

# ALBYN FOR ALL Foreward

## Lesley McInnes - Chair of Albyn Group

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and Human Rights are fundamental to how we operate at the Albyn Group.

To realise our vision of providing outstanding services to our customers, fostering a positive work environment for our staff, and developing the trust of our employees and communities, our values of being caring, being adaptable and being professional, must be ingrained in our work approach and the choices we make.

Our Boards, Committees, Leadership and Staff teams are dedicated to promoting EDI and acknowledge the significance of leading by example in our decision-making and governance processes.

## Kirsty Morrison - CEO

We aim to ensure that both our customers and employees have equal opportunities to thrive and realise their full potential. Our commitment extends to providing equitable access to our services for all customers and employees. As a housing provider, as well as an employer, we strive to enhance our understanding of the challenges faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds, and how we can respond effectively.

As a Group, we recognise our responsibility to address inequalities and alleviate poverty. We are also dedicated to ensuring that our policies, procedures, and services remain fair and unbiased, never putting any person or group at a disadvantage.



# Statement of Intent

The Albyn Group are committed to promoting equalities and upholding human rights in all aspects of our operations. We believe that everyone deserves fair treatment, dignity, and respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.

Our commitment to equalities and human rights is integral to our core values: -

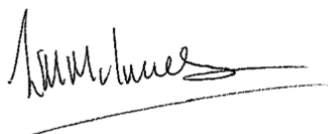
- Being Caring
- Being Adaptable
- Being Professional

We reiterate our policy commitments here: -

- **Non-Discrimination and Equality of Opportunity:** Our policies will set out that they will not discriminate against anyone based on protected characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law. The policies should promote equal opportunities for all individuals.
- **Accessibility and Accommodation:** We will support and adopt policies to ensure that our services and properties are accessible to people with disabilities. This may include providing reasonable accommodations and making necessary adjustments to the physical environment to cater to the needs of disabled tenants.
- **Harassment and Hate Crime:** Our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, Staff Code of Conduct policies are in place to address and prevent harassment, bullying, and hate crimes directed at tenants, staff or service users based on their protected characteristics. These policies outline clear procedures for reporting and addressing such incidents promptly.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Albyn promotes diversity and inclusion within our organisation and properties. We work with various stakeholders to create inclusive communities where people from diverse backgrounds can live comfortably.
- **Gender Equality:** Albyn work hard to ensure there is no gender-based discrimination and promote gender equality in our organisation by ensuring there is no gender pay gap and our services do not place any barriers on a person due to their gender.
- **Support for Vulnerable Groups:** Our policies will place special consideration and support for vulnerable groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, victims of domestic violence, and those at risk of homelessness.
- **Language Access:** Albyn provide language access services, such as translation and interpretation, to ensure that language barriers do not hinder individuals' access to information and services.
- **Data Protection and Privacy:** Our Data Protection policy is in place to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals' personal information and comply with relevant data protection laws.
- **Training and Awareness:** Albyn staff and board members receive regular training on equalities and human rights issues to create a culture of respect and awareness within the organisation.
- **Consultation and Engagement:** Albyn involve tenants and service users in decision-making processes and seek their input when developing and reviewing policies. There are actions in the plan to seek more representative views from our communities once there is more robust data to investigate.

This statement reflects our dedication to ensuring that the Albyn Group plays an active role in promoting our vision to: - **Maintain and build quality homes, providing excellent customer service, and giving opportunities for people and communities to flourish.**

Signed  
Lesley McInnes



Signed  
Kirsty Morrison



# ALBYN FOR ALL



## Equalities and human rights strategy

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building homes...supporting communities

# Background

The Equality Act 2010 sets out Albyn's legal responsibilities as both a landlord and an employer to uphold Equality and Human Rights. This Act prohibits discrimination based on characteristics like Age, Marriage, Religion or Belief, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity, or national origin), and Sexual Orientation.

## Relevance in Housing

The Scottish Social Housing Charter underscores the link between equality and customer care, particularly in Standard 1. This standard highlights the need for tenants and customers to have their unique needs recognized, be treated fairly and respectfully, and receive equitable access to housing and related services.

## Governance

Standard 5.3 of the Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management reflects this legal duty by emphasising that Albyn should work towards advancing equality and human rights and promoting positive relations across protected characteristics in all aspects of its work, including governance.

## Data for Effective Action

Having accurate information about our customer's, staff and board needs, including a broad understanding of equality-related data is vital for Albyn to effectively address those needs.

# Introduction

## Welcome to the Albyn Group's Equality and Human Rights Strategy.

Our strategy "Albyn for All" represents our first Equalities Strategy and reflects our current position as well as the journey we've taken to reach this point.

At Albyn, our values of Caring, Professionalism, and Adaptability align well with the objectives of our new Equality and Human Rights Strategy. This strategy is focused on fostering respect, understanding, and preventing discrimination by promoting diversity and ensuring equal opportunities for everyone.

Our approach to developing this strategy and policy has been inclusive. We included representatives from each department in the working group, along with participation from the Customer Involvement and Scrutiny Group, Board, and Leadership Team to create both the strategy and related documents.

The Equality and Human Rights Policy is the primary document through which the Albyn Group advocates for equality and upholds human rights in its operations. It also outlines our approach to data collection. This strategy and policy will shape our future actions as we create an action plan in response to our data findings. We're also developing an equality impact assessment process, an important aspect of our organisational governance.

We expect our employees to embody the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion when interacting with customers, colleagues, and stakeholders. We have a strong stance against any form of discrimination, harassment, victimization, or bullying. Similarly, we require customers to treat our employees respectfully, and we'll enforce our Unacceptable Actions policy in response to inappropriate behaviour or language.

Everyone connected with Albyn is expected to adhere to this strategy and its related policy.

You will find our Equality and Human Rights Policy on our website: [www.albynhousing.org.uk/library](http://www.albynhousing.org.uk/library)

# What is discrimination?



## Human rights at home

Albyn has utilized the “Human Rights at Home” guidance provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission for Housing Associations and Local Authorities to ensure compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA).

As part of our strategy, we have incorporated this guidance. Additionally, we have developed an Equalities and Human Rights Policy along with an action plan. Among the rights outlined in the HRA, we find Articles 6, 8, and 14 most pertinent to our role as housing providers.



## **At the Albyn Group we will embed the following Articles in our service delivery, decision making and our behaviours.**

### **Article 6: Right to a fair hearing**

Everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing, before an independent and impartial tribunal, within a reasonable time. This right applies where someone's private rights are at stake, such as in contractual or property disputes. It also applies to criminal trials.

The right to a fair hearing means, broadly, that a person should be given the opportunity to participate effectively in any hearing of their case, and to present their case in conditions which do not place them at a substantial disadvantage when compared with the other party in the case.

Article 6 is likely to be particularly relevant in review or appeal proceedings which would determine a tenant's rights. However, it may not be necessary for decision-making to fulfil all the conditions of a 'fair hearing' if a person has access to a subsequent appeal process which would satisfy these requirements.

### **Article 8 protects your right to respect for your private and family life**

Article 8 protects your right to respect for your private life, your family life, your home and your correspondence (letters, telephone calls and emails, for example).

'Family life' can include the relationship between an unmarried couple, an adopted child and the adoptive parent, and a foster parent and fostered child.

The right to respect for your home does not give you a right to housing. It is a right to enjoy your existing home peacefully. This means that public authorities should not stop you entering or living in your home without very good reason, and they should not enter without your permission. This applies whether or not you own your home.

There are situations when public authorities can interfere with your right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence. This is only allowed where the authority can show that its action is lawful, necessary and proportionate in order to:

- protect national security
- protect public safety
- protect the economy
- protect health or morals
- prevent disorder or crime, or
- protect the rights and freedoms of other people.

Action is 'proportionate' when it is appropriate and no more than necessary to address the problem concerned.

### **Article 14: Prohibition of discrimination**

This means that everyone must have equal access to the other rights contained in the Human Rights Act (HRA) regardless of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, political views or any other personal characteristic.

For example, the HRA means that a gay couple has to be treated in the same way as a heterosexual couple in relation to the right to succeed to a tenancy.

# Being fair and Equal

**We will strive to uphold the principles of equality and human rights by:-**

- » Ensuring we integrate quality and human rights practices into all we do.
- » Implementing fair and just employment practices.
- » Offering a culture that respects and values each other's differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.
- » Ensuring people are recruited and promoted solely on the basis of their merit, experience, ability and potential.
- » Providing an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life. Offering a culture that respects and values each other's differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.
- » Ensuring all employees are treated with fairness and respect and without any discrimination.

## Using data to inform

A significant part of our strategy will be on implementing our data collection through use of Scottish Federation of Housing's anonymous questionnaire. We have explained in our policy how on how we will gather and use the data to help our decision making about out where our services and information should be targeted. We need to understand our equalities data to inform our decision making and define our objectives and action plans.

We also aim to use this data to understand where our tenants may be in a minority and where there are different profiles that we are adopting inclusive practices. As both a landlord and an employer, we already collect some data. For example, when someone applies for a job with us or during the allocation process, applicants provide their date of birth and gender.

This type of information is very valuable when we're trying to grasp the age makeup of tenants in specific areas. It helps us focus on certain activities or pass on useful information.

### **Albyn Housing Tenant by Age Band and Sex.**

<i>Tenant age band</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
75+	251	7.21%	123	128
65-74	420	12.06%	203	217
45-64	1,437	41.27%	683	754
25-44	1,247	35.81%	459	788
16-24	127	3.65%	123	128
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,482</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,834</b>	<b>2,349</b>

The data provided in the tables sheds light on the demographics of people living in Albyn Housing. We examined their ages and whether they're men or women. The data reveals that 67.5% of Albyn Housing residents are women, in the 16 to 24 age group, there are 2.34 times more women than men. This may be due to women with children having a higher housing need than single men for example.

This pattern holds true across all age groups where there are more women than men. The largest groups in Albyn are people aged 45 to 64 years and 25 to 44 years, making up a total of 77.08% of all tenants. Those aged 65 and older make up 19.27% of tenants, while the smallest group is those aged 16 to 24.

When comparing Albyn's data with information from Highland Council and all of Scotland, it's intriguing.

### Highland and Scottish Population Data.

Age band	Total	% of total	Men	Women
75+	24,626	10.3%	10,710	13,916
65-74	30,598	12.90%	14,905	15,693
45-64	69,424	29.20%	33,520	35,904
25-44	53,826	22.6%	26,650	27,176
16-24	21,456	9.0%	11,353	10,103
0-15	38,130	16.0%	19,581	18,549
<b>Total</b>	<b>238,060</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>116,719</b>	<b>121,341</b>

Age band	Albyn Housing	Highland Population	Scottish Population
75+	7.21%	10.3%	8.7%
65-74	12.06%	12.9%	10.9%
45-64	41.27%	29.2%	27.2%
25-44	35.81%	22.6%	26.4%
16-24	3.65%	9.0%	10.2%
0-15	N/A	16.0%	16.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Albyn Housing has a much higher proportion of women tenants at 67.5%, whereas in Highland Council, women constitute 50.97%, and in all of Scotland, they are 50%. Albyn Housing also has more people aged 45 to 64 years than the general population. On the other hand, there are fewer young people aged 16 to 24 living in Albyn compared to the overall population. This analysis underscores that Albyn Housing has a unique customer group, and its tenant demographics differ from the larger populations of Highland Council and Scotland.



# Strategic objectives

Albyn commits to the following Strategic Objectives over the next three years to embed equal opportunities and protect human rights:

## OBJECTIVE 1

We will highlight this strategy, on our website, on our social media, in new leaflets and by launch of our questionnaire, to ensure all our stakeholders are aware of our commitment in promoting equality.

## OBJECTIVE 2

We will strive to provide material in suitable formats that reflect our returned equalities data and highlight this service to our stakeholders.

## OBJECTIVE 3

We will continue to work with tenants, service users, staff and board members who may require adaptations or reasonable adjustments to ensure they feel included, and their needs are met.

## OBJECTIVE 4

We will ensure our front-line services policies and procedures, i.e., allocations policy, is clear, comprehensive and unequivocally non-discriminatory.

## OBJECTIVE 5

We will ensure any membership, registration or applications are open to all by promotion widely in our areas of operation in order we engage and encourage representation across our group.



# Evaluation

Our board, Senior and Operational Leaders will receive reports on our returned equalities data and this will inform a new action plan that will prioritise our activities to embed and promote a more inclusive organisation that represents its tenants, staff and stakeholders.

# Thank you

We hope you enjoyed reading our Strategy. We welcome all feedback and suggestions. You can do this by contacting us via one of the ways below. You can also get in touch if you would like this publication in an alternative format or language.

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