Our vision is for CIH to be an organisation in which everybody can participate, regardless of age, gender, transgender, disability, religion or other beliefs, race, sexual orientation, social background or family or care responsibilities.

The CIH Single Equality Scheme aims to demonstrate our achievements to date and outline how we will ensure that equality and diversity continues to be an integral part of what we do. This document will be continually updated and improved in response to new developments within the legislative and regulatory framework, as well as feedback from CIH employees, members, and other key stakeholders.

CIH will remain committed to improving the diversity of our organisation, our membership, and to equipping housing professionals with the knowledge to promote equality and diversity across the housing sector. By ensuring the principles of equality and diversity are embedded into the way our organisation works, we will be better positioned to provide guidance, advice, and share best practice with our customers.

CIH champions organisational and individual excellence within the housing sector and we strive to do the same for the field of equality and diversity. We hope the adoption of the CIH Single Equality Scheme will enable us to reach this goal.

Helen Collins
President, 2011 - 2012
Our mission

The Chartered Institute of Housing is the professional body for people working in housing and communities. We have a diverse and growing membership of over 22,000 people across the world. In the UK, our members work in the public and private sectors as well as for government agencies, educational establishments and elsewhere. We exist to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the wellbeing of communities.

What is the CIH Single Equality Scheme?

Our Single Equality Scheme sets out our achievements and commitment to Equality and Diversity in one place. It is in two parts. The first part sets out our commitment to promote equality and diversity across all areas of our work and to promote good practice across the housing sector. The second part is a dynamic action plan which will be regularly updated to reflect achievements and evolving priorities. It is an electronic document so that it can be updated as the need arises.

It is intended to be a live document and CIH staff, members and other stakeholders will be regularly consulted to gather feedback to continually develop and improve the scheme. We will also actively seek to work in partnership with other organisations who share our objectives.

Who is it for?

Our scheme is presented as a public document so that we can be open to all our stakeholders about what we are seeking to achieve, what we are currently prioritising and why. It is intended to provide a framework for use by CIH trustees and staff as well as being a way of communicating with members, and others working in the sector, about what CIH is planning to do to drive forward the equality and diversity agenda in the sector.
The wider context

The demography of the UK continues to change and is becoming increasingly diverse. 4.5 per cent of people are aged over 80 and this is set to increase as life expectancy improves. There are 5 million BME people in the UK and, in some places, it no longer makes sense to refer to them as minority groups. 6.7 million people of working age are disabled and they are disproportionately likely to be living in social housing. There are 3.6 million lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people which represents about 1 in 20 adult citizens. It is estimated that between 1 in 4,000 and 1 in 10,000 people are transsexual. 76 per cent of people say they have a religion and, for some people, religious beliefs are becoming an increasingly important component of their personal identity.

It is not just that there are more people in each of the diversity strands. It is increasingly the case that people’s identities involve reference to more than one strand as, for example, an older woman or a gay black man. The picture is further complicated because, on occasions, the principle of respecting the rights of people in the different diversity strands can lead to irreconcilable tensions as in the case of the Christian hoteliers who refused a room to a gay couple.

In addition, the social housing sector is undergoing major changes including:

- the social and political vision of the coalition government with its emphasis on localism, individual and community empowerment, greater transparency and choice.
- proposals to reform the social housing system which will give local authorities and housing associations greater flexibility so that they can make best use of their housing to meet the changing needs of their communities. New and diverse approaches to social housing across the UK present challenges in terms of ensuring equal outcomes for tenants and communities.
- changes to the regulatory and inspection framework in the social housing sector with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) taking over elements of the Tenant Service Authority’s (TSA) regulatory powers with a more reactive approach to consumer regulation and a clearer role for tenant scrutiny in its diversity.
- cuts to public expenditure which will present new social and economic challenges for housing providers and their customers. The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010 allocated £15.3bn for housing over a four year period and introduced cuts to local government funding of 7.1 per cent per year over the period of the review. These cuts are likely to result in the reduction of services which may disproportionally impact on vulnerable groups in society including elderly and disabled people.
- changes to housing benefit, Local Housing Allowance and wider welfare benefits are likely to have negative equality impacts for different groups across different parts of the UK.

Housing organisations will need to assess the equality impacts of these far-reaching changes, both in the shorter term and in planning for the future.
We also have a new legal framework governing equality and diversity. The Equality Act 2010 applies across England, Wales and Scotland. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) governs equality legislation in Northern Ireland.

The Act consolidates nine major pieces of legislation and around 100 statutory instruments into a single piece of legislation with the aim of making the law more accessible and easier to understand. It provides a single approach to discrimination by extending the circumstances in which a person is protected against discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of a protected characteristic which includes some groups not previously covered by equalities legislation. In Great Britain, people are now protected by the law from discrimination on the basis of:

- age
- disability
- gender
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- race
- pregnancy and maternity
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

In Northern Ireland, public authorities are required to promote equality of opportunity and good relations on a range of grounds, including:

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- Between men and women generally;
- Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- Between persons with dependants and persons without.

Legal duties were also introduced in 2000 to ensure that all public authorities pay "due regard" to the need to promote equality of opportunity and "regard" to the desirability of promoting good relations. The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 will result in a number of differences between equality law in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The junior ministers in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister are considering proposals for further legislation to ensure that Northern Ireland equality law keeps pace with developments in GB, particularly with regard to anti-discrimination law.

The changing demographic and statutory context provides some key challenges across the UK housing sector. Specifically, the Equality Act 2010 will have an impact on all housing providers across Great Britain and will require some changes to working and employment practices across the sector. In Northern Ireland, the Department for Social Development and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, as public bodies, are automatically required to promote equality of opportunity and good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act and housing associations were designated statutory bodies in 2004 for the purposes of implementing Section 75 duties.

CIH will continue to work with our members to support the housing sector to address the challenges, work within the new legislative and regulatory framework as it emerges, identify and share good practice and equip professionals with the knowledge to do their jobs effectively.
Our approach to equality and diversity

Our members work with disadvantaged communities which are the product of inequality and differential treatment of social groups in UK society. Our members are at the forefront of tackling these issues. We want to support them and demonstrate leadership to the sector in the way that we conduct our own business as a professional body.

Our current work addresses all seven diversity strands. Going forward, we will work towards improving our performance against the nine protected characteristics created by the Equality Act 2010. However, we recognise that we are at different starting points for each of them and we will approach them differently for this reason. So, for example, we are successful in recruiting women into membership and on to our education and training programmes. We, therefore, do not expect to prioritise gender in our recruitment activity. In contrast, our work on disability is at an earlier stage. We need to improve our monitoring data and to find ways to enable disabled people to engage with us as members, service users and as CIH employees.
Our vision and values

At CIH we recognise that people are different and we seek to treat this with respect. We actively encourage good relations between our staff who have different backgrounds and experiences and we provide support to housing professionals to do the same in the communities they serve. We also recognise that our customers are increasingly diverse and we strive to provide equality of opportunity for everyone. We identify potential barriers to people accessing our services and we try to find ways around them. This starts at the design stage when we challenge ourselves to provide products and services that match the different needs and preferences of our customers.

We want CIH to be a truly open, accessible and diverse organisation. We want to be a professional body in which everybody involved in the sector can participate regardless of race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or gender identity.

To achieve this we need to ensure that:

• our education and membership programmes provide access points for everyone and do not place any unnecessary barriers to entry;
• our professional development, policy and practice activities help to drive performance on equality and diversity issues in the sector and that they are accessible and relevant to everyone;
• our governance and representative structures are open and welcoming to encourage participation from a wide range of people within the sector;
• our staff understand our corporate vision, are equipped with the necessary skills and provided with appropriate support to ensure that CIH is genuinely ‘open to all’ and ‘closed to prejudice’; and
• we communicate our message effectively so that people understand CIH’s commitment to equality and diversity.

Our key objectives are:

• To provide leadership to the sector to help shape the agenda on equality and diversity issues;
• To provide tools and support that housing professionals need to implement good equality and diversity practice;
• To ensure CIH is an inclusive and diverse organisation, and;
• To ensure CIH builds its internal capacity to improve its own performance on equality and diversity.

Equality and Diversity is an integral part of what we do at CIH. It is embedded in CIH’s culture and we are proactive in ensuring that we live up to our corporate value to be ‘Open to all, closed to prejudice’. We do this by ensuring that our staff understand what they need to do to ensure that our services are accessible. This is reinforced through our staff induction programme and our HR policies, our accreditation guidance for education establishments, our code of personal conduct for members and, the protocols we use to organise our events. The fact that our equality and diversity strategy forms part of our corporate business plan further serves to reinforce its importance.
Our achievements to date

We are not coming at this from a standing start. CIH has been actively promoting equality and diversity in the housing sector for over 20 years, although we have not always been good at telling people what we have done.

As part of our core business, CIH ensures that universities and colleges address equality and diversity considerations within their courses and that they are delivered in accessible ways. We also provide training courses and events on a range of equality and diversity issues and provide practice guidance to the sector on equality and diversity issues through our publications and services such as practice online.

At the same time as we have become a more diverse organisation, CIH has also made other significant strides in developing its equality and diversity work over the last 3 years.

Membership

We have significantly improved the diversity of our membership. For a long time, CIH has had a majority of women members and in the last 10 years, the proportion of women members has increased from 53% to 56%. We have also become more ethnically diverse. Since 2000, we have worked hard to change the racial composition of our membership. The proportion of BME members has nearly doubled in the last 10 years (from 8% in 2001 to 14% in 2010) as a result of our campaign to make CIH a more ethnically diverse organisation.

In part, this success has been achieved through gathering external challenge to our work on race and setting ourselves targets to increase the proportion of BME members. We have adopted a similar approach to the other diversity strands. We are actively seeking to improve the quality of our monitoring information by encouraging our members to provide equality and diversity information about themselves. We have set benchmarks to increase the diversity of our trustees, our staff and our members and we have sought support from our national business units and regional committees to help improve the latter. Improving our performance on the range of diversity strands will be a priority over the next few years.

Traineeship for disabled people

Positive Action for Disability creates professional traineeships for disabled people in England and Wales. It gives talented disabled people the support and mentoring they need to get on the first rung of a career in housing. It also gives expert advice to our housing organisation partners to enable them to become disability friendly employers. In November 2010, CIH’s ground-breaking scheme was recognised with a prestigious RADAR People of The Year Award.
Stonewall

In 2008, CIH became one of only two professional bodies to become a Stonewall Champion.

Working with other professions

CIH is a founder member of Equally Professional – a group of professional bodies, established under the auspices of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), with a commitment to improve performance on equality and diversity.

Welsh language

CIH Cymru has led the development of our Welsh language scheme and staff in our Cardiff office are learning Welsh.

Policy and practice work

CIH policy and practice has been at the forefront of influencing the national equality and diversity policy agenda and supporting the ongoing development of good practice across the sector. Key activities included input into the TSA regulatory standards framework, the HCA single equality scheme and verbal evidence to the EHRC inquiry on disability related harassment. In 2010 we introduced a LGBT practice network to encourage the dissemination of good practice and to facilitate discussion and share information.

We have also introduced a new chapter on equality and diversity in our online knowledge resource – practice online – which is structured to reflect and provide clear practical guidance on the Equality Act 2010 and the nine protected characteristics.
The development of CIH’s Single Equality Scheme

This scheme has been developed by CIH staff and trustees with input from other stakeholders.

Overall responsibility for the scheme lies with the Professional Development Board which is a sub-committee of CIH Council. The work of overseeing the development and delivery of our equality and diversity strategy is delegated to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group, which includes members of PD Board. The Advisory Group has steered the development of the scheme and it will be the body accountable for progress against the annual workplan.

The development work has been co-ordinated at Executive Team level by the Director of Professional Development. The scheme has been compiled by a wider staff group with representation from across the organisation. Many more staff are directly involved in the delivery of elements of the action plan.

We will work in partnership with other organisations, where appropriate, to help us deliver our objectives. For example, we are working with the Housing Diversity Network to synchronise our mentoring schemes and to provide a joint event. We will actively seek more opportunities to work with others in this way.

A draft outline of the scheme was considered by the Advisory Group. It was also discussed with a focus group of invited people from housing organisations that have a good reputation for equality and diversity. Comments from these two groups have informed the development of this public version of the scheme.

CIH will continually review its performance on equality and diversity. This is led from the top of the organisation by our trustees and the executive team. We have established an Advisory Group to monitor our progress against this scheme. The Advisory Group brings together trustees, senior staff and independent members to provide us with the external challenge we need to avoid complacency.

The Advisory Group receives monitoring information about CIH membership, training delegates, students on CIH accredited courses, trustees and CIH staff. This is compared over time to ensure that we are progressing towards becoming more inclusive in all of the diversity strands. It is also compared against the benchmarks that our trustees have established to help measure our performance.

One of our corporate values is to be ‘Open to all, closed to prejudice’. We want this to reflect the reality of the way we do business. This means that all our staff have to understand the organisation’s commitment to equality and diversity and what it means for them. We have a Code of Conduct for staff that stresses the importance of treating colleagues with respect and making an effort to understand their cultural differences. New staff attend equality and diversity training to further develop their understanding of what CIH’s commitment to equality and diversity means for them. All existing managerial and professional staff have a performance indicator linked to improving CIH’s performance on equality and diversity and this forms part of their annual performance appraisal. Additional support for staff is provided through ad hoc briefings, training and our internal communication channels.

CIH Single Equality Scheme
Equality Impact Assessments

CIH policy is that all our major decisions should include a consideration of whether a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required. This does not mean that we will always conduct a full EIA but we will include an assessment of whether one is required for all of our activities. We have developed a guidance document for use by CIH staff to help us decide when to conduct an EIA. This is reinforced by our practice that all reports presented to our governing body or its sub-committees include a statement saying whether an EIA has been conducted and, if so, what it shows.

Procurement

CIH is determined to create a working environment which supports our values and which is free from any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying and within which all individuals are treated with respect, fairness and dignity. Therefore, CIH is committed to ensuring that the way in which we procure goods, services and facilities reflects our commitment to equality and diversity. CIH expects all contractors with whom it enters into a contract, to carry out works or provide goods or services, to respect and act in accordance with our commitment to equality and diversity including age, gender, transgender, disability, religion or other beliefs, race, sexual orientation, social background or family or care responsibilities.

Monitoring and evaluation

Progress against our annual action plan is monitored regularly by the staff group. In February each year, the Advisory Group is presented with a progress report which details progress against each element of the plan. Any items that have not been completed are the subject of a more detailed explanation.

We also monitor the composition of our staff, trustees, regional committees/National Business Units, our membership, students on accredited courses and delegates attending our training courses and events. Our performance is analysed regularly and reported to the Advisory group twice yearly. Our performance is compared against benchmarks that have been set by trustees and, if there is a cause for concern, specific actions are agreed to address the problem.