



Cohesion & Diversity Strategy

Moving Forward

2009 to 2013



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Introduction and Summary

Welcome to West North West Homes Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, which includes our Single Equality Scheme for 2009- 2013 and our commitment to the Equality agenda.

West North West homes Leeds is much more than a social housing landlord, we are a community. We are a large community that includes staff, customers and all of those we work with. West North West homes Leeds is also a diverse community, meaning that there is a wonderful variety of cultural and personal differences amongst us.

For this reason, cohesion and diversity is a central and essential part of everything that we do. So what does this mean? “Cohesion” is about raising awareness and understanding, breaking down barriers, developing shared values and mutual respect and trust. “Diversity” is to value the differences of all of those individuals and groups that help make up the community.

West North West homes Leeds understand and embrace these differences. This strategy brings together the work we have done with our customers and partners, toward encouraging acceptance, raising awareness and increasing understanding within our community. It also outlines our legal obligations and duties that help to increase and promote equality of opportunity and aim to tackle discrimination and harassment.

West North West homes Leeds wishes to go beyond these legal obligations and work with all of those involved to do so. Together, we will develop and improve ways of encouraging understanding and acceptance towards all of the individuals that make Leeds such an attractive and diverse place to live.

We all aspire to live in a society that is fair and which supports each individual to fulfil their potential. West North West Homes Cohesion & Diversity Strategy 2009 to 2010 includes our Single Equality Scheme which focuses on employment, race, disability, age, gender, religion or belief and sexual orientation. In addition our strategy has incorporated West North West homes Core Values.

Our strategy has enabled West North West homes to move in a new and exciting direction by taking on board the rapidly changing government agenda in relation to cohesion and diversity as well as the increasing impact changing demographics is having on West North West Leeds.

The Strategy brought together and strengthened the work we had already done and set out our approach and business objectives to cohesion and diversity. We reviewed our Cohesion and Diversity strategy and strengthened this by building our Race Equality Scheme, our Disability Scheme and our Gender Equality Scheme and brought them together into our Single Equality Scheme. This strategy also takes into account our Single Equality Scheme and our legal obligations for equality.

Cohesion and Diversity is embedded across the organisation and is delivered through all four business divisions of West North West Homes Leeds.

- Business Improvement
- Customer Services
- Property Investment
- Finance and Corporate Services

Our commitment and results have shown that cohesion and diversity is at the heart of what we do, across all services, from strategic decision making to the delivery of frontline services; however we will still strive to move forward on this challenging journey

Our Cohesion & Diversity Strategy is further reinforced by the cross cutting themes within our Vulnerability strategy and our Access to Services strategy.

We will continue to fulfil our legal obligations and responsibilities to promote Cohesion and Diversity by working within the legal framework that supports cohesion and diversity in all of our activities to further develop an organisational culture which values all people.

Aims of this Strategy

The aims of this strategy within the following areas are:

Service Improvement

- Work within a consistent framework that highlights the importance of cohesion and diversity in not only planning but also evaluating and continuously improving or tailoring our services to meet the changing needs of our diverse communities.
- By working within our Access to Services framework that, West North West homes Leeds services will be accessible to all sections of our population, irrespective of background.
- By working with our Vulnerability framework that we have considered the diverse needs when working with our vulnerable customers
- Ensure we are working towards community cohesion and raising awareness and understanding, breaking down barriers, developing shared values, mutual respect and trust within our communities and by promoting positive messages about the values of community cohesion.
- Look at the training needs of our Board and Staff and develop additional training to increase their knowledge and skills to meet the changing diverse needs of our customers and to deliver an improved service.

Accountability

- To allow Customers, Community Groups, our partners and other Stakeholders to use this strategy to assess and scrutinise our commitment to the cohesion and diversity agenda and to our Cohesion & Diversity policy

Legislation and Inspection

- To work within our legal context for equality and to ensure that West North West homes is meeting its legal duties for equality
- To identify through our Inspection processes that West North West homes Leeds are meeting their legal and inspection requirements

- That West North West homes has considered Value for Money and are delivering services to the public in an efficient and effective way

Partnerships

- For our partners and stakeholders to be aware of our commitment and approach to cohesion and diversity and to comply with this when working with us.

West North West Leeds Core Values:

Our values are clear in everything we do, and how we operate. We expect our Board and employees to follow our core values; these serve as guidelines for our conduct and behaviour as we work towards our vision. WNWhL will ensure that all our customers, stakeholders and partners are aware of our core values so that they can judge our performance against them.

Our core values are:

Values	How
Putting the customer first	We will ensure we understand our customers, tailor our services to meet expectations and gather intelligence to help us get a better understanding of their wants and needs.
Integrity	We will be professional, open, honest and transparent and deliver on our promises.
To be excellent	We will place our customers, leaseholders, employees and partners at the centre of everything we do. In doing so we will strive to listen and be accountable for everything we do.
Get it right first time	A total quality management approach will be taken to delivery of service
Learning organisation	By responding to internal and external pressures, our experiences will help us to evolve. We will learn from feedback and celebrate success.
Embrace Equality and Diversity	Our strength is rooted in the diverse contributions from our Board Directors, staff and customers. These will define who we are.
To be innovative	We will inspire our staff to continually seek new and sustainable ways to grow our business. We will operate a 'no-blame' culture. We will challenge ideas and concepts and strive to be leaders of change rather than followers.
Socially responsible and accountable	We will seek to provide (amongst other things) local employment opportunities for the community we serve, through partnership working. We will be accountable to our Stakeholders.
To be a good employer	We will seek to be an employer of first choice, providing a safe and happy working environment with a healthy work life balance.

We will apply our values consistently to our service so that every communication or encounter with our customers, stakeholders and partners is the best it can be. WNWhL will ensure that customers remain at the heart of its services and ethos.

This Strategy supports the following Strategic Objectives:

- **Customers**
We will demonstrate our commitment to customers by striving to get things “right first time” and by increasing customer satisfaction. We will tailor our services to meet the individual needs of customers, delivering excellence in service delivery to meet customers agreed expectations.
- **Communities & Neighbourhoods**
We will become recognised as an organisation that drives and enables the creating of safe, clean, attractive, successful, sustainable and cohesive communities and neighbourhoods that work.
- **Business & People**
We will become an effective, efficient, economic and enterprising organisation, providing professional and expert advice and service and we will inspire staff to seek new and innovative ways to develop our business.
- **Homes**
We will become recognised as a provider of quality homes in neighbourhoods that people want to live in, meeting and exceeding basic decency levels. We will become a housing provider of choice.

Cohesion and Diversity is fundamental to the majority of our policies and strategies and there are strong links in particular to Access to Services, Customer Satisfaction, Communications and Marketing, Customer Involvement, Community Safety (Respect Agenda) and the Worklessness agenda.

Wider Corporate Priorities

The Cohesion and Diversity Strategy supports the Leeds City Council Business Plan through our work with customers and communities.

The strategy also supports Leeds City Council in delivering its corporate strategic objectives and Leeds City Council's Equality & Diversity Scheme.

Examples of this in 2008/09 are:

Cultural Life:

- Fusion cultural charity event

Learning:

- Supporting tenants to learn new skills and increase their capacity.
- Worker of the Week project in primary schools

Environment:

- Community Partnership Agreements
- Groundwork partnership.
- Involving customers in the Respect Agenda

Health and Wellbeing

- Keep Fit Classes for our customers in Sheltered Accommodation
- Cooking around the World project

Background

Overview of Leeds

Leeds is recognised as one of Britain's most successful cities. It has transformed itself over the last 20 years from a mainly industrial city into a broad based commercial centre, the most important financial and legal and business service centre outside London.

Leeds is the largest city and the biggest retail and employment centre in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Leeds is clearly becoming a more diverse place and is now a city of many cultures, languages, races, religions and lifestyles. We aim to be a welcoming city to immigrants and there is a mix of very different neighbourhoods. This diversity is valuable and has helped fuel the prosperity of the area. We have a strong history of welcoming and supporting independence and integrating asylum seekers, refugees, family joiners, students and others. Migration enriches our diversity but raises challenges for creating and sustaining a sense of belonging amongst all communities.

Economic, cultural and environmental factors have made major contributions to Leeds being a successful place. Over the past decade Leeds has benefited from continued and significant economic growth. Leeds has impressive shopping, cultural and educational facilities, as well as a thriving business sector. It boasts tremendous variety, from beautiful rural expanses and open countryside to inner urban areas, all with their own very different identities.

Leeds has excellent road and rail links and hosts the main airport in the region making the city a positive choice for living, for business and for pleasure.

Culturally, Leeds continues to invest in its magnificent and growing collection of concert halls, theatres, galleries, museums, parks and sporting venues. There is lively participation in community festivals across the city and Leeds offers the widest range of free events in the country.

Environmentally, Leeds is a green city with two-thirds of its area green belt land. Improving local neighbourhoods is also a strong priority and real improvements have been made. There is, however, still evidence of unfair discrimination against people because of their race, faith, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or lifestyle.

Too many children and young people still leave school with few or no qualifications, particularly from low income families, those with special educational needs, some black and minority ethnic groups and looked after children.

Health inequalities continue to exist. Children born into the most deprived neighbourhoods can expect to live almost 12 years less than those in areas that enjoy the best health. The percentage of people over 60, currently 20% of the population, is forecast to grow raising issues of how older people's health, independence and contribution to the life of the community will be supported.

Some neighbourhoods and communities have not shared in the economic success enjoyed by much of the city. The numbers of people unable to work due to illness or injury remains a key issue. Many local people are excluded from job opportunities or developing their careers due to a mismatch between their skills and aspirations and the skills now required. Only 65% of the Leeds workforce has level 2 skills (equivalent to five A* to C GCSEs) against a national skills target of 90% by 2020.

Leeds is a quality place to live, work and raise families and has attracted the largest increase in population in the country; 4.8% since 2001.

The current population of over 750,000 embraces a rich diversity of over 130 different nationalities. The Leeds metropolitan district covers 552 square miles, which includes a main city area, surrounded by small towns, villages and countryside. The population has grown by 27,700 in the last 5 years.

In Leeds, we believe the barriers approach to equality and diversity can be usefully applied to all areas of discrimination and, therefore, our Strategy focused on the identification and removal of organisational barriers.

We are committed to ensuring that there is no discrimination against any person on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, class, appearance, religion, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or having AIDS, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health needs.

This strategy continues to apply and build upon the principles within our former Equality and Diversity Strategy, however it goes beyond that and seeks to cover in more depth the Community Cohesion Agenda and how we incorporate this into our business objectives.

We recognise that the promotion of Cohesion and Diversity through this strategy and our policy will further reinforce this success.

We are one of the key players in the West and North West of Leeds and we are committed to using our influence to bring about positive change through Cohesion & Diversity and equality of opportunity for all.

Position Statement

West North West homes Leeds have reviewed progress against the Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, Moving Forward for 2008 to 2009, which included our legal obligations within our Single Equality Scheme.

We have achieved the following objectives over the past year:

Employment

- 343 members of staff have undertaken and completed the Diversity Workbook, which includes legislation on equality and have received a City & Guilds certificate for passing their on line test.
- We have set targets for our staff to reflect our diverse communities and met some of these targets
- Have delivered 6 sessions to our staff on Hate Crime and Equality Impact Assessments
- Have implemented training to staff on HIV/AIDS
- Have delivered 2 sessions on Cohesion & Diversity and Hate Crime to our Recognised Tenants Groups
- Have delivered 4 sessions on Domestic Violence to our staff
- Achieved the Disability Two Ticks Status, which means that we consider the needs of our disabled employees

- Achieved Investors in People Award which also took into account our work on Cohesion & Diversity
- Posts that are advertised can be made available in different formats
- Developed vigorous processes against harassment, bullying, domestic violence and promoting dignity at work
- Developed monitoring systems that includes the equality strands within recruitment and training
- Developed an effective cohesion & diversity training plan with our Human Resources Section

Race

- Have promoted a wide range of festivals and religion and faith activities on both our website and in our newsletters to both staff and customers
- Various information is available in community languages on our website and customers can access the Google translation services through our website
- Have developed a Black & Minority Ethnic Forum for Women who are our customers to discuss service provision and also provide them with an opportunity to have their views listened to
- Set targets for the employment of Black & Minority Ethnic staff and are meeting these targets
- Have internal procedures and budgets for translation and interpretation and Braille
- Staff awareness of the needs of Black & Minority Ethnic customers has increased and staff will now ask the Cohesion & Diversity Team for advice and support when working with these groups
- Developed monitoring systems in regards of ethnicity and will now use this data to improve performance where appropriate
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report racial harassment
- Provide quarterly reports to all teams of race hate that feed into team meetings
- In our last Audit Commission Inspection, complied with the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice for Social Housing
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with Black & Minority Ethnic customers by undertaking the training on Hate Crime for Racial Harassment

Disability

- Achieved the Disability Two Ticks Status, which took into account all our work on Disability
- Have internal processes and budgets in place to provide information in large print, Braille, audio tape, and provide British Sign Language Interpreters

- Developed a Disabled Customers Forum with whom our Adaptations Team meet with on a regular basis to discuss initiatives and best practice
- Set targets for Board and Area Panel composition for Disability within our Diversity Performance Framework and have met these targets
- Promoted the International Disability Day on our website for our customers and had coffee mornings in our Sheltered complexes to promote this
- Provide our rent statements in a larger font size
- Promoted the “Save Your Sight” Campaign within our Sheltered provision and on our website
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with disabled customers by undertaking the Diversity Workbook and delivering training on Hate Crime for Disability Harassment
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report disability harassment and provide quarterly reports to our teams of the incidents of Hate crimes
- Our website is now available in a larger font size

Age

- Promoted events and activities on our website and newsletters for all ages e.g. Older Peoples National Day, Adult Learners Week
- Removed age related criteria in our employment practices (subject to retirement age)
- Developed an Age Diversity Policy where staff can stay beyond the age of 65 if they wish to do so
- Developed flexible working policies for staff who are Carers
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with customers from all ages by undertaking the Diversity Workbook
- Trained some of our Wardens in the Sheltered Services to provide “Extended Exercises” to our customers using this service

Gender

- Have promoted International Women’s Day on our website and in our tenants and staff newsletter to raise awareness
- Developed policies and procedures which include sexual harassment for both our customers and staff
- Developed our Domestic Violence Policy to include victims of Domestic Violence being same sex couples and men
- Worked with our contractors to help them recruit more Women employees within their organisations

- Established a Black & Minority Ethnic Women's Group and meet with this group on a monthly basis
- Created a flexible working environment where work and home balance requirements are recognised and supported in all areas and levels.
- Set targets to achieve a gender mix at Board and senior level within our performance frameworks
- Have implemented an Equal Pay Review and are now moving onto Stage 2 of this

Religion

- Developed employment practices and services in ways in which recognise and respect religion and belief.
- Have delivered training on Religion and Faith to our Staff Diversity Champions Group
- Have policies and procedures in place to tackle unlawful discrimination for example our Religion Faith and Belief Policy
- Provide prayer room facilities where possible.
- Improved the understanding of religion and belief amongst our staff so that they can sensitively address the needs of individuals by sending out guidance notes when religious festivals are taking place e.g. Ramadan
- Raised the awareness of different religion and faith festivals through our website, tenants and staff newsletter
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with customers by undertaking the Diversity Workbook and delivering training on Hate Crime for religion and faith harassment
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report religion and faith harassment

Sexuality

- Have developed a partnership with Yorkshire Mesmac, a Leeds Gay Men's organisation and will be raising the awareness of Gay men and HIV/Aids with staff and our Board and Area Panels through training
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with customers from all ages by undertaking the Diversity Workbook and delivering training on Hate Crime for homophobic crime
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report homophobic harassment

Other Areas of Achievement;

- West North West homes in partnership with Leeds City Council have achieved Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This involved providing evidence against set criteria and being rigorously assessed by Leeds City Council's Equality Unit.
- West North West homes have implemented 76 Equality Impact assessments, which include all of the equality strands, to ensure that our policies, strategies and services have considered any potential barriers to excluding our customers from using our services. Where there have been any negative impacts we have changed our services e.g. we are piloting opening on Saturdays in one of our housing offices so that we are including customers who are in employment.
- Have developed Diversity Champions at both Board and Senior Management Level within the business
- Have established a Diversity KLOE Board and members are from our Board of Directors, our Senior Management Team and our Customers. The group meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss our performance against our Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, the Diversity KLOE and develop new initiatives
- Have developed a Diversity Performance Management Framework which is monitored on a bi monthly basis by our Diversity KLOE Board
- Have set targets against the collection of our Customer Profile data for service areas and met these targets
- Have implemented a Customer Profile Survey which includes diversity. We have used the analysis of this survey by implementing the following:
 - Staff look at the systems before visiting customers to see if they have any language or disability needs
 - Customer Profile data is used to implement targeted marketing strategies to various groups e.g. When we established the BME Forum for Women we used our Customer Profile data
 - When developing Area Partnerships pro-actively translated information in different community languages
- Have achieved Levels 1 to 3 of the Domestic Violence Quality Mark by Leeds City Council
- Have developed a staff Cohesion and Diversity Champions Group which meet on a regular basis to discuss concerns and share ideas
- Have a number of Service Improvement Groups across the business and have made cohesion and diversity an integral part of their decision making processes

Our Single Equality Scheme

We recognise that people experience discrimination, harassment and victimisation on a daily basis as a result of their race, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We acknowledge the impact this may have on a person's ability to access support, training and employment in their local area and recognise the barriers this can create for an individual to become a valued member of their community.

West North West homes Leeds believes that it is only through valuing difference and respecting the diverse needs of all individuals that we can truly achieve cohesive, inclusive and successful communities.

To support us in achieving this aim, West North West homes Leeds has set out our approach to diversity by way of our Single Equality Scheme. It provides a strategic overview of how we intend to meet our statutory duties under the Acts, as well as providing a clear approach to equality.

The Scheme outlines how we intend to meet the general and specific requirements of our legal obligations and the work that we will be undertaking for; race, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief. It also states our commitment to promote equality to all people who access our services, join our workforce or live in our communities.

For the purposes of this scheme, we have looked at all six strands individually, but we also recognise that people or groups do not fit easily into one box and we acknowledge throughout the Scheme that many people face multiple levels of discrimination in their daily lives.

The scheme describes our commitment to equality and outlines the actions we will be taking to improve our services as an employer, service provider and community representative in the next four years. The Single Equality Scheme is delivered through a four year action plan, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

As a leading employer in West North West Leeds, we recognise the importance of reflecting the area we serve in our workforce and Board. In such a diverse and culturally vibrant community it is vital that we too share these qualities and provide a service that is tailored to individual needs.

West North West homes Leeds core values and objectives play a key role in shaping our commitments and guide the development of this scheme:

West North West home Leeds already has a positive track record in diversity. In October 2008 we achieved Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Equality Standard is a tool to challenge institutional processes that can lead to discrimination as part of the culture, administration and governance of an organisation.

The Equality Standard has now been replaced with the New Equality Framework and we are now developing processes to meet this framework and new criteria.

It is West North West homes Leeds' intention to go beyond our statutory and legal duties. We want to show that we embrace the true value of a diverse workforce; going the extra mile to ensure that our work environment is one where individuals can be themselves without fear of discrimination, victimisation or unfairness. We want to play a leading role in our neighbourhoods; to show that diversity brings with it economic prosperity, cultural richness and a sense of community pride

West North West homes Leeds is proud to serve such a diverse area, but is unwilling to accept inequality as a part of every day life. We offer a commitment to all those who live in our communities, and who work for and with West North West homes Leeds, that we will use all means necessary to ensure that we embrace everyone in our community, and our workforce, on an equal basis. We promise to listen to the views of all individuals and groups, and to respond to their needs.

Our Comprehensive Cohesion and Diversity Policy outline our commitment to ensuring a fair and equal service for all. However, we know much work still needs to be done to tackle the deep-rooted inequalities that have existed within our society for many years now.

West North West homes Leeds endeavours to become the leading player in our community when it comes to Cohesion & Diversity. We want to encourage and work with all our partners, particularly Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police, as well as

- Voluntary/Community and Faith Sectors
- Trade Union officials
- Individual employees
- Members of the public

Working together we believe we can make West North West homes Leeds a better place to work and live by promoting change, embracing difference and most of all valuing diversity.

At the heart of a cohesive community lies a shared sense of belonging, pride and mutual understanding. We realise that it is only through open dialogue, sharing of best practice and involvement in its true sense that we can begin to create communities not just of tolerance, but of empathy, respect and shared understanding.

Implications of the Equality Bill 2009:

The Equality Bill published by Government in April 2009 is likely to have a major impact on housing organisations when the legislation comes into force in April 2010. It is expected that the legislation will place new duties on public bodies, which are likely to form part of the regulatory and inspection framework, as well as service provision and community engagement. It is anticipated that the new Act will cement the rights of many groups of people who rely heavily on the social housing such as disabled people, older age groups and black and minority ethnic groups. However, the new legislation will require public bodies to consider and plan more effectively for the diverse needs of their communities on issues such as sexual orientation, religion or belief. It is anticipated that all publicly-funded bodies will have a legal duty to proactively promote equality across all seven strands and to remove any barriers to fair service provision.

West North West homes Leeds understands that at this consultation stage, there is lack of clarity about the precise nature and extension of new equality duties; however, work is currently being undertaken and we will be working within this new Equality bill while developing our business model and planning our objectives to ensure a current and relevant approach to housing and regeneration.

New Equality Framework

West North West Homes in partnership with Leeds City Council had adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. This standard provided us with guidance to ensure that we considered equality within our work.

- The Equality Standard had been developed by the Employers' Organisation for Local Government, Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission.

There were Levels 1 to 5 of this standard and West North West Homes had achieved Levels 1 to 4. However there have been changes to this Equality Standard and a New Equality Framework has been developed.

Why a new Equality Framework for Local Government?

Simplification: less process, fewer indicators, emphasis on self assessment and peer challenge

Relevance: relates to new performance framework for local government and Comprehensive Area Assessment & the Diversity Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE 31).

Aspiration: highlights role of local authorities and partners in challenging inequality in their communities

New Features: The framework contains new features including:

- Wider definition of equality based on equal life chances
- New section on knowing your communities and equality mapping
- Focus on equality outcomes for all sections of the community, mapping and narrowing the gaps
- Central role for self assessment and peer challenge

Broader definition of Equality

The new framework includes a broader definition of equality, this being:

- An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.
- An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.
- This definition recognises that:
 - equality is an issue for all
 - we don't all start from the same position
 - to create a fair society we must recognise different needs

The Audit Commission defined Inequality and vulnerability as:

Effective local public services target effort where improvement is most needed to tackle inequalities within and between communities. This may include focusing on the particular needs of people who are disadvantaged or discriminated against through age, disability, race, gender or transgender, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It may also include efforts to reduce child poverty or other inequalities within communities. We will consider how well local partners know and understand the nature and extent of inequality and disadvantage within their communities and how effectively they are working to reduce or eliminate discrimination.

The new framework consists of three levels:

✓Developing

✓Achieving

✓Excellent

The Framework covers the following five areas

- **Knowing your community – equality mapping**
- **Place shaping, leadership, partnership**
- **Community engagement and satisfaction**
- **Responsive Services and Customer Care**
- **A Modern, Diverse Workforce**

West North West homes Leeds will now be adopting this framework and developing processes across the business to collate relevant evidence to meet the criteria for each of the areas. We will measure our performance against the framework through the Peer Assessment Process with other Local Authorities and ALMOs across England to ensure consistency and transparency

Outcomes and Key Priorities for 2009 to 2013

As part of our on going work and commitment to Cohesion and Diversity, our Single Equality Scheme and the new Equality Framework our work will include the following:

Race

West North West homes will be undertaking an external assessment to ensure that WNWhL sustain their compliance with the Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice for Social Housing (CRE Code of Practice)

Look at the needs of older BME customers and ensure they are aware how to access sheltered housing

Develop key partnerships with BME communities to deliver specific projects to meet their needs

Develop an on line reporting mechanism for Hate Crime

Set targets within our Lettings for black & minority ethnic groups

Disability

Look at researching the needs of disabled customers who are victims of Domestic Violence and discuss with support agencies how we can meet these needs

Establish a Project Team to include our disabled customers, and implement an Access Audit of our Sheltered Accommodation

Develop partnerships with key Voluntary Sector organisations who work with disabled people
Raise staff awareness of Mental Health issues and how this impacts upon our Customers

Look at good practice and innovative ways of delivering our adaptation services

Implement Annual Access Audits of our offices

Religion & Faith

Establish partnerships with various Faith Forums to provide training to our Board, Area Panel and staff on Religion and Faith to create relationships of mutual respect and trust with our customers

Develop partnerships and involve communities from various religious and faith organisations

Employment

Change the structure of our Staff Diversity Champions Group to engage more with our staff to understand the needs of our staff and customers

Ensure that all our policies comply with relevant legislation under the new Equality Bill

Sexual Orientation

In partnership with our Human Resources Section, become members of Stonewall and work with them to raise awareness of the sexuality agenda and to meet any staff needs we may have

Source a gay person's organisation to undertake a piece of research about the needs of victims of Domestic Violence from same sex couples

Work with local organisations to promote sexuality and HIV amongst Board, Area Panels and staff

Age

Work closely with our customers in Sheltered Provision to promote the Healthy Living Agenda including exercise

Develop Intergenerational Activities – Older People and Young People working together and being involved in the "Leeds For All Intergenerational Festival 2010"

Develop partnerships with the Voluntary Sector who work with older people

Gender

Work in partnership with our contractors to promote women considering employment in the Construction Industry

Raise the awareness of Transgender amongst our staff

Other Areas:

Achieve the Investors in Diversity Accreditation for the business

Raise staff awareness on drug and alcohol addiction

Work in partnership with the other ALMO's and Leeds City Council to develop the procurement framework post 2011

Continue to implement Equality Impact Assessments and publicise on our website

Continue to set targets within our Diversity Performance Framework

Develop a training programme that includes vulnerability

Work closely with the Access to Services Improvement Group to ensure that needs of our diverse communities is paramount within the projects identified

Work closely with our Tenancy Support Team and develop strategies to meet the needs of our vulnerable customers

Work closely with our Tenancy Management Service Improvement Group to incorporate Hate Crime and Domestic Violence within this area of the business

Work with the Property Services Directorate to embed the Cohesion & Diversity agenda and develop good practice

Raise awareness of Domestic Violence and Hate Crime with our contractors

Implement a Value for Money Exercise for our Translation & Interpretation Services for our Customers

Develop the new Equality Framework, which replaces the Equality Standard for Local Government

Ensure that the business is working within the new Equality Bill Framework that is planned to take effect from Autumn 2010.

Community Cohesion and Integration

Community cohesion is about raising awareness and understanding, breaking down barriers, developing shared values and mutual respect and trust.

The Government Definition of Community Cohesion is:

- there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods

As the national agenda on Cohesion has developed, so the definition and understanding of the Cohesion agenda for Leeds has become clearer.

- Wider than an equality agenda - but equality is a key and important part
- More than “black and white” issues – includes a focus on breaking down tensions and building relationships within and between all communities: recognising that there can be tensions within and between communities of race, faith and national identities; between old and young; urban and rural; settled and travelling communities; host and new migrant and refugee communities.
- Acknowledging that lesbian and gay people, disabled people, people with mental health illness, people who are homeless and many others can become a focus of tensions.
- About dealing with ‘perceptions’ not just facts; recognising that perceptions and myths fuel tensions between communities
- About people feeling they have an investment in Leeds, they are valued and they are involved: in schools, in work, in the place they live

Community cohesion is wider than the equality and diversity agenda. It goes beyond the issues of tackling racial equality, discrimination and social exclusion. It is about all kinds of relationships within communities and closing the divides between them. Everyone in Leeds should feel that they have an investment in the city, they are valued and they are involved: in schools, in work, in the place they live.

Working within the Cohesion and Integration Agenda West North West homes have achieved the following:

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

West North West Homes have developed a course for our customers who live in the Little London area. This area has a higher percentage of Black & Ethnic Minority groups. This course was developed using Area Panel Funding.

This course was very successful and 11 attended. West North West Homes have a reserve list of customers wanting to access another course. This course not only enabled our customers to improve their language skills but also brought different black and minority ethnic communities together. We are now working with this group to see if they would like to go onto further study or to be involved with us in other ways.

Cooking Around the World

This project was targeted at families who were on low incomes. This project was delivered through partnership working with the Voluntary/Community Sector.

We also used this project to break down barriers between communities by cooking dishes from different parts of the world. Dishes that were cooked were Egga (Iraqi), Jolef Rice (Gambia), Russian Pancakes/dumplings and a Tanzanian dish.

The project also considered the Healthy Living agenda within the food that was cooked and raised awareness amongst our tenants of how to cook healthy food on a low budget.

Fusion Event

West North West homes in partnership with our contractors, Kier and Frank Haslam Milan (FHM) developed a project to provide a forum to engage with our diverse communities, break down barriers and bring people together. This took place through a charity event which included music and fashion.

The project involved setting up a partnership with a local college, the Chinese Community, Leeds Faith Forum, Dazl, local dance group and salsa dancers.

We recruited our tenants to be the models, through our Buzz newsletter, and trained them to walk down the catwalk. Clothes were made by the local college and donated by the Asian, African and Chinese Communities.

The event took place at a hotel in the West North West of Leeds and 156 tickets were sold and a raffle took place to raise monies for Macmillan Nurses and St Georges Crypt.

The event was very successful and feed back from all who attended was very encouraging and positive. Attendees also felt that the event had provided an opportunity for them to mix with other diverse communities and that a number of their perceptions had been challenged through this event.

Hate Crime Partnership

West North West homes in partnership with the Police, Leeds City Council and Stop Hate UK meet on a regular basis to discuss Hate Crime incidents within the West North West of Leeds.

The partnership group is currently developing strategies for our hot spot areas of Hate Crime and also raising awareness of Hate Crime.

This group has also formed a sub group and are developing a project to look at Community Tensions within the Armley area of Leeds.

As part of the Cohesion agenda our Outcomes and Key priorities for 2009 to 2013 are:

Develop partnerships to support the objectives of the Cohesion agenda with the Voluntary/Community and Religion and Faith Sectors of Leeds

Work in partnership with other sections of the business, for example the worklessness agenda to enable good community relations

Develop initiatives to enhance community relations in the West North West of Leeds

Our Legal Obligations

West North West homes Leeds will operate this strategy and Single Equality Scheme and all other policies, strategies and practices in line with statutory requirements. The present statutory framework within which we work includes the legislation below:

The Equality Act 2006

The Equality Act has three functions:

- Creates a Single Equality and Human Rights Commission;
- Extends the prohibition on religious and sexual orientation discrimination to the provision of goods and services, planning, education and the exercise of public functions; and
- Introduces on public sector bodies the duty to promote gender equality and extends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to cover the provision of public functions.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 - Duty to Promote Race Equality

The **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000** [RR(A)A] was introduced following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, and extended the scope of the Race Relations Act 1976. The RR(A)A 2000 came into force in April 2001.

It introduced a new general positive duty upon specified public bodies including local authorities to promote race equality. A public body in carrying out its functions has due regard to the need to:

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

It amends and strengthens the 1976 Race Relations Act; therefore organisations are prohibited from unlawfully discriminating in carrying out any of their functions. Whilst functions like employment and the provision of services were already covered under the original 1976 Act, many of the functions of local authorities e.g. enforcement, regulatory, licensing and inspections were not.

But the real power of the Act is that introduces the new General Duty to promote racial equality. Now all public authorities must publicly demonstrate their awareness and commitment to race equality.

Specific duties were also placed on certain public authorities to help them meet the general duty. These include:

- Policy, planning and service delivery
- Prepare a race equality scheme setting out how it intends to meet general and specific duties
- Assess which functions and policies are relevant to the general duty
- Set out arrangements for assessing and consulting on the impact on the promotion of race equality, of policies it is proposing to adopt
- Set out arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality, of policies it has adopted or is proposing to adopt
- Set out its arrangements for publishing the results of assessments, consultations, and monitoring for adverse impact
- Set out arrangements for ensuring minority ethnic communities have access to information and services it provides

- Set out arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duty to promote race equality

Employment

- Ethnically monitor staff (by grade) and applicants for jobs, promotion and training
- Ethnically monitor and analyse: grievance and disciplinary action; performance appraisal (when this results in benefits or sanctions); training; dismissals and other reasons for leaving
- Publish annually the results of ethnic monitoring

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 ~ Duty to Promote Disability Equality

The duty to promote disability equality encompasses both general and specific duties

General Duties

These require public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

Specific duties

Certain public bodies will be covered by specific duties within the Act. A key requirement will be to publish a disability equality scheme (DES) every three years. Chapter 13 of the Act places a duty on public bodies to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people (e.g. procedural adjustments, physical alterations to buildings or provision of auxiliary services such as BSL interpreters). The duty requires public bodies to anticipate the requirements of disabled people and to make the necessary adjustments required by them.

Disability Equality Schemes

The essential elements that a disability equality scheme must include are:

- a statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme and action plan;
- arrangements for gathering information about performance of the public body on disability equality;
- arrangements for assessing the impact of authority activities on disability equality and improving these when necessary;
- details of how the authority is going to use the information gathered, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of its action plan and preparing subsequent schemes; and
- to report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

Equality Act 2006 - Gender Equality duty

The public sector duties lead public bodies to take proactive steps to positively promote equality rather than solely taking steps to prevent discrimination.

The **General Duty** requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Public authorities are expected to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between men and women in all their functions. The weight which public authorities give to gender equality should therefore be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. The greater the relevance of a function to gender equality, the greater regards that should be paid to it.

Specific duties, in brief, are:

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives;
- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap;
- To gather and use information on how the public authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services;
- To consult stakeholders (i.e. Employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take into account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives;
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality;
- To implement the actions set out in its scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable to do so; and
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

Equality Act 2006 - Religion or Belief

The Employment Equality Regulations 2003 currently offers protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the workplace.

Equality Act 2006 - Sexual Orientation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 currently offers protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the workplace.

With the addition of new powers introduced by the Equality Act 2006, it will become unlawful (subject to certain exemptions) to discriminate on the grounds of *religion or belief and sexual orientation* in the following areas:

- The provision of goods, facilities and services
- The disposal and management of premises,
- Education
- The exercise of public functions.

Who are our Customers?

WNWhL recognises that people who use our services come from diverse backgrounds, with different experiences and needs.

Taking into account the growth of Leeds the diversity of our customer base has changed over recent years as a result of demographic, social and economic trends.

This, in turn, affects the way in which services are delivered and the resources required to successfully manage tenancies, support customers to stay in their homes and enhance their quality of life.

The diversity of our customers is likely to increase over coming years due to:

- an ageing population, many of whom prefer to remain in their own homes.
- the potential impact of rent restructuring which could increase the number of benefit-dependent and vulnerable customers
- refugee status of our customers
- migration patterns within Leeds
- the potential impact of insufficient affordable rented housing to meet increasing demand and the complex needs of those in most serious housing need
- Labour market of Leeds

In order to respond to this changing market, it is likely that WNWhL will need to further develop a range of services to support the diverse needs and to provide a coherent, strategic approach to support provision which balances resources and achieves Value for Money.

The following illustrates the range number of potentially diverse customers who are currently tenants of WNWhL:

- 7% of tenants do not speak English as a first language
- 20.4% regard themselves as having a hearing impairment
- 4.5% consider they have a learning disability
- 9.9% feel they have mental health needs
- 39.0% have a physical impairment
- 2.4% have a speech impediment
- 8.9 have some a visual impairment
- 34% regard themselves as disabled
- 45% are aged 65+

(Above Data taken from our Customer Profile 2008)

This information provides a snapshot of the diversity of our potential customer base for whom services will need to be further developed to meet these changing demands and needs.

Monitor and Review

West North West homes have established a Diversity KLOE Board made up of our Board of Directors, Senior Management Team, Staff and our Customers.

The role of this Board is to ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations for equality and our key priorities set out within our Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, 2009 to 2010.

They also look at how the business meets the Diversity Key Line of Enquiry 31 (KLOE) from the Audit Commission. This is an assessment framework the Audit Commission has established for the Inspection Process for Housing Services in England.

The Diversity KLOE Board meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss performance against our strategy and the diversity key line of enquiry, discuss initiatives and good practice, provide support and promote the Cohesion & Diversity agenda amongst other parts of the business.

The Diversity KLOE Board also provides information and regular update reports at our Board of Director meetings.

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Diversity KLOE Board, our staff and our customers.

Consultation

As part of our Customer Involvement Strategy, we will use the consultation mechanisms described to consult annually on this strategy. We will also use these mechanisms to feedback on progress made on cohesion and diversity for West North West homes Leeds.

Consultation will include

- Customers that are part of our Sounding Boards
- Tenants and residents associations
- Voluntary, Community and Faith organisations
- Our Staff Diversity Champions Group
- Staff, through our various Service Improvement Groups and Team meetings

Publicising our Strategy

It is a basic right for all sections of our community to have access to information that will affect them. We will publicise our strategy using the following methods:

- Buzz, Tenants Newsletter
- West North West homes Website
- West North West homes Staff Newsletter
- Through local events and public meetings
- Recognised Tenant Groups
- Tenant Involvement Network
- Tenant Compacts
- Voluntary and Community Sector publications

We will use every effort to ensure that the information we publicise for our annual report and our performance against this is simple and easy to understand.

Cohesion & Diversity Action Plan 2010 to 2013



Cohesion & Diversity Action Plan 2010 to 2013

ACTION	MILESTONE EVENT	OUTCOME	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS TO DATE
Procure external assessor to implement CRE Code of Practice	External Assessor Procured	WNWhL complies with CRE Code of Practice for Social Housing Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race	J Duke/ M Kaur	Dec 09	Information being collated and assessment to be undertaken week commencing 14 th December 09
Look at needs of older BME customers in Sheltered Housing	Action plan and Questionnaire developed	Raised awareness of Sheltered Services for BME customers. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race	M Vowles	Jan 2010	Meetings taken place with BME community groups
Set Targets within our Lettings Performance Framework for Black & Minority Ethnic Groups	Targets now in place	WNWhL complies with the CRE Code of Practice for Social Housing and Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race	T Young	March 2010	Reports to go to Diversity KLOE Board on a regular basis
Establish Project Team to Implement Access Audits of Sheltered Complexes	Project Team Established	Sheltered Provision complies with DDA. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Disability	M J Vickers	March 2010	Project Team meet on regular basis and reports given to Diversity KLOE Board
Raise awareness of Domestic Violence with our registered tenant groups	Domestic Violence Training Package to be developed	Increased awareness of DV amongst Registered Tenants Groups	M Kaur	Mar 2010	Training package for Staff has been developed
Develop key partnerships with Faith Forums in Leeds to deliver training to Staff and Board	Meeting held with Yorkshire & Humber Faith Forum	Raised awareness and understanding of the various religions and faiths Linked to Equality Act 2006	M Kaur	March 2010	Draft training programme been drawn up

Engage with religious and faith forums in Leeds	Under representation Project Team established	Raised awareness of the work of WNWhL amongst religious and faith organisations. Linked to Equality Act 2006	J Duke	March 2010	Meetings held with local mosque
ACTION	MILESTONE EVENT	OUTCOME	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS TO DATE
Review the structure of our Staff Diversity Champions Group	Project Plan in place	Staff engaged more with the Cohesion & Diversity Agenda	M Kaur	March 2010	Project Group met to develop this
Become Members of Stonewall	Meeting with HR taken place	WNWhL understand staff's sexuality needs and develop strategies for the sexuality agenda. Linked to Equality Act 2006	L Nicholson	March 2010	Become Members of Stonewall
Deliver training to staff and Board on HIV & Sexuality	Training provider sourced	Raised awareness of the Sexuality agenda. Linked to Equality Act 2006	M Kaur	March 2010	Training has been delivered to staff
Work with customers in sheltered provision to promote Healthy Living agenda	Meeting held with Healthy Living Network	WNWhL to promote Healthy Living Agenda to our customers Linked to Equality Act 2006	M Vowles	March 2010	Some events have already been undertaken within Sheltered Complexes
Develop intergenerational activities amongst older and young people	Projects plans developed	Barriers broken down amongst various age groups. Linked to Cohesion agenda	M Kaur	March 2010	Two events have been implemented
Achieve Investors In Diversity Accreditation	Meeting held with Investors in Diversity	WNWhL commitment to Diversity is embedded and this is demonstrated	M Kaur	March 2010	Presentation delivered to Diversity KLOE Board
Develop a staff and Board	Training plan for 2009/10	Raised awareness and	M Kaur	March	Training plan in place for

training programme which includes vulnerability	in place	improved knowledge and skills of staff and Directors. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Employment		2010	2009/10
Implement 60 Equality Impact Assessments across WNWhL	36 completed	All strategies and policies have taken account of the 6 equality strands	All Staff	March 2010	Reported to the Diversity KLOE Board on a bi-monthly basis and part of Board reports
ACTION	MILESTONE EVENT	OUTCOME	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS TO DATE
Implement Value For Money Exercise on Translation, interpretation and Braille Services	Translation/Interpretation of community languages been implemented	WNWhL are receiving Value for money	M Kaur	March 2010	Need to look at costs for Braille
Develop new Equality Framework to replace Equality Standard	Part of the City Wide Working Group	WNWhL have met equality obligations with Local Government and National Indicator	M Kaur	March 2010	Meeting with IdEA taken place now procuring EFECT database
Develop Diversity Performance Framework	Framework Developed	WNWhL have complied with legal requirements and also measure performance	M Kaur	March 2010	Diversity Performance Framework reported to Diversity KLOE Board and our Board of Directors on a regular basis
Develop key partnerships with Voluntary Sector for Mental Health	Training to staff been delivered	Raised awareness and understanding of Mental Health issues. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Disability	M Kaur/ I Khan	March 2011	Training on Mental Health delivered to staff; need to role this out to Board and Area Panel. Need to engage with Customers with Mental Health issues
Develop a partnership to look at disabled victims of Domestic Violence	Meeting held with Leeds Involvement Project	Improved services to disabled victims of DV. Linked to Single Equality	M Kaur	Mar 2011	Meeting held with Leeds Involvement Project (LIP). Group is being established but

		Scheme (SES) for Disability			still at very early stages. LIP will come back to us in Sept 09
Develop methods of prevention for HATE crime	Risk Assessment Template developed	Reduced incidents of HATE crime and safe and sustainable communities created. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race/Disability/Gender	M Kaur	March 2011	Template developed. Need to discuss with Tina Young to see how we implement this
Develop an online reporting mechanism for HATE crime	Cross ALMO group set up	Improved reporting processes for HATE crime. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race/Disability/Gender	M Kaur	March 2011	On line form been developed and currently being piloted across Leeds with partners
ACTION	MILESTONE EVENT	OUTCOME	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS TO DATE
Deliver DV training with our contractors	Meeting with Contractors to take place	Raised awareness of DV issues	M Kaur	March 2011	Deliver DV training with our contractors
Consider implications of new Equality Bill for WNWhL	Report presented to Board	WNWhL complied with legal requirements. Linked to new Equality Bill	M Kaur	March 2011	Report presented to Board with action plan. Need to implement actions and monitor
Look at alternative methods of reporting ASB e.g. use of audio equipment	Purchase Audio equipment	Customers able to report ASB in a format they choose	M Kaur	March 2011	Look at providing and loaning audio equipment
Deliver training to TRAs on Hate Crime and Domestic Violence	Produce timetable	Increased awareness amongst Tenant and Residents Association. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race/Disability/	M Kaur	Sept 2011	WNWhL staff are DV and HATE crime trainers
Develop key partnerships with Leeds City Council to enhance cohesion activities	Are partners with Leeds Initiative	WNWhL involved in strategic strategies for Cohesion	M Kaur	March 2012	Are part of the Migration Task Group for Leeds

Work with contractors to promote training and employment for Women	Cross ALMO Procurement Project Team established	Training created and employment opportunities available for women. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race/Disability/Gender	N Lowson/ M Kaur	March 2012	Will be included as part of the Cross ALMO Procurement Project
Raise awareness of Cohesion & Diversity with contractors	Meetings held with contractors	Contractors are aware of WNWhL commitment to equality and implement our policies. Linked to new Equality Bill & Procurement	M Kaur/ L Nicholson	March 2012	Joint training sessions on sexuality have been delivered
Develop key partnerships with Voluntary/Community/Faith sector to develop cohesion activities	Project Plan for Armley in place	Community relations enhanced and ASB prevented	M Kaur	March 2012	Hate Crime Hot Spot initiative implemented. Need to look at developing more initiatives
ACTION	MILESTONE EVENT	OUTCOME	LEAD OFFICER	TARGET DATE	PROGRESS TO DATE
Develop good practice and innovative ways of delivering our Adaptations Service	Project Plan to be developed	An enhanced adaptations service for disabled customers. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Disability	N Lowson	March 2012	To be included as part of the Cross ALMO Procurement Project
Develop key partnerships and initiatives with BME Communities	Project plan to be developed	Key relationships developed and projects delivered with BME communities. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Race	M Kaur	March 2013	
Source an organisation to research needs of Domestic Violence amongst same sex	Project Plan to be developed	WNWhL understand the needs of same sex couples and DV and our	M Kaur/ P Reid	March 2013	

couples		service provision reflects this. Linked to Single Equality Scheme (SES) for Gender			
Develop key partnerships to work with the Youth and Older People	Project Plan to be developed	Linked to Cohesion agenda and Equality Act 2006	M Kaur	March 2013	



Cohesion & Diversity Strategy

Moving Forward

2009 to 2013



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Introduction and Summary

Welcome to West North West Homes Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, which includes our Single Equality Scheme for 2009- 2013 and our commitment to the Equality agenda.

West North West homes Leeds is much more than a social housing landlord, we are a community. We are a large community that includes staff, customers and all of those we work with. West North West homes Leeds is also a diverse community, meaning that there is a wonderful variety of cultural and personal differences amongst us.

For this reason, cohesion and diversity is a central and essential part of everything that we do. So what does this mean? “Cohesion” is about raising awareness and understanding, breaking down barriers, developing shared values and mutual respect and trust. “Diversity” is to value the differences of all of those individuals and groups that help make up the community.

West North West homes Leeds understand and embrace these differences. This strategy brings together the work we have done with our customers and partners, toward encouraging acceptance, raising awareness and increasing understanding within our community. It also outlines our legal obligations and duties that help to increase and promote equality of opportunity and aim to tackle discrimination and harassment.

West North West homes Leeds wishes to go beyond these legal obligations and work with all of those involved to do so. Together, we will develop and improve ways of encouraging understanding and acceptance towards all of the individuals that make Leeds such an attractive and diverse place to live.

We all aspire to live in a society that is fair and which supports each individual to fulfil their potential. West North West Homes Cohesion & Diversity Strategy 2009 to 2010 includes our Single Equality Scheme which focuses on employment, race, disability, age, gender, religion or belief and sexual orientation. In addition our strategy has incorporated West North West homes Core Values.

Our strategy has enabled West North West homes to move in a new and exciting direction by taking on board the rapidly changing government agenda in relation to cohesion and diversity as well as the increasing impact changing demographics is having on West North West Leeds.

The Strategy brought together and strengthened the work we had already done and set out our approach and business objectives to cohesion and diversity. We reviewed our Cohesion and Diversity strategy and strengthened this by building our Race Equality Scheme, our Disability Scheme and our Gender Equality Scheme and brought them together into our Single Equality Scheme. This strategy also takes into account our Single Equality Scheme and our legal obligations for equality.

Cohesion and Diversity is embedded across the organisation and is delivered through all four business divisions of West North West Homes Leeds.

- Business Improvement
- Customer Services
- Property Investment
- Finance and Corporate Services

Our commitment and results have shown that cohesion and diversity is at the heart of what we do, across all services, from strategic decision making to the delivery of frontline services; however we will still strive to move forward on this challenging journey

Our Cohesion & Diversity Strategy is further reinforced by the cross cutting themes within our Vulnerability strategy and our Access to Services strategy.

We will continue to fulfil our legal obligations and responsibilities to promote Cohesion and Diversity by working within the legal framework that supports cohesion and diversity in all of our activities to further develop an organisational culture which values all people.

Aims of this Strategy

The aims of this strategy within the following areas are:

Service Improvement

- Work within a consistent framework that highlights the importance of cohesion and diversity in not only planning but also evaluating and continuously improving or tailoring our services to meet the changing needs of our diverse communities.
- By working within our Access to Services framework that, West North West homes Leeds services will be accessible to all sections of our population, irrespective of background.
- By working with our Vulnerability framework that we have considered the diverse needs when working with our vulnerable customers
- Ensure we are working towards community cohesion and raising awareness and understanding, breaking down barriers, developing shared values, mutual respect and trust within our communities and by promoting positive messages about the values of community cohesion.
- Look at the training needs of our Board and Staff and develop additional training to increase their knowledge and skills to meet the changing diverse needs of our customers and to deliver an improved service.

Accountability

- To allow Customers, Community Groups, our partners and other Stakeholders to use this strategy to assess and scrutinise our commitment to the cohesion and diversity agenda and to our Cohesion & Diversity policy

Legislation and Inspection

- To work within our legal context for equality and to ensure that West North West homes is meeting its legal duties for equality
- To identify through our Inspection processes that West North West homes Leeds are meeting their legal and inspection requirements

- That West North West homes has considered Value for Money and are delivering services to the public in an efficient and effective way

Partnerships

- For our partners and stakeholders to be aware of our commitment and approach to cohesion and diversity and to comply with this when working with us.

West North West Leeds Core Values:

Our values are clear in everything we do, and how we operate. We expect our Board and employees to follow our core values; these serve as guidelines for our conduct and behaviour as we work towards our vision. WNWhL will ensure that all our customers, stakeholders and partners are aware of our core values so that they can judge our performance against them.

Our core values are:

Values	How
Putting the customer first	We will ensure we understand our customers, tailor our services to meet expectations and gather intelligence to help us get a better understanding of their wants and needs.
Integrity	We will be professional, open, honest and transparent and deliver on our promises.
To be excellent	We will place our customers, leaseholders, employees and partners at the centre of everything we do. In doing so we will strive to listen and be accountable for everything we do.
Get it right first time	A total quality management approach will be taken to delivery of service
Learning organisation	By responding to internal and external pressures, our experiences will help us to evolve. We will learn from feedback and celebrate success.
Embrace Equality and Diversity	Our strength is rooted in the diverse contributions from our Board Directors, staff and customers. These will define who we are.
To be innovative	We will inspire our staff to continually seek new and sustainable ways to grow our business. We will operate a 'no-blame' culture. We will challenge ideas and concepts and strive to be leaders of change rather than followers.
Socially responsible and accountable	We will seek to provide (amongst other things) local employment opportunities for the community we serve, through partnership working. We will be accountable to our Stakeholders.
To be a good employer	We will seek to be an employer of first choice, providing a safe and happy working environment with a healthy work life balance.

We will apply our values consistently to our service so that every communication or encounter with our customers, stakeholders and partners is the best it can be. WNWhL will ensure that customers remain at the heart of its services and ethos.

This Strategy supports the following Strategic Objectives:

- **Customers**
We will demonstrate our commitment to customers by striving to get things “right first time” and by increasing customer satisfaction. We will tailor our services to meet the individual needs of customers, delivering excellence in service delivery to meet customers agreed expectations.
- **Communities & Neighbourhoods**
We will become recognised as an organisation that drives and enables the creating of safe, clean, attractive, successful, sustainable and cohesive communities and neighbourhoods that work.
- **Business & People**
We will become an effective, efficient, economic and enterprising organisation, providing professional and expert advice and service and we will inspire staff to seek new and innovative ways to develop our business.
- **Homes**
We will become recognised as a provider of quality homes in neighbourhoods that people want to live in, meeting and exceeding basic decency levels. We will become a housing provider of choice.

Cohesion and Diversity is fundamental to the majority of our policies and strategies and there are strong links in particular to Access to Services, Customer Satisfaction, Communications and Marketing, Customer Involvement, Community Safety (Respect Agenda) and the Worklessness agenda.

Wider Corporate Priorities

The Cohesion and Diversity Strategy supports the Leeds City Council Business Plan through our work with customers and communities.

The strategy also supports Leeds City Council in delivering its corporate strategic objectives and Leeds City Council's Equality & Diversity Scheme.

Examples of this in 2008/09 are:

Cultural Life:

- Fusion cultural charity event

Learning:

- Supporting tenants to learn new skills and increase their capacity.
- Worker of the Week project in primary schools

Environment:

- Community Partnership Agreements
- Groundwork partnership.
- Involving customers in the Respect Agenda

Health and Wellbeing

- Keep Fit Classes for our customers in Sheltered Accommodation
- Cooking around the World project

Background

Overview of Leeds

Leeds is recognised as one of Britain's most successful cities. It has transformed itself over the last 20 years from a mainly industrial city into a broad based commercial centre, the most important financial and legal and business service centre outside London.

Leeds is the largest city and the biggest retail and employment centre in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Leeds is clearly becoming a more diverse place and is now a city of many cultures, languages, races, religions and lifestyles. We aim to be a welcoming city to immigrants and there is a mix of very different neighbourhoods. This diversity is valuable and has helped fuel the prosperity of the area. We have a strong history of welcoming and supporting independence and integrating asylum seekers, refugees, family joiners, students and others. Migration enriches our diversity but raises challenges for creating and sustaining a sense of belonging amongst all communities.

Economic, cultural and environmental factors have made major contributions to Leeds being a successful place. Over the past decade Leeds has benefited from continued and significant economic growth. Leeds has impressive shopping, cultural and educational facilities, as well as a thriving business sector. It boasts tremendous variety, from beautiful rural expanses and open countryside to inner urban areas, all with their own very different identities.

Leeds has excellent road and rail links and hosts the main airport in the region making the city a positive choice for living, for business and for pleasure.

Culturally, Leeds continues to invest in its magnificent and growing collection of concert halls, theatres, galleries, museums, parks and sporting venues. There is lively participation in community festivals across the city and Leeds offers the widest range of free events in the country.

Environmentally, Leeds is a green city with two-thirds of its area green belt land. Improving local neighbourhoods is also a strong priority and real improvements have been made. There is, however, still evidence of unfair discrimination against people because of their race, faith, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation or lifestyle.

Too many children and young people still leave school with few or no qualifications, particularly from low income families, those with special educational needs, some black and minority ethnic groups and looked after children.

Health inequalities continue to exist. Children born into the most deprived neighbourhoods can expect to live almost 12 years less than those in areas that enjoy the best health. The percentage of people over 60, currently 20% of the population, is forecast to grow raising issues of how older people's health, independence and contribution to the life of the community will be supported.

Some neighbourhoods and communities have not shared in the economic success enjoyed by much of the city. The numbers of people unable to work due to illness or injury remains a key issue. Many local people are excluded from job opportunities or developing their careers due to a mismatch between their skills and aspirations and the skills now required. Only 65% of the Leeds workforce has level 2 skills (equivalent to five A* to C GCSEs) against a national skills target of 90% by 2020.

Leeds is a quality place to live, work and raise families and has attracted the largest increase in population in the country; 4.8% since 2001.

The current population of over 750,000 embraces a rich diversity of over 130 different nationalities. The Leeds metropolitan district covers 552 square miles, which includes a main city area, surrounded by small towns, villages and countryside. The population has grown by 27,700 in the last 5 years.

In Leeds, we believe the barriers approach to equality and diversity can be usefully applied to all areas of discrimination and, therefore, our Strategy focused on the identification and removal of organisational barriers.

We are committed to ensuring that there is no discrimination against any person on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, class, appearance, religion, responsibility for dependants, unrelated criminal activities, being HIV positive or having AIDS, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health needs.

This strategy continues to apply and build upon the principles within our former Equality and Diversity Strategy, however it goes beyond that and seeks to cover in more depth the Community Cohesion Agenda and how we incorporate this into our business objectives.

We recognise that the promotion of Cohesion and Diversity through this strategy and our policy will further reinforce this success.

We are one of the key players in the West and North West of Leeds and we are committed to using our influence to bring about positive change through Cohesion & Diversity and equality of opportunity for all.

Position Statement

West North West homes Leeds have reviewed progress against the Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, Moving Forward for 2008 to 2009, which included our legal obligations within our Single Equality Scheme.

We have achieved the following objectives over the past year:

Employment

- 343 members of staff have undertaken and completed the Diversity Workbook, which includes legislation on equality and have received a City & Guilds certificate for passing their on line test.
- We have set targets for our staff to reflect our diverse communities and met some of these targets
- Have delivered 6 sessions to our staff on Hate Crime and Equality Impact Assessments
- Have implemented training to staff on HIV/AIDS
- Have delivered 2 sessions on Cohesion & Diversity and Hate Crime to our Recognised Tenants Groups
- Have delivered 4 sessions on Domestic Violence to our staff
- Achieved the Disability Two Ticks Status, which means that we consider the needs of our disabled employees

- Achieved Investors in People Award which also took into account our work on Cohesion & Diversity
- Posts that are advertised can be made available in different formats
- Developed vigorous processes against harassment, bullying, domestic violence and promoting dignity at work
- Developed monitoring systems that includes the equality strands within recruitment and training
- Developed an effective cohesion & diversity training plan with our Human Resources Section

Race

- Have promoted a wide range of festivals and religion and faith activities on both our website and in our newsletters to both staff and customers
- Various information is available in community languages on our website and customers can access the Google translation services through our website
- Have developed a Black & Minority Ethnic Forum for Women who are our customers to discuss service provision and also provide them with an opportunity to have their views listened to
- Set targets for the employment of Black & Minority Ethnic staff and are meeting these targets
- Have internal procedures and budgets for translation and interpretation and Braille
- Staff awareness of the needs of Black & Minority Ethnic customers has increased and staff will now ask the Cohesion & Diversity Team for advice and support when working with these groups
- Developed monitoring systems in regards of ethnicity and will now use this data to improve performance where appropriate
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report racial harassment
- Provide quarterly reports to all teams of race hate that feed into team meetings
- In our last Audit Commission Inspection, complied with the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice for Social Housing
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with Black & Minority Ethnic customers by undertaking the training on Hate Crime for Racial Harassment

Disability

- Achieved the Disability Two Ticks Status, which took into account all our work on Disability
- Have internal processes and budgets in place to provide information in large print, Braille, audio tape, and provide British Sign Language Interpreters

- Developed a Disabled Customers Forum with whom our Adaptations Team meet with on a regular basis to discuss initiatives and best practice
- Set targets for Board and Area Panel composition for Disability within our Diversity Performance Framework and have met these targets
- Promoted the International Disability Day on our website for our customers and had coffee mornings in our Sheltered complexes to promote this
- Provide our rent statements in a larger font size
- Promoted the “Save Your Sight” Campaign within our Sheltered provision and on our website
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with disabled customers by undertaking the Diversity Workbook and delivering training on Hate Crime for Disability Harassment
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report disability harassment and provide quarterly reports to our teams of the incidents of Hate crimes
- Our website is now available in a larger font size

Age

- Promoted events and activities on our website and newsletters for all ages e.g. Older Peoples National Day, Adult Learners Week
- Removed age related criteria in our employment practices (subject to retirement age)
- Developed an Age Diversity Policy where staff can stay beyond the age of 65 if they wish to do so
- Developed flexible working policies for staff who are Carers
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with customers from all ages by undertaking the Diversity Workbook
- Trained some of our Wardens in the Sheltered Services to provide “Extended Exercises” to our customers using this service

Gender

- Have promoted International Women’s Day on our website and in our tenants and staff newsletter to raise awareness
- Developed policies and procedures which include sexual harassment for both our customers and staff
- Developed our Domestic Violence Policy to include victims of Domestic Violence being same sex couples and men
- Worked with our contractors to help them recruit more Women employees within their organisations

- Established a Black & Minority Ethnic Women's Group and meet with this group on a monthly basis
- Created a flexible working environment where work and home balance requirements are recognised and supported in all areas and levels.
- Set targets to achieve a gender mix at Board and senior level within our performance frameworks
- Have implemented an Equal Pay Review and are now moving onto Stage 2 of this

Religion

- Developed employment practices and services in ways in which recognise and respect religion and belief.
- Have delivered training on Religion and Faith to our Staff Diversity Champions Group
- Have policies and procedures in place to tackle unlawful discrimination for example our Religion Faith and Belief Policy
- Provide prayer room facilities where possible.
- Improved the understanding of religion and belief amongst our staff so that they can sensitively address the needs of individuals by sending out guidance notes when religious festivals are taking place e.g. Ramadan
- Raised the awareness of different religion and faith festivals through our website, tenants and staff newsletter
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with customers by undertaking the Diversity Workbook and delivering training on Hate Crime for religion and faith harassment
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report religion and faith harassment

Sexuality

- Have developed a partnership with Yorkshire Mesmac, a Leeds Gay Men's organisation and will be raising the awareness of Gay men and HIV/Aids with staff and our Board and Area Panels through training
- Raised the awareness and confidence of staff working with customers from all ages by undertaking the Diversity Workbook and delivering training on Hate Crime for homophobic crime
- All our offices are Hate Incident Reporting centres and customers can report homophobic harassment

Other Areas of Achievement;

- West North West homes in partnership with Leeds City Council have achieved Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This involved providing evidence against set criteria and being rigorously assessed by Leeds City Council's Equality Unit.
- West North West homes have implemented 76 Equality Impact assessments, which include all of the equality strands, to ensure that our policies, strategies and services have considered any potential barriers to excluding our customers from using our services. Where there have been any negative impacts we have changed our services e.g. we are piloting opening on Saturdays in one of our housing offices so that we are including customers who are in employment.
- Have developed Diversity Champions at both Board and Senior Management Level within the business
- Have established a Diversity KLOE Board and members are from our Board of Directors, our Senior Management Team and our Customers. The group meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss our performance against our Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, the Diversity KLOE and develop new initiatives
- Have developed a Diversity Performance Management Framework which is monitored on a bi monthly basis by our Diversity KLOE Board
- Have set targets against the collection of our Customer Profile data for service areas and met these targets
- Have implemented a Customer Profile Survey which includes diversity. We have used the analysis of this survey by implementing the following:
 - Staff look at the systems before visiting customers to see if they have any language or disability needs
 - Customer Profile data is used to implement targeted marketing strategies to various groups e.g. When we established the BME Forum for Women we used our Customer Profile data
 - When developing Area Partnerships pro-actively translated information in different community languages
- Have achieved Levels 1 to 3 of the Domestic Violence Quality Mark by Leeds City Council
- Have developed a staff Cohesion and Diversity Champions Group which meet on a regular basis to discuss concerns and share ideas
- Have a number of Service Improvement Groups across the business and have made cohesion and diversity an integral part of their decision making processes

Our Single Equality Scheme

We recognise that people experience discrimination, harassment and victimisation on a daily basis as a result of their race, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief. We acknowledge the impact this may have on a person's ability to access support, training and employment in their local area and recognise the barriers this can create for an individual to become a valued member of their community.

West North West homes Leeds believes that it is only through valuing difference and respecting the diverse needs of all individuals that we can truly achieve cohesive, inclusive and successful communities.

To support us in achieving this aim, West North West homes Leeds has set out our approach to diversity by way of our Single Equality Scheme. It provides a strategic overview of how we intend to meet our statutory duties under the Acts, as well as providing a clear approach to equality.

The Scheme outlines how we intend to meet the general and specific requirements of our legal obligations and the work that we will be undertaking for; race, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief. It also states our commitment to promote equality to all people who access our services, join our workforce or live in our communities.

For the purposes of this scheme, we have looked at all six strands individually, but we also recognise that people or groups do not fit easily into one box and we acknowledge throughout the Scheme that many people face multiple levels of discrimination in their daily lives.

The scheme describes our commitment to equality and outlines the actions we will be taking to improve our services as an employer, service provider and community representative in the next four years. The Single Equality Scheme is delivered through a four year action plan, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

As a leading employer in West North West Leeds, we recognise the importance of reflecting the area we serve in our workforce and Board. In such a diverse and culturally vibrant community it is vital that we too share these qualities and provide a service that is tailored to individual needs.

West North West homes Leeds core values and objectives play a key role in shaping our commitments and guide the development of this scheme:

West North West home Leeds already has a positive track record in diversity. In October 2008 we achieved Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Equality Standard is a tool to challenge institutional processes that can lead to discrimination as part of the culture, administration and governance of an organisation.

The Equality Standard has now been replaced with the New Equality Framework and we are now developing processes to meet this framework and new criteria.

It is West North West homes Leeds' intention to go beyond our statutory and legal duties. We want to show that we embrace the true value of a diverse workforce; going the extra mile to ensure that our work environment is one where individuals can be themselves without fear of discrimination, victimisation or unfairness. We want to play a leading role in our neighbourhoods; to show that diversity brings with it economic prosperity, cultural richness and a sense of community pride

West North West homes Leeds is proud to serve such a diverse area, but is unwilling to accept inequality as a part of every day life. We offer a commitment to all those who live in our communities, and who work for and with West North West homes Leeds, that we will use all means necessary to ensure that we embrace everyone in our community, and our workforce, on an equal basis. We promise to listen to the views of all individuals and groups, and to respond to their needs.

Our Comprehensive Cohesion and Diversity Policy outline our commitment to ensuring a fair and equal service for all. However, we know much work still needs to be done to tackle the deep-rooted inequalities that have existed within our society for many years now.

West North West homes Leeds endeavours to become the leading player in our community when it comes to Cohesion & Diversity. We want to encourage and work with all our partners, particularly Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police, as well as

- Voluntary/Community and Faith Sectors
- Trade Union officials
- Individual employees
- Members of the public

Working together we believe we can make West North West homes Leeds a better place to work and live by promoting change, embracing difference and most of all valuing diversity.

At the heart of a cohesive community lies a shared sense of belonging, pride and mutual understanding. We realise that it is only through open dialogue, sharing of best practice and involvement in its true sense that we can begin to create communities not just of tolerance, but of empathy, respect and shared understanding.

Implications of the Equality Bill 2009:

The Equality Bill published by Government in April 2009 is likely to have a major impact on housing organisations when the legislation comes into force in April 2010. It is expected that the legislation will place new duties on public bodies, which are likely to form part of the regulatory and inspection framework, as well as service provision and community engagement. It is anticipated that the new Act will cement the rights of many groups of people who rely heavily on the social housing such as disabled people, older age groups and black and minority ethnic groups. However, the new legislation will require public bodies to consider and plan more effectively for the diverse needs of their communities on issues such as sexual orientation, religion or belief. It is anticipated that all publicly-funded bodies will have a legal duty to proactively promote equality across all seven strands and to remove any barriers to fair service provision.

West North West homes Leeds understands that at this consultation stage, there is lack of clarity about the precise nature and extension of new equality duties; however, work is currently being undertaken and we will be working within this new Equality bill while developing our business model and planning our objectives to ensure a current and relevant approach to housing and regeneration.

New Equality Framework

West North West Homes in partnership with Leeds City Council had adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. This standard provided us with guidance to ensure that we considered equality within our work.

- The Equality Standard had been developed by the Employers' Organisation for Local Government, Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission.

There were Levels 1 to 5 of this standard and West North West Homes had achieved Levels 1 to 4. However there have been changes to this Equality Standard and a New Equality Framework has been developed.

Why a new Equality Framework for Local Government?

Simplification: less process, fewer indicators, emphasis on self assessment and peer challenge

Relevance: relates to new performance framework for local government and Comprehensive Area Assessment & the Diversity Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE 31).

Aspiration: highlights role of local authorities and partners in challenging inequality in their communities

New Features: The framework contains new features including:

- Wider definition of equality based on equal life chances
- New section on knowing your communities and equality mapping
- Focus on equality outcomes for all sections of the community, mapping and narrowing the gaps
- Central role for self assessment and peer challenge

Broader definition of Equality

The new framework includes a broader definition of equality, this being:

- An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.
- An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.
- This definition recognises that:
 - equality is an issue for all
 - we don't all start from the same position
 - to create a fair society we must recognise different needs

The Audit Commission defined Inequality and vulnerability as:

Effective local public services target effort where improvement is most needed to tackle inequalities within and between communities. This may include focusing on the particular needs of people who are disadvantaged or discriminated against through age, disability, race, gender or transgender, religion or belief and sexual orientation. It may also include efforts to reduce child poverty or other inequalities within communities. We will consider how well local partners know and understand the nature and extent of inequality and disadvantage within their communities and how effectively they are working to reduce or eliminate discrimination.

The new framework consists of three levels:

✓Developing

✓Achieving

✓Excellent

The Framework covers the following five areas

- **Knowing your community – equality mapping**
- **Place shaping, leadership, partnership**
- **Community engagement and satisfaction**
- **Responsive Services and Customer Care**
- **A Modern, Diverse Workforce**

West North West homes Leeds will now be adopting this framework and developing processes across the business to collate relevant evidence to meet the criteria for each of the areas. We will measure our performance against the framework through the Peer Assessment Process with other Local Authorities and ALMOs across England to ensure consistency and transparency

Outcomes and Key Priorities for 2009 to 2013

As part of our on going work and commitment to Cohesion and Diversity, our Single Equality Scheme and the new Equality Framework our work will include the following:

Race

West North West homes will be undertaking an external assessment to ensure that WNWhL sustain their compliance with the Commission for Racial Equality Code of Practice for Social Housing (CRE Code of Practice)

Look at the needs of older BME customers and ensure they are aware how to access sheltered housing

Develop key partnerships with BME communities to deliver specific projects to meet their needs

Develop an on line reporting mechanism for Hate Crime

Set targets within our Lettings for black & minority ethnic groups

Disability

Look at researching the needs of disabled customers who are victims of Domestic Violence and discuss with support agencies how we can meet these needs

Establish a Project Team to include our disabled customers, and implement an Access Audit of our Sheltered Accommodation

Develop partnerships with key Voluntary Sector organisations who work with disabled people
Raise staff awareness of Mental Health issues and how this impacts upon our Customers

Look at good practice and innovative ways of delivering our adaptation services

Implement Annual Access Audits of our offices

Religion & Faith

Establish partnerships with various Faith Forums to provide training to our Board, Area Panel and staff on Religion and Faith to create relationships of mutual respect and trust with our customers

Develop partnerships and involve communities from various religious and faith organisations

Employment

Change the structure of our Staff Diversity Champions Group to engage more with our staff to understand the needs of our staff and customers

Ensure that all our policies comply with relevant legislation under the new Equality Bill

Sexual Orientation

In partnership with our Human Resources Section, become members of Stonewall and work with them to raise awareness of the sexuality agenda and to meet any staff needs we may have

Source a gay person's organisation to undertake a piece of research about the needs of victims of Domestic Violence from same sex couples

Work with local organisations to promote sexuality and HIV amongst Board, Area Panels and staff

Age

Work closely with our customers in Sheltered Provision to promote the Healthy Living Agenda including exercise

Develop Intergenerational Activities – Older People and Young People working together and being involved in the "Leeds For All Intergenerational Festival 2010"

Develop partnerships with the Voluntary Sector who work with older people

Gender

Work in partnership with our contractors to promote women considering employment in the Construction Industry

Raise the awareness of Transgender amongst our staff

Other Areas:

Achieve the Investors in Diversity Accreditation for the business

Raise staff awareness on drug and alcohol addiction

Work in partnership with the other ALMO's and Leeds City Council to develop the procurement framework post 2011

Continue to implement Equality Impact Assessments and publicise on our website

Continue to set targets within our Diversity Performance Framework

Develop a training programme that includes vulnerability

Work closely with the Access to Services Improvement Group to ensure that needs of our diverse communities is paramount within the projects identified

Work closely with our Tenancy Support Team and develop strategies to meet the needs of our vulnerable customers

Work closely with our Tenancy Management Service Improvement Group to incorporate Hate Crime and Domestic Violence within this area of the business

Work with the Property Services Directorate to embed the Cohesion & Diversity agenda and develop good practice

Raise awareness of Domestic Violence and Hate Crime with our contractors

Implement a Value for Money Exercise for our Translation & Interpretation Services for our Customers

Develop the new Equality Framework, which replaces the Equality Standard for Local Government

Ensure that the business is working within the new Equality Bill Framework that is planned to take effect from Autumn 2010.

Community Cohesion and Integration

Community cohesion is about raising awareness and understanding, breaking down barriers, developing shared values and mutual respect and trust.

The Government Definition of Community Cohesion is:

- there is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods

As the national agenda on Cohesion has developed, so the definition and understanding of the Cohesion agenda for Leeds has become clearer.

- Wider than an equality agenda - but equality is a key and important part
- More than “black and white” issues – includes a focus on breaking down tensions and building relationships within and between all communities: recognising that there can be tensions within and between communities of race, faith and national identities; between old and young; urban and rural; settled and travelling communities; host and new migrant and refugee communities.
- Acknowledging that lesbian and gay people, disabled people, people with mental health illness, people who are homeless and many others can become a focus of tensions.
- About dealing with ‘perceptions’ not just facts; recognising that perceptions and myths fuel tensions between communities
- About people feeling they have an investment in Leeds, they are valued and they are involved: in schools, in work, in the place they live

Community cohesion is wider than the equality and diversity agenda. It goes beyond the issues of tackling racial equality, discrimination and social exclusion. It is about all kinds of relationships within communities and closing the divides between them. Everyone in Leeds should feel that they have an investment in the city, they are valued and they are involved: in schools, in work, in the place they live.

Working within the Cohesion and Integration Agenda West North West homes have achieved the following:

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

West North West Homes have developed a course for our customers who live in the Little London area. This area has a higher percentage of Black & Ethnic Minority groups. This course was developed using Area Panel Funding.

This course was very successful and 11 attended. West North West Homes have a reserve list of customers wanting to access another course. This course not only enabled our customers to improve their language skills but also brought different black and minority ethnic communities together. We are now working with this group to see if they would like to go onto further study or to be involved with us in other ways.

Cooking Around the World

This project was targeted at families who were on low incomes. This project was delivered through partnership working with the Voluntary/Community Sector.

We also used this project to break down barriers between communities by cooking dishes from different parts of the world. Dishes that were cooked were Egga (Iraqi), Jolef Rice (Gambia), Russian Pancakes/dumplings and a Tanzanian dish.

The project also considered the Healthy Living agenda within the food that was cooked and raised awareness amongst our tenants of how to cook healthy food on a low budget.

Fusion Event

West North West homes in partnership with our contractors, Kier and Frank Haslam Milan (FHM) developed a project to provide a forum to engage with our diverse communities, break down barriers and bring people together. This took place through a charity event which included music and fashion.

The project involved setting up a partnership with a local college, the Chinese Community, Leeds Faith Forum, Dazl, local dance group and salsa dancers.

We recruited our tenants to be the models, through our Buzz newsletter, and trained them to walk down the catwalk. Clothes were made by the local college and donated by the Asian, African and Chinese Communities.

The event took place at a hotel in the West North West of Leeds and 156 tickets were sold and a raffle took place to raise monies for Macmillan Nurses and St Georges Crypt.

The event was very successful and feed back from all who attended was very encouraging and positive. Attendees also felt that the event had provided an opportunity for them to mix with other diverse communities and that a number of their perceptions had been challenged through this event.

Hate Crime Partnership

West North West homes in partnership with the Police, Leeds City Council and Stop Hate UK meet on a regular basis to discuss Hate Crime incidents within the West North West of Leeds.

The partnership group is currently developing strategies for our hot spot areas of Hate Crime and also raising awareness of Hate Crime.

This group has also formed a sub group and are developing a project to look at Community Tensions within the Armley area of Leeds.

As part of the Cohesion agenda our Outcomes and Key priorities for 2009 to 2013 are:

Develop partnerships to support the objectives of the Cohesion agenda with the Voluntary/Community and Religion and Faith Sectors of Leeds

Work in partnership with other sections of the business, for example the worklessness agenda to enable good community relations

Develop initiatives to enhance community relations in the West North West of Leeds

Our Legal Obligations

West North West homes Leeds will operate this strategy and Single Equality Scheme and all other policies, strategies and practices in line with statutory requirements. The present statutory framework within which we work includes the legislation below:

The Equality Act 2006

The Equality Act has three functions:

- Creates a Single Equality and Human Rights Commission;
- Extends the prohibition on religious and sexual orientation discrimination to the provision of goods and services, planning, education and the exercise of public functions; and
- Introduces on public sector bodies the duty to promote gender equality and extends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to cover the provision of public functions.

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 - Duty to Promote Race Equality

The **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000** [RR(A)A] was introduced following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, and extended the scope of the Race Relations Act 1976. The RR(A)A 2000 came into force in April 2001.

It introduced a new general positive duty upon specified public bodies including local authorities to promote race equality. A public body in carrying out its functions has due regard to the need to:

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

It amends and strengthens the 1976 Race Relations Act; therefore organisations are prohibited from unlawfully discriminating in carrying out any of their functions. Whilst functions like employment and the provision of services were already covered under the original 1976 Act, many of the functions of local authorities e.g. enforcement, regulatory, licensing and inspections were not.

But the real power of the Act is that introduces the new General Duty to promote racial equality. Now all public authorities must publicly demonstrate their awareness and commitment to race equality.

Specific duties were also placed on certain public authorities to help them meet the general duty. These include:

- Policy, planning and service delivery
- Prepare a race equality scheme setting out how it intends to meet general and specific duties
- Assess which functions and policies are relevant to the general duty
- Set out arrangements for assessing and consulting on the impact on the promotion of race equality, of policies it is proposing to adopt
- Set out arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality, of policies it has adopted or is proposing to adopt
- Set out its arrangements for publishing the results of assessments, consultations, and monitoring for adverse impact
- Set out arrangements for ensuring minority ethnic communities have access to information and services it provides

- Set out arrangements for training staff on issues relevant to the duty to promote race equality

Employment

- Ethnically monitor staff (by grade) and applicants for jobs, promotion and training
- Ethnically monitor and analyse: grievance and disciplinary action; performance appraisal (when this results in benefits or sanctions); training; dismissals and other reasons for leaving
- Publish annually the results of ethnic monitoring

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 ~ Duty to Promote Disability Equality

The duty to promote disability equality encompasses both general and specific duties

General Duties

These require public authorities to have due regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- Eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- Eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- Promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- Encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- Take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

Specific duties

Certain public bodies will be covered by specific duties within the Act. A key requirement will be to publish a disability equality scheme (DES) every three years. Chapter 13 of the Act places a duty on public bodies to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people (e.g. procedural adjustments, physical alterations to buildings or provision of auxiliary services such as BSL interpreters). The duty requires public bodies to anticipate the requirements of disabled people and to make the necessary adjustments required by them.

Disability Equality Schemes

The essential elements that a disability equality scheme must include are:

- a statement of how disabled people have been involved in developing the scheme and action plan;
- arrangements for gathering information about performance of the public body on disability equality;
- arrangements for assessing the impact of authority activities on disability equality and improving these when necessary;
- details of how the authority is going to use the information gathered, in particular in reviewing the effectiveness of its action plan and preparing subsequent schemes; and
- to report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

Equality Act 2006 - Gender Equality duty

The public sector duties lead public bodies to take proactive steps to positively promote equality rather than solely taking steps to prevent discrimination.

The **General Duty** requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment; and
- To promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Public authorities are expected to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between men and women in all their functions. The weight which public authorities give to gender equality should therefore be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. The greater the relevance of a function to gender equality, the greater regards that should be paid to it.

Specific duties, in brief, are:

- To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives;
- In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap;
- To gather and use information on how the public authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services;
- To consult stakeholders (i.e. Employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take into account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives;
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality;
- To implement the actions set out in its scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable to do so; and
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

Equality Act 2006 - Religion or Belief

The Employment Equality Regulations 2003 currently offers protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the workplace.

Equality Act 2006 - Sexual Orientation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 currently offers protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the workplace.

With the addition of new powers introduced by the Equality Act 2006, it will become unlawful (subject to certain exemptions) to discriminate on the grounds of *religion or belief and sexual orientation* in the following areas:

- The provision of goods, facilities and services
- The disposal and management of premises,
- Education
- The exercise of public functions.

Who are our Customers?

WNWhL recognises that people who use our services come from diverse backgrounds, with different experiences and needs.

Taking into account the growth of Leeds the diversity of our customer base has changed over recent years as a result of demographic, social and economic trends.

This, in turn, affects the way in which services are delivered and the resources required to successfully manage tenancies, support customers to stay in their homes and enhance their quality of life.

The diversity of our customers is likely to increase over coming years due to:

- an ageing population, many of whom prefer to remain in their own homes.
- the potential impact of rent restructuring which could increase the number of benefit-dependent and vulnerable customers
- refugee status of our customers
- migration patterns within Leeds
- the potential impact of insufficient affordable rented housing to meet increasing demand and the complex needs of those in most serious housing need
- Labour market of Leeds

In order to respond to this changing market, it is likely that WNWhL will need to further develop a range of services to support the diverse needs and to provide a coherent, strategic approach to support provision which balances resources and achieves Value for Money.

The following illustrates the range number of potentially diverse customers who are currently tenants of WNWhL:

- 7% of tenants do not speak English as a first language
- 20.4% regard themselves as having a hearing impairment
- 4.5% consider they have a learning disability
- 9.9% feel they have mental health needs
- 39.0% have a physical impairment
- 2.4% have a speech impediment
- 8.9 have some a visual impairment
- 34% regard themselves as disabled
- 45% are aged 65+

(Above Data taken from our Customer Profile 2008)

This information provides a snapshot of the diversity of our potential customer base for whom services will need to be further developed to meet these changing demands and needs.

Monitor and Review

West North West homes have established a Diversity KLOE Board made up of our Board of Directors, Senior Management Team, Staff and our Customers.

The role of this Board is to ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations for equality and our key priorities set out within our Cohesion & Diversity Strategy, 2009 to 2010.

They also look at how the business meets the Diversity Key Line of Enquiry 31 (KLOE) from the Audit Commission. This is an assessment framework the Audit Commission has established for the Inspection Process for Housing Services in England.

The Diversity KLOE Board meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss performance against our strategy and the diversity key line of enquiry, discuss initiatives and good practice, provide support and promote the Cohesion & Diversity agenda amongst other parts of the business.

The Diversity KLOE Board also provides information and regular update reports at our Board of Director meetings.

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Diversity KLOE Board, our staff and our customers.

Consultation

As part of our Customer Involvement Strategy, we will use the consultation mechanisms described to consult annually on this strategy. We will also use these mechanisms to feedback on progress made on cohesion and diversity for West North West homes Leeds.

Consultation will include

- Customers that are part of our Sounding Boards
- Tenants and residents associations
- Voluntary, Community and Faith organisations
- Our Staff Diversity Champions Group
- Staff, through our various Service Improvement Groups and Team meetings

Publicising our Strategy

It is a basic right for all sections of our community to have access to information that will affect them. We will publicise our strategy using the following methods:

- Buzz, Tenants Newsletter
- West North West homes Website
- West North West homes Staff Newsletter
- Through local events and public meetings
- Recognised Tenant Groups
- Tenant Involvement Network
- Tenant Compacts
- Voluntary and Community Sector publications

We will use every effort to ensure that the information we publicise for our annual report and our performance against this is simple and easy to understand.