

SAXON WEALD
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY



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Author: Vanessa Williams

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Next Review: December 2022

1.0 Introduction and aims

1.1 This policy sets out Saxon Weald's commitment to the principles of equality and diversity, both as an employer and provider of housing and associated services.

1.2 The aims of this policy are to ensure that:

- We are an open, inclusive and diverse organisation;
- All existing and prospective employees, residents, stakeholders, suppliers and contractors are treated fairly and without discrimination;
- All forms of harassment, including racial and sexual harassment and domestic violence are acknowledged, responded to and combatted;
- Access to our services is simple, fair and equitable;
- Information about our services is available and accessible to all;
- We create, promote and enable a culture where each employee is treated with respect and dignity and recognises the value and benefits of a diverse workforce; and
- Equality and diversity is considered in the development and review of all Saxon Weald policies, procedures and strategies.

1.3 This policy aligns with and supports Saxon Weald in delivering its corporate values, which are:

- Be customer led;
- Be one team;
- Be forward thinking;
- Be inclusive; and
- Do the right thing.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 To help ensure consistency of understanding in delivering the commitments set out in this and other organisational policies, Saxon Weald recognises and promotes the following definitions:

- 2.2 **Equality** is about ensuring that individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and have the same opportunities.
- 2.3 **Diversity** is about recognising people's individual differences and characteristics and understanding that each individual is unique. It is also about recognising and appreciating how a diverse workforce can enhance our business and influence the way we do things.
- 2.4 **Disability** is a physical or mental health impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to carry out or participate in normal day to day activities.
- 2.5 **Discrimination** is the unfair treatment of a person or group of people on the basis of one or more aspects of their specific characteristics, or because of stereotyped assumptions.
- 2.6 **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.
- 2.7 **Protected characteristics** were introduced in the Equality Act 2010; nine specific characteristics are protected from discrimination. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including race and ethnicity, nationality, immigration status), religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation.

3.0 **Background**

3.1 Saxon Weald will comply with the following legislation and regulatory requirements relating to equality and diversity:

3.2 Legislative requirements:

- The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) and Regulations 2011 (the Regulations);
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Employment Relations Act 1999 (as amended);
- Civil Partnership Act 2004;
- The Immigration Act 2014;
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (transparency in supply chains); and
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016.

3.3 Equality Duty:

3.3.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires organisations delivering public services to give 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations (tackling prejudice and promoting understanding).

3.3.2 Although Saxon Weald is not a public body, as a housing association, we are required to comply with the Duty in the provision, allocation and management of social housing.

3.4 Regulatory requirements:

3.4.1 The Regulatory Framework, published by the Regulator of Social Housing (RHS), requires registered housing providers to acknowledge and respond to the needs of diverse residents. Registered providers are required to treat all residents with fairness and respect, including protected characteristics and those with additional support needs.

3.4.2 We are required to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code (2020) and set out a specific provision for 'reasonable adjustments' (see 4.6).

4.0 **Our Policy**

4.1 Equality and diversity affects all aspects of our business and, as such, its principles are integral to everything we do. As a landlord and an employer, Saxon Weald aims to recognise and respond positively to people's differences, while providing equality of opportunity in relation to the services and careers we provide and support. This means that no person or group of people, either working for Saxon Weald or seeking housing, services, employment or contracts from us, will be treated less favourably because of their or their partner's, family's, friend's or associated person's protected characteristics, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including race and ethnicity, nationality, immigration status), religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. This includes individuals either already serving on or applying to join our Board.

4.2 Our approach and commitment to equality and diversity is underpinned by the following principles. As a responsible landlord and employer, Saxon Weald will:

- Appreciate that everyone is different and treat people as individuals;
- Promote and protect people's rights to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect;
- Recognise and value the diversity and talents of all individuals;
- Support, develop and empower people to succeed;
- Understand and be responsive to the diverse needs of our residents and local communities by delivering appropriate, accessible and flexible services;

- Promote equality of opportunity in employment and housing provision;
- Provide equality and diversity awareness training and guidance to all employees and our Board, and ensure that our contractors and suppliers do the same;
- Create a diverse workforce and inclusive workplaces, where people feel safe and happy to work;
- Be tolerant and understanding;
- Not judge people based on their personal characteristics, circumstances or lifestyle choices;
- Challenge and tackle prejudice, discrimination and harassment;
- Require all contractors, consultants and suppliers tendering for business with us to provide a copy of their Equality and Diversity Policy as part of the tender, along with evidence to demonstrate its implementation and effectiveness; and
- Actively promote and encourage equality, diversity and inclusion amongst our residents, communities, partners, stakeholders and supply chains.

4.3 To help ensure that equality and diversity principles are integral to our work, where appropriate, all policies and strategies relating to housing and associated services; employment; governance and procurement will include their own Equality and Diversity Statements.

4.4 Each statement will identify the specific equality and diversity considerations associated with that policy or strategy, along with how they will be addressed in line with the above principles and our corporate values.

4.5 The Equality Act 2010 sets out a duty for organisations to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. These can include changing the way things are done, changing a physical feature or providing extra aids or services. We will ensure that we will make 'reasonable adjustments' for employees and customers and that we address these specifically in our policies and practices.

5.0 Communicating this policy

5.1 We will ensure that this policy is publicised and made available widely, using a variety of methods. This will include, but is not limited to:

- Internally via Workplace;
- On our website and in our Tenants' Guide;
- Our recruitment advertising and recruitment pack;
- As part of our onboarding and induction process for new employees; and
- Through our contract tendering and review processes.

6.0 Monitoring and review

6.1 Our policies, procedures and strategies are reviewed and updated, where necessary, in accordance with an agreed timetable. This helps to ensure accuracy, compliance and best practice.

- 6.2 This policy will be revised in December 2022 and reviewed every three years thereafter in accordance with Saxon Weald’s policy review timetable, or in the interim period should any legislative or regulatory changes require it.

Version	Amendment	By	Date
5.0	Full review and update	Jim Dean	August 2018
5.1	Amendment to include specific provision for reasonable adjustments	Kath Hicks	October 2020
5.2	Interim update	Vanessa Williams	October 2021