



Equality and diversity policy

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1 Introduction

Alamo Housing Co-operative is committed to upholding the first co-operative principle which states that membership should be open to all “without artificial restriction or any social, political, racial or religious discrimination”.

We will implement the principles of equality and diversity when we allocate homes, when we provide services to members, in our employment practices and through our partnership arrangements. Our *Code of Conduct* requires that our members adhere to the Equality and Diversity Policy when at meetings or otherwise acting on behalf of the co-operative.

Our co-operative has always recognised that some social groups experience high levels of social and economic disadvantage, intolerance and discrimination. It remains our aim to counteract discrimination and promote equality of opportunity, and so we will always consider the impact of our policies and procedures on disadvantaged groups to ensure that we are meeting this objective.

Alamo Housing Co-operative will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation of our members, employees or contractors for any reason. Harassment committed by a member will be treated as a serious breach of the conditions of tenancy.

2 What we mean by equality and diversity

Equality means ensuring that individuals and groups are treated fairly and equally and due regard is paid to people's specific characteristics when we provide services or employ people.

The *Equality Act 2010* sets out a number of “protected characteristics”, and grants people with these characteristics statutory protection from discrimination. These characteristics are:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.
- Marital / civil partnership status.
- Race, ethnic origin, religion and belief.

Alamo Housing Co-operative will promote equality by preventing discrimination and by respecting diversity. We will recognise, value and take account of our members' diverse backgrounds, and respect their knowledge, skills, and experiences. We believe that a diverse community should also be a strong community.



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3 Objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy

The objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy are to ensure that:

- All our members have fair and equal access to services.
- The composition of the management committee reflects that of the wider membership.
- Our meetings and other activities are as accessible as possible to our members, so that as many people as possible can participate.
- If discrimination is identified in any form, no matter who the victim is, we take appropriate action to stop it.
- We let our homes fairly and that everyone living in our community has an equal chance to apply for one.

This policy applies to the members of our co-operative, to people who live in our members' homes and to any visitors they invite to their home. It will also apply to our employees, contractors and consultants.

We will expect all the people and organisations who work with our co-operative to respect the principles of equality and diversity.

4 Legislation

Alamo Housing Co-operative will comply with all the relevant legislation and codes of practice including:

- *The Equality Acts*
- *The Employment Protection Acts*
- *The Human Rights Act 1998*
- *The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*

5 Breaches of the equality and diversity policy

Any member who commits harassment, or who discriminates against another member, a neighbour, an employee or a contractor, will be in breach of the equality and diversity policy and also in breach of the conditions of their tenancy.

In the event of an allegation of harassment or discrimination, the committee will investigate, and if the breach is serious, the general meeting will have the power to suspend or expel the member concerned.

The following actions will be considered a serious breach of the policy:

- The use of racist, sexist, homophobic and other discriminatory language.
- Harassment, including physical and mental violence, motivated by hatred of people with a protected characteristic.
- Discrimination against any person in respect of the allocation of a property; the conduct of a repair; the employment of staff and contractors, or in relation to any service we provide.

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6 Diversity of representation

As a small organisation, reliant on volunteer members, Alamo Housing Co-operative is not able to guarantee that the make up of the management committee will always reflect that of the broader membership.

However, the committee will take steps to encourage members from any ethnic or cultural groups that are not represented, or are under-represented, to become active and to stand for the committee and committee offices.

In order to ensure that everyone is able to participate, we may offer help with the costs of transport and childcare to members who need it.

7 Equality in allocations

Alamo Housing Co-operative is committed to allocating homes fairly, which means that everyone living in our community should, subject to their personal and family circumstances, should have an equal chance of being housed by our co-operative.

If we have entered into a nominations agreement in respect any of the homes we own or manage we will adhere to it. We may sign nominations agreements with local authorities and with the housing associations whose properties we manage.

We will also keep a waiting list, and we will publicise it in such a way as to ensure that everyone who is entitled to apply has a fair chance of doing so. We will also make sure that our procedures for assessing housing needs and co-operability do not deliberately or unintentionally discriminate against any person or group of people.

In order that we can check that we are complying with our commitment to allocate homes fairly, we will collect and record certain information about new members. This information will include their gender, age and ethnicity.

8 Equality of access to services

We will keep records of our members' specific communication needs, including languages spoken, literacy needs and any vision and hearing disabilities. This will enable us to contact people using the most appropriate methods. Some of the methods we will use to contact people are described below:

- Alamo Housing Co-operative is a small organisation and does not have the resources to translate written materials as a matter of course. If any of our members find it difficult to access our services because they do not read English, or do not read English well, we will arrange for an interpreter to assist.
- Members whose literacy is poor will be contacted, as far as possible, by telephone.
- We do not have the resources to translate materials into Braille for blind members, and instead will make contact by telephone, or by home visit if this is the member's preference.
- Deaf members and members with a hearing impairment will be able to contact us using a "Teletalk" type service. We can also employ a signer to interpret if this is the member's preference.

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9 Adaptations to the homes of members with disabilities

Alamo Housing Co-operative aims to do everything it can to assist members with disabilities to make full use of their homes. As our membership becomes older, we expect that more and more members will need their home to be adapted, or alternatively to move to a more suitable home.

Subject to the division of maintenance responsibilities in our management agreement with the landlord of the member's home, the co-operative will carry out adaptations which are needed so that a member with a disability can access their home; can move around inside their home; or so they can use the facilities, particularly the kitchen and bathroom.

If extensive adaptations are needed, the co-operative may only be able to carry out the work if we can secure *Disabled Facilities Grant* from the local authority. If we cannot afford to carry out an adaptation, or if the cost would be disproportionate, we may instead offer the member a transfer to a more suitable home or ask the local authority to provide one.

Our *Allocations Policy* will take account of the needs of members with disabilities, in particular the needs of members who are finding it difficult to access their present home due to mobility problems. So far as is permitted under our nominations agreements, we will reserve ground floor flats for members who need them.

10 Monitoring and reporting

An equality and diversity report will be presented to the annual general meeting (or to another general meeting). The report will, at a minimum, show the proportion of empty homes let by ethnicity, to people with a disability, and to those over the age of 55; the proportion of complaints that were made by Black and minority ethnic members; and any cases of discrimination or harassment which related to the protected characteristics set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

The committee may also elect to receive other reports, to a regular or ad-hoc timetable, to ensure that the co-operative is complying with the equality and diversity policy.

We will comply with the requirement in the management agreements we have signed with the landlords of our properties, that we periodically provide statistics to demonstrate that we are ensuring equality of access to homes and services, and that we are promoting and respecting diversity amongst our membership. The requirement to provide statistical information may vary from landlord to landlord.

11 Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually. It will also be reviewed if there are changes to relevant legislation or to the regulatory framework.