

Inclusion & Diversity Policy

Our Vision

Building better lives through social care and housing in local communities.

Our Mission

We co-design and deliver services that offer innovative social care solutions and support people to thrive.

Our Values

We are **caring** and **compassionate**



We are **inclusive** and **trusted**



We focus on **excellence** and **innovation**



We work in **partnership** and are **one-team**



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to creating a genuinely psychologically safe environment and an inclusive workplace with a culture where all colleagues, customers, including both adults and children, feel they belong, are valued and respected, and can make a difference through this sense of belonging. We are also committed to ensuring that our workforce reflects our diverse customer base, recognising that this enables us to better understand their unique and varied needs and priorities.
- 1.2 We understand that inclusion is about engaging the uniqueness, talents, beliefs, backgrounds, abilities and ways of working of all our colleagues and customers so that they are empowered to show up as their authentic selves and fulfil their individual potential. Embracing diversity means that we will ensure our staff and customers are representative of wider society.
- 1.3 We are committed to ensuring that inclusion and diversity runs through everything we do as an organisation. As an organisation we will encourage and expect everyone to contribute to an environment in which everyone can feel comfortable expressing who they are, how they feel and what they need, knowing that they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued. As demonstrated in our values and behaviours, all staff should actively challenge discrimination. The Board holds overall responsibility to ensure that this vision is delivered throughout the organisation.
- 1.4 We are committed to developing an inclusive culture which is reflected in a diverse organisation, embracing those with protected characteristics, lived experience, diverse skill sets and encouraging cognitive diversity across working groups.
- 1.5 This policy is intended to assist us in putting this vision into practice. By complying with the policy staff can create an inclusive workplace that will benefit all.
- 1.6 This policy applies to all employees, the Board, Bank Support Workers ('BSW'), contractors, volunteers, job applicants, and all customers, including adults, children, and young people, as well as the communities in which we work. It applies to all aspects of employment from recruitment and selection to termination of employment.
- 1.7 We are responsible for ensuring that inclusion and diversity policies are actively implemented and we are aware of our personal responsibility to each other, customers, contractors, suppliers, visitors and members of the public.

2. Legislation

- 2.1 We will work within current and relevant anti-discrimination laws. The Equality Act 2010 brought together previous legislation and strengthened equality laws, prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination due to the following nine protected characteristics:
 - Age

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- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Maternity and Pregnancy
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

2.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires us to meet certain statutory duties to tackle persistent and long-standing issues of disadvantage. As an organisation we will ensure that our employees - paid and unpaid - and customers are treated fairly and equally and receive equal services and opportunities. When we talk about inclusivity we are considering the following areas - although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Age
- Disability
- Caring responsibility
- Gender reassignment status
- Gypsy or traveller heritage
- Medical status, including HIV/AIDS Status
- National origin
- Race, ethnicity or colour
- Physical abilities
- Refugee status
- Parental responsibility
- Physical appearance
- Religion or belief
- Gender
- Employment
- Sexual orientation
- Social background
- Marriage, civil partnership, or relationship status
- Pregnancy or maternity status
- Trade union membership and activities
- Neurodiversity

3. Definitions

3.1 **Equality** is about treating people fairly and without discrimination regardless of who they are. It is about recognising that inequality is often caused by circumstances not of an individual's own making and taking positive action to address this. Our commitment to equality ensures that policies, procedures and practices do not discriminate against staff, customers or other people we come into contact with.

4.2 **Equity** is about fairness and justice. Where equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognising that we do not all start from the same place and

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must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances to ensure everyone can reach an equal outcome.

- 4.3 Respecting **diversity** ensures that all people are valued as individuals and can maximise their potential and contribution to our organisation and to their community. This means that we recognise that different people have different needs that need to be met for them to experience equal opportunities and equal outcomes.
- 4.4 **Direct Discrimination** occurs when an individual is dealt with less favourably explicitly on the grounds of a characteristic - for example their race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender reassignment status, relationship status, caring responsibility, sexual orientation, age, physical, sensory or learning disability, mental health, religion and belief, medical status (eg HIV), employment status, physical appearance, unrelated criminal convictions, union activities or for any other reason regarded as unjustifiable.
- 4.5 **Indirect Discrimination** occurs when a requirement or condition which, although applying equally to people of all groups, is applied in such a way that a significant minority of a particular group are considerably disadvantaged on this basis. For example, dress codes have sometimes been held to discriminate indirectly against people on the basis of their gender or religious belief.
- 4.6 **Associative Discrimination** is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- 4.7 **Perceptive Discrimination** is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess the characteristic.
- 4.8 **Victimisation** in the context of equality and diversity occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because that person has asserted their rights under legislation, for example the Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act, or the Disability Discrimination Act, or acted as a whistle-blower on such activity.
- 4.9 **Harassment** relates to repeated, unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, looks, actions, suggestions or physical contact which are found objectionable and offensive and which might threaten an employee or customer or create an intimidating or uncomfortable environment. Harassment does not need to be based on the characteristics of an individual but can be sexual or racial, directed against people with disabilities or related to any characteristic exhibited by an individual or group of people. The Equality Act makes employers potentially liable for harassment of employees by people - third parties - who are not employees, such as customers or clients.
- 4.10 **Microaggressions** are subtle verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalised group membership. Microaggressions in everyday life are sometimes hard to recognise. They might be presented as backhanded compliments which make them even harder to unpick and rationalise.
- 4.11 **Unconscious Bias** is bias which happens outside of our conscious control, and we are unaware of. Unconscious bias is triggered by our brain making quick

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judgements and assessments that are influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

- 4.12 **Positive Action** refers to measures taken to assist participants and groups who have been under-represented in specific areas, to reach a level of confidence, knowledge and achievement that is comparable with their peers. These measures would normally take the form of additional training, positive recruitment amongst certain groups and making public a commitment to redressing any imbalance in participation and challenge historical barriers. An example might be explicitly welcoming applications from a particular group which are currently under-represented in a particular area of work.

5. Inclusion & Diversity in Employment

- 5.1 We are committed to avoiding unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.
- 5.2 Job descriptions will only include requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements of the job, considering any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Recruitment panels need to be diverse.
- 5.3 Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.
- 5.4 We will reflect on whether our standard working practices - eg number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the location - have any possible indirectly discriminatory effects.
- 5.5 We will comply with our obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. We will also make workplace adjustments to our standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.
- 5.6 We will monitor the protected characteristics of our existing workforce and of applicants for jobs - including internal promotions - and the number of people with protected characteristics within these groups and will consider taking any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.
- 5.7 We will not discriminate against ex-employees - for example, refusing to provide a reference relating to one of the protected characteristics.

6. Inclusion & Diversity in Service Delivery

- 6.1 We recognise the diversity of our customers, including adults, children, and young people, and will ensure that we deliver accessible services and equitable outcomes across all customer groups.

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- 6.2 We are committed to drawing upon the lived experience of our customers and staff and creating channels to ensure the user voice is heard.
- 6.3 We understand that, without understanding the individual needs of our customers, we cannot tailor service delivery to meet their needs. As such, we will focus on improving the quality-of-service experience for all our customers
- 6.4 We recognise that most of our customers face discrimination and disadvantage by virtue of having experienced homelessness, exploitation, having a disability or low income etc.
- 6.5 We will actively tackle discrimination and reduce disadvantage by:
- Supporting customers to sustain tenancies and build independent living skills
 - Providing positive environments which enable customers to influence and take control of their lives
 - Supporting customers to maximise income and achieve financial inclusion
 - Supporting customers to engage in the community and breakdown barriers
 - Developing positive partnerships that increase positive pathways and improves their health and wellbeing
 - Making reasonable adjustments to overcome social and physical disabilities.

7. Supporting the Diverse Needs of Children and Young People

- 7.1 We recognise that children and young people have unique and diverse needs, which may differ from those of adults. Our commitment to inclusion and diversity means we strive to provide services and support that are sensitive to each child's age, stage of development, background, culture, and lived experience.
- 7.2 We will make sure that every service that children can access is both suitable and easy for them to use. When planning activities and events at our services, staff will be sensitive to and take account of each child's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture, and race.
- 7.3 Staff will work in partnership with children, their families, and relevant professionals to understand and meet their individual needs and review any activities to identify potential improvements.
- 7.4 We will regularly review our practices to ensure they reflect best practice in safeguarding and supporting children's wellbeing.

8. Raising an Inclusion & Diversity Concern Customers

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8.1 Where a customer has a concern or a complaint to make they can raise it in one of the following ways:

- Speak with a Support Worker
- Email their complaint to: FeedBack@lookahead.org.uk
- Call our Customer Contact Centre on 03330104600.

8.2 Children and young people, or those acting on their behalf, can also raise concerns or complaints through these channels. We will ensure that our processes are accessible and appropriate for children and young people, and that their voices are heard and acted upon.

Staff

8.3 Members of staff can raise a complaint in the following ways:

- During supervision or their 121 with their line manager
- Refer to the relevant sections of the Grievance or Harassment and Bullying Policies on The Hub
- Refer to the Whistleblowing process on The Hub, contacting Head of Corporate Governance and Assurance
- Raise it with a relevant Diversity Network Lead, if applicable
- Email the relevant HR Business Partner

9. Monitoring & Reporting

9.1 We will deliver an Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and embed it across all business functions which seeks to:

- Create and maintain an inclusive work environment for all staff
- Attract, develop and retain staff from the widest pool of talent
- Ensure our diversity data drives our annual inclusion initiatives
- Ensure compliance with legislation and regulatory requirements relating to diversity and inclusion
- Deliver accessible services and equitable outcomes across all customer groups, including adults, children, and young people

9.2 This will be monitored through People Inclusion and Diversity KPIs and data every 6 months and the Customer Insight Data dashboard every quarter.

9.3 Where there are any issues, actions will be taken to resolve them.

9.4 The Board has overall responsibility for ensuring the delivery and embedding of the Inclusion and Diversity policy, practices, and vision throughout the organisation.

10. Roles & Responsibilities

- 10.1 Our **Board of Management** has overall accountability for Inclusion and Diversity.
- 10.2 The **Senior Leadership Team** provides leadership, resources, and governance to deliver our diversity and inclusion vision and business objectives.
- 10.3 The **Senior Management Team** reviews progress against our plans and identifies emerging issues that need to be addressed.
- 10.4 'The **Director of People** and wider team are responsible for overseeing and analysing the data submitted by employees and job applicant and reporting against compliance, trends and KPI's.
- 10.5 The **Director of Housing & Customer Experience** and wider team are responsible for overseeing Customer Inclusion and Diversity insight data and reporting against trends and KPI's.
- 10.6 **Heads of Services** are responsible for developing, delivering, and monitoring Inclusion and Diversity actions as part of the business planning process. They hold responsibility for ensuring the needs of all our customers, including children and young people, are met in line with this policy.
- 10.7 The **Policy Manager** will undertake Equality Impact Assessments and reviews.
- 10.8 The **Employee Forum** is a forum for Look Ahead staff and unions to partner and discuss issues impacting staff. It enables trade union and elected staff members to bring forward and discuss Inclusion and Diversity related issues. This is a standing item on the agenda.
- 10.9 The **Network Groups** are responsible for raising awareness at all levels on issues affecting the people their network group represents and working to create sustainable positive change on diversity and inclusion across the organisation. Employees who don't wish to join the group can also speak to network members and leads on any concerns and issues relating to D and I that need raising.
- 10.10 The **Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Group** are a group of Directors, Exec and the Board lead for Diversity and Inclusion who meet every 3 months to review the key strategic action plan and delivery and set new objectives under the strategy.
- 10.11 All our staff and partners are responsible for understanding and applying our Inclusion and Diversity values, standards, and behaviours in their day-to-day work.

Record Keeping and Confidentiality

It is the Policy Owner's responsibility to update the Asset & Liability Register with any risks and data arising as a result of this policy.

We will comply with our Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy which can be found by clicking [Here](#) or visiting our website at www.lookahead.org.uk

Inclusion and Diversity

Services provided should be appropriate to both adults and children, and not discriminate for any reason, including, but not limited to, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture or lifestyle.

We will strive to ensure action taken is sensitive to and takes account of each individual's gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race, with particular attention to the unique needs of children and young people

Policy Sign Off and Ownership

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Version History

| Version | Date | Description of Changes | Author |
|---------|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 4.2 | Jan 2026 | Amended to reflect Ofsted requirements, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased references to children throughout the policy New section on meeting the diverse needs of Children and YP | Mike Bansback |
| 4.2 | Jan 2026 | Updated to include more specific reference to children, and a new dedicated section on Children and Young People | Mike Bansback |
| 4.1 | Nov 2025 | Reformatting to new template. Extension approved by PG on 26 November to allow further time to review. | Claudia Bartram |
| 4.0 | Nov 2023 | Reviewed to comply with Ofsted requirements. | Ofsted Working Group |
| 3.0 | August 2022 | Addition of further roles and responsibilities. Adding missing | Claudia Bartram |

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| | | protected characteristics and Network Group leads a group members. | |
| 2.0 | August 2018 | Comprehensive review and change of title from Equality & Diversity Policy & Procedure to Inclusion & Diversity Policy | Claudia Bartram Olivia Gray Nicole Njie |