Wigan & Leigh Housing’s Action Plan for Delivering a Fair Service.  
“There’s no quality without equality”

This document is about our approach to delivering a fair service. It explains what we are going to do and how we are going to do it.

“What’s no quality without equality”

What is a Fair Service about?

Delivering a Fair Service is about achieving equality and respecting diversity.

- Equality is about creating a fair environment, challenging discrimination and removing barriers that stop people or groups accessing services.

- Diversity is about respecting differences between people. Differences that you may be able to see like age, disability, race, and those that are invisible like sexuality, background, and work-style. It’s about valuing and harnessing those differences to create a better organisation and community.

“What’s no quality without equality”

What we are going to do.

Our vision.

Providing a fair service for all

We are committed to Equality & Diversity. We are determined to make sure that:

- Our policies, procedures and working practices, in both employment and service delivery reflect this.

- We comply with legal requirements and good practice guidance such as the Sex Discrimination, Disability, and Race Relations Acts, and the CRE Code of Practice in Rented Housing.

All our policies and procedures will be applied fairly and consistently to all people, making Wigan Borough a place for all.
We welcome feedback from employees and customers regarding how well we are meeting this commitment.

How to let us know:

**By post:**
Equality & Diversity Team  
Wigan & Leigh Housing  
Freepost WN 5327  
PO Box 48  
Wigan  
WN3 4BR

**By phone:**
Equality & Diversity Team 01942 486604  
Tenant Participation Freephone:
Leigh Homes: 0800 032 1451  
Wigan Homes: 0800 389 7652

By e-mail: equality@walh.co.uk

**By Text:** 07797806590  
or to staff at any of our offices
“There’s no quality without equality”
How we are going to do it.

To make sure that we are providing a fair service for all we have developed this Action Plan.

The Plan is based upon five Equality & Diversity ideas. They are to:

1. Remove unlawful discrimination, against individuals or groups.
3. Promote good relations between all social groups.
4. Meet our legal and good practice responsibilities.
5. Involve all types of people in how we deliver our service and measure how well we are doing.

We are pursuing these five ideas in a straightforward way:

- Appointing a Diversity Champion, and setting up an Equality & Diversity Team.
- Following Audit Commission Best Value recommendations and guidance.
- Making sure that Equality & Diversity is added to our Business and Service Action Plans.
- Following the Equality Standard for Local Government, and good practice guidance.
- Making sure that when possible we comply with Wigan Council’s Equality and Diversity plans.
- Looking at all our policies and practices to make sure that they do not discriminate unlawfully.
- Working hard to involve all types of people in what we are doing and planning to do next.
- Making sure that our staff and those involved in helping us to develop services are provided with information and training opportunities.
- Checking that we are improving.
1. **Appointing a Diversity Champion and setting up an Equality & Diversity Team.**

Our Diversity Champion is David Herschell. David is responsible for making sure that our Equality & Diversity service plans are put in place. He is helped to do this by the other members of the Equality & Diversity Team, Amanda Davies and Joanne Aspey. The Team also work very closely with the company’s Human Resources Team who are taking forwards the company’s Equality & Diversity employment issues including training.

You can contact the Team by using the “How To Let us Know” address and numbers on page 3.

2. **Following Audit Commission Best Value recommendations and guidance.**

We had a Best Value Inspection in 2002. Our overall service was assessed to be two stars with good prospects for improvement, but concerns were raised about our progress on Equality and Diversity. The recommendations of the Best Value Inspectors and the progress we have made are listed in our Equality & Diversity “Where We Are Up To” position statement. You can get this from our Website [www.walh.co.uk](http://www.walh.co.uk) or by post from the Equality & Diversity Team.

The Best Value inspectors recommended that to make sure we are being fair, we should find out which groups our staff and customers belong to. We have made a good start on this by sending out a questionnaire to all our staff, tenants, and working groups who influence the service we give. All our staff and over a third of our tenants have replied, and we are encouraging more people to let us know which groups (gender, race, disability etc) they belong to.

Before the next round of Best Value inspections, the Audit Commission has issued guidance in a document called the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE). The KLOEs set out the standards that the inspectors expect to see in organisations giving an excellent service and in organisations giving a fair service. We are working hard to provide an excellent service. Details of the Diversity KLOE and our plans to incorporate the excellent standard in our Service Plans are included in our Equality & Diversity “Where We Are Up To” position statement. You can get this from our Website [www.walh.co.uk](http://www.walh.co.uk) or by post from the Equality & Diversity Team.

3. **Making sure that Equality & Diversity is added to our Business and Service Action Plans.**

We have added Equality & Diversity into our business and service plans to make sure that this is something that all our managers and staff think about when we are providing, developing or reviewing services.

Each year our senior managers look very carefully at the services we provide, for example Customer Care, Estate Management, Homelessness and so on. Each of our services has a Service Plan. There are 19 service plans in total covering everything that we do as an organisation.
We have written an Equality & Diversity section into each of these service plans to make sure that managers:

- Show how their work contributes to our five Equality & Diversity objectives
  1. To remove unlawful discrimination, against individuals or groups.
  2. Promoting Equality and Diversity.
  3. Promoting good relations between all social groups.
  4. Meeting legal and good practice responsibilities.
  5. Involving all types of people in how we deliver our service and measuring how well we are doing.

- Commit to, and are measured against meeting a set of Equality & Diversity Targets. This years targets are for managers to:

- Encourage all types of people who have an interest in our services to get involved and wherever possible change things according to what customers have said they want. Managers must also be able to produce evidence that they have done this.

- Look carefully at our policies and practices to make sure that they do not discriminate against any particular groups of people.

- Make sure they regularly monitor how fair they are being to different groups of people by:
  - Checking if any groups (age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief and sexuality) are receiving a worse service,
  - Reporting the results,
  - If things are going wrong, making plans and setting targets to put things right.

- Make a list of the key service standards and information leaflets that will require translating into community languages and formats suitable for people with disabilities.

These targets will make sure that we take Equality & Diversity into account at the highest levels in Wigan & Leigh Housing.

Equally important is making sure that our front line staff know what is expected of them and how they can help to provide a fair service for all. We will make sure they do this by providing them with a series of training and awareness raising sessions.
4. Following the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) and good practice guidance.

The Equality Standard recognises the importance of fair treatment and equal access to local government services and employment. The standard has been developed as a tool to enable local authorities to make sure that gender, race and disability needs are included in council policy and practice on a day to day basis.

The standard has five levels. Each level has a list of actions that must be achieved. Many of the actions at each level cover similar areas but are harder to achieve. This means that as we progress through the levels our expertise in Equality and Diversity issues and how fair we really are to people will improve.

We see the actions for each level as a set of tasks to be achieved by key target dates. The Council’s Community Protection department has agreed that we have already reached level 2 of the standard, and we are currently working hard to reach level 3.

The tasks required to meet the standard and how well we think we are doing are listed in our Equality & Diversity “Where We Are Up To” position statement. You can get this from our Website www.walh.co.uk or by post from the Equality & Diversity Team.

The position statement will be updated as we get nearer to achieving level 3. Once we are sure that we meet the first three levels we will move on to achieving levels 4 and 5.

We are also looking at the best practice guidance that is provided by a range of organisations, including the Commission for Racial Equality & other housing providers.

We are employing external consultants or experts to give their views on our plans as they develop. Wigan Council’s Community Protection department is checking that we have achieved each task and level.

5. Making sure that when possible we comply with the Council’s Equality and Diversity plans.

Although we are an arms length company we are still committed to producing policies that are in line with the Council’s plans. The most important ones being the Council’s Community Plan, the Housing Strategy, Equality & Diversity Strategy, and Race Equality Scheme.

Our main responsibility in the Community Plan (currently being reviewed) and Housing Strategy is in respect of “access to a decent home in a clean safe neighbourhood”.

This Action Plan is in line with the key priorities in the Councils Equality & Diversity Strategy and supports the key aims of the Council’s Race Equality Scheme.

We think that there is much to be gained from joint working both in terms of spreading the cost and sharing good ideas. Diversity Impact Assessments, which are explained below, are a good example of this joint working in action.
6. **Looking at all our policies and practices to make sure that they do not discriminate unlawfully.**

It is important to us that our policies, working practices and procedures are applied fairly and consistently to all people. So, we are checking how fair our services are using a method called Diversity Impact Assessment. This is a way of finding out whether an existing or new policy or service is delivered fairly.

The impact assessment focuses on the following groups:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Religion or Belief
- Sexuality

The list of services we are reviewing, when we are reviewing them, and details of some of the improvements that have been introduced are included in our Equality & Diversity “Where We Are Up To” position statement. You can get this from our Website [www.walh.co.uk](http://www.walh.co.uk) or by post from the Equality & Diversity Team.

7. **Working hard to involve all types of people in what we are doing and planning to do next.**

This plan is based on legal and good practice requirements. Another important element is the views of interested parties. These include:

- Customers
- Potential customers (including hard to reach groups)
- Employees
- Partner and other agencies.

We shared our initial proposals at the Annual Tenants Conference in September 2003 and with the local Black and Minority Ethnic Network in December 2003. Ideas and progress continue to be shared at a range of tenants’ events and through our Equality & Diversity newsletter, which is distributed to staff, tenants’ groups, our partners and other organisations.

We feel that it is very important to share what we are doing with a wide range of people so that they can tell us what they think of our plans and let us know where we are not living up to our promises.

8. **Making sure that our staff and those involved in helping us to develop services are provided with information and training opportunities.**

It's no use to have a good plan if our front line staff, the people who deliver our services are not sure of what they should be doing, or have no say in how things are done. After our customers our staff have the best idea of what is working and what is not.
We have set up a series of training and awareness raising sessions, aimed at providing all staff with the necessary information and skills to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

We are providing Equality & Diversity Training for Senior Managers, Board Members, our Tenant Auditors and other groups. Our plans and how we intend to achieve them are shared with a wide range of people, including partner and voluntary organisations.

Details of the training we have already completed are included in our Equality & Diversity “Where We Are Up To” position statement. You can get this from our Website www.walh.co.uk or by post from the Equality & Diversity Team.

9. Checking that we are improving.

We think that our plans will make sure that all our customers receive a fair service. But we need to be sure. We need to check that things really are improving, especially from a customer’s point of view.

One of the ways that we will do this is by carrying out a series of reality checks.

Our current activities and plans include:

- Increasing the number of satisfaction surveys, so that more people can tell us how we are doing.

- Some of our tenants are helping us by acting as tenant auditors. They take a close look at the services we provide, by conducting postal and telephone surveys, interviewing staff, consulting customers, and reading numerous documents. They visit other organisations to compare performance and how things are done, as well as pretending to be customers (mystery shoppers) just to check out how well we are doing first hand. Then they report back to our management and decision-making groups on what they have found, so that we can highlight our good work or put right what is going wrong.

- A group of overseas students from Wigan & Leigh College recently checked out how well our services for people who do not speak English is working.

- We are also arranging for a group of people with disabilities to become mystery shoppers. They will visit our offices and let us know if we are getting things right from their point of view.

- We have an open invitation to all types of people to join our consultation, focus and decision making groups, or to just let us know how well we are doing.
“There’s no quality without equality”

Making sure we are listening to everyone.

We think that it is essential to listen to a range of views on whether we are doing the right things and how well we are doing them. This means listening to everyone who has an opinion.

Everyone includes **you**, the person reading this plan, whether you are young or older, whatever your gender, cultural background, religion or beliefs, abilities or sexuality. You may be one of our tenants, someone looking for a home, a member of staff, working for a partner or voluntary agency. Whoever you are we value your views.

**Want to know more?**

The full details of what we are doing are listed in our Equality & Diversity “Where We Are Up To” position statement. You can get this from our Website [www.walh.co.uk](http://www.walh.co.uk) or by post from the Equality & Diversity Team.

**Let us know what you think**

We are determined to make sure that our services are delivered fairly to everyone. Please let us know how well you think we are doing by contacting the Equality & Diversity Team.

**Want to get more involved?**

We are looking for all types of people to join our consultation and decision making groups. If you want to get more involved then let us know by contacting the Tenant Participation Team.

**How to let us know:**

**By post:**

Equality & Diversity Team  
Wigan & Leigh Housing  
Freepost WN 5327  
PO Box 48  
Wigan  
WN3 4BR

**By phone:**

Equality & Diversity Team 01942 486604  
Tenant Participation Freephone:

Leigh Homes: 0800 032 1451  
Wigan Homes: 0800 389 7652

**By e-mail:** equality@walh.co.uk

**By Text:** 07797806590  
or to staff at any of our offices