

## **ED&I STRATEGY 2025-2028**

### **1. What this strategy is about and why we need it?**

- 1.1 This strategy confirms our commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I). It is overarched by our Corporate Strategy (2024- 2030) *Getting There Together* which details that we will continue to promote inclusive communities and respect diversity, ensuring equality is rooted in all our actions. It is supported by our values and guiding principles which steer how we work the Acis Way and ensures that we have the right focus and priorities.

### **2. Who does this strategy apply to?**

- 2.1 This strategy applies to all of our people, Board members, contractors working for us, and to our customers and the communities that we work in.
- 2.2 Specific responsibilities are as follows:
- Our Board and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) have responsibility for positive commitment to our ED&I priorities and overseeing actions to meet them
  - Our Senior Management Team (SMT) are responsible for ensuring that services are delivered and developed in accordance with our priorities
  - The ED&I Working Group, comprising representation from all teams, has responsibility for positive promotion of our ED&I priorities and reviewing how we are meeting them
  - Our people have a responsibility to show a positive commitment to our ED&I priorities

### **3. Our Vision and Priorities**

- 3.1 Our strategy is underpinned by our ED&I vision, which was developed in conjunction with the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) and endorsed by our Board:

**“Acis group is committed to delivering services and support that bring about positive change. We will do this by continuing to develop our knowledge and understanding of the diverse needs of our customers and communities and promoting an equitable and inclusive organisational culture.”**

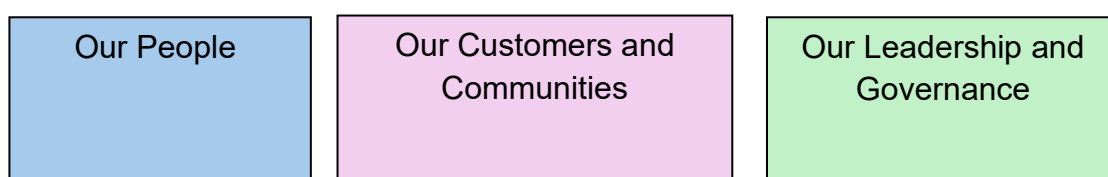
3.2 Our strategy has been developed by our ED&I Working Group. It has been informed by:

a) Consultation with our customers and our people. Whilst a wide spectrum of views were expressed by the customers who responded to a survey conducted through our “Your Voice” platform, feedback received aligned to the priorities for our strategy. Consultation with our people was undertaken directly within teams, and the feedback received also aligned to the priorities for our strategy. Both the customer and our people feedback gave helpful pointers to guide how we deliver some of the priorities.

and

b) The assessment that we commissioned by RSM Consulting (RSM) and the HDN in 2024 to give us a specialist independent view of what we are doing well and where we can further develop our focus. The assessment led to us proudly attaining the HDN DNA accreditation, which is a benchmark for ED&I excellence in the housing sector.

3.3 To deliver our ED&I vision, we have identified three main areas of focus, around which we have set the priorities for our strategy. These are:



3.4 Our priorities are shown below. There is a headline recap on our current position for each, and we have set out both our aims and how we will meet them.

| <b>PRIORITY 1: RAISE AWARENESS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p><b>Our current position is:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We have carried out various activities to raise the awareness of our people, including our ED&amp;I calendar, training via our APLE system, regular discussions in team meetings, sharing videos, and arranging themed events.</li><li>• When we surveyed our people and the Board in 2023, 82% either strongly agreed or agreed that they were well trained and knowledgeable on ED&amp;I issues. 97% either strongly agreed or agreed that they were aware of our ED&amp;I policy.</li></ul> |

**Our aims are to:**

- Continue to raise our people and the Board's general awareness and understanding of ED&I principles and terminology and our commitment and priorities.
- Raise our customers' awareness of our education/training programmes and wellbeing/support services.

**To meet our aims, we will:**

- Deliver a programme of awareness raising activities for our people and our Board.
- Re-survey our people/the Board at an annual frequency to assess awareness levels.
- Promote our ED&I principles to our customers and produce an annual report to share progress in delivering our priorities.
- Promote our education/training offer/programmes and wellbeing/support services to raise customers' awareness.

**PRIORITY 2: ACTIVE COLLABORATION****Our current position is:**

- We have an established working group which has several sub-groups and positively promotes ED&I activities.
- We actively participate in peer networks and are members of a specialist ED&I network (HDN).

**Our aims are to:**

- Ensure that our working group has representation from all teams, positively promotes our ED&I priorities, and reviews how we are meeting them.
- Continue to actively participate in peer and specialist ED&I networks, with a view to sharing and implementing good practice consistently across all areas.

**To meet our aims, we will:**

- Ensure that the working group meets at an agreed frequency with active representation from all teams, has a clear focus, actively promotes our ED&I priorities and reviews how we are meeting them.

- Ensure that ED&I is a standing agenda item at all team meetings, with safe and progressive discussions encouraged.
- Continue to actively participate in peer and specialist ED&I networks and seek to widen these as opportunities allow.
- Build on our collaborative approach by sharing learning and innovative practices across all areas and ensure that good practice approaches are consistently implemented.
- Ensure that ED&I is a standing agenda item at all team meetings, with safe and progressive discussions encouraged.
- Continue to actively participate in peer and specialist ED&I networks and seek to widen these as opportunities allow.
- Build on our collaborative approach by sharing learning and innovative practices across all areas and ensuring that good practice approaches are consistently implemented.

### **PRIORITY 3: COLLECT AND USE PROFILING DATA**

#### **Our current position is:**

- We continue to collect profiling data from our customers but this is not yet being routinely used to tailor provision and services or assess if there are any barriers for particular groups.
- We continue to collect profiling data from our people and the Board through different routes towards assessing diversity and informing resource planning.

#### **Our aims are to:**

- Have a good knowledge and awareness of the characteristics and diversity of our customers.
- Use data meaningfully to inform service provision for our customers.
- To understand and promote the diversity of our people.
- To assess the representativeness of our Board.

#### **To meet our aims, we will:**

- Continue to promote why we are collecting profiling data and how will use it and actively encourage customers, our people, and the Board to provide it.

- Review all profiling data at a six-monthly frequency and act in response to findings as appropriate.

#### **PRIORITY 4: PROMOTE A POSITIVE CULTURE**

##### **Our current position is:**

- We have established values and guiding principles which are both recognised and worked to.
- Our people are very committed to the difference they make to people's lives and recognise the value and importance of having an inclusive culture can have on those that we support. The aforementioned HDN assessment highlighted that interviews at Acis were amongst the most positive that they had undertaken in carrying out their assessments nationwide.
- We celebrate diversity, highlight good news stories, lived experiences, and engage our people in being able to express their individuality and individual needs.
- Our 2024 Investors in People assessment identified *"living our values and behaviours"* as established (silver) and moving towards the advanced (gold) level
- 2024/25 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) showed 86.1% of respondents feeling that they are treated with fairness and respect.

##### **Our aim is to:**

- Promote a positive culture where ED&I is recognised, valued, and celebrated.

##### **To meet our aim, we will:**

- Continue to promote our values and a positive culture around ED&I via 1-2-1s, team meetings, communications, and the working group.
- Maintain a zero-tolerance approach to cases of harassment, victimisation, and hate crime and take prompt action to address any recognised/reported instances, through the application of our workplace policies or the enforcement of tenancy conditions.

#### **PRIORITY 5: SUPPORT ED&I THROUGH OUR LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

##### **Our current position is:**

- Our Leadership is committed to ED&I at Board and Executive level and are clear about how this will benefit us and the customers that we serve.

- The Board Chair signed up to the National Housing Federation's Chairs' ED&I challenge.
- The Terms of Reference for the Board and the various committees are well-defined and provide a clear purposes and structure but they have narrow coverage of ED&I roles and responsibilities.
- The Board receives an ED&I report at an agreed frequency.
- We are participating in HDN's trainee Board member programme to support and nurture a more diverse cohort of future Board members.
- Our 2024 recruitment resulted in increasing the diversity/lived experience of the Board/Committees and the Executive Leadership Team.

**Our aims are to:**

- Comply with the principles in the National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Governance.
- Embed ED&I within our governance framework.
- Promote inclusive recruitment with a view to the Board being representative of the communities that we serve.

**To meet our aims, we will:**

- Promote ED&I responsibilities within the Board/Committees' terms of reference and incorporate into role profiles.
- Report our ED&I dashboard and on the delivery of our strategy action plan to the Board at the agreed frequency.
- Continue to take proactive steps to support and nurture a more diverse cohort of future Board and JLT members

**PRIORITY 6: INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE AND SERVICE PROVISION**

**Our current position is:**

- We proactively support our people who have diverse backgrounds and needs by considering any reasonable adjustments that may be required in the workplace.
- We carry out Equality Impact Assessments on strategies and policies when they are developed or reviewed.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We encourage persons registering on the Your Voice platform to provide profiling information so that we can seek to understand who is engaging with us.</li> <li>• We use some service measures to identify if there are any significant differences in the outcomes that customers may be experiencing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>Our aims are to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer accessible, flexible, and inclusive workplaces</li> <li>• Ensure that our strategies and policies support our ED&amp;I commitments.</li> <li>• Enable diverse customer engagement activity and support underrepresented groups</li> <li>• Integrate ED&amp;I principles into service interactions and provide customers with an experience that is fair and inclusive.</li> <li>• Ensure that contractor and supplier work practices are consistent with our ED&amp;I commitments.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><b>To meet our aims, we will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake workplace assessments with a repeat frequency.</li> <li>• Continue to undertake Equality Impact Assessments on our strategies and policies when newly drafted or reviewed.</li> <li>• Assess who is and who is not getting involved “Your Voice” activities to understand and identify any under-represented groups and take appropriate action in response.</li> <li>• Continue to analyse service measures (including TSMs/complaints/ASB cases) to identify if there are any significant differences in the outcomes that customers may be experiencing that require action to address.</li> <li>• Assess contractor and supplier ED&amp;I commitments and work practices as part of our procurement and ongoing contract management.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>PRIORITY 7: RECRUITMENT, REWARD AND DEVELOPMENT</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p><b>Our current position is:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our People Strategy sets out our aim of attracting a diverse range of applicants and the best talent.</li> <li>• Our job advertisements, application process, and shortlisting are inclusive.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

- We monitor and report profiling information for job applicants and appointees.
- Our people policies, procedures, and practices support ED&I.
- We collate, assess, and report gender pay gap information.
- Our reward and recognition approaches are fair and equitable.

**Our aims are to:**

- Be inclusive when recruiting for all opportunities.
- Have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities where we operate.
- Ensure that our people policies, procedures, and practices continue to positively support ED&I in the workplace.
- Ensure that we provide balanced and equitable opportunities to support professional development, talent management, and succession planning.
- To analyse and understand any pay gaps and use findings to inform resource planning

**To meet our aims, we will:**

- Reference our commitment to ED&I when advertising and/or promoting job vacancies and make appointments against objective and non-discriminatory criteria.
- Continue to monitor and report profiling information for job applicants and appointees.
- Keep our people policies, procedures, and practices under review to ensure that they positively support ED&I in the workplace.
- Ensuring our requirements for talent management, development and succession planning resourcing are informed and influenced by our diversity and inclusion data.
- Collate pay gap information for assessment, planning, and reporting.

#### **4. How will we monitor this strategy?**

- 4.1 The delivery of this strategy will be subject to ongoing monitoring by the ED&I Working Group. The Board will review progress against the action plan that accompanies the strategy at the agreed frequency.

#### **5. Related legislation/Regulation**

- Equality Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 1998

#### **6. Related strategies and policies**

##### **Strategies**

- Corporate
- People

##### **Policies**

- Allocations
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Conduct
- Confidential Reporting
- Customer Feedback
- Data Protection
- Dignity at Work
- Domestic Abuse
- Flexible Working
- Grievance
- Hate Incidents and Mate Crime
- Health and Safety
- Hoarding
- Learning and Development
- Maternity
- Neighbourhood and Estate Management
- Procurement
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Recruitment and Selection
- Safeguarding
- Starter Tenancy
- Tenancy Management
- Vulnerabilities

## 7. When this strategy will be reviewed

- 7.1 This strategy will be reviewed in 2028 or sooner if required by changes to legislation and/or regulation, or if priorities/objectives require to be refocussed

## 8. Jargon buster

| Reference                          | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Customer                           | Any customer of Acis, including but not limited to, tenants, learners, and students                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Disability Confident accreditation | Scheme supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace                                                                                                                                                     |
| Equality Impact Assessment         | A way of ensuring that policies, practices, services, and functions are as inclusive as they can be by ensuring that they do not inadvertently disadvantage anyone directly affected                                                                     |
| Harassment                         | Unwanted behaviour which may be offensive or cause intimidation or humiliation. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination                                                                                                      |
| Hate crime                         | Crimes that are targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice towards that person's: 1. disability 2. race or ethnicity 3. religion or belief 4. sexual orientation 5. transgender identity. They can be committed against a person or property |
| HDN DNA                            | Housing Diversity Network Diversity Network Accreditation - a benchmark for ED&I excellence in the housing sector                                                                                                                                        |
| Pay Gap                            | The difference between the average amounts that different sectors of the population are paid                                                                                                                                                             |
| Reasonable adjustment              | A physical change to premises or to work practices to avoid or correct the disadvantage to a person with a disability                                                                                                                                    |
| Victimisation                      | Victimisation (defined in Section 27 of the Equality Act 2010) takes place where one person treats another less favourably because they have asserted their legal rights in line with the Act or helped someone else to do so                            |
| Your Voice                         | Our customer engagement framework                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## **9. Appendices**

### **1. Action Plan**