



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

The legal and organisational context

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, our duty is to provide protection from direct or indirect discrimination or harassment on the basis of eight characteristics: age, race, socioeconomic status, gender, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation and disability. In addition to these, Tonic does not tolerate discrimination or unequal treatment, access and services on grounds of poverty and/or deprivation, health and/or well-being, or other life factors which carry stigma and stereotype such as HIV status, unemployment, underemployment, residency status, asylum and ability in language and literacy.

Although Tonic is not bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty, we subscribe to its principles to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not and
- 3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Equality

We promote equality because we believe it's the right thing to do. We also know that more equal societies are better for everyone¹.

Housing is a basic human right and to live in safe, comfortable and compatible surroundings, particularly as we get older, should be a possibility for us all. This means having a physical environment that suits our needs, an ambiance that provides a sense of belonging and where others respect us and we respect them, free from stigma and stereotypes.

All staff, Board members, volunteers, job applicants and residents will receive equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, gender identity, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity/paternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Disability covers physical and

¹www.theequalitytrust.org

sensory impairment, chronic conditions, learning disability and difficulty, mental health and neuro-diverse conditions (such as autism, dyspraxia etc.).

At Tonic, we believe that equality requires:

- 1) The rejection of all discrimination or less good treatment on the basis of who and what we are
- 2) The utmost support to close the gap between those who have more than sufficient and those who have less than enough to get by.

At Tonic, we work to achieve both through three pillars of equality:

1) Equality of access

Being able to move around and use spaces and places with equal ease and dignity.

2) Equality of treatment

Having a sense of belonging in our living space and working place where we fit in, thrive and can be ourselves.

3) Equality of service

Feeling the space and place have been designed with people like us in mind.

Diversity

We value diversity because we know it makes Tonic a more creative place to work and believe it makes our project a more interesting and inclusive place to live.

Because our approach is based on supporting human rights, we do not allow racism, sexism and homophobia to be put into competition with each other. Nor do we allow disability access and reasonable adjustments to be an afterthought.

We believe that:

- Listening to different points-of-view improves how we do things.
- Diverse work teams make better decisions – likely to be more grounded and informed.
- Seeing people like ourselves around us increases our sense of belonging.
- Valuing differences, as well as things we have in common, strengthens inclusion.

Because we promote equality and diversity it is our commitment to:

- Treat everyone with respect and dignity
- Value their work and takes their concerns seriously
- Promote a healthy and considerate balance between work and our lives outside of work.

We know diverse teams produce more creative thinking, sharper problem-solving and better results all round. We use positive action to increase the diversity of the staff.

We know too that racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination can intrude into the workplace in both blatant and subtle ways. To counter this possibility, we promote a positive culture where, for example:

- Staff are paid equal rates for jobs of equal worth

- Disabled staff can access our facilities and reasonable adjustments are pro-active
- Honesty, integrity and care for each other are highly prized

Reporting supportive staff, Board members, volunteers and residents is encouraged and valued; reporting aggressive staff, Board members, volunteers or residents is a responsibility.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are everyone's responsibility; Board members set the tone and take the lead. At Tonic, the Board and CEO are responsible for assessing how well the strategic priorities, business plan and day-to-day decisions promote equality and increase diversity, and for making proactive changes if they don't.

Part-time and fixed-term employees are treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (pro-rata where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

What does excellence look like?

- Staff contribute to an open and honest culture
- Policies and ways-of-working which promote equality & value diversity
- Staff have the support and the skills to integrate equality into their work.

Inclusion

Inclusion goes further and is where people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

What does excellence look like?

- Regularly discussing equality, diversity and inclusion in Resident, Staff and Board meetings
- Working with other organisations to bring in other voices and expertise.

Closing the inequality gap

Inequality is often about access and/or affordability. At Tonic, we always look for ways to make our services affordable and make sure staff are paid at least the Living Wage. We also ensure that any outsourced services are accountable and that outsourced staff are as well-treated as Tonic staff because they too are part of the Tonic community.

So, for example, at Tonic:

- Resources, fees and costs are used to reduce inequality and increase access
- Remuneration and pay benefits everyone equitably e.g. differentials between pay scales
- All contracts of employment model best working practice

What does excellence look like?

- Clear and vocal leadership by managers on equality and diversity
- Collaborative management throughout the organisation
- Accountable plans to promote equality, increase diversity and reduce inequality.

Procurement and partnerships

Tonic may procure services from other organisations, including architects, builders, consultants, developers, care providers, suppliers etc. We pay for their services and expertise.

The Equality Act 2010 enables us to promote equality through the services we procure. This means we may give preference to contractors and employers who can demonstrate that, for example:

- They are LGBT+ affirmative in their policies and actions
- They have a robust equality and diversity
- They have fair and just employment practices, paying the Living Wage, and equal pay for jobs of equal value.
- They have evidence of ethical practices in relation to the environment and sustainability.
- They have a commitment to training and supporting young people.

Our priority in commissioning or contracting services is always to consider small local companies owned or part-owned by women, minority ethnic, LGBT+ and/or disabled people.

What does excellence look like?

- Doing business with firms which actively promote equality and diversity
- Building partnerships which benefit LGBT+ communities
- Working with other employers to promote equitable and environmental best practice.

Inclusive design

We champion inclusive design because this is how equality is applied to the built environment. Inclusive design is about making sure places and spaces are welcoming and easy to use for as many people as possible. We value diverse perspectives on design because this improves the finished product and particularly seek input from those groups who are usually not asked or heard. We believe that co-production leads to better results. It may not be possible for every space to be accessible to everyone but we will do our best to make it so.

Some examples of inclusive design include:

- Fully accessible spaces with a wide availability of assistive technologies
- Entrances and public spaces designed for people with sensory impairments
- Changing Places toilets²
- Gardens which are accessible, sensory and encourage wildlife

² www.changing-places.org

- Corridors and living spaces laid-out to help people with memory-loss
- Décor which is sensitive and inclusive

Ours is a project where, for example:

- A range of people are engaged in project design and ongoing management
- Professional access audits influence our building plans
- No one at Tonic says: 'Access is a budget issue'.

What does excellence look like?

- Meaningful consultation and action on what we hear with inclusive results
- Creative and imaginative solutions to design dilemmas
- State-of-the-art places and spaces which feel like home for everyone.

Laws

Tonic also has responsibilities under legislation, regulation and codes of governance including, but not limited to:

- the Equality Act 2010 (incorporating the Public Sector Equality Duty);
- the Human Rights Act 1998;
- the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020; and
- the Regulator of Social Housing Regulatory Framework.

and any relevant amendments to such legislation or further codes/frameworks of practice.

Reporting discrimination

If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through our Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate. You should not be victimised or retaliated against for reporting discrimination.

Signed: 25th October 2023