



# Equal opportunities and diversity for our people



creating places  
where people  
want to live

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## 1. Overview

### Guide to equal opportunities and diversity

Equal opportunities is a vital and integral part of L&Q's work. It is our firm belief that everyone should have equal access to our services and an equal chance of gaining employment with L&Q. L&Q work actively to prevent any discrimination in employment, training and the workplace, in the way we allocate and manage our homes, in the provision of services, and in the way we make decisions about employing staff, contractors and suppliers.

In our view, we can best achieve these goals not through one rigid policy applied across all of our diverse operations and functions, but by addressing equal opportunities as a specific element in each area of L&Q's work. We expect everyone who works with us or for us to uphold the principles in our equal opportunities statement.

This policy applies to positively address equal opportunities in the following areas of operation:

- The governance of L&Q.
- The provision of housing and services.
- Recruitment, employment and training within L&Q.
- Housing management, development and contractor provision.

## 2. Equal opportunities statement

L&Q is committed to equal opportunities. We aim to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities for everyone and positively value diversity. We expect everyone who works for us to support us in this. This is what we will do:

- Do all we can to provide equal opportunities in recruitment, employment and employment opportunities as well as training and career progression whatever a person's gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, their religion, age, sexuality, HIV status, physical or mental disability, state of health, appearance, marital status, family circumstances or offending background.
- Encourage groups and individuals who are disadvantaged in housing and employment, to apply for jobs, homes and work contracts.
- Keep a record of the ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, religion, disability or age of everyone applying for a home or job.
- Apply our commitment to equal opportunities when we decide who serves on our committees.
- Make sure everyone we work with or who works for us knows about our policy and keeps to it. If any of these people have their own policy, we will make sure it fits in with ours.
- Take into account good practice in equal opportunities when we update our housing and employment policies and procedures.

## 3. Equal opportunities

L&Q has a policy of actively encouraging people from all backgrounds to apply for advertised posts, and as an Investor In People, we maintain strong career development programmes to help all employees improve their performance in their job and to progress within L&Q.

For example, we take positive steps to inform people with disabilities and those from disadvantaged groups in society of our vacancies and we carefully monitor the ethnicity and gender of applicants and our changing workforce. Staff involved in recruitment and selection are trained to take a consistent approach to all candidates.

### **a) Step Up Team Leader Traineeship**

This post provides the opportunity to a current black or minority ethnic (BME) employee to undertake work experience at team leader level and study for the Advanced Certificate in Team Leadership in conjunction with Nottingham University.

### **b) Step Up Officer Traineeship**

The objective of the scheme is to address the under representation of black and minority ethnic people (BME) with a goal to creating a workforce that reflects a diverse community.

## 3. Equal opportunities

### c) Housing Diversity Network (HDN)

This is a concept that has developed over a number of years. Initially a piece of research from Salford University, on behalf of the National Housing Federation and the Housing Corporation, identified a lack of career opportunities for black and minority ethnic (BME) people within the housing sector. HDN have developed a number of practical actions to promote and improve diversity in employment.

As part of this L&Q has signed up to their website job search facility. This initiative enables housing sector organisations to post their job adverts knowing that BME people will see the ads and understand that the organisation is taking positive steps to employ more BME staff and develop a diverse workforce.

## 3. Equal opportunities

### d) Disabilities

L&Q is a registered “Disability Symbol User”. This accreditation means that we are working to the good practice guidelines set out in the Department of Employment Code of Good Practice on the Employment of Disabled People. As part of this we practice the following:

- Guarantee a job interview to all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum job requirements and consider them on their abilities
- Consult existing employees with a disability about what we can do to develop and use their skills at work.
- Make every effort to retain employees who become disabled by providing equipment and reviewing job descriptions.
- Review our practice each year.

### e) Age Positive Employer Champion

In 2003 L&Q was awarded the Age Positive Employer Champion status by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This means that L&Q’s commitment to having a workforce with a good age range adheres to the Government’s Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment. L&Q applied to the DWP detailing who we are and what we did to make our workforce eligible for this initiative.

## 3. Equal opportunities

### f) Equal Opportunities in Training

We place a high priority in ensuring that every member of staff has equal access to our training programme to acquire new skills and knowledge, which is regularly monitored. Equal opportunities and diversity is itself a subject of induction training for new staff and regular refresher training for existing employees is available as part of our 'Dignity at Work' Training course.

### g) L&Q Apprenticeships

L&Q have always recognised the value of 'growing our own' to develop a workforce of the future. The L&Q Apprenticeship scheme provides opportunities for people to enter the world of work and to gain a relevant qualification by placing them in existing job vacancies.

### h) Work experience

Work experience introduces young people to the world of work and is a valuable and essential part of their education. It usually takes the form of a 2 week placement in which a young person (aged 14-18) carries out a range of tasks or duties, with the emphasis on the learning aspects of the experience. All requests for work experience in L&Q offices must be forwarded to Human Resources rather than be handled at a local level.

## 3. Equal opportunities

### i) Volunteering

L&Q has implemented a number of volunteering schemes across the various offices and departments. The idea behind this is to encourage and assist people who may be struggling to get on the employment ladder. A large number of volunteers have been successful in securing paid employment within L&Q.

### j) Stonewall

L&Q are working with the organisation Stonewall to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people by carrying out policy development, cultural and attitudinal change, lobbying for legal change, providing information on rights and responsibilities and promoting good practice.

### k) Ujima Foundation

The Ujima Foundation, established following the merger of L&Q and Ujima in January 2008, will help ensure that Ujima's founding principles are preserved. The aim is to address the barriers to inclusion faced by diverse communities.

The foundation will support projects and initiatives that promote opportunity in housing, that seek to benefit L&Q and former Ujima residents and staff. It will also undertake research and promotional work to highlight problems that weaken community cohesion.

## 4. Equality and diversity working group

L&Q's equality & diversity working group has the role of monitoring our commitment to fairness and equality, and making sure the objectives set out in the Statement from representative trade unions. The group meets regularly during the year to:

- Ensure equal opportunities policies and monitoring in housing services, employment and training are properly implemented and reviewed.
- Consult all divisions on proposed changes to policies and procedures.
- Produce statistical information on L&Q's performance.
- Recommend improvements in equal opportunities to L&Q's Governing Board.
- Ensure news and developments about equal opportunities are communicated to all staff.

## 5. Bullying and harassment

L&Q recognises that all employees have a right to work in an environment in which the dignity of individuals is respected and which is free from harassment and bullying. It is committed to eliminating intimidation in any form.

The policy applies to harassment and bullying on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, belief, sex, age, sexuality, HIV status, physical or mental disability, state of health, appearance, marital status, family circumstances or offending background. L&Q will consider seriously, and investigate fully, reported incidents of sexual, racial, heterosexual or other forms of bullying and harassment.

The Harassment and Bullying Policy is set out in the Staff Handbook.

## 6. Monitoring

In order for the policy to be effective (i.e. that the aims set are being achieved) and to comply with employment legislation and best practice guidelines the Group monitors a number of areas relating to 'Our People', including the composition of applicants for all posts.

Monitoring will involve:

- The collection and classification of information regarding the ethnic origin, gender, religion, sexuality age and disability of all current employees and job applicants.
- The examination of ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, religion, age and disability of the distribution of employees and the success rate of applicants according to grade and job category.
- Recording recruitment, training and promotional records for all employees, the decisions reached and the reasons for those decisions.

L&Q wishes to stress that this information is purely for the purpose of ensuring the effective implementation of its equal opportunities policy and will be kept in strictest confidence in the Human Resources Department.

## 7. The London Equal Opportunities Federation (LEOF)

L&Q was a founder member of the London Equal Opportunities Federation (LEOF), which promotes enterprises run by black people, women and people with disabilities. By working with housing associations and other public and voluntary organisations, LEOF aims to improve business opportunities for its members.

We liaise regularly with LEOF to identify suitable contractors from disadvantaged groups to work with us. We have provided training for some LEOF businesses and we are discussing projects to encourage greater opportunities for ethnic minority sub-contractors.

We will continue with our pro-active policy, which makes sure that ethnic minority, female and disabled contractors receive reasonable and proportionate work opportunities.





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L&Q is an exempt charity

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