

L&Q Policy

Equality and Diversity



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Introduction

L&Q believes in and is committed to promoting equality and diversity within our organisation and the communities we serve. We are dedicated to promoting equality and diversity both as a landlord and employer and will work to eliminate any direct or indirect discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional. We will use the strength of our organisation to influence and actively challenge and eliminate inequality and disadvantage.

Our goal is to ensure that everyone has fair and equal access to our services and workplace. We expect everyone who works with or for L&Q to uphold the principles in our Equal Opportunities & Diversity policy.

Definitions

The definition of the terms equality and diversity used through this document are based on the legal definitions in the Equality Act 2006:

Diversity - is the fact that individuals are different and that such difference should be valued

Equality – creating parity between individuals. Equality is not about treating everyone the same way, it recognises that individual needs can be met in different ways

Our commitment to equality and diversity is key in delivering our 5 year plan and is embedded in our core corporate themes:

- Responsible growth
- Financial strength
- Maximising resident satisfaction
- Operational excellence

Scope of policy

This policy applies to all policy areas but positively addresses equality and diversity in the following areas of operation:

- The governance of the Trust
- Housing management
- The provision of services
- Harassment and Bullying
- Recruitment, employment and training
- Development & Regeneration
- Procurement

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Statement

L&Q is committed to eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and valuing diversity amongst our workforce, customers and the communities we serve. We understand that certain groups or individuals are more likely to be discriminated against. We are committed to eliminating all forms of unfair discrimination and to promoting equality for all residents, staff and others who work with us.

Our customers:

We will work together to ensure that our customers receive culturally sensitive services that recognise issues of discrimination and celebrate their diversity. We will work to provide services that meet the needs of individuals and create sustainable cohesive communities.

Our People:

We will work to create a working culture where everybody feels welcomed and everyone is valued and respected.

In order to achieve this for our residents and staff we will:

- Provide and promote equal opportunities whatever a person's race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, beliefs, gender including gender identity, age, sexual orientation, HIV status, physical or mental disability, state of health, appearance, marital status, civil partnership, family circumstances, offending behaviour or any other matter which may cause a person to be treated unfairly.
- Give all staff equal opportunities training.
- Encourage groups and individuals that are disadvantaged in housing and employment, to apply for jobs, homes and work contracts.
- Keep a record of and monitor the ethnic origin, sex, disability and age of everyone who applies to us for a home or job.
- Apply our commitment to equal opportunities and diversity 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 does not conflict with ours.
- Take into account good practice in equal opportunities and diversity when we update our housing and employment policies and procedures.
- Respect and listen to the customers and staff.

The Governance of the Trust

We believe that the reputation and accountability of L&Q is improved by aiming to have a representative Board and committees.

Our Board of trustees are responsible for ensuring that all targets for equality and diversity are met.

We will ensure that the Board and committees have the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure that L&Q's commitment to equality and diversity are implemented effectively. We will ensure that our Board and committees are recruited in an open and accountable manner. We will aim to remove barriers that may prevent underrepresented groups applying to L&Q.

The Governing Board and the Executive Management team will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and understood throughout the business.

All employees will be responsible for ensuring that they comply with this policy and related documents and have a responsibility to report any instances of discrimination or service failure.

Housing Services

We will work to ensure that our approach to equality and diversity spans the provision of housing and related services.

We will work in partnership with local authorities, other housing providers, local agencies and government to assess and ensure the diverse needs of all residents are met, and to improve access to housing by providing affordable and accessible housing.

We will look to develop effective policies and procedures that will ensure that transfers, empty homes and choice based lettings are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner, and will monitor their impact as part of our E&D strategy.

Provision of Services

We will understand and respond to the needs and aspirations of our residents and others within the neighbourhoods where we work.

We will aim to remove any barriers to different groups accessing information and advice about our services, and we will ensure we understand the communication needs of our residents.

Harassment and Bullying

We have developed policies to deal with hate crimes and harassment on the grounds of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other perceived difference.

We will help residents to report incidents and support and assist those who are victims of harassment, working with other agencies and groups where appropriate. Equally, we expect residents to respect our staff and will take action against those who abuse or harass them.

We will work with local authorities and other local agencies to ensure support is provided to victims of harassment.

Recruitment, Employment and Training

Our people focus on delivering the best service to our residents and are representative of the neighbourhoods they serve.

Our policies recognise the benefits of diversity and ensure that all employees have equal opportunities and receive fair treatment. Recruitment to posts is governed by our recruitment and selection policy, we recruit on the basis of the person's ability to do the job.

We search for applicants from the widest pool possible, all advertisements are placed at least internally, sometimes externally as well. We are committed to promoting and developing our current workforce wherever possible.

On an annual basis we monitor to ensure we are recruiting, retaining and training a diverse workforce. This information is reported to Board.

We encourage personal development of staff through the use of performance management systems and provide extensive training programmes including diversity training.

We have grievance, harassment and whistle blowing procedures to protect staff. We take action against those who discriminate against or harass our employees.

We will ensure that all employees have equal access to training and development opportunities.

We ensure that all employees are treated fairly in terms of pay and conditions.

Development and Regeneration

We will ensure that the location and design of housing reflects the needs of our residents and the communities we serve.

We will aim to provide community development activities that promote diversity, and help to remove barriers to training and employment opportunities. We will work to support and develop mixed tenure communities and in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to promote community cohesion and assist in eliminating discrimination.

We will provide a range of ways for residents to get involved and influence service delivery which encourages best practice and the involvement of Black, Minority and Ethnic people and other "hard to reach" groups.

We will ensure our buildings are accessible to everyone.

Procurement

All consultants and contractors including our partner organisations are checked to make sure they have equal opportunities policies that are compatible with our own.

We will ensure that our contractors and consultants who provide services in people's homes are aware of and are sensitive to the different and diverse needs of our residents.

We will work with partnering organisations and local and central government to improve the economic development of local communities.

Implementation and Monitoring

This policy will be implemented and monitored through our diversity strategy and equality plans which are embedded in employment and service planning at every level.

We are committed to:

- Tackling institutional discrimination
- Consulting and involving residents in what we do
- Carrying out equality impact assessments of key functions and policies
- Monitoring the impact of our work and addressing any adverse impact
- Publishing and providing equal access to information on what we are doing
- Recruiting a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve
- Providing a safe and secure environment for our customers

L&Q staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy in their individual role as an employee of L&Q.

All managers have responsibility for equality and diversity both in terms of staff, stakeholders and resident needs. L&Q has an Equalities and Diversity Working Group who will review policy and good practice in this area including L&Q's Equalities plan and disseminate information to staff.

Overall responsibility for the Equality and Diversity policy at L&Q ultimately lies with The Board. The board will receive an annual report and be kept update about any relevant E&D issues.

Appendix 1

Our policy has a duty under the legal and regulatory framework and various legislation to promote equal opportunities and civil rights. The key legalisation that underpins our policy is list below:

Equal Pay act 1971
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Race Relations Act 1976
Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
Human Right Acts 1998
Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000 and 2003
Employment Act 2002
Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulation 2003
Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulation 2003
Civil Partnership Act 2000
Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
The Equality Act 2006
Gender Equality Duty 2007
Draft TSA Standards 2009