



Our Equality and Diversity Strategy

1. Introduction

This is the Byker Community Trust (BCT) first equality and diversity strategy. We appreciate that while we strive to ensure that all our properties are the best that we can make them, it is the people in our community who will make our Vision become reality.

The Board and staff of BCT give a commitment that we will aim to create a community in which all our residents have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and a place which is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

It is BCTs responsibility to ensure that all residents have decent homes to live in and a community that they can take pride in. It is the responsibility of all residents to be good neighbours, to show respect and compassion to all.

Jim Coulter, Chair and Jill Haley, Chief Executive

2. About Byker Community Trust

The Byker Community Trust ('BCT') was incorporated in September 2011 under the Industrial and Provident Society Act 1965 with charitable objectives. BCT is also a 'Registered Provider' of social housing.

In July 2012 a stock transfer from Newcastle City Council was completed and BCT became the owner of over 1,800 properties. The creation of BCT has the whole hearted support of Newcastle City Council, the Homes and Communities Agency and English Heritage. The proposal for the stock transfer was also supported by the tenants of the estate who voted in favour of the transfer in a ballot in June 2011.

Byker is a special and unique place because of what it is today and because of how it was created. Unlike many other housing estates developed on the 1960's and 1970's the estate was Grade II* listed in 2007.

3. Our Vision

'To secure for the Byker Estate high quality sustainable housing and services, where people want to live and work with a sense of pride in their homes and community.'

The people, who call the Byker Estate home, are a proud and passionate community. They have a high sense of belonging to their community and are committed to improving their environment for themselves, their families and their neighbours, both now and in the future.

4. Our Mission

We are committed to improving the local environment in our community by building partnerships with businesses, community leaders and our neighbours to create a cleaner, safe place to live and work.

5. Our Values

We believe in:

Doing our very best for the Byker Estate

Respecting and valuing people

Being open and approachable

Being positive about the challenges we face

Equality in everything we do

6. Our Equality Vision

To help to create a community that is free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, a place where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

7. Achieving the Vision

Achieving our Vision will be an ongoing process and we recognise that we have much to do. It is therefore essential that we approach this area of our business in a structured way that takes a realistic account of our current workload and available resources.

We aim to lay a solid foundation for moving forward. Our priorities are;

- To develop an understanding of the profile and needs of our customers and identify the actions needed to meet their needs
- To ensure key policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity are in place,
 - upto date, actively publicised and embedded into the organisation
- To make our services and office accessible to all, ensuring all physical barriers to access are removed.
- To develop our equality analysis framework to ensure our services are tested by residents to ensure there are no adverse barriers to service.
- To build an effective monitoring and review system that will allow us to assess information and issues of inequality.

- To promote ownership of this strategy and engage the whole organisation in working towards achieving our objectives.

8. Purpose of this Strategy

This strategy has 3 main functions:

- To clearly define what equality and diversity means to BCT
- To set objectives and be clear about what we want to achieve
- To provide a plan and process for getting there

It will be used internally as a tool to guide our progress and externally as a statement of our commitment and to demonstrate our approach to addressing equality and diversity.

There are 2 main reasons why we have developed this strategy;

Good performance on equality and diversity is central to our values as an organisation. We therefore need a framework to make sure that the importance we attach to it is reflected in the way we work.

It makes good business sense that we are responsive to the needs and preferences of individuals. It will mean that our services are in demand, contributing to our success as a business. Similarly, we want to attract and retain staff and board members with a diverse range of skills and experiences. This will result in creativity, new ideas and an ability to meet the needs of our customers more effectively.

9. Responsibilities

The Board have responsibility for ensuring that this strategy underpins all aspects of our work and that as individual members they behave in a way that reflects the Equality Strategy and objectives.

The Board will monitor performance and agree corrective action where necessary. They will ensure compliance with the strategy, challenge existing practice and review it regularly.

The Chief Executive has responsibility for ensuring that the strategy, including the BCT work plan, is efficiently implemented.

They will ensure all reports on policy matters to the Board identify equality and diversity implications.

They will ensure training and development on equality and diversity matters are received by board members and staff to sustain competencies and maintain up to date knowledge.

All staff members are responsible for ensuring that they familiarise themselves with the strategy and policies and that they complete any tasks allocated to them in the work plan. They must also ensure that they follow the principles it sets out and bring

to the attention of the Chief Executive or a Board Member, any instances of discrimination or other issues that could undermine our ability to achieve the objectives we have set out.

Tenants are expected to:

Adhere to matters of law in relation to equality and diversity and the terms of their tenancy agreement, which states in clause 20 that Tenants and residents should not commit any act of harassment.

Fulfil a 'good neighbour' role respecting the needs and circumstances of all people in their community.

10. Strategy commitments

To eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act.

To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

To foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

11. Corporate Governance

How we operate

Good Governance we aim to:

Ensure that our Board members have an understanding of and are committed to equality and diversity issues in all areas of our work and are able to provide leadership and direction.

Aim to have board members that broadly reflect, at all levels, the diversity of the community we serve and who have a diverse range of backgrounds, skills and experience.

Adopt good practice in all areas relating to equality and diversity and take a proactive approach.

As an Employer we aim to:

Create an organisational culture that values diversity and recognises equality and diversity as a core business issue.

Aim to have a staff team that broadly reflects, the diversity of the community we serve.

Create a positive working environment where all staff feel empowered, valued and supported.

Ensure that all staff members have an understanding of equality and diversity, and contribute towards achievement of our objectives.

As a Registered Provider of Housing we aim to:

Be equally accessible to all.

Ensure that our services recognise and respond to the needs of individuals.

Create a community in which the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued.

Offer customers the opportunity to be involved and consulted in a range of different ways that suit different needs and preferences.

Ensure that any groups and forums we establish are inclusive and broadly reflect the tenant community they represent.

Ensure that our services are accessible and acceptable to all residents.

Working with communities and others:

We will work with community groups to improve community cohesion.

Work with other agencies to help ensure residents are signposted correctly to receive the services they need.

We will actively promote equality and diversity in all our partnership agreements and strategic alliances.

We will actively promote equality and diversity in the way we procure goods and services.

12. Action planning

An initial work action plan has been scoped in draft, this is only a skeleton (attached). This will evolve into a working document which will demonstrate how BCT will start to achieve our Equality and Diversity objectives. The action plan requires further work to ensure that it is appropriate and fit for purpose and this will be overseen by the BCTs Head of Engagement and Community Development, working alongside the BCT Equality and Diversity Advisory Group, once fully established.

13. Equality and Diversity Working Group

The Equality and Diversity Advisory Group (EDAG) will be made up of a diverse group including board members, staff, tenants, residents and individuals who have declared an interest in helping BCT to achieve the Equality and Diversity Strategy

objectives. They will meet quarterly to review the Equality and Diversity Strategy and monitor progress on the Equality Action Plan.

The group will contribute to the compilation of an annual report on equality and diversity

14. Terms of Reference of Group

The EDAG will champion and advise BCT strategy on all matters relating to Equality and Diversity. This includes ensuring effective delivery of the BCT Equality Action Plan.

The Group will make recommendations to BCT Board in relation to Equality and Diversity.

The Group will advise the Chief Executive and Board how BCT can ensure the elimination of discrimination for all BCT residents, advance equality of opportunity for BCT residents and seek to foster good relations between BCT residents.

15. Responsibilities

To champion and promote Equality and Diversity principles in all that BCT does.

To help develop, monitor and regularly review BCT's Equality & Diversity Strategy.

To contribute to the compilation of reports on Equality and Diversity to the Board including an annual report.

To consider data and information gained from monitoring, equality analysis and general consultation activity to inform priorities and future practice.

To suggest improvements in Equality and Diversity performance throughout all aspects of BCT's business.

To provide a forum where BCT's plans, policies and procedures relating to issues of Equality and Diversity can be examined and reviewed.