



# Commitment to Change

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Equalities, Diversity and  
Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

**2021 - 2024**

This document sets out the strategic approach that Homeless Link will take to the issues of equalities, diversity and inclusion over the next 3 years. It should be read alongside our strategic plan 'Shaping the Future Together' and our EDI policy. By publishing this Strategy we are committing to a programme of work to improve our EDI across all aspects of our governance and operations. Progress against this strategy will be led by the Homeless Link Executive Team and reported to the Board who will take overall responsibility for achieving the EDI strategic aims set out below. We will produce and monitor progress against annual Implementation Plans that move us incrementally closer to achieving our overall aims.



# Our Vision

**Our vision is a country free from homelessness. We believe that everyone should have a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.**



# Our Mission

**To develop, inspire, support and sustain a movement of organisations working together to achieve positive futures for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.**





# Our Values

**At Homeless Link we are:**

## **Committed**

We work tirelessly to drive social change to end homelessness for good

## **Compassionate**

We believe in the value and potential of people. We champion justice, humanity and compassion for all

## **Credible**

We speak the truth based on evidence. We listen and learn, ask questions and respond with honesty and integrity

## **Collaborative**

We believe in the power of partnership, working together for better results - with our members, our partners and people experiencing homelessness

# Our Commitment to Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion

Homeless Link is committed to EDI because, for maximum performance as an organisation and as a corporate citizen, we must:

**Recognise and value difference**

**Recognise and redress inequality and disadvantage**

While current UK Equality legislation refers to 9 protected characteristics (i.e. specific demographic groups) which have legal protection against discrimination, our intention is to address EDI in its broadest sense. This strategy and our related policies are not limited to only meeting legal compliance; they are intended to cover all unfair discrimination and promote the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.





We acknowledge that as an organisation we are on a journey and have much to learn. At present our Board of Trustees, Leadership team and wider staff team are not as diverse as we would like. We also recognise that the sector we support and represent – made up of almost 900 organisations across the country – also have a way to go on their own EDI journeys. And the policy and legal framework that impacts on homelessness in all its forms can at times fail to address the specific needs of the wide range of citizens in this country.

This strategy is our **Commitment to Change**. By the end of the 3 year period covered by the strategy we want to be significantly more diverse and supportive as an employer' strongly championing EDI to members, partners other homelessness organisations and policy makers to support the rights and needs of all citizens even if this requires fundamental changes to the way things are done.

Our approach and efforts must be all-encompassing, engaging all aspects of our operations. We have structured our approach using five strands – our **Governance**; our **Team**; our **Members**; **People Experiencing Homelessness**; and **Government and Society**. To deliver EDI successfully we will be data-driven and consistently and systematically drive progress in each strand as set out below:

# 1. Our Governance

Homeless Link is governed by a Board of Trustees which comprises of individuals elected from our membership (who must be a Senior Executive of a member organisation); individuals who are appointed by the Board for a particular skillset; and individuals with lived experience of homelessness. All Trustees are expected to serve a minimum of 3 years.

To address equality, diversity and inclusion in the Board, we will take the following actions:

- Proactively seek out EDI in the trustee recruitment and election process
- Maintain a 'living database' of Trustees to inform our knowledge of Board diversity and identify under-represented groups
- Actively encourage applications from people from under-represented groups when advertising for new Trustees
- Implement other ways of adding EDI to the board, e.g. co-opting members, inviting diverse individuals to specific, relevant board discussions
- Carry out annual EDI and Skills audits of the Board and take any actions as necessary to maximise Board effectiveness and diversity
- Ensure that Homeless Link is applying the EDI Principle contained in the current Charity Code of Governance and seeks to achieve continuous learning and development of its practice
- Ensure that Board meetings are safe, respectful spaces where different views and perspectives are sought and encouraged
- Monitor our progress and report on any actions

## 2. Our Team

Homeless Link is proud of its reputation as an excellent place to work. We encourage personal development and welcome contributions from team members to our strategy and operations at all levels of the organisation. We also strive for Homeless Link to be a safe and empowering work environment.

To address equality, diversity and inclusion in the Team, we will take the following actions:

- Carry out a fundamental review of our recruitment practices to identify opportunities to improve equalities, diversity and inclusion in the way we advertise, interview for and select candidates, taking any remedial action as required
- Maintain a 'living database' of staff members to inform our knowledge of team diversity and identify under-represented groups
- Regularly review and update our staff EDI policy and make it available to all staff including highlighting the policy to staff via annual Appraisals.
- Support the internal Equalities and Diversity Working Group (EDWG), a group of staff from all levels of the organisation, to meet regularly and make recommendations for action to the Senior Management Team (SMT)
- Ensure that staff are consulted on their experience of EDI issues via an annual EDI Staff Survey and actions agreed and implemented
- Take action to ensure that all staff feel safe and supported in their work and have access to the full range of training, supervision and opportunities for progression
- Monitor our progress against these actions and report back to staff routinely

# 3. Our Members

It is crucial that our members feel included, valued and reflected in all our work. As our membership is so large and diverse – ranging from small local faith based organisations right up to ‘household name’ large charities – this is a particular challenge. Equally challenging will be supporting our members to adapt their practice and approaches to embrace EDI

To address this we will take the following actions:

- Take a leadership role in championing Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion across the homelessness sector and beyond including disseminating information about our own experiences as a ‘living case study’
- Support our members’ own EDI work by producing and disseminating good practice materials, holding events and providing training, and stimulating debate and exchange of information
- Ensure that our membership fees structure enables even the smallest organisation to join Homeless Link and obtain value from their membership
- Work with members to create a dataset of who is (and isn’t) accessing homelessness services and use this data to improve both practice and commissioning
- Consciously use language and imagery in our external communications that is inclusive and reflects the diversity of our membership and the people they employ and support
- Challenge poor practice by our members in a constructive way and ensure that Homeless Link staff who witness such practice are clear about how to address and report this and feel personally supported by the organisation

# 4. People Experiencing Homelessness

Clearly people who experience homelessness come from all walks of life and are as diverse as the rest of the population. Available data shows that some groups are over-represented in the homeless population eg LGBTQ+ young people. It is therefore vital that services' alignment to the needs of individuals is optimised to provide the right kinds of support in the right ways.

To address this we will take the following actions:

- Use only appropriate and positive imagery and language when describing and depicting individuals experiencing homelessness
- Actively seek people with lived experience of homelessness to participate on our Board, work for us, speak at events and conferences, participate in advisory groups and engage in consultation processes
- Produce good practice materials and communications resources that spotlight the issues and needs of diverse communities within the homeless population for example women, people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ people and neurodiverse people
- Challenge poor practice and discriminatory behaviour against people experiencing homelessness
- Challenge discriminatory behaviour from people experiencing homelessness towards sector staff, by providing learning and development opportunities to increase understanding of the impact of these behaviours on individuals that aim to support them
- Seek to improve data collection and analysis about the demographics of people experiencing homelessness in order to inform more appropriate service delivery and commissioning responses to people with diverse needs

# 5. Government and Society

Many of the causes of discrimination and inequality are structural in nature and as such can only be addressed by major systems changes. Alongside this, there is a need to shift the narrative away from people themselves being seen as 'the problem' and instead towards the societal changes that need to be made in order to achieve fairness and equity for all.

To address this we will take the following actions:

- Strive to influence policy and legislation that impacts on people from diverse backgrounds experiencing homelessness to ensure equality and inclusion for all
- Contribute to the existing dataset about what works and doesn't work in tackling rough sleeping and preventing homelessness from an equalities perspective
- Establish partnerships with relevant organisations that can help support wider systems change and campaigning in the context of EDI
- Lend our organisational weight to the actions of partner organisations that help achieve our strategy
- Challenge negative stereotypes and reporting in the media and present positive stories and images that promote diversity and inclusion



## **About Us**

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

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