

Golden Gates Housing Trust (GGHT)



Single Equality Scheme
2010-2012



“Working Together”

s**T**aff
contract**O**rs
 **G**
custom**E**rs
par**T**ners
H
resid**E**nts
boa**R**d

“Diversity is the one true thing we all have in
common. Celebrate it every day.”

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سٹاف کے کسی ممبر سے بات کریں۔

(Urdu)

Please contact:

Email: cam.kinsella@gght.org.uk

Post: Cam Kinsella

Quality & Performance Team, Golden Gates Housing Trust, Bank House
88 Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1RH

Phone: 0800 25 26 27



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*We are rated a 'three-star excellent'
 Housing Service by the Audit
 Commission – Equality & Diversity
 Was found to be an area of
 Strength.*

Foreword:

From the Chief Executive, Equality & Diversity Officer and Lead Board Member

We are proud to present Golden Gates Housing Trust's (GGHT) Single Equality Scheme – **'Working Together'**.

The concept of **'Working Together'** comes from GGHT's belief that by **working together** with our staff, board, customers, residents, partners and contractors we can create an environment in which equality & diversity is embedded into the core of everything we do.

'Working Together' helps to promote social inclusion, service improvement, employment opportunities, and equality and diversity through every aspect of GGHT's operations.

We believe that **'Working Together'** provides a real opportunity to build on our existing work in equality & diversity, in a way which will ensure that we deliver against the duty placed on us to promote good relations, celebrate diversity and equality of opportunity and foster community cohesion across our neighborhoods.

Through a process of annual reviews, we will strive to ensure that this remains a working document and guides decision making at all levels across this organisation.

We have made great progress in regards to equality & diversity but do also understand that there is a lot more to be done. We are looking forward to **working together** with our Staff, Board, Customers, Residents, Partners and Contractors to make this scheme a success.

Signed



Peter Mercer

Peter Mercer

Chief Executive



Cam Kinsella

K. Kinsella

Equality & Diversity Officer



Sheila Barber

Sheila Barber

Lead Board Member



1.) Introduction into “Working Together” - GGHT’s first Single Equality Scheme.

We here at GGHT strive to be a “leading housing provider creating quality homes and neighbourhoods where people want to live.” We value diversity immensely and realise that we need a unified approach to equality & diversity that is measured by outcomes.

‘Working Together’ is GGHT’s first Single Equality Scheme which aims to merge the existing Race, Disability and Gender Schemes (which we had adopted from the Council) to develop a holistic approach to equality.

The decision to create ‘Working Together’ came from the introduction of the new legislation – The Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act streamlines the existing legislation into one easy to follow document, which is what we have done with this scheme.

Another factor for creating ‘Working Together’ is the Tenant Services Authority’s (TSA) new approach that we are going to adopt of co-regulation. We decided that co-regulation is an important aspect of moving forward with the organisation and base this whole scheme on the idea of ‘working together.’

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2.) What is “Working Together” and why do we need it?



In recent years new duties to promote race, disability and gender have required organisations to develop schemes in a proactive manner by building equality into organisational practices and procedures. ‘Working Together’ is an overarching strategy that sets out GGHT’s commitment to tackling inequalities and promoting diversity.

‘Working Together’ aims to meet the individual duties imposed on it by legislation but will go further to include all areas of equality such as socio economic status, whether they are covered by legislation or not. ‘Working Together’ will ensure that GGHT mainstreams equalities into everyday work, by writing it into departmental plans, Action plans, employment practices and into everyday service delivery.

We need to **Work Together** because without the support and commitment from everyone in this organisation, the scheme will not succeed. And so, ‘Working Together’ will create an equality infrastructure that will enable more people to get involved in the key decisions that affect them and everyone around them.

3.) What does ‘Working Together’ cover?

Working Together provides a framework that extends to all of the nine protected characteristics which are protected by The Equality Act. These are:

- ❖ Age
- ❖ Race
- ❖ Disability
- ❖ Sexual Orientation
- ❖ Religion & Belief
- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Transgender status
- ❖ Pregnancy/Maternity or paternity
- ❖ Marriage & Civil Partnerships



We also recognise the need to support tenants with care or support needs, who have long term illnesses or who are at a disadvantage due to socio economic inequalities. GGHT believes in equality & diversity and understands that people must not be unfairly discriminated against because of any of these protected characteristics. We understand that we must all **work together** to contribute in creating a positive workplace and environment where discriminatory practices and discrimination no longer occur.



4.) What is Equality & Diversity?



Equality is treating people equally according to their needs. GGHT will make sure that everyone is treated fairly and has equal access to all of the services we provide. Equality focuses on the protected characteristics which are covered by the law and protected from discrimination. Equality is the legal aspect.

The moral aspect is diversity. Diversity is about valuing an individual for their differences. We at GGHT believe that it is these differences that make us great. Diversity aims to recognise, value and manage difference to enable everyone to contribute and realise their full potential – whether it is a member of staff or tenant.

This scheme of **Working Together**, pulls together both equality & diversity to work in harmony – creating an atmosphere in which differences are valued and everyone is treated equally according to their needs.

5.) The Local Context & Profile



GGHT is working to understand the diverse needs of our customers, residents & staff because we understand that there is a diverse mixture of customers, residents & staff.

We are currently working to complete a profiling exercise in which we will be collecting information on each of the protected characteristics from our customers. We will be doing this so we can tailor our services to best meet every individual customer's needs.

The government recognises that having information about the people for whom we provide services is vital if we are to ensure that those services are effective. It expects housing associations to know the ethnicity, age, whether someone is disabled, gender, employment status, language requirements, religion or belief, transgender status and sexual orientation of customers. We can then use this information to help adapt our services to meet the needs of our customers and to try to ensure that no group is excluded.

The information on our profile is as follows:



Warrington Residents:

Sexual Orientation	91% class themselves as being heterosexual. 6% didn't respond. 2% prefer not to say. 0.5% class themselves as being gay 0.5% class themselves as being a lesbian.
Gender	49.3% of people class themselves as being male. 50.7% of people class themselves as being female
Age	30% of females are under 24 years of age 32% of males are under 24 years of age
	18% of females are over 65 years of age 13% of males are over 65 years of age
Disability	26% of people class themselves as being disabled or having a long standing illness.
Ethnicity	5.9% of people class themselves as being an ethnic minority.
Religion & Belief	13% of people have no religion or belief 82% were Christian, 3% didn't answer, the other 2% was split between 'other, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh & Jewish.
Socio economic status	Warrington has 11 super-output areas in the top 10% nationally which is most deprived.

GGHT's current Customers:

Sexual Orientation	<i>We do not have a clear profile on this yet</i>
Gender	45% of people class themselves as being male. 54.64% of people class themselves as female. 0.36% of people class themselves as an unknown gender.
Age	16.64% of females are under 24 years of age 16.24% of males are under 24 years of age
	9.08% of females are over the age of 65 6.31% of males are over the age of 65
Disability	0.84 % of tenants class themselves as being disabled. 91.23% preferred not to say.
Ethnicity	1.82% classes themselves as being an ethnic minority. 53.96% of tenant's ethnicity is unknown.
Religion & Belief	<i>We do not have a clear profile on this yet</i>
Socio economic status	Warrington has 11 super-output areas in the top 10% nationally, which is most deprived. Within these areas, GGHT has 3000 properties.

GGHT Staff:



Sexual Orientation	<i>We do not have a clear profile on this yet</i>
Gender	65% of people class themselves as being male 35% of people class themselves as being female
Age	20.5% of staff are 18 – 29 years of age
	6.6% of staff are 60+ years of age
Disability	4% of staff class themselves as having a disability
Ethnicity	1.4% of class themselves as being an ethnic minority
Religion & Belief	<i>We do not have a clear profile on this yet</i>

6.) How will we ‘Close the Gap?’

As you can see from the statistics on the previous page, Warrington has 11 super-output areas in the top 10% nationally which is the most deprived. Within these areas GGHT has 3000 properties. This gap causes socio economic inequalities and GGHT are partnership working with The Warrington Partnership to ‘Close the Gap’.



The borough is very unequal; there is a marked difference in prosperity and quality of life within the borough. The stark contrasts between the hard-pressed inner wards and the leafier suburbs and villages in the outskirts of the town are striking.

We are going to **Work Together** with key public sector partners, as well as representatives from the third sector and local businesses, to develop new ways of **working together** to help support our customers in vulnerable situations and to tackle inequalities. GGHT’s ambition is to meet a diverse range of housing needs and ensure an adequate supply of affordable homes for people in the borough, whilst also working to tackle worklessness through our involvement with the Future Jobs fund.

‘Closing the Gap’ recognises that inequality can only be effectively tackled by all partners **working together** to provide holistic support to often complex and long-standing problems and “In pursuing our ambitions we will prioritise closing the gaps in quality of life for our most disadvantaged communities.”

7.) Who is responsible for 'Working Together?'



Well, the clue is in the title of the scheme. Everyone is responsible for the success of 'Working Together'. We all have a responsibility when it comes to equality & diversity and so we need the staff, board, tenants, residents and partners to be on board with this scheme.

Staff:

All staff whether senior management team or operative are responsible for ensuring they adhere to and help deliver the principles in 'working together'. This is through acting as role models, challenging inappropriate behaviour, celebrating success and maintaining fair and consistent services for customers.

Board:

The Board are responsible for ensuring that equality & diversity are embedded at the core of all of our strategic decisions. We also have a nominated Equality & Diversity Champion on the board – Sheila Barber.

Customers:

All current and future tenants and leaseholders are responsible for their commitment to be a part of 'working together.' Tenants are made aware of GGHT's commitment to equality and diversity in their Tenant Handbook and also in their tenancy agreement. Customers are also aware of our stance in regards to discrimination, harassment and hate crime. We want our customers to feel like they belong and that they are a priority.

Residents:

We need the residents of Warrington to be on board with this scheme for community cohesion. We understand that we are not just maintaining homes, but also communities. Communities are made up of a diverse range of people and we hope that this scheme adds to the well-being of all that live in our wards.

Partners:

GGHT will ensure that we will work with our partners for consultation on any new policies & procedures and for a greater understanding of the diversity of Warrington. 'Working Together' will help us to ensure we enforce our commitment to equality within procurement and be of support to anyone that needs our expertise also. This scheme will help us partnership build with local groups so we may share best practice, knowledge and also so we can work together in the future.

8.) What have we achieved so far and what we still need to do...



Service Delivery:

GGHT aims to be a leader in delivering services that meet the diverse needs of the communities. We are committed to improving services and meeting the different needs of the diverse communities in our wards.

- We achieved the Audit Commission's 3 star status in 2007 in which equality & diversity were found to be areas of strength.
- We aim to reach the 'achieving' level in the new Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF) by 2012.
- We are renewing our profile information from our tenants so we may best tailor our services effectively to meet the diverse needs of our customers.

Resident Involvement:

GGHT recognises the importance of **working together** with our stakeholders and in engaging and listening to the views of all of our customers. We have been working to ensure our involvement methods operate in a fair and unbiased manner and also take active steps to encourage participation from all sections of the community.

- We have a variety of methods of involvement ranging from 'armchair consultation' to 'being on a committee.' This is so we do not exclude any group.
- We aim to make all resident involvement groups reflective of the community by promoting our services even wider to the various minority groups throughout Warrington.

Access to information & services:

GGHT will strive to ensure that access to all of our services is easily accessible. We will **work together** with all stakeholders so we may listen to the differing needs of customers and their needs



- We have 'Text talk' which enables customers with a hearing impairment to access services.
- We have a 'free-phone service' to make sure socio-economic inequalities are addressed and so people with a lower income can call us anytime without worry of the cost.
- We have an interpretation & translation service we use.
- We put the 6 main 'language strap lines' in the area on all leaflets and customer information.
- We aim to make sure all information is converted into plain English.
- We are in the process of updating our website to coincide with the launch of our new Housing Trust status and we will strive to ensure this is accessible.
- We will provide alternate formats of most information upon request



Governance:

GGHT's board will take the lead in ensuring equality issues are at the heart of our business and will set the vision, direction and standards. GGHT's Senior management team (SMT) will also ensure equality & diversity principles are filtered down throughout their business areas.

- GGHT have a Board Champion - 'Sheila Barber' who is the lead on equality & diversity at board level.
- We will work on making sure the board, committees, and any other decision making groups are representative of the communities we serve so that every section of the community has a voice.
- We will update the equality & diversity training for SMT to reflect the changing needs in the communities, current legislation and current issues.

Community Cohesion:

GGHT wants to contribute in creating communities where everyone feels that they belong and are a priority. We work to improve our neighbourhoods and promote community cohesion in all events and actively consider it in service delivery, policy and practices.



- We are involved in the 'Closing the Gap' programme.
- We run numerous fun days for our wards.
- We are currently investing in helping with the Warrington 'MELA' which is a festival celebration of the different cultures in Warrington.
- We are researching into a volunteer programme in which employees of GGHT will work voluntarily in organisations that work with minority groups to promote an understanding of the diversity of the community in which we work.



Asset Management:

GGHT aims to provide an effective and efficient improvement and repairs service and aids & adaptations service and ensure that our homes meet the individual needs of our diverse customers.

- We achieved the 'Decent Homes Standard' in 2008 ahead of the Governments target date of 2010.
- The 2008 Customer Survey showed that 79% of tenants were satisfied with the service they use.
- We have increased our aids & adaptations budget for tenants with disabilities and plan to set up a Fast Track Disabled Adaptations Service.
- We offer furnished tenancies to tenants.
- On Transfer we will be working towards the Warrington Standard in which equality & diversity is a cross cutting theme.



Procurement & Supplier diversity:

GGHT will ensure fair and consistent practices in attracting tenders from contractors.

- All contractors will be expected to meet our equality & diversity requirements set out in our pre-qualification questionnaire & procurement strategy at pre tender stage.
- Support will also be given to organisations wishing to tender but who do not easily understand the process in the form of an easy to follow guide.
- This scheme of **'Working Together'** will be supplied with all tender documentation and expressions of interest so all organisations wishing to tender, understand our stance in regards to equality & diversity and are aware of our expectations.

Employment:

GGHT wants to be recognised as being an employer of choice. We understand the business case for diversity and recognise that employing staff from a diverse range of backgrounds draws upon the widest possible range of views and experiences, meaning we will be able to listen to and meet the changing needs of our staff, customers and partners.



- GGHT will endeavour to ensure that job requirements do not exclude any groups or individuals.
- We will also ensure that every job is accessible to all through advertising in a variety of locations and allowing applications to be made in a variety of ways on request.
- The selection processes used will be structured to make them fair and transparent.
- The employee induction will be tailored to help the individual(s) understand their role in regards to equality & diversity and **'Working Together.'**
- GGHT offers flexible working and encourages diversity within the workforce.
- GGHT will ensure equality of opportunity in development of its staff and will provide additional training and employment opportunities for our tenants to embody our stance on **'Working Together'**.
- GGHT want to be an 'Employer of Choice' and so will work hard at creating an environment to work in that is recognised for being inclusive.



Hate Crime, Harassment & Discrimination:

GGHT wants to be viewed as an organisation that is proactive and professional in preventing and responding to harassment & discrimination of any kind. This includes domestic violence, hate crimes, harassment & discrimination (*direct or indirect*) because of age, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender, transgender status, religion & belief, marriage & civil partnership and pregnancy & maternity.

- We will ensure our policies on these areas are well publicised and staff are trained to deal with these situations.
- GGHT will ensure that all staff members are aware of the no tolerance stance we take in regards to hate crime, harassment and discrimination (*direct or indirect*) of any kind. We do not accept it in any form and have procedures set in place to deal with this accordingly.
- We view discrimination (*direct or indirect*) and hate crime as 'gross misconduct' from employees and a breach of tenancy from tenants. If found to be guilty of gross misconduct or a breach of your tenancy, you will most likely lose your job or your tenancy.
- We aim to partnership work with Cheshire Police to become a third party 'Hate Crime Reporting Centre.'

9.) Monitoring & measuring the success of 'Working Together.'



We will monitor the success of our scheme through the Action Plan we have created (*section 12*).

The Action Plan sets out practical targets to complete with realistic time frames. Whilst also including people from different areas of the business such as the Board and SMT to be involved in the implementation and outcomes. We will make sure this scheme embodies the theme of '**Working Together**' through involvement from everyone at some point.

We also have an Equality Impact Assessment process in which we try to measure any adverse impact towards any of the protected characteristics in our policies and procedures. We also aim to publish all completed Equality Impact Assessments on our website to be transparent.

10.) Links to any other Policies or documents

Equality & Diversity is a key theme with every policy And procedure within GGHT.



'Working Together' is linked with:

- GGHT Equality & Diversity Policy
- GGHT Disciplinary Procedure
- GGHT Tenancy Agreement
- GGHT Business plan
- GGHT Equality & diversity action plan
- GGHT ASB Policy
- GGHT Bullying & Harassment policy
- GGHT Hate Crime Policy
- GGHT Recruitment & selection policy
- GGHT Complaints Policy
- GGHT Tenant Participation strategy
- Community Groups Contacts list.
- EIA documents (stages 1 & 2 & 3)
- Working Together Group Terms of Reference

11.) Definitions of words used in this document

GGHT

Golden Gates Housing Trust

Equality

Treating people equally according to their needs.

Diversity

Recognising that people are all different and unique, and it's these differences that make us great.

Protected Characteristic

Nine characteristics protected from discrimination by the law which are age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief, gender, transgender status, civil partnership & marital status and pregnancy & maternity.

Socio-economic Inequality

Inequality arising from factors such as income, education and occupation.

Direct Discrimination

Consists of treating a person less favourably because of having one of the nine protected characteristics.

Indirect Discrimination

Consists of applying a requirement, which, internally or not, has a disproportionately adverse effect on a particular group and can not be shown to be justifiable.

Victimisation

Where a person is treated less favourably because they have pursued or it is suspected they will pursue their rights under this policy.

Harassment

Where customers or staff feel there has been an interference with their safety or comfort. This can be in the form of verbal abuse or physical. This can be because of one of the protected characteristics.

Equality Act 2010

The new legislation that is intended to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all; to update, simplify and strengthen the previous legislation; and to deliver a simple, modern and accessible framework of discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

Mela

Mela is a word meaning 'gathering' or 'to meet' or a Fair. It is a celebration of culture.

“Working Together”

Golden Gates Housing Trust’s Single Equality scheme 2010 – 2012

“Closing the Gap”

A programme GGHT are involved in to close the gap between the affluent and deprived areas in Warrington. Warrington has 11 super-output areas in the top 10% nationally which is the most deprived. Within these areas, GGHT has 3000 properties. As part of the Warrington Partnership, GGHT has pledged to reduce the socio economic inequalities in regards to housing within these deprived areas.

12.) Action Plan

If you would like to copy of the Equality & Diversity ‘Action Plan’, which covers the next 12 months in GGHT - Please contact us using the details on the next page and request the document in your preferred format.



13.) Contact us

As you should know from reading this document, we strongly believe in **Working Together** with **you** to become the best possible Housing Trust we can be. We have high standards and so should you, so please let us know what you think of our Single Equality Scheme.

We can only constantly improve with your views and feedback and we value every comment we receive.

To request more copies of 'Working Together' or to give us some feedback, please contact:

Cam Kinsella – Equality & Diversity Officer

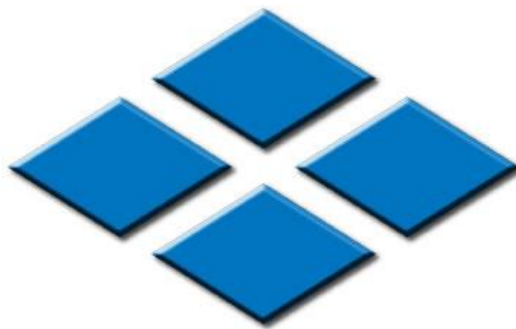
Email: cam.kinsella@goldengateshousing.org.uk

Post : Cam Kinsella
Quality & Performance Team
Golden Gates Housing Trust
Bank House
88 Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1RH

Phone: 0800 25 26 27



** For more information on the sources used to collect the facts and figures used in this document, please also use the above contact information.*



Golden Gates
Housing Trust

