

# **Gender Equality Scheme 2008 – 2010**

## Foreword

This is the first gender equality scheme and action plan produced by Genesis. We are both very pleased to introduce this scheme, which represents the Group's commitment to gender equality and to creating communities and work environments that respect diversity and seeks to grow through utilising the strengths that this diversity brings.

Genesis has a long established history in providing quality homes and services to tens of thousands of people across London and the South East.

Our aim is to put our customers first in all that we do. We pride ourselves in putting our customers first, by delivering services that they want and by building and supporting new communities.

This scheme is consistent with our diversity strategy and the aims of the Group to eliminate discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and to ensure equality of access for all.

Any targets we set within this scheme will feature within the Genesis diversity strategy, and will be regularly reviewed and scrutinised by our Diversity Committee.

Rolande Andersen

Chair - Diversity Committee

Anu Vedi OBE

Chief Executive

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## **Abbreviations**

**BAME** – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic

**DDA** - Disability Discrimination Act

**DV** – Domestic Violence

**EqPA** - Equal Pay Act 1970

**EOC** – Equal Opportunities Commission

**GES** - Gender Equality Scheme

**GPN** - Good Practice Note (From the Housing Corporation)

**KLOE** - Key Lines of Enquiry

**PKP** - Pathmeads Key Places

**POH** - Pathmeads Octavia Hill

**PTH** – Pathmeads

**SBD** – Springboard

**SMART** – Specific, Measurable, Acceptable, Realistic, Timely

**SDA** - Sex Discrimination Act 1975

**EIA** - Equality Impact Assessments

# 1. Introduction

Genesis Housing Group is committed to delivering gender equality. This is the first gender equality scheme (GES) for the Group. Our mission, vision and values set the scene by outlining our commitment to equality.

Genesis continues to work towards a comprehensive equality scheme which will cover all aspects of the Group's work and integrate all of the six main strands of diversity (gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief and age).

The timescales in the gender equality scheme and action plans are aligned to our strategic business plan, as well as our diversity strategy, providing an integrated business approach to embedding gender equality across all areas of our performance.

We are starting from a position of strength, as we already have in place an effective monitoring, review and evaluation framework to enable us to monitor our progress.

For example we:

- have successfully developed schemes under black and minority ethnic (BME) and disability strands
- equality impact assess all new policies
- have six levels of accountability and responsibility for implementation of our equality and diversity policy, strategy and action plans. These range from the Board in their leadership role, to managers and staff
- have a dedicated Group Head of Diversity post to provide a focus for continuous improvement and development.

The GES is divided into 12 key areas. The first five are based on regulatory guidance Good Practice Note 8 from the Housing Corporation and their GES. This guidance covers domestic violence, harassment and anti-social behaviour, homelessness, access to affordable shared ownership housing and resident involvement. Seven additional areas in the Group's GES are: use of positive action, governance, becoming an employer of choice, equal pay and pensions, work-life balance, procurement, contractors and suppliers, employment and customer service. They flow from the Group's equalities and diversity policy, strategy and actions plans.

The 12 key areas are supported by an action plan with SMART objectives and outcomes in each area.

## 2. Genesis Housing Group

### About Us

We provide homes and services to tens of thousands of people across London and the southeast. The Group consists of a number of organisations, including three major RSL subsidiaries (PCHA, Pathmeads and Springboard housing associations) as well as a charitable foundation, Genesis Community.

As one of the largest and most successful housing groups in the UK, owning and/or managing around 40,000 homes, our overriding aim is to put customers first and provide excellent service to all. We have been at the heart of London communities for over 40 years and, as housing needs have changed, so has our organisation, our approach and our range of services. We currently provide the following services:

- Permanent housing - Through subsidiaries PCHA and Springboard, we provide affordable rented homes, and a range of services to many of those most in need.
- Property management services - Pathmeads is the largest Registered Social Landlord provider of property management services in London. It manages homes for other landlords including local authorities, housing associations, primary care and NHS trusts, developers and private investors.
- Affordable home ownership - We maintain an active part rent/part buy development programme, helping more people get a foot on the property ladder. [www.geneshomes.org.uk](http://www.geneshomes.org.uk)
- Key worker housing - Pathmeads Key Places manages homes for London's essential workers.
- Supported housing - Springboard, is an acknowledged expert provider of supported housing for the elderly and for people with special needs and has a subsidiary, St Matthew Housing which specialises in providing housing and support to single homeless people. PCHA also has a very strong track record in the provision of effective support to the most vulnerable.
- Genesis Community – our charitable foundation works with communities to make real changes to peoples lives by challenging social and economic deprivation. Everything we do is about improving the quality for life of our customers and the communities they live in across a number of themes including young people, financial inclusion and training and employment.

We are part of the G15 which is a group of London housing associations that aim to build diverse and sustainable communities. The group works by putting profits back into building homes, improving existing stock, and delivering services to tenants and neighbourhoods.

## **Our Mission Statement and Vision**

### **Vision**

At Genesis we are proud of our record in delivering good services and driving innovation. We are committed to building on this success through strong management of our business and taking the Group into new territory in our relationships with customers.

### **Mission**

Customers come first at Genesis. We provide quality homes and make sure they are better places to live in by delivering services that customers want and by building and supporting communities. We continue to expand our business so that we can make more of a difference. We use experience and innovation to make things happen.

### **Values**

At Genesis we:

- Put our customers first
- Work together and value everyone's contribution
- Treat people as individuals, with integrity and respect
- Focus on getting positive results
- Try new ways of doing things to get better at what we do
- Use our resources efficiently.

### **Our commitment**

Genesis Housing Group is committed to service excellence that reflects individual need and circumstances. This means achieving the very highest standards of equalities practice in service delivery and employment.

The Group is committed to maximising opportunities to create an environment which promotes community cohesion and improves the quality of life for all members of the community, based on the following key principles:

- Diversity is a strength
- People's differences are understood and respected
- Services are fully accessible
- Our workforce reflects the communities we serve.

### **3. Introduction to the scheme**

#### **The Law**

The Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA), placing a statutory duty on all public authorities to have a GES. As a public authority, the Housing Corporation has general duties to promote equal opportunities relating to gender in all functions. This requirement has been passported to housing associations to have gender equality action plans. This should enable associations to fulfil general and specific duties.

#### ***General Duty***

To meet the 'general duty' whilst carrying out all of their functions, organisations must have due regard of the need:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) and discrimination that is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act 1970 (EqPA)
- To promote equality of opportunity between women and men.

This requires organisations to take action on the most important gender equality issues within their functions. The promotion of equal opportunities between women and men requires the recognition that the two genders are not starting from an equal footing and identical treatment will not always be appropriate.

Under the duty, organisations also have an obligation to eliminate discrimination and harassment towards current and potential transsexual staff. This duty was extended to transsexual service users from December 2007.

#### ***Specific Duty***

Genesis Housing Group is also required to meet the 'specific' duties and will therefore:

- Prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how we will meet our general and specific duties and setting out our gender equality objectives
- Formulate our overall objectives, considering the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
- Gather and use information on how our policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services
- Consult stakeholders (i.e. employees, service users and others, including trade unions), taking account of relevant information to determine our gender equality objectives.

#### **Regulation and inspection**

In November 2007, the Housing Corporation issued a circular placing a duty on housing associations to develop gender equality action plans by April 2008, arising from the legal requirements contained within the Equality Act 2006.

Guidance from the Housing Corporation on equality and diversity is detailed in Good Practice Note 8 (GPN 8 - November 2007). This states “our equalities schemes recommend that associations adopt outcome-focused approaches. On gender – housing associations should focus on removing barriers and set targets for achieving equality in representation in the governance structures of the housing association and at all levels within the staff body; and housing associations should ensure that adequate provision is made for the victims of domestic violence. Services should be provided for gender groups as appropriate. This should include advice and support that recognises the particular barriers to communication with the victims of domestic violence”.

There is guidance from the Audit Commission in their Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE). KLOE 31 covers diversity, enabling inspectors to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided. This in turn informs the regulatory process.

**KLOE 31 states:**

These are the overarching questions that inspectors will be looking at to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of services.

**Corporate culture and governance**

- Is there clear and consistent leadership in the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity?
- Does the organisation ensure that its policies and strategies are written or developed with regard to the diverse needs of its communities?
- Are external requirements (legislative or good practice) being addressed? How are these requirements communicated to staff and service users?
- Have service users and relevant stakeholders been involved in determining priorities? How have these priorities been disseminated?
- Do the governance structures receive the reports necessary to judge whether the organisation is delivering on diversity?
- Is the board/organisation able to demonstrate that it understands the business case for diversity?

**Access and customer care**

*‘Access’ here includes physical access and relates in part to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).*

- Is communication with service users conducted in a manner that meets their needs, and can all service users access all relevant services?
- Is there up-to-date information on the needs of different service users which is easily available and used to provide an appropriate service?
- Are the needs of vulnerable service users, or people with disabilities, monitored to ensure that they are getting the right amount of support?
- Is there the facility to bring in more support for service users where this is needed?

### **Service user involvement**

- Is the organisation aware of the diversity of its service users who are involved in influencing services, and whether these are representative? Is it taking steps to ensure that all diverse views are represented?

### **Partnerships**

- How does the organisation ensure contact with its various communities? What is it doing to involve other agencies and partners?
- How does the organisation ensure that its contractors and consultants are committed to diversity in service provision?
- Does the organisation promote community cohesion?

### **Harassment and domestic violence**

- Does the organisation have an effective approach to dealing with harassment, domestic violence and hate crimes?
- Are there effective means of offering support to residents who suffer harassment?
- Is there a clear message to residents on the stand that the organisation takes against those who harass and in support of those who suffer harassment?
- Does the organisation encourage a partnership response against harassment where appropriate?

### **Legislation**

- Awareness of and response to legislative changes.

The above legal, regulatory and inspection requirements inform the development of our GES. In fulfilling this regulatory duty, Genesis Housing Group has published this scheme and action plan. It stems from our current diversity strategy, and is also aligned to our Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plans.

## 4. The national position

A number of indicators from research across a broad spectrum are detailed below. These provide further context for the requirement of a GES.

- Childcare and carers' responsibilities have an impact in maintaining a work-life balance for many people. People in low paid employment, those who work part-time or people who have career breaks due to children, or other care responsibilities, are likely to receive lower pensions. These factors may produce significant gender differences with regard to access to housing, in particular for older and younger people. (Source : Our Gender Duty – The Housing Corporation 2007 – 2010)
- In the housing association sector 66% of employees are women and 39% of board members are women. (Source: Delivering Gender Equality, Housing Corporation, 2007)
- A quarter of women experience domestic violence in their lifetime and up to one in ten experience it annually. Less than half of all incidents are reported to the police. (Source: The Cost of Domestic Violence, Women and Equality Unit, 2004)
- One in six men experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. (Source: The British Crime Survey, the Home Office, 2005)
- On average, women in full-time employment earn 17% less per hour than men. Two thirds of mothers with dependent children work but only just over a half of women with children below five years old work. 79% of men are in employment compared to 70% of women. (Source: Facts About Women and Men in Great Britain, EOC, 2006)

Whilst improvements continue to be made to promote gender equality, there is a greater need to continue this work.

## 5. The Genesis position

### (a) Customers Statistics

#### Group Profile – By Percentages (as at June 2008)

	PCHA %	SBD %	PTH %	POH %	PKP %	Overall Percentage	Genesis total number
Female	61	60	70	54	56	62%	16943
Male	38	40	30	46	27	37%	10271
Unknown	1	0	0	0	17	1%	278
Totals	100	100	100	100	100	100%	27492

Source: Customer profile information

An average of 62% of households in the Group is headed by women.

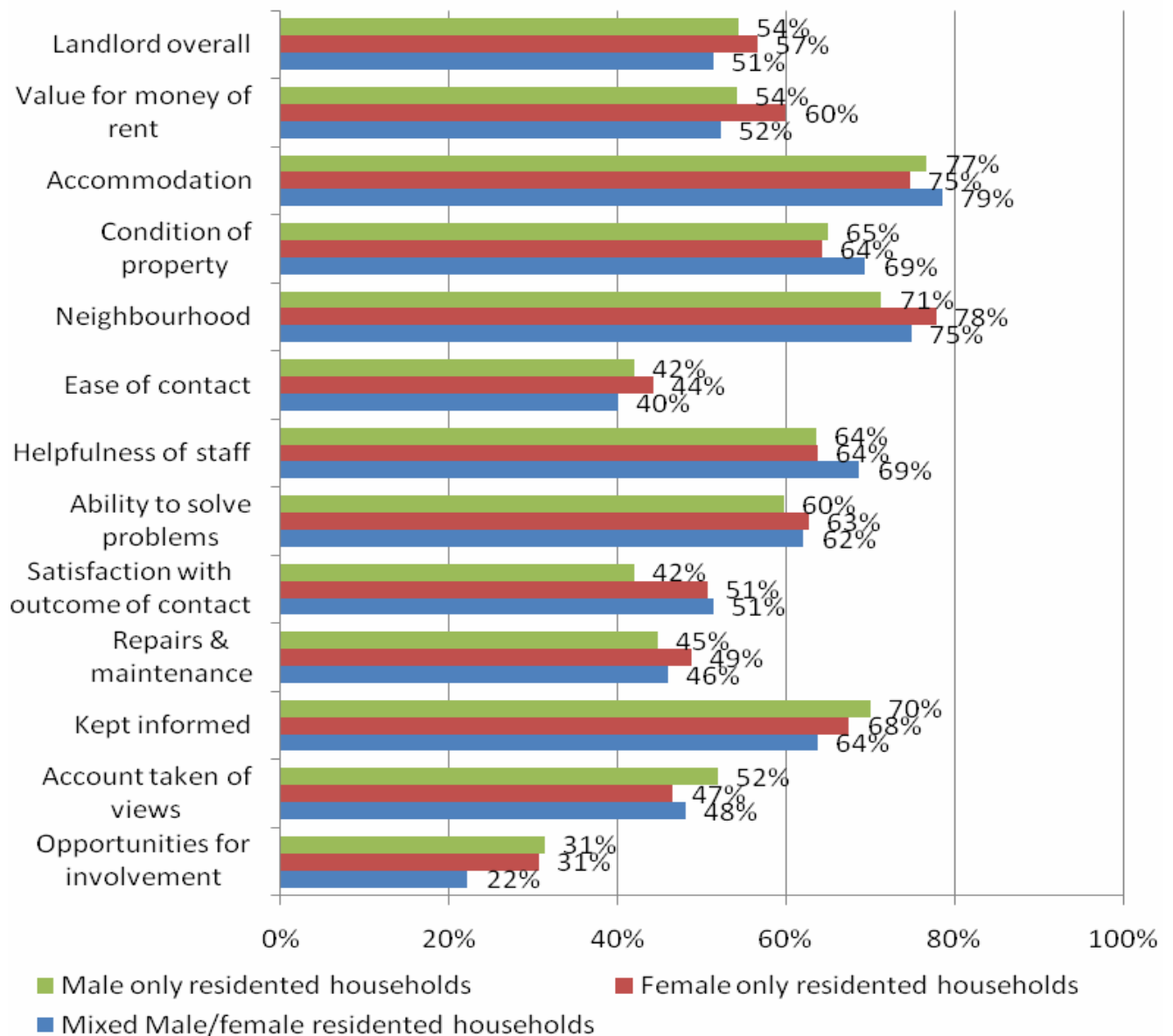
We continue to use Status and other surveys to inform us of satisfaction levels by gender. Findings are analysed and reported on an on-going basis to address any issues identified in meeting the housing needs of all genders.

Two examples of analysis are detailed below. Results from such analysis are used to inform potential improvements to shape service delivery.

#### (i) Pathmeads Octavia Hill – Customer Satisfaction Survey Report 2008

The results of the survey were analysed to see if there was any difference in responses between households made up of different genders. The survey found some differences, which suggests that female only households are marginally more satisfied than male only households and mixed households. Again age may be a determining factor here – as female only households may contain more older residents than other groups. Female only households were more satisfied with the landlord overall (57%), value for money (60%) and the repairs service (49%) than other household types. However male only households – who were less satisfied with the neighbourhood (71%) and satisfaction after contact (42%), were more satisfied with being kept informed (70%) and the account taken of their views (52%) than the other two groups. Mixed households were less satisfied with being kept informed (64%) and the opportunities for involvement (22%) but more satisfied with the condition of the property (69%) and the helpfulness of staff (69%) than the other two groups.

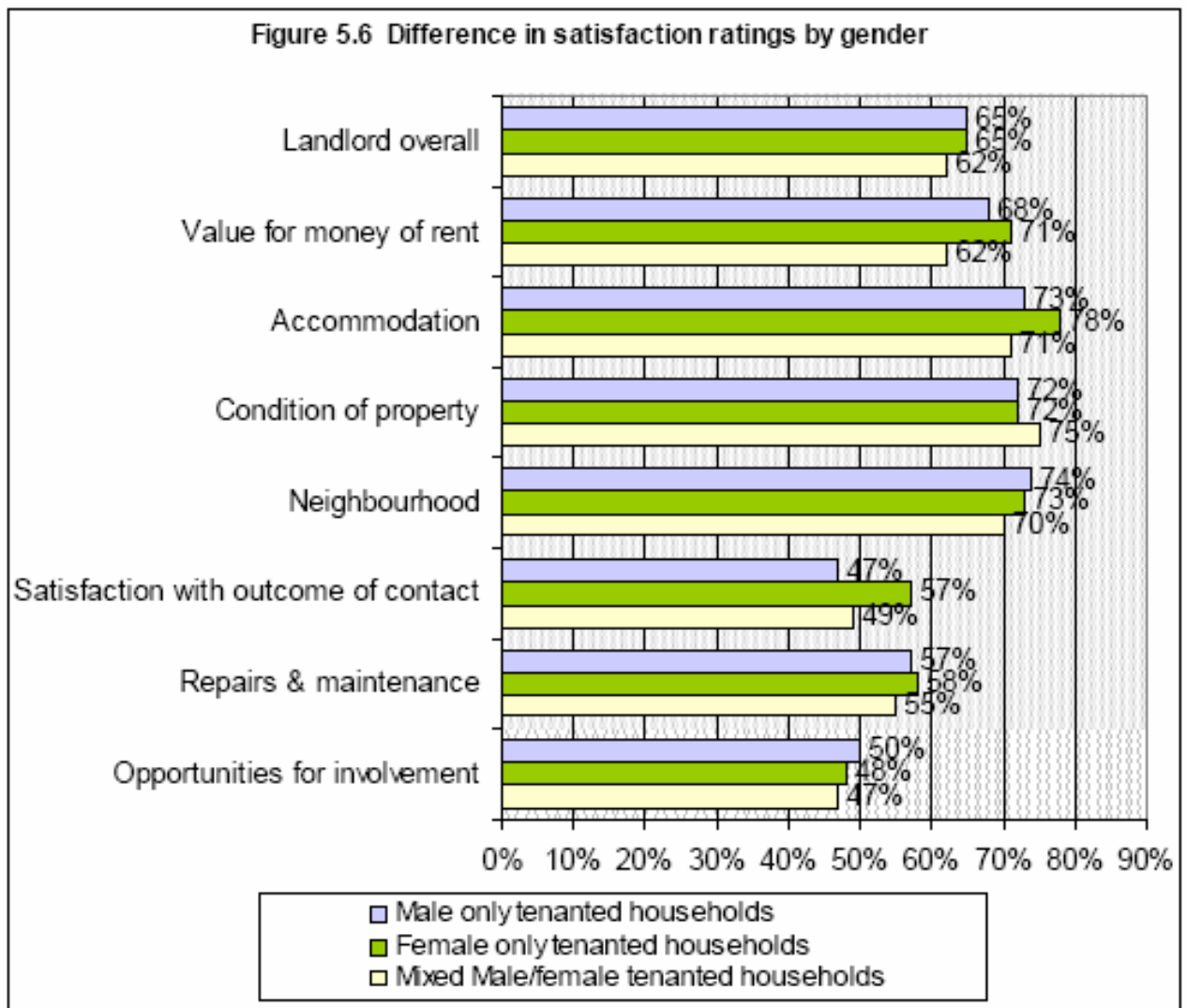
**Figure 5.7 Difference in satisfaction between gender of residents**



**(ii) PCHA - Customer Satisfaction Survey Report - 2007**

The results of the survey were analysed to see if there was any difference in satisfaction between the gender of tenants. The survey found only a few minor differences. Mixed male and female tenanted households were less satisfied with the value for money (62%) and the ease of contacting staff (46%); while male only tenanted households found it easier to contact staff (57%) but were less satisfied after having contacted their landlord (47%).

**Figure: Difference in satisfaction ratings by gender**



## (b) The Board and Employment

### Board Representation (as at June 2008)

Board	Female Number and Percentage	Male Number and Percentage	Total
Genesis	3 (30%)	7 (70%)	10
PCHA	5 (42%) 2 Customer Members	7 (58%) 2 Customer Members	12 4 Customer Members
Springboard	2 (20%)	8 (80%) 2 Customer Members	10 Includes 2 Customer Members
Pathmeads	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	8
Genesis Community	2 (33%)	4 (67%)	6
Totals	14 (30%)	32 (70%)	46

The proportion of women at 30%, across all Boards in Genesis remains low. This is despite some progress having been made. The Board of PCHA, for example has 42% women, the highest number and proportion in the Group.

Efforts continue in the Group to address the imbalance in the gender makeup of Board members. Women have previously been targeted for recruitment at Board level. Plans are already in place from our Diversity Strategy Action Plan 2007 – 09 to work towards the composition of Boards that reflect and are influenced by the communities served. We also wish to ensure our recruitment of Board members is in line with best practice, including positive action regarding gender.

The composition is subject to on-going monitoring and review processes.

### Employment Statistics: Gender by Grade

	Female		Male	
	%	No.	%	No.
Grade A-C	75.5%	455	24.5%	148
Grade D-F	54.6%	249	45.4%	207
Grade G-J	40.4%	38	59.6%	56
Senior Managers	21.1%	4	78.9%	15
Directors	35.3%	6	64.7%	11

The gender profile of employees, at all levels in the Group, is reported regularly to the Board. All managers receive equality training to ensure they promote fairness in all aspects of recruitment. The current set of data reveals that:

- Women are over-represented at lower levels at 76% and under-represented at higher levels
- For Senior Managers and Directors and special grades, over Director level, the representation levels are reversed from the lower levels with the majority of those holding senior posts being male.

## 6. What we do already

The business case in Genesis Group, is reflected strategically by ensuring the Diversity Strategy and Action Plans, Disability Equality Scheme, and GES are all aligned to the business plan timeframes. This is complemented by a robust structure that covers monitoring, review and evaluation mechanisms. (Please see Section 8: Responsibility for Implementation and Review). There are clearly defined responsibilities with key individuals from Board to frontline.

The starting position is one of strength, based on foundations from previous work on gender, race and disability equality.

The Board provides a clear leadership steer in promoting equality of opportunity in the Group. Regular updates are provided to the Board to ensure progress can be demonstrated by agreed outcomes.

Impact assessments on all newly developed or reviewed policies routinely inform us on implications for gender equality.

### **Employment**

The Dignity at Work policy forms the basis for creating and sustaining an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace. A number of other policy areas and practices promote gender equality in the workplace, including:

- Flexible working
- Work-life balance
- Carer's policy
- Paternity/maternity provision
- Adoption provision
- Take up of training courses in the Group
- Staff satisfaction surveys
- Childcare vouchers to enable staff to make savings on approved and registered childcare
- Training on diversity is mandatory for all staff and covers the six strands of equality as well as family/caring responsibilities. Our policy also provides for tailored training to be available for staff who need additional skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles
- Policy framework: Statistics are analysed and reported to the Board, on employment, covering all six strands of equality, in addition are also reported by grade for gender and ethnicity
- Targeting potential female members to join the Group at Board level.

## **Customer Service**

Customer satisfaction surveys are undertaken across the Group. These can break down satisfaction results by gender.

Specialist provision of housing and tenancy sustainment in DV cases.

## **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

We have developed an Equality Impact Assessment framework that aims to bring together the relevant legal and regulatory requirements in all equality areas. Through this framework, we will be assessing all new Group policies and existing policies, when they are due for review, on the six equality strands.

Two EIAs were completed and signed off by the Group's Head of Diversity in 2007. Both were determined to have a positive impact on both men and women:

- 1) **Domestic violence policy** - this was seen to have no adverse impact on men and women. It was assessed that the impact will be greater for women as national research suggests that they are more likely to be victims of DV.
- 2) **Harassment policy** - again, this was seen to have no adverse impact on both men and women as anyone can be a victim of harassment.

## **7. Our gender equality scheme**

This section sets out our intentions to continue to make gender equality an integral part of our work.

The scheme is supported by an action plan aligned with our Diversity Strategy that is owned by the whole of the Group as we recognise the continuing role we all must play in mainstreaming gender equality into our functions, policies and services.

The actions that arise under this scheme will inform our existing Diversity Strategy Action Plan and form a platform to develop our comprehensive equality framework in future.

The key principle to our scheme is proportionality. We intend to set a number of realistic and achievable objectives and outcomes to succeed in delivering this GES. This then forms a platform for continuous improvement.

### **How we developed our scheme**

The scheme considers issues under the broad headings of Employment and Customer Service. The stages are set out below:

#### **Stage 1**

Desktop review of key documents, which included the strategic plans 2007-2010, diversity policy, strategy and action plan, disability equality scheme (Appendix 1: Reference Documents, provides the full list).

The Housing Corporation's Good Practice note 8 and GES provided an understanding of the regulatory requirements outlined as the first five of twelve action areas in the scheme (Appendix 2). These are:

- domestic violence,
- harassment and anti-social behaviour,
- homelessness,
- access to affordable shared ownership housing and
- resident involvement.

#### **Stage 2**

Policy checklist of areas covered in the Group's activities. At this stage, seven additional areas were added to the above five in a framework for the scheme. As a leader in promoting equality and service excellence, we wish to go further in promoting best practice. The seven areas being positive action, governance, become an employer of choice, equal pay and pension, work-life balance, procurement, contractors and suppliers. A total of twelve subject areas set the ground for consultation with a range of stakeholders, as mentioned previously, see Appendix 2.

### **Stage 3**

Customer and staff involvement comprised of: questionnaires; one to one meetings; telephone and focus group interviews. The assessments were designed and conducted to ensure views captured in the process involved key personnel and stakeholders. This was carried out taking account of gender balance, to form as representative a cross-section as possible to influence the development of detail for the scheme and action plan.

The processes and information collated through these, gave us a good understanding of our current position on gender and areas for improvement.

### **Stage 4**

Testing was carried out on collected data and information to meet legal, regulatory and inspection requirements. Peer comparisons of GES schemes were carried out to provide added value and further robustness in the process, as well preparing the ground for future benchmarking activities. A gap analysis was then carried out against best practice external standards. The information collated from this exercise formed the basis of our current GES and action plan, encompassing twelve areas.

The action plan is a direct result of the issues raised by the above activity.

### **Stage 5**

Following approval by the staff forum, the Diversity Group and the Executive Team, the GES was presented to the Board sub committee on diversity for final approval.

### **Stage 6**

The launch in-house was followed by briefings to staff across the Group. An external launch will follow to be attended by customers and key stakeholders and partners.

The scheme is now subject to the monitoring, review and evaluation processes in the Group. This includes annual updates on progress to the Board. Progress in respect of the implementation of the GES will be reported quarterly to the Diversity Committee and the Group Executive Team and annually to the Board.

The scheme will be subject to an evaluation at the end of the current cycle in 2010. In future, Genesis Housing Group aims to have a single comprehensive equalities scheme encompassing the six strands. Considerable work has taken place to facilitate this and the GES will be an integral component of the overall scheme.

## **8. Responsibility for implementation and review**

### **The Board**

The Board of Genesis Housing Group has overall responsibility for the implementation of this scheme. The Board has delegated this authority to the Group Diversity Committee.

### **The Group Diversity Committee**

The Group Diversity Committee has delegated responsibility from the Board for approving this scheme and for ensuring that adequate resources are provided to implement this scheme, for monitoring progress and for its regular review.

### **Executive responsibility**

Overall responsibility for the scheme rests with the Chief Executive, who works closely with the Executive Directors and Board members to oversee implementation. The lead Executive Team member with delegated responsibility to champion and implement this scheme is the Group Director of Corporate Services.

### **Diversity Group**

This group consists of Diversity Champions from across the Group. It meets on a bi-monthly basis and is responsible for monitoring the GES action plan.

### **Group Head of Diversity**

This role is responsible for ensuring the practical implementation of the GES and coordinating the regular review.

### **All Managers**

All managers are responsible for ensuring that they integrate the objectives of the GES within their department and team plans.

### **All Staff**

All staff are responsible for the implementation of this scheme across Genesis Housing Group. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that they are fully conversant with this scheme and the targets of the action plan of the policy.

## **Monitoring Review and Evaluation**

The GES will be evaluated in January 2010, to inform its integration into the Comprehensive Equality Scheme in the Group, covering the six strands of diversity.

# **Appendix 1 : Reference documents**

## **1. Genesis**

Strategic Plan 2007-2010

Diversity Strategy and Action Plan 2007 – 2010

Equality and Diversity Policy

Annual Report 2007

STATUS Surveys – Pathmeads Octavia Hill, Pathmeads Temporary Housing, Springboard, PCHA

Disability Equality Scheme 2007 – 2010 & Action Plan

Staff Satisfaction survey 2007

## **2. Equal Opportunities Commission (Now part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission)**

Gender Equality Duty Code of Practice November 2006

## **3. Housing Corporation**

Good Practice Note 8 – November 2007

P2 Circular on Disability and Gender Action Plans

Our Gender Duty – The GES

## **4. Audit Commission**

Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) 31 – Diversity

Making equality and diversity a reality: gender - Our gender equality scheme 2006-2009

## **5. Best Practice**

3 sample Gender Equality Scheme comparisons from other housing associations.

## Appendix 2 : Gender equality framework

### Housing Corporation's Key Issues for Gender in Housing

Source : Delivering Gender Equality – The Housing Corporation's GES

1. **Domestic Violence** – whilst housing can be a place of refuge, there is recognition that women are the majority of victims but men and same-sex couples can also experience domestic violence.
2. **Harassment and anti-social behaviour** – this can include harassment or violence based on a person's gender or transgender status.
3. **Homelessness** – providing appropriate housing and support for vulnerable people requires effective responses to ensure there is no discrimination on grounds gender.
4. **Access to affordable shared ownership housing** – can be affected by pay gaps between men and women. The Group is aware of potential gender differences to ensure that the outcomes are not disproportionate.
5. **Resident Involvement** – people with caring duties may not be able to get involved in the same way as other groups of people.

**In Genesis Housing Group** we have identified these additional areas to improve our focus on gender equality ;

6. **Positive action** - gender initiatives to promote better representation at management levels
7. **Governance** - Board levels to include more balanced gender and resident representation
8. **Become an employer of choice** – increase developmental and career opportunities for BAME, women and disabled employees
9. **Equal pay and pension** - audit to consider any imbalances
10. **Worklife balance** - flexible working practices to improve staff recruitment and retention
11. **Procurement** – implications and outcomes on gender
12. **Contractors and suppliers** to Genesis and how they address gender issues.