



**LINK GROUP**

**EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

**APPROVED: MAY 2008**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2088**

**REVIEW DATE: MAY 2011**

## **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY**

***The Link group of companies believes that equality and diversity is about recognising differences, respecting each other as individuals and tailoring the services we offer to meet differing needs. We aim to promote an atmosphere where people are valued and respected.***

### **1. Introduction**

The Link group of companies [“Link” or “We”] is committed to equality of opportunity in all aspects of its work. We will not tolerate any form of discrimination (either direct or indirect) and will challenge all acts of discrimination, prejudice, harassment and victimisation which occur within the workforce or within the communities in which we work.

We are committed to the promotion of equality and embrace diversity across the group because we believe that this makes us stronger as an organisation. This underpins two key elements of our Mission Statement: “Working Together” and “Valuing People”.

Equality and diversity is core to our business and we will ensure that this is reflected in all our policies, practices and services. We will promote actively to the organisations and individuals with whom we work, the rights they have not to face discrimination on any grounds.

We acknowledge equality legislation and will act within this legislation at all time.

We will also meet the requirements and standards expected by our regulators including the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Social Care & Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) in respect of equality and diversity.

### **2. Scope**

A commitment to this policy is required from all staff, Board members and others with whom we may work (for example contractors, consultants, suppliers). We also expect the same commitment from all those who receive a service from us and will promote this policy in all our dealings with them.

### **3. Principles**

Link’s Equality and Diversity Policy aims to:

- Be clear and understood by all employees
- Be fair and equitable and non-discriminatory
- Reflect the needs of our diverse organisation
- Reflect statutory requirements and best practice
- Be flexible and adaptable to changing needs

Link’s commitment to ensuring equal treatment goes beyond compliance with legislation. We are committed to achieving equality for everyone by removing direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, marital status, being a lesbian or a gay man, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability or any other ground, which cannot be shown to be objectively justified in the circumstances. We are committed to achieving social inclusion in its widest sense.

## 4. Objectives

### 4.1 Our commitment as an employer

- To aim to have a workforce reflecting the communities in which we work with people from different groups represented at all levels in the staffing structure. Implementation of our Recruitment and Selection policy together with positive action to address under-representation will aid in achieving this aim.
- To provide an environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and has his or her dignity maintained.
- To foster working environments where people are able to give their best and are free from discrimination, intimidation, harassment or bullying. Any member of staff displaying such behaviours will be subject to disciplinary action
- To ensure that staff understand how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better quality services and so reduce inequality.
- To provide fair access to learning and development opportunities, encouraging and supporting staff in fulfilling their potential.
- To develop an effective communication strategy that involves and communicates actively with all members of staff.
- To provide all employees with the training and development they need to enable them to achieve the organisation's goals in line with equality and diversity
- To provide support to any members of staff who may experience any form of discrimination whilst at work and take appropriate action against the perpetrators of harassment, victimisation or discrimination.
- To ensure that our employment practices are non-discriminatory and support staff with specific religious or cultural beliefs, or who need specific assistance to overcome disabilities to fulfil their requirements as far as reasonably possible.
- To review regularly our policies to ensure they are fair and reflect best practice.

### 4.2 Our commitment as a service provider

- To build and deliver services, facilities and resources that are accessible, relevant and of use to every individual in the communities in which we work.
- To understand better who our customers are so that we are able to provide appropriate services which are accessible to all people within the communities we serve.
- To be mindful that people are different and take account of these differences in the way in which we help and advise our customers.
- To provide clear, meaningful information about Link services in ways that are accessible and meet the diverse needs of our communities.

- To promote and market housing and other products and services to a range of different communities.
- To work with partners in consulting with all sections of the community on service needs and provision.
- To monitor allocation of properties and evaluate services to ensure they do not discriminate against, or exclude, individuals or people from different groups.

To consult actively with different individuals and communities to ensure that services which are provided are responsive and reflect the diversity of need.

## 5. Responsibilities for Embedding Equality and Diversity

If we are to be successful in embedding an inclusive and supportive approach in all of our activities, all members of staff must take responsibility for making a positive contribution towards this aim.

The table below outlines overall key areas of responsibility:

<b>Board Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that policy is applied across the Link Group</li> <li>• To ensure compliance with equality legislation</li> <li>• To refresh their knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to equality legislation and Link's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity.</li> </ul>
<b>Senior Management Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be led by the Group Chief Executive on equality and diversity issues</li> <li>• To take corporate responsibility for group-wide activity</li> <li>• To communicate the importance of equality and diversity at Group level.</li> <li>• To support Managers in localised equality activities.</li> <li>• To refresh their knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to equality legislation and Link's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity.</li> <li>• To ensure that customers, contractors and partner organisations are made aware of Link's Equality and Diversity Policy and our expectations of them in supporting our approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Equality and Diversity Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote and lead on equality and diversity objectives.</li> <li>• To advise on strategic policy development and implementation.</li> <li>• To provide equality and diversity information to assist in the delivery of action plans.</li> <li>• To refresh their knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to equality legislation and Link's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity.</li> </ul>
<b>Human Resources Department</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To introduce all new employees and board members to Link's Equality and Diversity Policy via their induction.</li> <li>• To ensure agreed programmes of equality and diversity training are properly implemented</li> <li>• To ensure that the policy is available on Link's intranet</li> </ul>

	<p>and web pages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure any new legislation or updates/amendments to existing legislation are implemented and communicated as they come into force.</li> </ul>
<b>Managers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To communicate the importance of adherence to the Equality and Diversity Policy</li> <li>• To promote equality of opportunity for staff members</li> <li>• To ensure that all staff are given the opportunity to reach their full potential</li> <li>• To use appropriate measures to address inequality</li> <li>• To consult actively with different individuals and communities to ensure that the services which are provided are responsive and reflect the diversity of need</li> <li>• To monitor and review services in line with equality standards</li> <li>• To implement, monitor and review equality and diversity action plans</li> <li>• To ensure that staff are fully trained to perform their roles and that staff are released to attend mandatory programmes of training on equality and diversity</li> <li>• To refresh their knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to equality legislation and Link's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To encourage equality and diversity within the Link Group and ensure that their actions do not contribute to unfair or discriminatory treatment of others.</li> <li>• To support colleagues who may be experiencing unfair or discriminatory treatment through bringing this to the attention of their line manager or HR Business Partner and/or by encouraging the recipient to take appropriate action.</li> <li>• To challenge unacceptable behaviour and/or work practice where these are identified</li> <li>• To refresh their knowledge of their responsibilities in relation to equality legislation and Link's approach to ensuring equality of opportunity</li> <li>• All members of staff must take responsibility for making a positive contribution towards achieving the aims and objectives of this policy.</li> </ul>

## 6. Policy Availability

This policy is available on the Link Group website, to the Board on the Link Group extranet and to staff on the Link Group intranet.

Copies are also available on request and free of charge from Link. A summary of this policy can be made available in a number of other languages and other forms if required.

## 7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review.

We will monitor and review the policy as part of a programme of continuous improvement.

Adopted	Review Date	Reviewed by	Approved by
May 2008	May 2011	SMG + staff via consultation process	Link Group Board