

CHS EDI Strategy 2024 - 2027

CHS Mission Statement

To enable people to flourish by providing security and creating opportunities, through the delivery of high-quality Cambridgeshire based homes with support.

(Approved by Board in August 2023)

EDI Commitment Statement

CHS Group is proud to be an equal opportunity, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisation committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment for our workforce and the communities we serve.

(Approved by HR Committee in May 2022)

Objective

CHS strives to be a fair and inclusive organisation and we want everybody to have equal access to opportunities and services. An organisation that values diversity, encourages participation and treats people fairly and in accordance with their needs so that no-one is treated differently or discriminated against because of their characteristics. CHS will not tolerate any acts of unlawful or unfair discrimination, harassment, or victimisation committed against an employee, tenant, customer, contractor or visitor because of their protected characteristics.

Introduction

Equality, diversity and inclusion is a golden thread that runs through our corporate objectives and our values. This strategy builds upon our existing ED&I plan and sets out our plans for the next three years as well as how we will continue to embed the agenda into our culture, so that it becomes the responsibility of everyone at CHS to achieve.

The terms equality, diversity and inclusion are often used interchangeable but they are very different concepts. Together they allow organisations to perform at their best, meet the needs of the customers and stakeholders and enable employees to be the best version of themselves.

Equality – is about fairness and ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no-one should have poorer life chances because of the way that they are born, where they come from, what they believe or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that historically certain groups of people with protected characteristics have experienced discrimination.

Diversity – is psychological, physical and social differences that occur among all of us. It includes the differences we can see (eg. visible disabilities, gender, race and ethnicity) and importantly, those we can't see (eg. sexual orientation, culture, mental

ill-health, religion, socio-economic status). It is about recognising and valuing the differences in everyone.

Inclusion – an inclusive environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters, and they are able to live to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances.

We want our workplace and communities to allow people to be treated equitably and according to their needs. However, we also know that our individual identities are not limited to one single experience. We are all made up of many different parts and we have multiple identifies such as gender, social background, sexual orientation, race and disability. This is referred to as intersectionality. As an organisation, we must consider the advantage and disadvantage taking intersectionality into account to enable us to take appropriate and equitable action to meet the needs of individuals within groups and prevent us from assuming that people belonging to a group or groups all have the same needs.

The key themes upon which our ED&I strategy have been built around are:

- Customer Inclusion and engagement (improving wellbeing and quality of life of our customers individually and collectively)
- Employee Inclusion and engagement (creating working environments that promote inclusion and belonging, where employees are empowered to succeed and are representative of the local community)
- Leadership (ensuring that the CMT and Board demonstrate leadership on ED&I work and to the housing sector)

With the introduction of the new Consumer Regulations by the RSH from April 2024, it is strategically appropriate to make this the focus of the revised strategy.

We need to show how CHS understands the different needs of our tenants and customers for example, are there differential rates of satisfaction links to a group with protected characteristics? The focus needs to be on identifying barriers and ways to overcome these, ensuring fair access to services for everyone.

Our ED&I priorities will continue to be centred around the protected characteristics as defined in legislation, and will build upon the work already delivered by the E&DI Advisory Group, which is chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by members of staff and a tenant cttee representative. Over the last few years the group has raised the profile of E&DI across CHS with staff and tenants by creating a series of educational material for staff, social media and newsletter articles, engaged in discussions with colleagues and ensured that appropriate training was being delivered to staff.

Whilst all protected characteristics are important there may, on occasions, be an identified need for a greater focus on particular protected characteristics where this is supported by our own ED&I monitoring and customer/employee engagement. For example, The English Housing Survey identifies higher levels of dissatisfaction with ethnically diverse tenants and with disabled tenants, a finding supported by the CIH and the NHF. Collection and analysis of data specific to CHS tenants and customers is therefore a key starting point in the action plan.

CHS have already signed up to the Social Housing Anti Racism Pledge (SHARP) so that anti racism will be one strand of activity.

ED&I needs to be embedded in the delivery of services and employment activities within the organisation as a whole and not seen as discrete area of work. Importantly it must also be demonstrated that ED&I has been taken into account in key decision making.

Resources

CHS are members of the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) which gives access to a range of policy guidance and training materials.

As members of the National Housing Federation (NHF) we also have access to further support material including information and training for board members.

CHS are members of the Tenant Participatory Advice Service (TPAS) to assist with best practice in tenant and customer engagement.

Action Plan

The work is divided in to three themes: tenants/customers, staff and the Board.

Tenants/Customers	Staff	Leadership (CMT & Board)
Linked Key strategies & policies		
Tenant Engagement Strategy	HR Strategy	Governance Policy suite
Housing Management Policy	Communications Strategy	
Complaints Policy	ED&I Policy suite	
Communications Strategy	Wellbeing Strategy	

Key Actions		
Survey customer base to improve our diversity monitoring data	Survey staff to improve our diversity monitoring data	Work through the Chairs Challenge programme
Analyse customer data to help identify and adapt to the needs of our customers and reshape our services to accommodate those needs.	Use the results of employee surveys to measure and assess our employees' sense of belonging	Make an inclusive culture part of the CHS brand and ensure this is promoted widely
Review our key service areas to identify and address potentially negative equality impacts on underrepresented groups	Provide employees with the training and resources they need to support our ED&I strategy.	Provide appropriate ED&I training for CMT and Board Members

Seek accreditation from the Social Housing Ant Racism Pledge (SHARP)	Analyse our employee profile and put positive action plans in place to address areas of underrepresentation.	Utilise the NHF EDI Board recruitment toolkit
Ensure that all residents fully understand how CHS defines and responds to hate crime	Consider our people processes (attracting, recruiting, promoting) through an ED&I lens and alter appropriately	Explore HDN accreditation
Consider introduction of customer diversity targets	Consider introduction of employee diversity targets	
Strengthen the equality impact assessment process for all policies and strategies and key decisions.	Implement Diversity Champions across CHS to provide support, guidance and raise issues with the ED&I Advisory Group	
	Improve our Disability Confident Status	
	Gender Pay Gap tracking	

Monitoring

These key actions are set out with target dates in the attached appendix.

Progress on the Action Plan will be shared with the ED&I Advisory Group and Tenant Committee and formally monitored by the HR, Remuneration & Governance Committee.

The strategy will be reviewed by April 2027.

Appendix – SMART Project Tracker To be completed once strategy and project list above is approved

Project	Lead Director	Target Date
Survey customer base to improve data	Customers	Nov 2024
Analyse customer data to help identify and adapt to the needs of our customers and reshape our services to accommodate those needs.	Customers	May 2025
Review our key service areas to identify and address potentially negative equality impacts on underrepresented groups	Customers & Homes	June 2025
Ensure that all residents fully understand how CHS defines and responds to hate crime	Customers	Sep 2024
Consider introduction of customer diversity targets	Customers & Corporate Services	Nov 2025
Survey staff to improve data	Corporate Services	Jan 2024
Provide employees with the training and resources they need to support our ED&I strategy.	Corporate Services	2024-25
Use the results of employee surveys to measure and assess our employees' sense of belonging	Corporate Services	April 2024
Seek accreditation from the Social Housing Anti Racism Pledge (SHARP)	Corporate Services, Customers & Community Services	May 2024
Improve our Disability Confident Status	Corporate Services	May 2024
Work through the Chairs Challenge programme	Company Secretary	June 2024
Utilise the NHF EDI Board recruitment toolkit	Company Secretary & Corporate Services	March 2024
Explore HDN accreditation	Company Secretary	May 2026
Gender Pay Gap tracking	Corporate Services	Annual
Make an inclusive culture part of the CHS brand and ensure this is promoted widely	Chief Executive	June 2025

Provide appropriate ED&I training for CMT and Board Members	Corporate Services & Company Secretary	March 2024
Implement Diversity Champions across CHS to provide support, guidance and raise issues with the ED&I Advisory Group	Corporate Services	March 2024
Strengthen the equality impact assessment process for all policies and strategies and key decisions.	Corporate Services	March 2024