



# CUSTOMER EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY



<b>Customer Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy</b>			
<b>Last Reviewed</b>	<b>January 2026</b>	<b>Next Review</b>	<b>January 2028</b>
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Director of Operations</b>		

## Policy Statement

At Freebridge Community Housing, we believe that a home is more than four walls it's the foundation for life, for dignity and for belonging. We are proud to serve the people of North & West Norfolk from the heart of King's Lynn to our surrounding rural communities and with that pride comes responsibility.

This policy isn't about ticking boxes. It's about building a community where everyone feels seen, safe and welcome. We know inequality doesn't stop at the doorstep. Some of us have lived through poverty, discrimination or trauma. Others face barriers that aren't always visible mental health conditions, digital exclusion, caring responsibilities. Our commitment is to recognise those realities and design services that work for everyone.

## Procedural Guidance

### Purpose and scope

This document sets out our commitment to make equality, diversity and inclusion part of how we think, act and serve. It applies to everyone connected to Freebridge tenants, leaseholders, applicants, visitors, contractors, community partners, staff, volunteers and board members. It guides how we provide homes, deliver services, recruit and support our people, and engage our communities.

### Our Community Context – North and West Norfolk

Our work takes place in a proud and diverse area, North and West Norfolk is largely rural with strong community networks and an ageing population.

- Around 24% of residents are aged 65 or over – higher than the national average (ONS Census 2021)

- Approximately 21% report a long-term health condition or disability
- Around 2% identify as being from BAME backgrounds, smaller than national averages but growing
- Digital exclusion remains an issue: about 15% of adults lack basic digital skills

These figures remind us that inclusion in North and West Norfolk is as much about age, health, isolation and rural access as about ethnicity or gender. That shapes how we design our homes, communicate with our customers and plan services.

### What inclusion means to us

Inclusion isn't about treating everyone the same. It's about understanding difference and removing the barriers that stop people from feeling they belong.

To us, inclusion means:

- Designing services that are accessible to people with disabilities or without digital access
- Welcoming all cultures, faiths, genders and backgrounds into our communities
- Understanding trauma and responding with patience and compassion
- Creating spaces where every voice – no matter how quiet – is heard
- Supporting mental health with the same care as physical health

### Inclusion in action – real life, real people

Here's what inclusion looks like at Freebridge:

- When Ravi, a new tenant struggling with his mental health missed a rent payment, our team didn't jump straight to warnings. They reached out, listened and helped him stabilise his tenancy
- When Joan, 84, called us confused by a digital letter we sent a paper version and arranged a home visit
- At the Discovery Centre a retired resident and a young mum met during a community lunch and began volunteering together. What started as small talk over coffee became a friendship reminding us inclusion often begins with connection
- During a recent interview, a successful candidate paused and asked: 'I haven't said anything wrong, have I? I have ADHD and autism and sometimes I can come across too direct.' What stayed with us wasn't her words but her openness. She felt safe being fully herself that's what inclusion feels like in practice

These aren't special cases these are our people and inclusion means recognising their humanity not just their tenancy.

### **Equality impact assessment (EIA) framework**

Before we make major decisions we assess who might be affected and how our EIA process helps us design fair, inclusive outcomes. All major policy changes will include an EIA summary in board reports.

Each EIA considers:

- Purpose of the change or policy
- Who is affected and evidence considered
- Impacts on protected groups
- Mitigation and actions to remove barriers
- Decision and sign-off recorded

Summaries of EIAs will be published annually to demonstrate transparency and learning.

### **Listening, learning and changing**

We know inclusion is a journey, not a destination.

We will:

- Listen to customers and communities
- Act on feedback and complaints
- Review and update this policy and strategy annually
- Share learning openly through resident newsletters and staff briefings

### **Workforce and training**

All staff receive EDI induction training with annual refreshers. Managers complete inclusive leadership training every two years and all recruitment panel members complete bias awareness training. Training content is reviewed each year to reflect emerging local and national issues. Completion rates and impact will be reviewed annually through the People Team.

### **Our promise**

At Freebridge it is quite clear; diversity means everyone's welcome; inclusion means every voice is heard; and equality means everyone is treated with dignity.

Thank you for helping us build a stronger, fairer, more inclusive community.

## Monitoring, reporting and governance

EDI performance will be tracked through:

- Quarterly EDI dashboards covering workforce and service data
- Bi-annual progress reports to the Board and Operations Committee
- Annual EDI and People Report published for staff, residents and partners
- Progress will be benchmarked against national housing sector data via the NHF EDI Tool

The board supported by an EDI Champion will review overall progress and resource needs each year.

## Glossary of key terms

- Protected Characteristics – The nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation)
- Positive Action – Measures that encourage participation or reduce disadvantage for underrepresented groups
- Reasonable Adjustment – A change or support that removes barriers for someone with a disability
- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) – A process for assessing whether a policy or decision could unfairly affect certain groups

## Talk to us

If you've experienced exclusion, discrimination or have ideas for making our services more inclusive, we want to hear from you. Contact us on 03332 404 444 or via email [cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk](mailto:cxsupport@freebridge.org.uk)