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# **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

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**July 2023 Version 1**

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy

## 1. Introduction

We recognise that people's needs and abilities are not the same and that these differences, whether because of gender, gender reassignment, age, race, religion, colour, beliefs, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or disability should not be barriers to people accessing services or achieving their potential and living free from discrimination.

This Policy sets out Rykneld Homes Limited (RHL) approach to embedding/ensuring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the services we deliver and the way we conduct business and act as an employer.

This 2023 update to our Policy provides us with a clear vision and objectives against which we can hold ourselves accountable. We have reviewed what we have achieved to date, through our previous Equality Objectives, taking into account current data, our regulators, and legislative requirements, and our Operational Board and Boards comments.

### 1.1. What is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?

**Equality** is about making sure that everyone has the same opportunities to achieve the same or similar outcomes. It is not about treating 'everyone the same' but recognising that "one size doesn't fit all" and that services should be tailored to meet individual needs.

**Diversity** is about respecting, valuing and celebrating people's differences.

**Inclusion** is about making sure that people feel comfortable to be themselves, that they belong and can reach their full potential without disadvantage or discrimination.

### 1.2. Why Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Matters

Embedding EDI is the right thing to do for our customers, our business and the communities we serve. Bringing together people with a diversity of perspectives will lead to a better understanding of our customer and staff needs and ultimately better service performance. Creating environments where all our customers and staff are valued and respected and can be their true selves will bring innumerable benefits to individuals and local communities.

### 1.3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

EDI has a clear legislative and regulatory framework. This includes the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty and the Regulator for Social Housing's Housing Standards – for more information about this please see **Appendix 1**.

## 1.4. North East (NE) Derbyshire is Changing

The communities in NE Derbyshire that we serve are evolving. Rykneld Homes' services and objectives need to take account of these changes to continue to successfully support customers. There are some key defining characteristics to NE Derbyshire communities that are different to the rest of the Country and have a key impact for the delivery of housing services. The changes are identified from the 2011 to the 2021 Census report. These include an aging population – the number of people aged 75 to 84 years rose by around 2,300 (an increase of 34.6%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by just over 3,400 (16.3% decrease).

In 2021, 10.0% of NE Derbyshire households rented privately – this is the Country's lowest percentage of privately-rented homes. The percentage of NE Derbyshire households that owned their home decreased from 70.9% to 70.5%. One in five households (18.7%) lived in socially rented housing, a reduction from 20.4% in 2011.

**Appendix 2** provides more information from the 2021 Census outlining the changes in NE Derbyshire since 2011.

## 1.5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Across Service Areas

Rykneld Homes' Strategies and Policies for each service are set out the considerations that are made in respect of EDI for each particular service area. Examples of these include:

- the Repairs Policy, which sets out how services are reasonably adjusted or flexed to support vulnerable customers
- the Communications Strategy, which includes information about translation services, accessibility of service information and the website
- the Human Resource Strategy, which includes fairness in recruitment, reasonable adjustments to support employees and adoption of Disability Confident
- The Community Involvement Strategy, which includes information about RHL's adoption of the Together with Tenants Charter 6 themes and ways customers can be involved and shape services, projects to engage customers and events to promote communities' engagement.

The EDI Policy can be read in conjunction with RHL's Policy to support Vulnerable People which provides guidance for all service areas about how the needs of vulnerable people need to be considered during service delivery.

## 2. Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### 2.1. Equality

- We will treat people fairly, making sure that everyone has the same opportunities to achieve the same or similar outcomes.
- We will ensure services and employment practices will be free from any discrimination – direct or indirect

- Assess the impact of Policies and services to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged through their delivery
- Make reasonable adjustments to service delivery, places of work, equipment, facilities, support and processes to encourage people with disabilities to access services and apply for work.

## 2.2. Diversity

- Recognise and respect people's differences and understands that they may have different needs
- Create a workplace culture which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation
- improve our decision-making and problem-solving by creating a balanced workforce with a variety of viewpoints and a wider range of experience.

## 2.3. Inclusion

- Be proactive in our approach to positive action, encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to use our services and seek employment opportunities
- Take action against the perpetrators of domestic abuse, hate crime and discrimination
- Promote positive relationships between different people through our Community Involvement activities
- Keep learning and aspiring to provide services that support all customers by adopting appropriate best practice codes for services.

## 3. Rykneld Homes' Business Plan and Equality Objectives

Rykneld Homes' inclusive business planning process allows customers, partners, organisations and staff the opportunity to shape service delivery. The Business Plan adopts North East Derbyshire District Council's (NEDDC) overarching strategic priorities:

- Protect the most vulnerable people in our communities
- Improve existing housing
- Increase housing growth and promoting homeownership.

\* Please note the NEDDC strategic priorities are currently under review

The approach to EDI informs all our service planning and delivery. To proactively impact change, RHL has developed a series of **Equality Objectives**:

### Equality Objective 1: Improve accessibility of services (equality)

1. Introduce a Communication best practice training course for staff to ensure customers remain informed during service delivery.

2. Develop a new website through customer consultation to ensure it is accessible and easy to navigate.
3. Introduce bespoke (refresher) training for all staff required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments to ensure services are effectively tailored to individual customer circumstances.
4. Introduce Value Training for staff to raise awareness and increase engagement with Equality Diversity and Inclusion, including Code of Conduct and Behavior Policy.

### **Equality Objective 2: Support People to live independently and sustain their tenancy (Equality)**

1. Deliver new housing consciously designed around the specific needs of local communities of NE Derbyshire.
2. Review the Adaptations Policy and Assisted Move Policy with NEDDC to ensure they continue to deliver the best possible outcomes for customers and make the most efficient use of housing and funding.
3. Provide access to online money management sessions from the RHL website and promote via Financial Inclusion work.

### **Equality Objective 3: Support all customers to shape service delivery (Inclusion)**

1. Undertaking a perception survey following adoption of the Together with Tenants Charter to inform service improvements shaped around the six Charter commitments.
2. Use technologies to connect communities with our staff to increase the number of people consulted/shaping service delivery. We will do this by promoting the Digital Involvement Group and providing the necessary IT skills training through our Get Connected sessions.
3. Continuing to promote RHL's Complaints Service alongside the Derbyshire Law Centre to support customers to resolve issues and access with free independent advice and support.
4. Support the customer led Operational Board to review local offers and service standards to ensure they continue to be an appropriate standard and measure for accountable service delivery.

### **Equality Objective 4 – Support and promote the diversity of Communities and Rykneld Homes (Diversity)**

1. Complete the National Housing Federation, Board and Staff EDI survey to understand representativeness compared to the 2021 Census.
2. Work towards becoming a Disability Confident Leader through positive action campaigns through under-represented groups.
3. Celebrate and promote the diversity of NE Derbyshire through a mix of Community Involvement events that are open to all and bring communities together.

4. Promote all RHL's career opportunities to ensure they are inclusive – positively challenging stereotypes where there is under-representation.

## **4. Monitoring, Learning and Review**

### **4.1. Monitoring and Evaluation**

We believe that, as with all service delivery, promoting EDI is a continuous and cross-cutting process relating to all service delivery areas.

Rykneld Homes may not get it right all the time, so have built into our Performance Management Framework and our Complaints Policy, regular reviews of systems, processes, attitudes and behaviour to ensure that the commitment to provide a quality service which is equitable to all, is a working reality.

When undertaking reviews of services it is important to understand the impact they will have on customers and tenants. Rykneld Homes asks customers and staff to provide necessary profile information and advises how this information will be used.

Impact Assessments are built into Service Reviews to ensure new Policies do not disadvantage customers who may have specific needs. Rykneld Homes has refined its approach to Equality Impact Assessments on services or Policies following the Equality Act 2010.

Rykneld Homes Policies and performance, and more information about its work to deliver its Equality Objectives, can be found through the Company's website: [www.RykneldHomes.org.uk](http://www.RykneldHomes.org.uk).

## **5. Contact**

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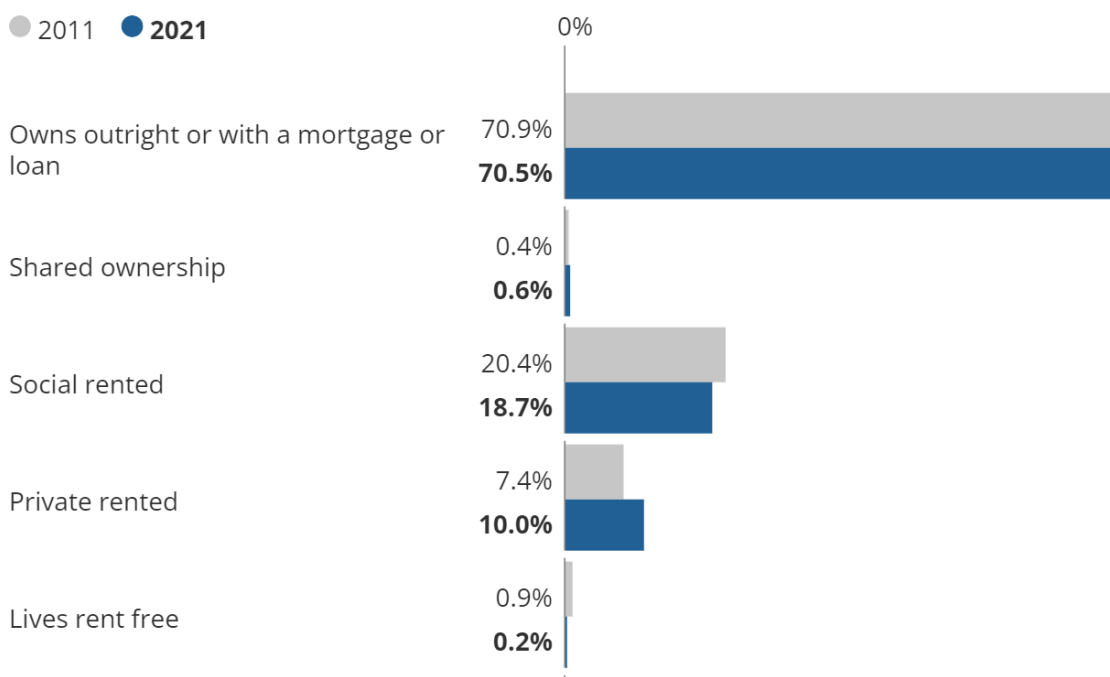
### Changing NE Derbyshire – the 2021 Census

- **Population growth was lower in NE Derbyshire than across England** – 3% as opposed to 6.6% (since the 2011 Census)
- **NE Derbyshire's population continues to age** – the number of people aged 75 to 84 years rose by around 2,300 (an increase of 34.6%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by just over 3,400 (16.3% decrease)
- **NE Derbyshire was in the highest 30% of English Local Authority areas for the share of households which include couples with only adult children in 2021**
- **Changing relationships in NE Derbyshire** – NE Derbyshire saw England's joint third-largest percentage-point rise in the proportion of people aged 16 years and over who had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership (from 9.2% in 2011 to 10.3% in 2021)
- **Unpaid Care** – the percentage of people in NE Derbyshire providing up to 19 hours of weekly unpaid care for children aged five years and over decreased by 3.3 percentage points
- **Religion in NE Derbyshire** – 50.9% of people in NE Derbyshire described themselves as Christian (down from 67.4%), while 5.5% did not state their religion. 42.3% of residents reported having "No religion", up from 24.7% in 2011. All other religions accounted for 1.2%
- **National Identity** – 97.9% of residents reported a UK identity. The percentage of people who did not identify with at least one UK national identity in NE Derbyshire increased by 0.6 percentage points
- **NE Derbyshire residents' Country of birth** – in 2021, 95.5% of NE Derbyshire residents reported their Country of birth as England, 0.8% reported Scotland, 0.5% reported Wales, 0.3% reported Poland and 0.3% reported.
- **Rise in Private Renting** – in 2021, 10.0% of NE Derbyshire households rented privately. This figure increased from 7.4% in 2011. However, this area had the Country's lowest percentage of privately rented homes

In 2021, just under one in five households (18.7%) lived in socially rented housing, compared with 20.4% in 2011. The percentage of NE Derbyshire households that owned their home (outright or with a mortgage or loan) decreased from 70.9% to 70.5%.



### Percentage of households by housing tenure, North East Derbyshire

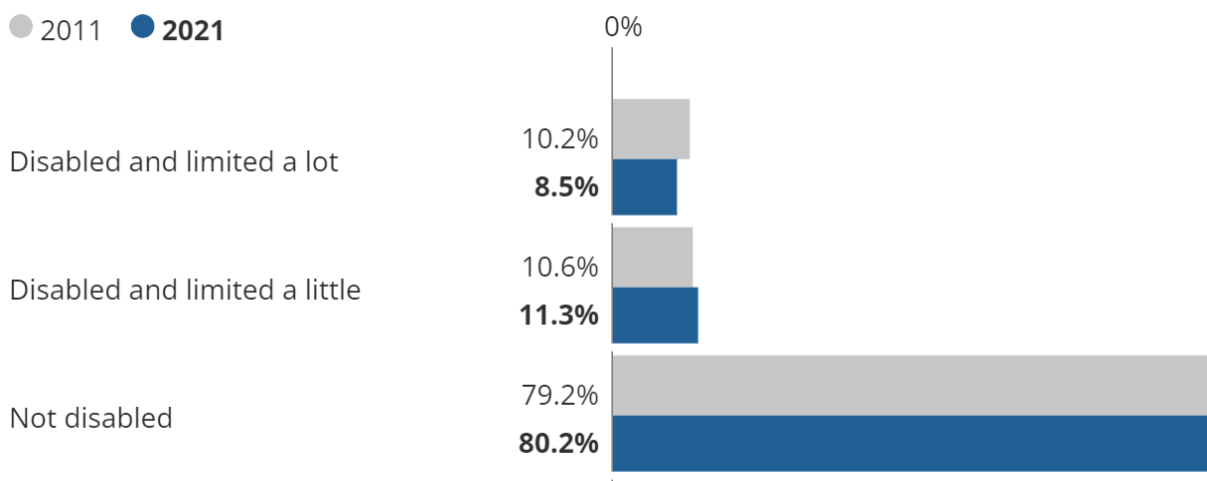


Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

- **Fall in Employment** – in 2021, just under 1 in 50 people (1.9%) said they were unemployed, compared with 3.3% in 2011. The percentage of retired NE Derbyshire residents increased from 27.5% to 29.4%
- **Working hours in North East Derbyshire** – in 2021, 9.9% of NE Derbyshire residents aged 16 years and over and in employment said they worked 15 hours or less per week. This figure was the same in 2011
- **Disability in North East Derbyshire** – in 2021, 8.5% of NE Derbyshire residents were identified as being disabled and limited a lot. This figure decreased from 10.2% in 2011. These are age-standardised proportions

The decrease in the proportion of residents who were identified as being disabled and limited a lot in NE Derbyshire (1.7 percentage points) was similar to the decrease across the East Midlands (1.6 percentage points, from 9.3% to 7.7%). Across England, the proportion fell by 1.6 percentage points, from 9.1% to 7.5%

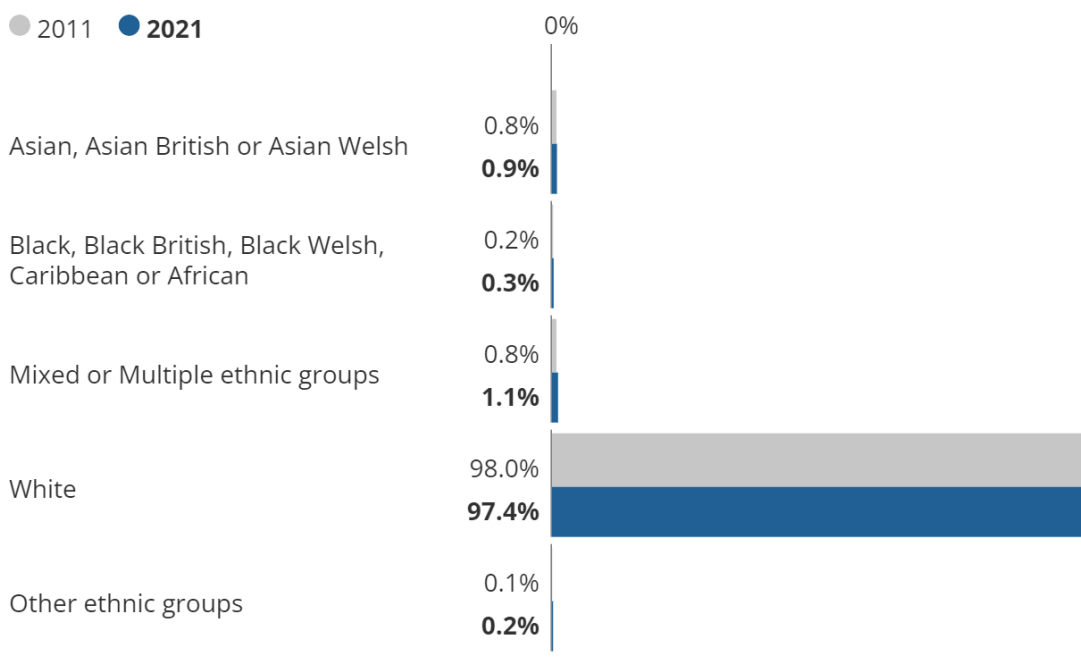
Age-standardised proportion of usual residents by long-term health condition or illness, **North East Derbyshire**



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

- **Health in North East Derbyshire** – in 2021, 46.3% of NE Derbyshire residents described their health as "very good", increasing from 44.7% in 2011. Those describing their health as "good" remained at 33.8%. These are age-standardised proportions
- **Ethnic groups in North East Derbyshire** - in 2021, 1.1% of NE Derbyshire residents identified their ethnic group within the "Mixed or Multiple" category, up from 0.8% in 2011. The 0.4 percentage-point change was the largest increase among high-level ethnic groups in this area

Percentage of usual residents by ethnic group, **North East Derbyshire**



Source: Office for National Statistics – 2011 Census and Census 2021

### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Legislation and Regulation

The Equality Act 2010 harmonised all existing discrimination legislation into one Act and contains a further range of rights, powers and obligations to support the drive towards equality. These are based around nine protected characteristics:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race (which includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin);
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (April 2011) requires organisations like RHL to do certain things because we carry out a public function by managing and maintaining NEDDC's social housing. It consists of the **General Equality Duty** which is the overarching requirement or substance of the duty, and the **specific duties** which are intended to help performance of the general equality duty.

#### **The General Equality Duty requires that public bodies:**

- Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

The Equality Act explains that the second aim (advancing equality of opportunity) involves, in particular, having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

It states that meeting different needs includes (among other things) taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It explains that compliance with the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

## **The Specific Duties**

The specific duties were created by secondary legislation in the form of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. In summary, public authorities are required to:

1. Publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty. This information must include, in particular, information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are:
  - its employees; and
  - people affected by its policies and practices.
2. Each Authority must prepare and publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty. The objectives must be specific and measurable.

Both the equality information and the equality objectives must be published in a manner that is accessible to the public. They can be published as a separate document, or within another document such as an Annual Report or a Business Plan.

## **Social Housing Regulation – Housing Standards**

Rykneld Homes' regulator, the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH), makes it clear that all housing providers are to adhere to Equality and Diversity requirements through its Housing Standards, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017. This has three overarching themes:

1. Customer service, choice and complaints.
2. Involvement and empowerment.
3. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants.

More specifically, Registered Providers shall:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs
- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

It is every member of staff's responsibility to act in accordance with the requirements the Equality Act 2010 and deliver services that meet the Housing Standards.

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