

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out what the Sovereign Housing Group aims to achieve with its Equality and Diversity strategy – our vision; the standards or requirements that will believe will deliver the vision; and the structures and arrangements that we will put in place to ensure that our vision is delivered as an integral part of providing homes and neighbourhoods where people want to live.
- 1.2 This strategy applies to all Partner Members of the Sovereign Housing Group and their subsidiaries.
- 1.3 For ease of reference the following terms have been used to identify the members of the Group:-
- Sovereign Housing Group - combined (the Group)
 - Sovereign Housing Group Ltd (SHG)
 - Kingfisher HVHS (KHV)
 - Sovereign HA (SHA)
 - Twynham HA (THA)
 - The Vale HA (VHA)
 - Partner Members (KHV,SHA,THA,VHA)

2 Vision

- 2.1 Everyone associated with Sovereign Housing Group will understand what it means to treat people fairly, and will act on that understanding. We will be able to show clearly how we embrace and promote equality and diversity, by creating opportunities for residents, employees, and the wider communities we serve. We will take prompt and robust action to deal with unfair discrimination by any individual or organisation connected with Sovereign Housing Group.
- 2.2 We aim to treat everyone fairly, but we recognise that certain groups may face discrimination or may be disadvantaged in other ways. We refer to these groups as 'diversity groups'. We have identified the following diversity groups, and we will aim to ensure that members of these groups are treated in ways that meet their needs, and that they are not excluded inappropriately from any services or activities within the Group. We will aim to promote their inclusion and to challenge discrimination against them. Sometimes, this may require us to provide additional support or facilities – such as translation facilities or adapted office equipment:
- Black and Minority Ethnic Groups;

Equality and Diversity Strategy

- Disabled people;
- People of different faiths;
- People of different ages;
- People of different genders;
- People with different relationship status;
- Ex-offenders;
- People with different sexual orientation; and
- People with caring responsibilities

2.3 In addition, to the diversity groups listed above, we will aim to actively combat negative or discriminatory attitudes to all social housing tenants.

2.4 The Group's Equalities Statement can be found at **Appendix 1**.

3 Requirements

3.1 The requirements that the Group sets in relation to Equalities and Diversity are detailed in **Appendix 2**, together with an explanation of where operational responsibility for their delivery lies.

3.2 The legislative framework that the Group operates within is detailed at **Appendix 5**.

4 Implementation

4.1 Sovereign Housing Group aims to provide strong central support for local service delivery. In this context, it is appropriate for Group-wide strategies and policies to provide a clear framework of requirements, within which Group members can design services that are effective in their own localities. This approach will also allow us to achieve a balance between the need for Group-wide accountability and the desire to benefit from the diversity of the Group and the differing approaches taken by Group members.

4.2 In the case of an Equalities and Diversity strategy, it is also important that the approach be integrated into the day to day business of the organisation. In common with the Group Strategic Plan, overall responsibility for delivery of this strategy rests with the Group Chief Executive; individual Group Directors and Managing Directors are responsible for delivery plans at a more local level.

4.3 Being a fair and responsible organisation requires us to carry out our business in a particular way - taking account of people's needs and

Equality and Diversity Strategy

preferences. But the fundamental business of the Group – providing homes and neighbourhoods where people want to live – has not changed. For this reason, this strategy does not set out any new objectives. Instead, it identifies a series of requirements that relate to different parts of the business. Like the objectives that appear in other strategies, these requirements will provide the focus for evaluation and planning at the local level.

- 4.4 Responsibility for delivering these requirements will rest with the Group Directors and Managing Directors. It will be for each of them to determine how they will meet their responsibilities by involving staff and residents as necessary. **Appendix 3** sets out the responsibilities of each director. It is anticipated that – over time – the areas of duplication will be reduced. Managing Directors of the Partner Members will also need to determine how residents should be involved in promoting equality and diversity.
- 4.5 Each Group Director or Managing Director will be responsible for ensuring that an action plan is developed for their areas of responsibility, enabling them both to meet the requirements of the strategy and provide evidence that they have met them.
- 4.6 Oversight of the strategy will be carried out by a **Group-wide Equalities Forum**. This forum, chaired by the Group Chief Executive, will meet at least 3 times a year. Its main roles will be
- to receive evidence that the Requirements are being met;
 - to share good practice; and
 - to consider whether the Requirements need to be updated or expanded.

The Forum will also be able to deal with any matters that do not fall to any of the specific task groups. Forum membership will be composed of representatives from each management team, and each management board. **Appendix 3** explains the role and composition of the Forum in more detail.

- 4.7 The Forum's role is strictly strategic, and operational responsibility will remain with the relevant Directors and Managing Directors, subject to the relevant appeal and verification processes. Nevertheless, incidents may sometime arise that cannot appropriately be dealt with through an individual's line manager. Where this is the case, they should be dealt with in accordance with the arrangements for 'whistle blowing' relevant to each Group member.

Appendix 1

Equalities Statement

Sovereign Housing Group recognises that we operate in diverse communities. We aim to provide homes and neighbourhoods where people want to live, but we also want to be a sustainable social business, and to be fair and responsible in everything we do. For all these reasons, our commitment to equality and diversity is central to the way we work.

We aim to ensure that all applicants, residents, employees and other customers receive fair treatment, free from direct or indirect discrimination on any grounds.

Vision:

Everyone associated with Sovereign Housing Group will understand what it means to treat people fairly, and will act on that understanding. We will be able to show clearly how we embrace and promote equality and diversity, by creating opportunities for residents, employees and the wider communities we serve. We will take prompt and robust action to deal with unfair discrimination by any individual or organisation connected with Sovereign Housing Group.

Although we aim to treat everyone fairly, we recognise that certain groups may face discrimination or may be disadvantaged in other ways. We refer to these groups as 'diversity groups'. We have identified the following diversity groups, and we will ensure that members of these groups are treated in ways that meet their needs, and that they are not excluded inappropriately from any services or activities within the Group. We will promote their inclusion and challenge discrimination against them. Sometimes, this may require us to provide additional support or facilities – such as translation facilities or adapted office equipment. Our approach to achieving the vision outlined above is set out in our Group-wide Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Diversity Group	Definition
Black and Minority Ethnic Groups;	<p>We interpret this group of people widely, and include gipsy/ travellers and any other group that would not identify themselves as white British under normal monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>We will treat members of all ethnic groups fairly, and will take account of their differing needs.</p>
Disabled people;	<p>In relation to disabled people, this strategy is based on the social model of disability, which has been developed by disabled people. This model defines disability as existing when a person with a specific impairment or condition is prevented from carrying out a particular activity because their needs have not been met.</p> <p>We consider this model to encompass people with any long term illness or condition that affects their day to day life or that could mean that they become a target for discrimination or unfair treatment. This includes HIV status, MS, Haemophilia, mental</p>

	<p>illness, learning disability or any similar long term condition.</p> <p>As a service provider and as an employer, we will work in a way that promotes the inclusion of disabled people.</p>
People of different faiths;	We aim to promote sustainable neighbourhoods and to be a sustainable organisation. This means people of different faiths living and working alongside each other, accepting and respecting each others' beliefs.
People of different ages;	Age can be the focus for discrimination. For example, older people may face discrimination in the workplace, whilst younger people – particularly young parents - may face prejudice in gaining access to services. We will combat any discrimination against people in relation to their age.
People of different genders;	Whilst women are most likely to be the target of gender-based discrimination, we recognise that this is not exclusively the case. For example, men may also be the victims of domestic violence. We will ensure that men, women and people who define themselves as transgender are treated fairly in terms of services and employment.
People with different relationship status;	Our policies and services will not discriminate between people who are married, single, co-habiting or part of a civil partnership.
Ex-offenders	Where people have been – or are – in contact with the criminal justice services, we will only take it into account when it is directly and demonstrably linked to the matter under consideration. For example, certain posts may require applicants to be subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks, or an applicant for housing may be subject to residence restrictions or other injunctions.
People with different sexual orientation;	<p>Sexual orientation is defined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • orientation towards persons of the same sex (lesbians and gay men) • orientation towards persons of the opposite sex (heterosexual) • orientation towards persons of the same sex and opposite sex (bisexual) <p>Our policies and services will not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.</p>
People with caring responsibilities	As service providers and as employers, we will take account of people's caring responsibilities.

Appendix 2

Strategic requirements

The table below indicates the regulatory requirement in the left hand column. The requirements of this strategy - Sovereign Housing Group Requirements - are more broadly drawn, to reflect the diversity groups we have identified, and cover a slightly broader range of activities.

Housing Corporation Requirement	Sovereign Housing Group Requirement	Lead responsibility for compliance	Likely evidence (not exhaustive)
<i>(i) Lettings: are proportionate to BME housing need, or census data where this information is deficient, in the area where the association has homes. An association specialising in particular client groups establishes different targets based on ethnicity data available for such groups.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications and lettings reflect housing need amongst diversity groups and others in the communities we serve. • The design of new homes and neighbourhoods takes account of the needs of local communities, including diversity groups. • New residents from diversity groups are at least as satisfied with their new homes as others are. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDs • GDD in relation to design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core reports • LA-based housing need data • Development and lettings satisfaction surveys • Evidence of how community needs are considered in development schemes.
<i>(ii) Tenant satisfaction: is at least as high as for non- BME tenants.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers from diversity groups are at least as satisfied with our services as others are. • We are able to show that residents and customers from diversity groups receive a standard of service similar to that provided to others that takes account of their specific needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDs • GFD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction surveys • Detailed analysis of service/ PI data • Details of how services are tailored

Appendix 2

Strategic requirements

Housing Corporation Requirement	Sovereign Housing Group Requirement	Lead responsibility for compliance	Likely evidence (not exhaustive)
<i>(iii) Dealing effectively with racial harassment: the association establishes targets for reporting, victim support and satisfaction, and action taken against perpetrators.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are able to demonstrate through robust data that we deal effectively with harassment directed against diversity groups, and that customers are satisfied with our approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MDs in relation to customers, GHRD in relation to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on numbers of incidents, performance in dealing with them and satisfaction with outcomes. Data on staff harassment cases.
<i>(iv) Governing body membership: the proportion of BME new appointments and re-appointments to the governing body is the same as under 'Lettings' above.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board Membership reflects the diverse communities we serve, particularly in terms of our diversity groups. Board Members from diversity groups are satisfied with any specific training, development or other types of support they require to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCX MDs GCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data Formal feedback as part of Board Member appraisals Feedback on specific events
<i>(v) Staffing: new appointments and promotions achieve the same levels of representation, at all levels of the organisation, as under the application of the 'Lettings' criteria.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job applications and take up of offers of employment reflect the make up of the communities where we work. Employees from diversity groups are satisfied with any specific training, development or other types of support they require to fulfil their role. Employees from diversity groups are equally satisfied with their employment in comparison to others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GHRD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data Analysis of training and development feedback Staff survey

Appendix 2

Strategic requirements

Housing Corporation Requirement	Sovereign Housing Group Requirement	Lead responsibility for compliance	Likely evidence (not exhaustive)
<i>(vi) Representation in tenants/residents associations: reflects the ethnic mix of the association's tenants in the relevant area.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents from diversity groups are equally represented in activities designed to gather feedback on services, or to influence their development. Involved residents from diversity groups are satisfied with any specific training, development or other types of support they require to participate in these activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data Feedback on specific events More general feedback
<i>(vii) Employment performance of suppliers, contractors and consultants: as a criterion for award of work or contracts and a condition of doing business, associations should pass on requirements in respect of staffing, customer satisfaction and dealing with racial harassment (set out above) to their consultants, contractors and suppliers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are able to show that we have required everyone that carries out work for us to comply with our Group Equalities and Diversity Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exor accreditation Audits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our premises and other facilities provide a welcoming and supportive environment for all employees and visitors, including those from diversity groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MDs re: customers, GFD re: facilities & GHRD re: staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audits Staff and visitor feedback

Appendix 2

Strategic requirements

<i>Housing Corporation Requirement</i>	Sovereign Housing Group Requirement	Lead responsibility for compliance	Likely evidence (not exhaustive)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can show that we have considered whether our policies and procedures are likely to have an adverse impact on any diversity group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCX MDs GHRD GFD GDD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of impact assessments having been carried out
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can show that the way we approach communication is inclusive and takes account of people's specific needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GCX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details of how communications are tailored General feedback – satisfaction survey.

Key

MD – Managing Director

GCX – Group Chief Executive

GFD – Group Finance Director

GDD – Group Development Director

GHRD – Group HR Director

GCS – Group Company Secretary

Appendix 3

Equality and Diversity operational responsibilities

The table below indicates the broad areas of responsibility across the Group, for which each Group or Managing Director is responsible. Their responsibility encompasses both compliance with the Group Requirements, and the active promotion of diversity in their particular areas.

Support will be provided from the following:

1. SHG's Performance team will lead on definition/ analysis of monitoring data (age, sex ethnicity etc) to make sure that we can identify any trends in relation to our diversity groups, and that Group Members/ teams take a co-ordinated approach. They will establish consistent definitions to be used for monitoring, and will work with others to agree monitoring frameworks and reporting formats that can be applied consistently by Group members. Where necessary, they will provide advice and support to enable Group members to undertake the required data analysis.
2. SHG's Performance team will also provide updates to all Group Members on any changes in housing law or Best Practice relating to customer services in relation to our diversity groups.
3. SHG's HR team will provide updates to colleagues on changes in employment legislation or Best Practice, including any new legal requirements relating to the workplace.
4. The Group Chief Executive's team will provide updates on general regulatory or legal requirements specific to the housing sector.
5. The Group Chief Executive's team will ensure that individual action plans are amalgamated into a Group-wide action plan.
6. The Group Chief Executive's team will provide secretariat support to the Group-wide Equalities Forum.

Director	Focus	Scope
SHA Managing Director	Customer Service (residents, applicants etc) and related procurement.	SHA
THA Managing Director	Customer Service (residents, applicants etc) and related procurement. Staffing matters , including suitability of working environment and equipment	THA

Appendix 3

Equality and Diversity operational responsibilities

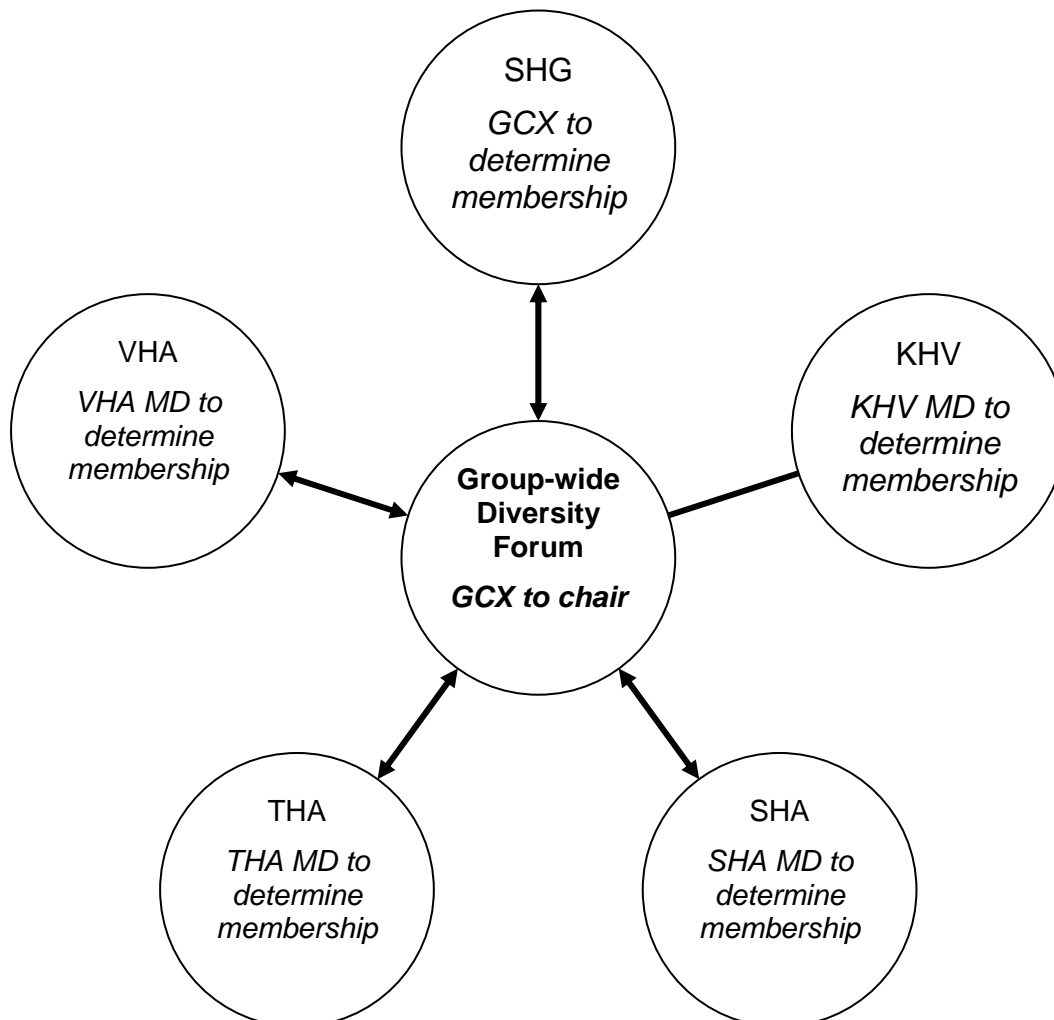
VHA Managing Director,	Customer Service (residents, applicants etc) and related procurement Staffing matters , including suitability of working environment and equipment	VHA
KHV Managing Director	Customer Service (residents, applicants etc) and related procurement Staffing matters , including suitability of working environment and equipment	KHV
Group Development Director	Design of new homes and estates, (including location, dwelling mix etc.) Development partnerships and procurement, including agency work, consultants, contractors	Group-wide and Sovereign Development Consortium
Group Human Resources Director	Staffing matters , including advice and support service to Group members	All Group members
Group Finance Director	Finance services , including payments, customer accounts, contents insurance etc. Facilities management , including accessibility of offices	All Group Members
Group Chief Executive	Governance , including board composition and support to Board Members.	Group wide
	Advice and support to Group members, co-ordination of action plans, and secretariat support to Equalities Forum (4-6 above)	
	Communication , including accessible and inclusive approaches	Group wide

Governance of Equality & Diversity within SHG

For Equalities and Diversity to truly become a mainstream part of our work, we need to have governance structures that are based on how we manage other aspects of day to day delivery. We also need to make sure that strong central support is available to support local delivery.

Although there is some specialist knowledge required in terms of changing legislation and promotion of best practice, this is no different to many other aspects of how we work, and can be provided in the form of support to managers.

The diagram below illustrates how different management teams and other groups contribute to governing equalities and diversity across the group, ensuring that the Requirements are delivered. Details of the remit of each group are provided in the table that follows.



Group/ individual	Responsibilities	Frequency of meetings
All Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominate Equalities champion to keep up to date on issues and represent Board at E&D Forum annually 	n/a
Group Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead on E&D strategy at Group level • Chair Group-wide E&D Forum • Provide/ manage resource to support E&D champions, and Forum. • Co-ordinate approach to ensuring that boards and committees reflect principles of Equality and Diversity through governance forum. 	n/a
Group policy lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental scanning, briefings, secretariat support for Group-wide E&D Forum 	n/a
Group-wide E&D Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Group Strategy and Policy. • Agree detailed Strategic Requirements. • Approve detailed plans to deliver Strategic Requirements by Group members and SHG departments. • Monitor delivery of Strategic Requirements • Consider the implications of any new legislative or regulatory requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Min. 3 times per annum
Managing Directors and SHG Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get local team/ forum together to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Set local action plans and PIs ○ Make sure they get delivered • Determine how residents should input into local approach • Nominate Management Team representative to be policy lead and Group Forum member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least quarterly

1. Introduction

This note supports the Diversity key line of enquiry (KLOE). It outlines the current legislation and statutory requirements that organisations inspected by the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate are expected to take into account. Legislation and statutory requirements change over time so this note will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains up to date.

2. Legislation

Organisations should be able to demonstrate that they are meeting current legislative requirements and are being pro-active in preparing for new legislation requirements. Some organisations are slow in delivering against responsibilities and as a result delays impact on delivery of effective services to customers. Further information on specific areas of legislation is detailed below:

Equal Pay Act 1970

- Made it unlawful to pay men and women differently for the same or like work or on work rated as equivalent
- An equality clause is placed in a woman's employment contract so that their contractual conditions are no less favourable than those a man who is engaged on like work or on work rated as equivalent

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

- Made it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of sex or marital status in the provision of employment, goods and services.
- Made it unlawful to victimise a person for being involved in a sex discrimination case.
- The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was set up under the Act with power to issue codes of practice and monitor its implementation.

Race Relations Act 1976

- Made it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origin in the provision of employment, goods and services.
- Made it unlawful to victimise a person for being involved in a sex discrimination case.
- It set up the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) whose duties are very similar to the EOC but in relation to race.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

- Made it unlawful to discriminate against a person on ground of disability i.e. a person who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a long term and substantial adverse effect on her/his ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

- Introduced a duty of employers to make reasonable adjustments to physical features or other arrangements that would place the disabled person at a substantial disadvantage.

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

- If there is intention, behaviour that has the effect of causing harassment alarm or distress, including within the workplace, is a criminal offence under this act. This became known as the ‘Stalking Act’.

The Human Rights Act 1998

- Came into force in 2000. Applies to all public bodies
- Will have an equalities impact under several of the articles.
- Article 14 specifically prohibiting discrimination of any kind.

The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975

- Prohibits direct discrimination in employment on the grounds that a person intends to/is currently/has undergone gender reassignment.

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

- Made race discrimination unlawful in public authority functions not previously covered by the 1976 Act.
- "Public authority" has been defined widely for this purpose. This means that law enforcement, whether by the police, local authorities or tax inspectors, are for the first time subject to race discrimination laws
- Certain public appointments, and the termination and the terms and conditions of public appointments, are also subject for the first time to race discrimination laws, as is the implementation of Government policies and services across the board.
- The Act also places a general duty on public authorities to work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.

Age of Consent for Gay Men 2001

- This was lowered to 16
- However there is attached to this the “abuse of trust” law which criminalises any person who has sexual relations with someone they have a professional responsible relationship with.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

- Outlaw discrimination in employment and vocational training on the grounds of sexual orientation and religion or belief respectively.

- Direct discrimination - treating people less favourably than others on grounds of sexual orientation or religion or belief;
- Indirect discrimination - applying a provision, criterion or practice which disadvantages people of a particular sexual orientation or religion or belief and which is not justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim;
- Harassment - unwanted conduct that violates people's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment;
- Victimisation - treating people less favourably because of something they have done under or in connection with the Regulations, e.g. made a formal complaint of discrimination or given evidence in a tribunal case.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995: extended in 2004, whereby service providers will have a statutory obligation to take reasonable steps to remove physical barriers to disabled people or to provide services by other means.

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (mainly to be implemented by Dec 2006)

- Makes it unlawful for a public authority to discriminate against a disabled person when exercising its functions
- Requires public authorities to –
 - Have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against and the harassment of disabled persons
 - Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other persons
 - Tackle institutional discrimination through a duty to promote disability equality for the public sector

Civil Partnership Act 2005

- Same sex couples are entitled to the same employment benefits as married employees and same sex couples can make a legal commitment by forming a civil partnership.

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 1st. October 2006

- A minimum default retirement age of 65 years
- Bans direct and indirect age discrimination in recruitment, promotion and training in the workplace.
- Unfair dismissal and statutory redundancy rights extended to those 65 and over (unless they have reached the employers retirement age of 65 or over).
- Employers duties include:
 - Employers to consider an employee's request to continue working beyond retirement.
 - Employers to give written notice to employees at least 6 months in advance of their intended retirement date.

Housing Act 2004 Gypsies and Travellers

- Duty under the Race Relations Act to promote good community relations in regard to accommodation provision for Gypsies and Travellers
- Local authorities are required to include Gypsies and Travellers in the Accommodation Needs Assessment process, and to have a strategy in place which sets out how any identified need will be met, as part of their wider housing strategies.

The Gender Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2006 is an amendment to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. **The Gender Equality Duty** comes into force in April 2007. All public authorities must demonstrate that they are promoting equality for women and men and that they are eliminating sexual discrimination and harassment. The specific duties, in brief, are:

- **To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme**, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives.
- In formulating its overall objectives, **to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.**
- To gather and use information on how the public authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
- To consult stakeholders (i.e. employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
- To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.
- To implement the actions set out in its scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.
- To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

The first scheme must be published by 30 April 2007.

3. Emerging Issues

New legislation to support equality and diversity agenda. These include:

Equalities Bill: (April 2007)

Part 1 - establishes the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) and sets out its duties, general powers, and enforcement powers. The CEHR will take on the work of the existing equality commissions and will additionally assume responsibility for promoting equality and combating unlawful discrimination in three new strands, namely sexual orientation, religion or belief, and age. The CEHR will also have responsibility for the promotion of human rights.

Part 2 - sets out provisions prohibiting discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, premises and the exercise of public functions.

Part 3 - sets out provisions prohibiting sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions and creates a public sector duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

Single Equality Bill (April 2009) - This new Bill brings together all the strands of diversity within one piece of legislation. It will become law in April 2010 and will bring with it new and challenging expectations on housing organisations across England, Wales and Scotland. Broadly, it will impact across a whole range of key areas including regulation and inspection, monitoring and review, and engagement with local communities. Under proposals contained in the Bill, public bodies will have to consider the impact of their policies on socio-economic disadvantage. In practice this could see public bodies obliged to offer extra support to disadvantaged communities to make sure they have the same access to services as other residents. Local authorities would have to consider how strategic decisions they make could be used to reduce inequality across areas such as housing, education, health, and crime rates.

Work & Families Act 2006: April 2007

- Extending statutory maternity pay, maternity allowance and statutory adoption pay from 6 to 9 months;
- A power to introduce new paternity leave for fathers, enabling them to benefit from leave and statutory pay if the mother returns to work before the end of her maternity leave period;
- Introducing 'keeping in touch' days, whereby women on maternity leave and staff on adoptive leave can, by agreement with their employer, return to work for a few days during their leave;
- Extending the period of notice for return from maternity leave to two months, enabling employers and employees to plan more effectively for return to work;
- Extending the right to request flexible working to carers.

4. Key references, useful guidance

General

Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com

- This organisation has replaced the following organisations:-
 - Commission for Racial Equality
 - Disability Rights Commission
 - Equal Opportunities Commission

Government Equalities Office www.equalities.gov.uk

Disability

Code of Practice – Rights of Access: Goods, Facilities, Services and Premises
www.disability.gov.uk/dda

DDA Helpline ddaahelp@stra.sitel.co.uk

Department for Education website for all disability publications www.disability.gov.uk

Disability Information <http://www.disabilityinformation.com/>

Royal National Institute for the Blind www.rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute for the Deaf www.rnid.org.uk

Job Centre Plus www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk for GIS and access to work information

Black and Minority Ethnic

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance
http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/default_en.asp

Home Office Website <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2001-race-relations/>
Institute of Race Relations www.irr.org.uk

Gender

Opportunity Now www.business-impact.org

Women's National Commission www.thewnc.org.uk 0207 276 2555

Women's Unit www.womens-unit.gov.uk

Age

Department for Work and Pensions, Age Positive - <http://dwp.gov.uk/agepositive/>

Age Concern <http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/>

Information on Pensions: www.pensions-pmi.org.uk

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

GALOP: confidential L&G help-line 0207 704 6767 www.galop.org.uk

Lesbian & Gay Employment Rights <http://www.proud2serve.net/help/lager.htm> 020 7704 2205

Stonewall <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Terence Higgins Trust www.tht.org.uk

Work Options

Direct Gov:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Flexibleworking/DG_10029491

New Ways to Work <http://www.newwaystowork.org/>

Part-time Work ACAS <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1576>