

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020 - 2023

Version Control

Item	Reason for Change	Version	Author	Date
1	Initial Draft to be completed (and sent to CC for review)	0.1	Jill Goodwill	7 th August 2020
2	Receive feedback from BAME/Customer Services Committee	0.2		17 th August 2020
3	2 nd Draft – sent to CC for review	0.3		13 th January 2021
4	2 nd Draft sent to Exec for review and feedback	0.4		15 th January 2021
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6	Final draft to be submitted to Board for Approval and sign off	1.0		10 st February 2021

Last Review Date: January 2021 **Next Review Date:** January 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 Origin believes that equality and fairness are the hallmarks of a modern, decent society that offers opportunity and draws on the talents of all. We are committed to valuing people as individuals, to promoting diversity and inclusion and to tackling the root causes of inequality and unfair discrimination.

We:

- Believe each person should be treated uniquely as an individual and with respect
- Are committed to treating people equitably and fairly
- Welcome people who are committed to our approach to diversity and inclusion into our organisation
- Understand that effective equality, diversity and inclusion policies are a key to the success of the organisation
- Will commit to practical action which brings our principles to life

1.2 This strategy sets out Origin's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and applies to all staff, residents, customers and stakeholders. It seeks to provide a clear vision for how we will build on recent successes to contribute to delivering great homes, positive people and strong communities. Promoting inclusive working environments for our employees and valuing the diversity of our residents and communities is essential to delivering our vision. This strategy supports delivery of our Corporate Plan 2020-2025 and links to key strategies including People, Customer Service, Resident Engagement and Procurement.

2. Defining Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Equality - is the recognition that everyone should be treated fairly, and we should help to create a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the same opportunity to fulfil their potential. It does not mean everyone should be treated the same: some people will need more help to overcome barriers created by society.

Diversity – acknowledges, values and respects the full range of differences between people in the workplace, community and in wider society and recognizes that diversity extends beyond the characteristics included within equality legislation to social, economic and educational background, professional background, hierarchical level, working style, and nationality

Inclusion – refers to an individual's experience within the workplace, community and in wider society and the extent to which they feel valued and included.

3. **Overall aims**

3.1 The overall aims of this strategy are:

- To create an inclusive organisational culture which values and celebrates diversity and offers everyone a chance to succeed and reflects our diverse communities
- To provide residents and all customers with equal access to services which are shaped to reflect their diverse needs
- To provide services and communicate in ways that respond to individual needs and preferences

3.2 This strategy has been developed to support the implementation of our business objectives and Origin's mission statement;

- **Great Homes:**
places people are proud to live in.
- **Positive People:**
caring responsive staff getting services right for customers.
- **Strong Communities:**
helping people and neighbourhoods thrive.

4. **Why equality diversity and inclusion?**

4.1 Origin is committed to providing equal treatment and opportunity in access to housing, provision of services and access to employment and career progression. We recognise and respect diversity and aim to embrace principles and practices in service delivery across the range of our activities that promote equality and are relevant to the diverse needs of the communities in which we work. We are committed to the elimination of unfair discrimination in all our services and to ensuring that services are accessible to all.

Considering issues of diversity is a key part of being customer focused and demonstrating integrity when delivering services to customers.

Developing relationships with our customers to understand differences and issues of inequality can support us to add value to peoples' lives and communities. Achieving this depends on our ability to create an environment and workforce that supports talented and committed people, representative of the communities we work in, to work to the best of their ability.

4.2 **Our Values**

Delivering a strong, integrated approach to Equality and Diversity is central to who we are as an organisation, and key in supporting us to deliver our values and our corporate plan. Origin launched a new set of organisational values at its staff conference in September 2019.

Whilst the values made no explicit reference to valuing diversity, under the value of building trust is the statement "We are inclusive, united by our shared goal to build thriving communities where people can prosper and grow". All staff subsequently received training on the new values hence given us an opportunity to reiterate their relevance and connection to Equality Diversity and Inclusion.

The results of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion focus groups which were conducted by an external consultant in October 2019, indicated that staff were generally positive about Origin's vision and values and its commitment to better understanding and responding to the diverse needs of residents and service users.

Areas identified for improvement related to responding to differing communication needs e.g. for partially sighted residents or residents with limited or no understanding of English. The lack of personal data held/known about residents' individual needs was also raised as an area of concern, particularly in respect of disability, accessibility and evacuation requirements.

Staff were less positive in relation to Origin's approach to understanding and responding to the needs of its staff. Many felt that there was a need for more visible leadership and modelling of behaviours and for more diversity in leadership and governance. There was a need to create an environment where equality, diversity and inclusion was discussed regularly e.g. at team meetings, celebrating cultural days e.g. black history. Pride etc; for more commitment to improving communication across the organisation and to do more to develop and promote staff who understand the values of the organisation.

5. **Leadership**

We acknowledge that top-level commitment is vital for a rigorous EDI culture to grow and thrive. The Executive and the Board will display full commitment to the Equality and Diversity Strategy and provide the visible leadership required.

This will be demonstrated by:

- Modelling the principles that inform the strategy in their own behaviour.
- Demonstrating they have taken 'due regard' to equality in their decision making by:
- Actively considering matters of equality and diversity when formulating strategy and making strategic choices
- Monitoring impacts of Executive and Board decisions and strategy

All board members, and senior management will commit to achieving excellence in the field of EDI. As part of this commitment they will be expected to lead by example and also to communicate the importance of these issues at all levels throughout the organisation and beyond it in dealings with third parties.

Strong leadership also entails a commitment to championing equality, diversity and issues beyond the confines of our own organisation. Origin will endeavour to raise awareness of these issues in all dealings with clients, suppliers and other stakeholders, including community groups, statutory bodies and other service providers.

6. **Roles and responsibilities**

6.1 The key roles and responsibilities for delivering the strategy are outlined below;

The Board – Responsible for approving the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and undertaking an annual review of performance in delivering the objectives and ensuring all legislative and regulatory obligations are met.

Senior Management – Responsible for ensuring implementation and compliance with the Strategy and associated policies and procedures, and to monitor progress against the objectives and action plan.

Managers - Responsible for promoting and implementing the strategy, role modelling behaviour and communicating the strategy to staff and stakeholders; ensuring compliance by staff and taking appropriate action in instances of non-compliance.

Employees – Responsible for understanding and complying with the strategy and associated policies and to undertake training and development as required.

7. A diverse, motivated and inclusive workforce

- 7.1 Through our People Strategy we aim to deliver priorities to ensure staff are engaged, motivated, high performing and proud to work for Origin. Becoming an employer of choice for a diverse group of people, representative of our communities is an important part of this.
- 7.2 An insight review of housing association staff in England conducted by the National Housing Federation (2020) cited that:
- Research conducted by the Department for Business and Energy, found that “improved participation and progression of BAME staff in employment is estimated to be worth £24bn a year to the economy”.
 - Research conducted by Deloitte has found diverse and inclusive workplaces “drive perception of high performance amongst employees, specifically around innovation, productivity and customer satisfaction”.
 - Research conducted by the Chartered Governance Institute shows that “the most admired, peer ranked companies have more diverse boards in terms of representation of women”.
 - McKinsey & Co suggest that Diverse companies; “have better employee satisfaction”, “make better decisions” and focus more on their customer needs’ through bringing their own experience of different customer groups” .
- 7.3 A diverse workforce will be more likely to recognise the requirements and opportunities presented by our entire customer base. Additionally, that diverse customer base will be more likely to be engaged in developing services and solutions

8. Our people

- 8.1 We believe that every member of staff has a responsibility and role in delivering our EDI strategy and we will ensure that all staff understand the objectives and actions that support the EDI strategy. We will provide our people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to implement and progress equality, diversity and inclusion in their work.
- 8.2 To promote EDI and prevent discrimination we have put in place a range of policies, learning tools and initiatives including;
- Mandatory EDI eLearning module which has been developed to increase awareness of the basic principles of EDI. All staff are required to complete this upon joining the organisation as part of their induction process.
 - Unconscious Bias eLearning is now available to all staff and managers. This module aims to equip users with the tools to unpack, understand and address unconscious bias. It also helps users self-reflect on how biases have implications on others both socially and in the workplace.
 - Robust disciplinary and grievance procedures which can be used to deal with failures to treat people with dignity, respect, equality, and fairness. Staff are aware of these processes and should be empowered and confident to use them to hold us to account as an employer.
 - Our internal bullying and harassment policy specifically set out our approach to managing bullying and harassment and dealing with complaints of discrimination from our staff.
 - Executive Director led mentoring scheme launched in November 2020 aimed at a diverse staff talent pool. First cohort confirmed and mentoring sessions are under way.

- Mental Health Awareness eLearning module available to all staff and managers, which covers what good mental health means, self-care and supporting others and offers some useful tools and resources.
- Origin has signed up to Harry's Pledge which involves a series of commitments to support those who need care, and to help those who provide it. Our commitment currently includes flexible working, paying the London Living wage and offering "carer friendly" policies to those with caring responsibilities and making homes more accessible.
- During the summer of 2019 Origin were proud to be the first Housing Association to take part in the "Change 100" programme with Leonard Cheshire, offering four summer internships to students and graduates living with a disability, and arranging training for our managers to raise their awareness of supporting employees with a disability. We are positive about employing individuals with a disability and display the "disability confident employer" symbol on our website, to indicate that we will interview all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy.
- In light of recent events and in response to the renewed focus on police brutality and structural racism affecting black communities in the UK, a Black Lives Matter Yammer group forum was set up to enable staff to share resources and reading on the Black Lives Matter movement and anti-racism more broadly.
- The Diverse Origin Professionals Network (DOP Network), was formed in 2020, this involves which include staff from black and ethnic minorities who meet once a month. The aims of the network are to play a key role in:
 - Advocating for strategic and systemic changes that contribute in making Origin a more progressive, diverse and inclusive organisation
 - Empowering members with supportive tools, events, initiatives and networks to inspire them to inclusively reach their professional potential and overcoming any structural barrier
- Listening sessions were held in July 2020 by the chair of the Diverse Origin Professionals Network (DOP Network) with attendance by an Executive Director. Staff were able to share their personal and professional lived experiences, ask questions and make suggestions for a more progressive workplace. The longer term goals are to broaden these conversations to help address other inequalities ensuring there is a clear link to our EDI Strategy.
- Business processes are being reviewed to seek out new opportunities to collate EDI data at touchpoints with customers
- Functionality of CRM to be reviewed in order to improve capability and usefulness for our residents
- Online access to services, such as the portal to be updated to enable residents to manually input their own EDI data.
- Periodic equality and diversity training to be provided to all Board and Committee members in order to understand their responsibility in this area
- Succession planning for the resident Board member to ensure access to a diverse pool of good quality candidates
- Origin aims to be an employer of choice and through its People strategy aims to ensure its workforce is able to make a valuable contribution to its objectives, whilst ensuring that their health and wellbeing is supported.

9. Our residents

- 9.1 Over the last 2 decades England and Wales have become more ethnically diverse. The 2011 census survey has shown a decrease in the white population falling from 94.1% in 1991 down to 86% in 2011.

9.2 A survey of residents living in housing associations across England was conducted by The English Housing Survey (EHS) in 2018/19. Its purpose was to establish whether people living in housing association homes reflected the existing inequalities in society and concluded the following:

- 59.3% living in housing association households were female compared to 40.9% for the population
- 37% living in housing association homes were lone females or single mothers with dependent children
- 53% of households had at least one household member who were disabled or had long term illness compared to 34% compared to 34% for the population
- 14.9% of households living in housing association homes were headed by ethnic minorities compared to 11.9% across the population.
- 69% of households living in social housing had a religion – 60% Christian and 6% Muslim

9.3 Whilst there is no specific data on LGBTQ+ within housing associations, the Human Institute estimates from their research that around 4-6% of social housing head of households are LGBTQ+.

9.4 The table below indicates the current makeup, of the Board, staff, and residents broken down into gender, ethnicity, disability and age recorded as at January 2021.

	Senior Staff (EXEC/SMG)	All Staff	Board	Residents
Total no.	20	276	11	12399
%Female	45%	54%	36%	54%
%BAME	30%	*22%	18%	**22%
%Disabled	15%	3.1%	0%	***12%
%25-29	0%	10%	0%	**8%
%30-44	40%	35%	20%	****24%
%45 plus	60%	50%	80%	****67%

* based on 70% of data collated and recorded

** based on 49% of data collated and recorded

*** based on 32% of data collated and recorded

**** based on 94% of data collated and recorded

9.5 Whilst our profile is broadly reflective of local demographics, our key challenge is to address the underrepresentation of women and BAME staff in senior level roles. To this effect all our recruitment policies and practices have been developed to comply with the law, to promote equality and diversity, and to provide checks and balances to ensure our approach is applied consistently and reflected in the experiences of staff.

9.6 We recognise the significant impact on our residents and services if our workforce does not reflect the local communities we serve in terms of ethnicity and will work to put in place measures to address this issue such as targeted recruitment. As our customer groups diversify, ensuring that we recognise diversity and the positive impact that this can bring to both the workplace and to the services we deliver is important. A priority is to improve our collation and recording of resident data in regards to their protected characteristics, currently we only have 49% of information held on CRM. The gap of 51% in the data poses a challenge of not being able to make informed decisions about improving our services.

10. Responsive services

10.1 One of Origin's principle objectives is to improve and develop services that meet the needs and aspirations our customers. We are committed to developing services that are non-discriminatory and will consult with all our customers, especially those who are from a minority or hard to reach communities, to establish their needs and requirements.

10.2 We will monitor and report the satisfaction of our customers with respect to the standard of service and accommodation and quality of work, aiming to ensure services are suitable for current needs, and respond as far as possible to changes in customers' physical and personal circumstances and aspirations.

11. EDI Objectives and Outcomes

Objective 1. To identify opportunities and barriers related to recruitment progression and management of a diverse body of staff and achieve greater diversity at senior levels of the organisation

- Employ, develop and retain a diverse workforce enabling progression into leadership roles to create a working environment that recruits, retains, engages with and motivates talented staff from diverse range of backgrounds.
- Fair and transparent recruitment, promotion and reward processes in place
- Employee diversity networks are developed and staff feel encouraged to take a lead generate discussion topics, and feedback to make informed decisions
- Representative proportion of shortlisted applications received from BME applicants
- Recruitment for Board level roles, provides opportunity to attract and retain people from diverse backgrounds.

Objective 2. To ensure equality and diversity is driven from the top through strong leadership from the Board and Senior Management

- Design leadership programmes to help harness talent in all its diverse forms and provide succession into future senior and board level opportunities.
- Increase representation of BAME/Women at Board level
- Increase representation of staff from BAME backgrounds at Exec/Senior Levels
- Increase visibility of leadership on EDI

Objective 3. To embed an inclusive culture that embraces equality, diversity and inclusion

- Accessible and fit for purpose communication that reaches as wide an audience as possible and is consciously inclusive
- Celebrate annual diversity events in order to sustain an accessible and inclusive environment for all staff,
- Promote and foster a work environment free from unlawful discrimination, harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. No employee or potential employee will receive less favourable treatment or consideration due to belonging to any of the protected characteristic groups.

Objective 4. To ensure equality and diversity lies at the heart of our business planning process and informs how we design and deliver our services

- Principles of good equality and diversity practice inform and shape our employment approaches
- Equality diversity and inclusion considerations are taken into account in all decisions taken at all levels to reduce inequalities for all customers, residents and staff
- Address communications barriers including those we have identified spanning language and literacy, mental health and audio and visual impairment

Objective 5. To actively consult our residents to understand better the diversity in our communities and ensure that their views form an integral part of the decision making process

- Further engagement from BAME residents and other communities in order to understand their experience of our services and activities and how we can achieve greater equality and inclusion
- Ensure continuous improvement in customer experience which is responsive to resident priorities
- Improve range, accuracy and application of EDI data held on residents to help address inequality and improve services

11.1 Our EDI strategy will focus on achieving positive outcomes for potential and existing residents and the wider community. We will continue to take direct positive action to address the needs of under-represented communities that face barriers in accessing information, services and opportunity.

11.2 The aims of the EDI strategy will be reflected in implementation of the customer service and resident engagement strategies.

12. Data

12.1 Our commitment and faith in the power of data and evidence to improve how we operate and to deliver better outcomes for residents is reflected in the Corporate Plan key theme of creating a data-driven business. The use of personal information will be treated with appropriate levels of confidentiality and will be fair and lawful. Origin will ensure that personal information is accurate; not kept for longer than is necessary; secure; and adequate, relevant and not excessive. All information will be processed in accordance with the data protection rights of the individual.

13. Action Plan

13.1 The overarching aim of this strategy is that equality, diversity and inclusion plays an intrinsic part of daily working, the organisational culture and our service delivery.

13.2 The development of an organisational-wide annual Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will be a major factor in ensuring that we deliver on this strategy. Supported by senior managers, the development of the action plan will focus on our strategic objectives and will be informed by:

- On-going monitoring of our performance in the area of EDI
- Changing business requirements
- External factors and influences – such as legislation, regulation, etc

13.3 The action plan provides an overview of our approach to equality and diversity, highlights some of the work we are doing to close equality gaps and sets out the key activities to be undertaken over the next 12 months to achieve the EDI objectives identified.

14. Monitoring and Review

14.1 The next three years will see us work towards delivering our overall vision for Equality Diversity and Inclusion and our strategic objectives. Ensuring that progress is being monitored and reported is vital to successful achievement of our goals.

14.2 The strategy will be reviewed in full at least every 3 years.

14.3 The Executive will report to Board annually on progress in meeting the strategy objectives and the impact in improving performance

14.4 Progress reports against the action plan will be presented to, Customer Services Committee on a quarterly basis.

Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. These protected characteristics are detailed below.

Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds)
Disability	A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
Sex	This refers to whether a person is a man or a woman
Gender reassignment	This is the process of transitioning from one gender to another
Race	This refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.
Religion and belief	Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (such as atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition
Sexual orientation	This is whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes
Marriage and civil Partnerships	Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman. A Marriage now includes a marriage between a same sex couple. Same sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as a 'civil partnership'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act)
Pregnancy and Maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding

TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

There are a number of ways discrimination can be seen:

- Direct discrimination
- Associative discrimination
- Discrimination by perception
- Indirect discrimination
- Harassment
- Victimisation

Direct discrimination	This is where someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic
Associative discrimination	This is direct discrimination against someone because they are associated with another person who possesses a protected characteristic
Discrimination by perception	This is direct discrimination against someone because others think that they possess a particular protected characteristic. They do not necessarily have to possess the characteristic, just be perceived to
Indirect discrimination	This can occur when a rule or policy is applied to everyone but disadvantages a person with a particular protected characteristic
Harassment	This is behaviour that is deemed offensive by the recipient. Employees can now complain of the behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them
Victimisation	This occurs when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or grievance under this legislation

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Public Sector Equality Duty was created by the Equality Act 2010 and covers age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

As a registered provider Origin is subject to the duty and must, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination also covers marriage and civil partnership.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Regulator of Social Housing proactively seeks assurance from registered providers that they are meeting their regulatory standards. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard contains specific expectations and the outcomes that providers are expected to achieve with regards to Equality and Diversity. It specifies that providers shall:

- Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards (1.1.1a)
- Treat residents with fairness and respect (1.1.3a)
- Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs (1.3.1b)
- Demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants (2.3.1)

Origin will continue to ensure that it complies with the Regulatory Standards in relation to Equality and Diversity and Inclusion by implementing the objectives of this strategy.