valley Homes Leeds Single Equality and Cohesion Strategy 2009-2012

## Introduction to Equality, Cohesion and Service Improvement

As a service provider and an employer, Aire Valley Homes is proud to be an organisation that values the diversity of its customers and staff. Our Single Equality and Cohesion Strategy will help us to provide the most efficient and appropriate services for the diverse communities we serve, ensuring that existing and future customers and colleagues have similar opportunities at home and at work.

With a common and consistent vision of equality and cohesion adopted throughout the organisation, we are in a strong position to be able to identify and implement service improvements. We can only do this by building on our understanding of our communities, workforce and partners and striving to tackle any inequalities that exist within them. Every member of staff understands the importance of promoting equality and challenging discrimination and exclusion in order to continually improve the services we provide.



Aire Valley Homes is proud to have achieved Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and staff are encouraged to work with the new Equality Framework for Local Government. As a consequence of our Single Equality and Cohesion Strategy and our commitment to the new framework we will strive to be an excellent organisation in order to maximise the potential of our workforce and ensure that our diverse customers feel respected and satisfied when accessing our services.

### What do we mean by.....?

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Equality</b>           | Treating people fairly and making sure that we do not unfairly discriminate against particular individuals or communities |
| <b>Diversity</b>          | Understanding that each individual is unique and will have different experiences, expectations and needs                  |
| <b>Community Cohesion</b> | Relationships within communities and closing divides between them. Everyone should feel that                              |

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they have an investment in the area they live in,  
that they are valued and they are involved

## **Purpose of this Document**

The purpose of our Single Equality and Cohesion Strategy is firstly to set out to our stakeholders, our commitment to promoting equality and cohesion over the next three years, as well as helping to show how we will promote positive relations between people in and around the communities we serve. It outlines our aims to reduce inequalities within service delivery and employment and improve services for our customers and staff.

Secondly, we recognise that within a society that is rich in diversity, some people can be at risk of discrimination. This may be on the grounds of ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment or for any other unfair reason. We consider any type of discrimination to be unacceptable and this strategy will highlight our achievements in tackling the problem, as well as outlining our objectives to further challenge the issue.

It is for to us to ensure that our customers can access all our services and that we identify any potential barriers to this access and ensure they are removed.

In the same way we understand that our services will be improved by investing in and developing a skilled, experienced and diverse workforce. This can only be achieved by ensuring equality of opportunity within our human resource policies and actively seeking to reduce unfair practices

We aim to do this by:

- Setting out our equality outcomes that underline where we aim to be as an organisation;
- Highlighting our achievements to date that have contributed towards achieving these outcomes;
- Outline a set of objectives that will help us to fully achieve these outcomes

## **Who will benefit from our Strategy?**

### **Our Customers**

Our customers are at the heart of all our decisions and they can use this document to monitor and scrutinise our commitment to equality and cohesion. This strategy will ensure that their diverse needs are taken into account in everything we do. Our practical approach to service improvement, by mainstreaming equality into our daily working practices, will result in barriers to access being identified and removed. By promoting equality and continually improving services, our customers will reap the benefits of services that are free from discrimination, which will help them to feel satisfied, valued and respected.

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## Our workforce

We cannot achieve our equality mission without the full support of our workforce. By creating a working environment that promotes equality of opportunity and is free from discrimination, our employees will feel confident and motivated in their role providing services. This document will also enable them to understand their role in delivering a service that meets the diverse needs of our customers, as well as meeting our legal obligations. By empowering and supporting staff to contribute to our equality and cohesion vision, they will feel valued and respected and able to make a difference.

## Consultation

In identifying our equality priorities, key stakeholders within the community have been involved. These include our tenants, our employees, community forums from outside of the organisation and other local partners. In order to ensure that the priorities are representative of the diverse communities we serve, we conducted specific consultation exercises with gender, disabled and Black and Minority Ethnic groups. These groups and other stakeholders will continue to be involved in the implementation and review of the action plan.

Examples of how this involvement influence the strategy can be found in Appendix 1, "You said....we did."

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## **Aire Valley Homes' Mission and Values**

Aire Valley Homes' mission is to provide desirable and affordable homes in good neighbourhoods, constantly improving life for individuals and communities.

We can only achieve this by understanding the importance of, and committing to, promoting equality and challenging discrimination and exclusion. This is underpinned by our core values;

- Customer Focus- Understanding who our customers are and their different needs, listening to and involving them to ensure our services are shaped around these needs
- Community Focus- Working with partners to maximise our contribution to shaping and improving the communities in which our customers live
- Innovation and Initiative- Encouraging scrutiny and challenge from our workforce and customers, and demonstrating creativity and imagination in responding to them
- Integrity and Professionalism- Valuing and supporting our colleagues and maintaining high standards of personal conduct and service delivery
- Service Excellence- Innovating and delivering a high quality service with which customers across all groups are satisfied

By working to achieve our mission we are also contributing to Leeds City Council's mission;

"The Council seeks to bring the benefits of a prosperous, vibrant and attractive city to all the people of Leeds."

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## **Aire Valley Homes' Equality and Cohesion Vision**

### Our equality mission statement

“We will strive to understand our diverse communities and neighbourhoods to ensure that our services are designed to meet the needs and aspirations of our existing and prospective customers. As an employer and service provider we aim to narrow equality gaps in order to improve the life chances of all our stakeholders.”

In order to achieve our equality mission we must:

- Identify and prevent any potential negative impacts that our services have on individuals, groups and neighbourhoods;
- Encourage and support staff to embed equality into their working practices;
- Consult with customers and staff at all stages of policy, planning and service delivery;
- Work with city wide partners to ensure that equality and discrimination issues affecting all groups are addressed consistently and effectively;
- Ensure that equality considerations are built into our procurement practices to ensure that the services we provide via our contractors meet the needs of our customers;
- Following the recommendations of the CRE code of practice on racial equality in housing, ensure that training, monitoring and equality impact assessments play a key part in tackling racial inequality, as well as other areas of inequality.

### **Our Legal Duties**

As well as our dedication to service improvement we have a number of legal duties to adhere to with regard to the promotion of equality and the prevention of discrimination.

We have three public duties which fall under the following acts of legislation;

- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Discrimination Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995

We are required under the race, disability and gender specific duties to develop an equality scheme for each of the three strands. This will help us to ensure that we meet each of the general duties. However, in light of the proposed Equality Bill we have chosen to develop one single scheme as part of this strategy, which seeks to demonstrate how we will support and protect stakeholders within three other equality groups as well; age, sexual orientation and religion and belief.

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Current legislation places the following duties on us;

## **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 aims to protect against discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. As a public sector organisation we are required to;

### General duties

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity and good race relations between persons of different racial groups

### Specific duties

- Prepare and publish a race equality scheme which is annually reported on
- Assess which functions and policies will affect the elimination of unlawful racial discrimination or the promotion of equality of opportunity and good race relations between persons of different racial groups
- Monitor the negative effect of policies and services
- Assess and consult on policies and proposals for adoption
- Publish the results of any assessments, consultation and monitoring
- Ensure that the public have access to our information and services
- Train and brief staff on racial equality issues

## **Code of Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing (2006)**

This code aims to explain the provisions of the Race Relations Act (1976) that are relevant to the provision of housing. It sets standards for achieving racial equality, providing practical guidance to avoid unlawful discrimination, to promote equal opportunities and encourage good race relations.

It makes recommendations under the following key areas of housing;

1. Governance and the role of governing bodies
2. New and improved housing
3. Sales and Lettings
4. Mortgage Lending and Insurance
5. Homelessness and housing advice
6. Neighbourhood regeneration and integration

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7. Tenancy and housing management
8. Racial harassment and anti-social behaviour
9. Contractors and procurement
10. Involvement of residents and tenants

### **Disability Discrimination Act 1995/ Disability Discrimination Act 2005**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 aims to protect against discrimination on the grounds of disability. As a public sector organisation we are required to;

#### General duties

- Promote equality of opportunity for disabled people
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Eliminate harassment

#### Specific duties

- Prepare and publish a disability equality scheme and to involve disabled people in its production
- Report on progress of the disability equality scheme and to review and revise it every 3 years
- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act
- Eliminate the harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- Take steps to meet the needs of disabled people, even if it requires more favourable treatment

### **Equality Act 2006**

The Equality Act 2006 outlaws the discrimination within service delivery on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief. As a public organisation we have the following duties with regards to gender;

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## General duties

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity between men and women

## Specific duties

- Prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, demonstrating how we will meet our general and specific duties and setting out our gender equality objectives
- To report on the scheme every year and review the scheme every 3 years
- Consider the need to include an objective to address the cause of any gender pay gap
- Gather and use information on how our policies and practices may impact on the workforce and in the delivery of services
- Consult stakeholders and take account of relevant information in order to determine our gender equality objectives
- Assess the impact of our current and proposed policies and practices on gender
- Implement the actions set out in our scheme within 3 years, unless it is unreasonable or impractical to do so

Other important legislation includes;

- Race Relations Act (1976)
- Race Relations (Amendment) Regulations (2003)
- Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Regulations (2003)
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006)
- Equal Pay Act (1970)
- Sex Discrimination Act (1975)
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations (1999)
- Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations (2003)
- Gender Recognition Act (2004)
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (2003)
- Civil Partnership Act (2004)
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations (2003)

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## **The Equality Bill**

The proposed Equality Bill is a key document reflecting the Government's changing equality agenda and will impact upon Aire Valley Homes. We recognise the need to plan for these changes and to incorporate them into policies and procedures. Some key areas for change may include;

- The development of a single equality scheme which will seek to provide comparable protections across all 7 equality groups
- Incorporation of socio-economic issues
- Stronger equality requirements within procurement
- Steps to tackle indirect discrimination

## **Our Work in Equality and Cohesion**

We have developed and integrated some key areas into our working practices to ensure that we are continuously meeting our general and specific duties under the three equality duties and continuously promoting improving services.

These areas include:

- **Neighbourhood and Customer Profiling**

By gathering and recording equality data from our customers we are making sure we that we understand who they are. We are therefore in a better position to be able to recognise areas of our services that need improving to better suit these needs. The more accurate and up to date our customer information is, the more we are able to shape our services to benefit customers.

We aim to use this information to:

- Improve our services to ensure that they are fair and that everybody is able to use them when it is most convenient to them;
- Make adjustments in delivering our services to make sure that they are meeting specific customer needs;
- Identify trends that indicate where people may not be using services that are available to them.

Profiling at a neighbourhood level also helps us in identifying areas of inequality. We can then use this information to target our resources where there is a greater need and plan future services and service improvements according to the changing community demographics.

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- **Equality and Community Cohesion Impact Assessments**

We carry out equality and community cohesion impact assessments to ensure our policies and procedures do what they are designed to do, and for the people they are designed for. By ensuring that we have equality and community cohesion impact assessed all policies procedures and services we can be sure that we have actively taken steps to ensure that we are not discriminating against, or excluding, any of our service users and so everybody has similar opportunities to benefit from our services and employment practices. Furthermore, we can also measure the impact these policies, procedures and services have on community relations and to what extent they promote equality and positive relations within communities.

In order to ensure that all service users have been taken into account it is crucial that they are involved in the assessment. This includes direct involvement by inviting and encouraging service users to participate in the assessment. It is important that all diverse groups are represented in the assessment and therefore consultation prior to the assessment itself being undertaken.

Equality and community cohesion impact assessments help us to address barriers that might exclude particular communities or groups of people by implementing service improvements. These services improvements are monitored regularly to ensure that the barriers have been removed and the negative impacts on these communities or groups are being reversed.

- **Customer Consultation and Involvement**

In order to ensure that our services have been developed to meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve, it is important that these communities themselves have had the opportunity to shape and influence them.

We take a broad view of who our customers are. A customer can be an existing tenant, a leaseholder, a family or household member of a tenant, a member of the housing register, a carer or advocate speaking on a tenants behalf or a resident living in an area where Aire Valley Homes have an influence over the local services delivered.

We involve customers at an early stage of policy and decision making, including involvement in the procurement of contractors for customer facing services.

We seek healthy representation involving and empowering customers who are representative of our wider customer base.

We offer a range of choices of involvement method, aware of the potential barriers customers with different needs and communication preferences may have. These include;

- Customer Panel
- Email Panel
- Postal Surveys
- Cold Calling

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- Door Knocking
- Focus groups
- Community and voluntary groups, forums and networks

We also use these same channels to feedback to customers how we have improved services as a result of their involvement and

### **Demographics of Aire Valley Homes**

Our organisation manages approximately 15,400 of Leeds City Council's housing stock in the south and east areas of Leeds. Although our tenant base is constantly changing we house around 18,800 tenants. By gathering and recording equality data from our tenants we are in a position to be able to use the data to inform our policies and tailor our services to meet the diverse communities we serve.

We use various methods of data capture for customer profiling including 'Getting to know you' questionnaires at sign up, new tenancy visits and annual tenancy visits for example. This data is confidentially recorded onto our computer system and we can then extract the data to monitor the profile of our tenants.

The table below shows the percentage splits by gender from a sample of 18,834 AVHL tenants compared with Leeds as a whole. Please note, as tenants end their tenancies and new tenants sign up, these figures will change on a weekly basis.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>% within Leeds (total population 715,402)</b>	<b>% within Aire Valley Homes (Sample population 18,834)</b>
Male	48	39
Female	52	61

The table below shows the percentage splits by ethnic group from a sample of 12,986 AVHL tenants compared with Leeds as a whole. Please note, as tenants end their tenancies and new tenants sign up, these figures will change on a weekly basis.

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>% within Leeds (total population 715,402)</b>	<b>% within Aire Valley Homes (Sample population 12,986)</b>
White	92	91
Mixed	1	1
Asian	5	1
Black	1	3
Other	1	3
Unwilling to answer		1

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The table below shows the percentage splits by impairment from a sample of 5271 AVHL tenants compared with Leeds as a whole. Please note, as tenants end their tenancies and new tenants sign up, these figures will change on a weekly basis.

<b>Impairment</b>	<b>% within Leeds (total population 715,402)</b>	<b>% within Aire Valley Homes (Sample population 5,271)</b>
Hearing Impairment	Although we do not have the data for the percentage of the population of Leeds who have a disability the Office of National Statistics suggests that nearly 5% of the population of Leeds claim Disability Living Allowance	3.7
Learning Impairment		0.9
Mental Health Issues		4
Physical Impairment		29.5
Speech Impairment		0.3
Visual Impairment		2.4
Other Health Conditions		10.5
None		48
Unwilling to answer		0.7

The table below shows the percentage splits by age band from a sample of 16,524 AVHL tenants compared with Leeds as a whole. Please note, as tenants end their tenancies and new tenants sign up, these figures will change on a weekly basis.

<b>Age Band</b>	<b>% within Leeds (total population over 17 years old 563,453*)</b>	<b>% within Aire Valley Homes (Sample population 16,524)</b>
Under 17-20 years	5	0.61
20-29 years	19	11.38
30-39 years	19	16.94
40-49 years	16	17.41
50-59 years	15	13.63
60-69 years	11	14.94
70-79 years	9	13.39
80 years and over	5	11.7

\*Please note that the above statistics are based on the population of Leeds over 17 years old as it is at this age that they are eligible to have a tenancy with Aire Valley Homes Leeds

The table below shows the percentage splits by religion from a sample of 5,919 AVHL tenants compared with Leeds as a whole. Please note, as tenants end their tenancies and new tenants sign up, these figures will change on a weekly basis.

<b>Religion</b>	<b>% within Leeds (total population 715,402)</b>	<b>% within Aire Valley Homes (Sample population 5,919)</b>
Christian	69	78
Muslim	3	2
Other	3	2
No Religion	17	15

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Not stated/Unwilling to answer	8	3
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The table below shows the percentage splits by sexual orientation from a sample of 4,091 AVHL tenants. Please note, as tenants end their tenancies and new tenants sign up, these figures will change on a weekly basis.

Sexual Orientation	% within Leeds (total population 715,402)	% within Aire Valley Homes (Sample population 4,091)
Gay	The government estimates that 5-7% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual and Stonewall feels that this is a reasonable estimate. However there is no hard data on the number of lesbians, gay men or bisexual people in the UK as no national census has ever asked people to define their sexuality	0.4
Heterosexual		92.7
Lesbian		0.6
Bisexual		0.2
Unwilling to answer		6.1

### **Our Equality and Cohesion Priorities 2009-2012**

Aire Valley Homes Leeds believes that all its customers have the right to a high quality service and we recognise that this will only be achieved by incorporating diversity into our service provision to ensure that our customers are treated fairly. Our commitment to developing imaginative, diverse and informed services will result in continual improvement in the quality of service that our customers receive. This means that we will not discriminate against people because of their ethnic origin, gender, impairment, age, sexual orientation, religious belief, gender reassignment or for any other unfair reason. It is for to us to ensure that our customers can access all our services and that we identify any potential barriers to this access and ensure they are removed.

In the same way we understand that our services will be improved by investing in, and developing, a skilled, experienced and diverse workforce. This can only be achieved by ensuring equality of opportunity within our human resource policies and actively seeking to reduce unfair practices.

Aire Valley Homes understands that the diverse individuals and groups that live within its communities want to feel that they belong within their neighbourhoods. It strives to encourage everyone to take part in community life and to help them to feel that their contributions are valued. As the demographics of Leeds continue to change we are aware that our priorities must change to encourage community cohesion and integration. In this way we are encouraging individuals to live and work well together, creating a happy and cohesive community.

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To be successful in our equality and cohesion agenda we aim to achieve the following outcomes;

## **Outcome 1**

We have detailed knowledge of our customer profiles and we are able to reliably use this knowledge to gain understanding of our customers, both at an overview and a detailed level. This understanding is used to shape existing, planned and future policies and services, ensuring that they are equitable and fair, meeting the needs of our diverse customers.

Achievements to date

- We currently hold a lot of customer profile data and the more we collect and store, the more we will be able to analyse and use the data to improve our services
- We incorporated the “Getting to Know You” questionnaire into the sign up process, new tenancy visits and annual tenancy visits to increase the level of understanding we have about our customers and ensure that it is up to date

Our objectives

- To increase customer data capture at service delivery level  
*\*This is linked to our Business Plan, objective 1.1*
- To improve the quality and reliability of data held
- To monitor, report and analyse data collected according to the 6 principal equality groups
- To use the data analysis to inform policies and implement service improvements

## **Outcome 2**

All our employees are committed to our equality agenda and understand the barriers that vulnerable people face. There are adequate resources allocated and structures in place to ensure that support, guidance and encouragement is available to them.

Achievements to date

- All staff have access to a guide to Accessing Customer Communication Services which includes information regarding Leeds City Council’s Central Interpreting and Translation Unit
- All staff have access to an Equality Etiquette booklet and Directory of Support Services. This helps staff to feel comfortable when communicating with customers and staff from diverse groups as well as helping them to signpost customers to appropriate agencies for further advice and assistance.

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## Our objectives

- To ensure that equality and service improvement work is monitored as part of the Performance Management Framework
- To set up an employee equality working group to ensure teams have the support they need to contribute to equality and service improvement work
- Update equality and cohesion training for all managers and staff
- To revise equality and cohesion aspects within the induction process.
- To adopt the Equality Framework for Local Government and use the Equality Framework Collection and Evidence Tool
- Equality and cohesion objectives to be included in day to day working practices of staff

## Outcome 3

We have in place an effective procurement strategy allowing us to work closely with our contractors to ensure that our customers receive an efficient service that is appropriate to their needs.

## Achievements to date

- Precious metals scheme was adopted as a way of assessing and monitoring our contractors in their approach and contribution towards Equality and Diversity. Contractors are assessed and awarded according to their equality achievements and are encouraged to progress to the next level through supported programmes of continual service improvement.

## Our objectives

- To develop a procurement strategy that highlights our approach to equality and cohesion and details the equality requirements we expect from our contractors.  
*\*This is linked to our Business Plan, objective 5.5*
- To build equality requirements into the contract specification of all procurements.  
*\*This is linked to our Business Plan, objective 5.3*

## Outcome 4

We work closely with partner organisations to continue to share best practice and learn about, support and communicate with our diverse communities. This includes any specific communication needs or cultural requirements.

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## Achievements to date

- Ongoing work with Stop Hate UK to support victims of Hate Crime. This includes work to raise awareness of the different types of Hate Crime that can occur and to promote the reporting of direct and indirect hate crime.
- Ongoing Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC) meetings to support victims of Hate Crime and domestic violence. This multi agency group aims to discuss and resolve specific cases within the Leeds area.

## Our objectives

- To increase our awareness of specific cultural and communication needs through partnerships developed with voluntary organisations that represent the community groups we serve  
*\*This is linked to our Business Plan, objective 3.2*
- To continue to share and use best practice guidance

## **Outcome 5**

We promote and oversee accessible and up to date methods of customer consultation and our service users believe that they have a voice. Our customers are satisfied that they have influenced our equality priorities, including groups that are vulnerable or at greater risk of disadvantage.

## Achievements to date

- We have set up and support a wide range of consultation channels including;
  - Customer Voices- These include feedback surveys, compliments and complaints, satisfaction scorecards, feedback from 'roadshows', ad-hoc focus groups and evaluation panels
  - Customer Panels- These include regular focus groups and evaluation panels e.g. Repairs focus group, surveys, mystery shopping
  - Customer Representation- These include tenants and residents groups, leaseholder forum
  - Customer Management- These include Area Panels, Tenant and Leaseholder Board Directors
- Equality Impact Assessments ensure that our tenants have a say in shaping our policies and processes either directly, by participating in the assessment, or indirectly, when customer consultation is used to identify improvement actions.

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- 'Airetalk' soon to be launched which is a Residents portal which facilitates online consultation

## Our objectives

- To promote participation of customers in Equality Impact Assessments
- To promote Airetalk and its benefits through a variety of communication channels
- To research and develop new and imaginative consultation methods that aim to encourage active participation of vulnerable or marginalised groups
- To ensure all customer consultation information is used to inform policies and services
- To feed back to customers any service improvements that are the result of consultation

## Outcome 6

All our customers are satisfied that Aire Valley Homes Leeds engage with them and they can fully access our services, including those that are provided by a third party.

## Achievements to date

- All public offices comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act
- There are a number of ways to contact AVHL, including reporting a repair, making a rent payment or making a complaint. These include;
  - Via AVHL website
  - Via freephone telephone number (24 hours for reporting a repair)
  - In writing
  - Face to face at a variety of offices and one stop centres throughout the Aire Valley area.
- All information and publications include a strap line advising the reader of its availability on CD, tape, in Braille, large print or translation.
- AVHL website is easy to navigate and offers the following benefits;
  - Read-speak software
  - Accessible font size with ability to change contrast and size
  - Written in plain English
  - Google translate facility
  - Pictorial repairs reporting programme

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- Regular newsletter available in a number of formats including large print and audio
- Communications Group is used to review all customer facing literature as well as the website to ensure that it is accessible to all.
- Tenants Handbook is provided at Sign Up which includes a full set of Service Standard leaflets which sets out what a customer can expect from all areas of the organisation, including Equality and Diversity.
- As part of the sign up process, new tenants have the opportunity to watch a DVD which enables them to understand important aspects of their tenancy

### Our objectives

- To address the need to communicate through British Sign Language for appropriate tenants
- To increase communication with tenants that rarely or never contact Aire Valley Homes through any communication channel
- To review the accessibility of Aire Valley Homes' customer facing literature  
*\*This is linked to Aire Valley Homes' business plan, objective 1.3*
- To consult with customers that represent communities we serve to identify any access barriers within our services  
*\*This is linked to Aire Valley Homes' business plan, objective 1.3*
- To continue to carry out Equality Impact Assessments for all policies and procedures to identify any potential barriers to access and use actions to inform service improvement  
*\*This is linked to Aire Valley Homes' business plan, objective 1.2*
- To develop a strategy to target the take-up of sheltered, floating support and adaptation services by British, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities  
*\*This is linked to Aire Valley Homes' business plan, objective 3.1*

### Outcome 7

We are representative of the communities we serve and our working environment and human resource policies are free from discrimination. Our staff are encouraged to reach their full potential through effective training and development.

### Achievements to date

- We monitor our Board members to assess gender, disability and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic representation

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- We monitor our employees to assess gender, disability, ethnicity, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation representation
- We monitor the top earners as a percentage of the total workforce according to gender, disability and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic representation
- Wherever possible, job opportunities are advertised internally as well as externally
- Use of online advertising as well as advertising with Job Centre and on the Leeds City Council website
- To ensure equality of pay, all jobs are evaluated according to Leeds City Council evaluation process which operate according to nationally agreed pay structures
- We have a grievance procedure which takes into account any complaints of bullying, harassment or discrimination
- We have a flexible working policy which supports our employees to balance their professional and domestic lives and encourages women to return after maternity leave
- All new employees attend a comprehensive induction programme which includes Equality and Diversity aspects
- We organise training courses around specific equality aspects as often as is required e.g. Hate incident reporting training
- We have achieved the Investors in People accreditation

### Our objectives;

- To modernise and impact assess all human resource policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose and in line with any recent changes in legislation
- To research employment initiatives that will generate opportunities for younger people
- To expand the monitoring of Board members to include age, religion or belief and sexual orientation representation data
- To identify ways of bringing under represented groups onto the Board and into staff and management groups  
*\*This is linked to Aire Valley Homes' business plan, objective 5.2*
- To develop training evaluation initiatives to ensure that training is accessible for all staff and tailored to individual needs

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- To explore new ways of delivering training to ensure that staff feel confident in approaching equality issues
- To implement Equality Impact Assessment refresher training
- To achieve the Positive About Disability 'Two Tick' accreditation  
*\*This is linked to our Business Plan, objective 4.3*

### **Outcome 8**

We have the support structures in place to be able to deal effectively with any reports of Anti Social Behaviour, Hate Crime or Domestic Violence.

#### Achievements to date

- We introduced the Hub system which enables us to record and monitor cases of Anti Social Behaviour, Hate Crime, and domestic violence in one central location. The system can also be used to diarise appointments and run reports as a way of monitoring cases and benchmarking the efficiency with which they are dealt
- Recording and monitoring of Hate Crimes within the Aire Valley Homes area
- Monitoring of tensions within the Aire Valley Homes area
- Ongoing work with Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Domestic Violence sub group and MARAC Hate Crime sub group to support victims of Hate Crime and domestic violence. Working with a multi agency approach allows us to discuss and resolve specific cases within the Leeds area and offer support to the victims
- We have a policy in place regarding Domestic Violence and Hate Crime as well as a set of service standards which all staff have access to. This enables us to make every effort in supporting victims with their housing needs
- Staff have been trained to complete a Multi Agency Hate Incident Reporting Form when a tenant reports such an incident. They are aware of the actions they must take when dealing with a hate incident report and they will involve the appropriate partner agencies where necessary. They are fully aware of their duties regarding sensitivity and confidentiality
- Ongoing partnership work with Stop Hate UK and Community Safety to support victims of hate crime and share best practice initiatives

#### Our objectives;

- To increase awareness training for staff regarding domestic violence and hate crime

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- To coordinate refresher training for staff regarding hate incident reporting and supporting people who have reported a hate crime or domestic violence
- To ensure we are in touch with the most appropriate support groups according to our customers' needs

### **Outcome 9**

We have a deeper understanding of communities and neighbourhoods within the Aire Valley area and within the whole of Leeds.

Achievements to date

- Existing qualitative data collected through various community engagement channels
- We have signed up to Yorkshire Forward, which gives us access to a detailed area profiling system, allowing us to understand the make up of our communities at a neighbourhood level

Our objectives;

- To identify trends and anomalies in data collected and to use it to inform policies
- To continue to develop data regarding existing and forecasted demographics of Leeds and use this to identify gaps in our services
- To set up staff groups as a way of sharing knowledge internally

### **Outcome 10**

Existing and new communities living in the Aire Valley Homes area feel that they belong to their local community and that they make a valuable contribution in shaping its future.

Achievements to date

- As a member of Leeds Ahead, we recognise the value and benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility and have successfully developed a number of initiatives including mentoring schemes, reading with primary school children, and painting a local primary school
- Tenants are empowered through use of community involvement initiatives to have a say in the decision making process and improving services

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- We attend local community galas and fetes to promote and raise awareness of the work Aire Valley Homes does and of regional and national days weeks e.g. Older Persons week

Our objectives;

- To explore ways in which we can promote and support local voluntary, community and faith organisations
- To complete our Corporate Social Responsibility policy
- To continue to work with local schools and partners in community cohesion initiatives
- To research ways in which Aire Valley Homes Leeds can engage with vulnerable and marginalised groups within the community, allowing them to contribute towards the future of their community
- To continue to attend local fetes and melas and promote and raise awareness of regional and national days/weeks

### **Monitoring**

In order to ensure that we are making progress towards our equality and cohesion goals, Aire Valley Homes Leeds continually monitors and reviews its work on equality and cohesion.

Some of the ways we do this include;

- National and Local Performance Indicators

We evaluate our progress against performance indicators in all areas of the organisation, including equality. Examples of these indicators include; percentage of staff from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities compared to the local community, percentage of Board members that are disabled and the percentage of total customer profile information for each equality group.

- Regular reporting to the Board and Sub Committees

Every report that goes through Aire Valley Homes Leeds' Board and Sub Committees is required to state the impact it will have on equality and diversity. Furthermore there is an Equality and Diversity Champion that sits on our Board and attends the Sub Committee meetings to ensure that any issues affecting equality can be picked up on. The Service Improvement Officer will also send progress reports to our Board and the Customer Services Sub Committee on a quarterly basis to evidence the progress made towards achieving our equality outcomes. An annual report will go to our Board which will highlight service improvements that have contributed towards our equality and cohesion outcomes and meeting our legal requirements.

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- Equality Standard for Local Government and Equality Framework for Local Government
- Aire Valley Homes Leeds worked hard to achieve Level 4 of the Equality standard and will work with the new Equality Framework to ensure that equality and cohesion are further embedded into the working practices of everyone in the organisation. Using the achievement journey we will be able to measure our performance on equality and we are in the process of adopting the Equality Framework Collection and Evidence Tool to use as a way to evidence our progress which we can then use for self assessment. The levels of achievement within the journey are developing, achieving and excellent. In striving towards excellence we aim to achieve our equality mission.
- Self assessment and guidance from external bodies

We will continue to closely follow best practice guidance from the Audit Commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the newly established Tenant Services Authority (TSA) which will allow us to lead in equality, cohesion and consultation work. Some key guidance that will be used as a basis for self assessment includes;

- The Audit Commission's Diversity Key Line Of Enquiry
- The TSA's 6 new standards for social landlords which will all include diversity criteria

Our Equality and Cohesion strategy is a living document and can be updated and improved as often as required. However, we will commit to regularly reviewing the document at least every 3 years.