



Queens
Cross
Housing
Association

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

2021-25

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Equality, Diversity, Inclusion Strategy
2021-2025

FOREWORD

I'm delighted to present the Association's second Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) and want to thank everyone who has contributed to it.

The strategy set out here is consistent with the Association's business strategy 2020-25, *Choose to Live Here, Choose to Work Here*. They sit alongside each other along with our new Tenant Participation, Digital, Investing in Our People and Customer First strategies. In reality, equality proofing should be ingrained practice within all existing and future organisational plans and is becoming even more integral to the organisation's culture.

Overall, the people we consulted to develop the strategy generally felt that the organisation is in a good place but that continual progress is needed to turn our cultural commitment into greater organisational practice and longer-term equality and diversity outcomes for colleagues and service users.

People are not defined by one or other of the nine protected characteristics from the Equality Act or by them facing economic inequality. People's experiences, and their needs, can be influenced by each of these but it is important not to assume that all groups of people are the same. So, while we may talk about groups or communities in this strategy we know that people are individuals, whilst recognising that they may have experiences or beliefs in common.

The increasing ethnic diversity of the geographical areas served by Queens Cross was particularly noted in consultation discussions. The complexity of this issue was apparent, with changes in the profile, circumstances and needs of communities being driven not only by new residents to the area but also by the natural evolution of existing communities. These changes will continue, and this highlights the importance of our continued engagement to understand people's changing equalities profiles and needs as they age, for example.

Through talking to staff and tenants we have also identified needs in relation to various age groups, people who have a disability, different religions or beliefs, sex, and to the needs of LGBTQ+ people.

Economic inequalities may arise from an individual's protected characteristics and are also part of the overall nature of the equality challenge in Queens Cross. The issue of in-work poverty is of particular concern as we aim to make our rents affordable while maintaining service performance.

I want to thank our EDI working group for their efforts to bring this strategy together and I am convinced of our common determination to see the actions set out here come to fruition in the next four years.

Andrew Burns
Board Chair



Executive Summary

The Association's fundamental role as a social housing provider demonstrates its contribution to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Consultations for this strategy show the extent to which its staff teams have at times gone 'above and beyond' in the delivery of their roles and that people from all different backgrounds value the Association's services and feel that they are treated fairly.

The Association has a good record of developing an understanding of the communities that it serves and has made good progress in addressing many issues to do with equality of access to services.

The Association also makes a significant contribution to addressing economic inequality, both through its direct housing and tenancy sustainment role and through the delivery of specific services such as financial inclusion and social regeneration. Over some time, the Association has supported or delivered a range of community-based events and activities, which have helped to celebrate the diversity of the communities that it serves.

All of the above is seen against a backdrop of the organisation's culture that is inclusive and genuinely values equality, diversity and inclusion.

A number of specific ideas and suggestions have been made to build on the strong base already built by the Association.

These have been distilled into six strategic themes:

1. **Information, understanding, involvement** – deepening and broadening our knowledge of our communities and our engagement with them
2. **Language and communication** – addressing language and other communication needs
3. **Being a diverse employer** – demonstrating inclusivity in recruitment and employment practices
4. **Service access** – understanding and addressing practical, social and psychological barriers to service access
5. **Focus on economic inequality** – helping mitigate economic inequality through our service delivery
6. **Diversity in events and activities** – extending our range of events and activities to promote diversity and celebrate difference



WHO WE ARE

Our Vision

Excellent housing in vibrant communities

Our Values

Respect

We see the positive in everyone, especially our tenants. We treat everyone fairly, regardless of age, race, gender or background. We ask for opinions even if we know we might not like what we hear. And we address people's concerns in any way we realistically can.

Integrity

What we say in public is the same as what we say behind the scenes. If we say we'll do something, we mean it. Our tenants can count on us to solve their problems and make sound decisions.

Aspiration

We want the best for all our current and future tenants. We're not afraid to strive for things that won't be easy – or try things that haven't been done before. We seek out opportunities and welcome change. If it doesn't turn out as planned, we learn and improve and then we try again.

Our Strategic Objectives

We aim to deliver on five clear objectives:

1. Building and sustaining popular neighbourhoods
2. Creating and supporting greater life opportunities for all
3. Developing greener spaces and community wellbeing
4. Being a dynamic and listening community partner
5. Treating people equally and with respect

What we do

Queens Cross Housing Association (QCHA) has been at the heart of the community here in North West Glasgow since 1976.

We remain a grassroots organisation run by local and community representatives and service providers. Since we started, we've grown from managing just a few properties to looking after more than 4,300 homes.

We're a community based social landlord and, as well as providing affordable housing, we run services where individuals, friends and families can socialise, develop skills, get support and advice, have fun and get to know their neighbours.

Our aim is for Queens Cross to be a welcoming and vibrant community and we encourage all sorts of city, national and local partners to work with us, recognising our strengths and investing in the future for everyone who live and work in our communities.

Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy for 2021-25 tells the story of where we are, where we need to develop and what we'll focus on for the next four years. It is linked to the Association's business plan 2020-2025, *Choose to Live Here, Choose to Work Here* which commits to providing services that address wider wellbeing needs beyond the home and to providing an equal, diverse and inclusive workplace.

The commitments in *Choose to Live Here, Choose to Work Here* were the starting point for a highly collaborative and inclusive approach to this strategy involving extensive stakeholder engagement. The stakeholder consultation activity to develop the strategy is a first step in what will be an ongoing process to delivering the strategy's objectives and outcomes.

The purpose of the strategy is to set out:

1. An assessment of the organisation's strengths in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion
2. Identification of areas for development and improvement
3. Meaningful and achievable objectives and outcomes.

This strategy complements existing Association policies, strategies and processes. Over the course of its four years, it will inform thinking and activity in relation to all our services, departments and communication. It will also inform our approaches to our contractors, suppliers and partners and how each employee approaches their role.

Through the success of its approach and actions, it is key to the delivery of the Queens Cross Group goals for 2020-2025.

How the strategy was developed

In writing the strategy we've learned from and been influenced by customers representing different communities, individuals and groups and employees who deliver services.

We're extremely grateful for the time given to us. The advice and guidance received has been important to us in developing the strategy's aims and objectives. It has improved our knowledge and given us confidence in moving our actions forward.

This initial consultation programme has sought inputs from a range of internal and external stakeholders, through a combination of individual and group consultations that took place over the summer of 2021.

The programme of work included:

- Internal groups with staff
- Interviews and small group discussions with service users
- External stakeholder interview with the Council for Ethnic Minorities in Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO)
- Consultation on the draft document with internal and external stakeholders.

In developing the strategy we have looked at customers' perceptions of EDI challenges and opportunities faced by the community; the importance of what Queens Cross does in relation to EDI; awareness and perceptions of existing Queens Cross EDI activities; suggestions as to how we can address different aspects of EDI; and prioritisation of EDI strategy actions, both long and short term.

Definitions

These are the definitions of equality, diversity and inclusion that we bear in mind when thinking about how we approach a task or issue.

Equality is based on creating a fairer society, where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is also about recognising that inequalities exist, and making sure that everyone is treated fairly.

Diversity is defined as 'difference'. Taking a representative sample of one hundred adults from the population it is likely we will find a wide range of individuals with different and diverse characteristics. Diversity is also a principle of recognising and valuing the differences we have as individuals, as teams and as communities.

Inclusion is a feeling as well as an ethos or a value. As a feeling, we experience inclusion as a sense of belonging, feeling respected and valued for who we are. As an ethos or a value, it is about consciously considering the diversity of people, including their needs, and making everyone feel welcome and valued.

Legal duties

Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland

The Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland was created by the Equality Act 2010. The Duty covers the protected characteristics of: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The duty to have due regard to eliminating discrimination also covers marriage, civil partnerships and social economic disadvantage.

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/public-sector-equality-duty-scotland>

Equality Act 2010

The Equality and Human Rights Commission publish statutory codes of guidance⁴ on the implementation of the Equality Act 2010.

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter². One of the sixteen outcomes which Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) must meet is the equality outcome. It says that RSLs are to ensure:

Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/>

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998³ says an individual has the right to own and enjoy the ownership of property, respect for their private life, respect for their family life and respect for their home. The Human Rights Act legislates for the right not to be discriminated against.

<https://beta.gov.scot/policies/human-rights/>

Where we are now

From 2018-21 we worked on delivering the commitments of our equality and diversity strategy, aiming to make a difference to our service delivery, strategic planning and governance, procurement, staff, employment and performance monitoring.

We're proud of what's been achieved and the work of the Equality & Diversity Working Group who have guided us through the strategy action plan. Through the work that we've completed, we know that we've improved our understanding of and engagement with individuals and community groups through a wide range of initiatives. Here are just some of the projects and actions that have shaped our services and delivered for tenants and employees.

Getting to know our tenants

In 2019/20 we carried out a third tenant household profile survey. *Getting to Know You 3* provides the Association with valuable equalities, socio-economic and health, transport and wellbeing data. It helped form the aims and objectives of our business plan 2020-25 including new initiatives on addressing poverty. For example, we now know:

- 61% of tenant households are made up of single adults
- 9% of households are one parent families

- Families with children under 16 are less likely to say their monthly income covers their monthly expenditure
- 40 languages are spoken as a first or preferred language
- 7% of households are of Muslim faith
- 54% of tenants have a health condition or disability.

Addressing Hate Crime

As a third party reporting centre for Hate Crime, staff at the Association are here to support and help any resident who has experience of it because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability.

In line with reporting across Glasgow, and Scotland in general, reporting of Hate Crime to us is low. To address this, we've continued to publicise our involvement in third party reporting.

Sharing Lives, Sharing Spaces

Sharing Lives, Sharing Spaces is a project set up to engage with residents of the Chinese community living in Woodside.

During the pandemic our Project Officer remained in regular contact with tenants, consistently signposting the community to the official Scottish Government advice during the pandemic.

The project also delivered ESOL language classes for Chinese residents and other activities geared towards social inclusion on Zoom.

Many of our Chinese tenants work in the hospitality and leisure industry, such as restaurants, takeaways, beauticians, and Chinese grocery shops. Some tenants sought help with benefits applications and were signposted to welfare rights advice from our financial inclusion service.

Community Health and Wellbeing

Incidences of ill health, loneliness and social isolation are higher in our communities than in many other parts of Glasgow and indeed Scotland.

During the pandemic, many of our health and wellbeing activities were moved online. Singing, mindfulness, yoga, cooking and art classes all took place online during the lockdown phase of the pandemic. Access to growing spaces was also possible and providing people with outdoor space and growing activity was much welcomed. Walking groups also resumed when restrictions allowed, providing social contact and outdoor exercise.

Food Provision to Support Communities in Greatest Need

During the pandemic the Social Regeneration Team worked in partnership with local community organisations to put food support projects in place for people in isolation and in need.

Funding from the Scottish Government allowed us to continue with home delivered meals to families and meant that Flourish House Café did not have to furlough their staff, and that fresh nutritious food continued to be delivered. By March 2021 we were involved in supporting the Café to become a Community Pantry, which still continues to tackle food poverty following a sustainable business model. It now has over 700 members.

Our second food delivery partnership involved working with Community Central Halls and Woodlands Development Trust. Our role was to assist with coordination, develop an online referral system, and provide call handling support. We accessed funding to keep this service running until the end of May 2021.

Combined, these food delivery partnerships were providing around 800 meals per week, supporting 50 – 60 households, and helped over 470 households in total. Over 28,000 meals were delivered across the two partnerships during the pandemic.

Dealing with digital and social inclusion

We made considerable advances on digital inclusion during the pandemic. In total 119 people were supported to get online with a device and internet connection and a further 116 young people received support to buy devices for use at home. Specifically we enabled people to become connected to the internet, who previously had no home broadband or tablet device. Priority was given to those not online.

Supporting people to get connected to the internet provides a broad range of positive social impact for recipients and their households. Access to online shopping and websites that can help people find cheaper utilities are some of the ways in which getting online can benefit people.

Participation and involvement

Digital solutions, such as Café Conversations, led to us engaging with new participants who had not previously taken part in association activities. Residents without English as their first language also became increasingly involved with our online ESOL classes which increased from 2 to 6 sessions per week.

Similarly we recruited new people for our Community Involvement Groups. A willingness to embrace digital technology also allowed us to advance the Association's approach to participation

by helping people to talk to us from home effectively, whilst also reducing the need for time spent travelling to and from meetings.

The Pantry in Westercommon

A new food pantry opened in early 2021 to help Queens Cross residents buy healthy and affordable food. For a membership of £1, customers can spend £2.50 per visit on food and other household items worth £10-15. A huge success since it opened, it now has over 800 local members.

Translation & Interpretation

We've developed our translation and interpretation service over the last four years. We continue to use the Happy to Translate service so that we can communicate well with tenants who speak little or no English. We have reviewed and provided new resources for staff, run training courses, and are now testing hand held translation devices for use by frontline staff.

At the forefront of LGBTI+

We continued our membership as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and the Association's Youth Homelessness Service undertook the LGBT Youth Scotland charter accreditation achieving bronze level in 2019.

The Association sponsored Glasgow Fronrunners, Scotland's largest LGBT running group. Their aim is to highlight and promote LGBT participation in sport. This annual event is part of Pride Glasgow and we were proud to support such an important event.

Our role as an equalities employer

We became members of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) in 2019, benefitting from the wide range of training activities, updates and news that membership offers.

We maintained our accreditation as a Disability Confident Employer and Investors in Young People at silver level. We offered workplace opportunities in partnership with Positive Action Through Housing, Flourish House, Inclusion Scotland and Skills Development Scotland.

An inclusive recruitment review in 2021 provided us with clear direction on how we can attract a more diverse workforce, showing public commitment to race equality and embedding an all-round inclusive culture.

Where we want to be

In this section, we outline in detail the six objectives we'll deliver over 2021-2025.

Objective 1: Information, understanding, involvement

Deepening and broadening knowledge of our communities and our engagement with them

Over the next three years we aim to:

Hold our **fourth Getting to Know You tenant household survey** so that we can track and take further action on the big issues impacting tenants' lives such as poverty, ill health, aging and social and employment exclusion. We'll further develop our digital inclusion, social inclusion, employability and community development projects as a Queens Cross Group of companies and measure the impact they make as well as the diversity profile of participants to ensure we are responding to the needs of all of our customers.

We will increase and improve how we use QL, our **customer relationship management system**. Our aim is to have up to date equality profile information about customers on which to develop and improve programmes of work, large and small. We need to have effective systems in place to access and to inform how we plan for and develop the services we deliver.

We have to develop, for example, **a better understanding of different communities and cultural norms** such as religious issues in relation to the delivery of services to unaccompanied women. We see this relating to how we deliver services to individuals, looking to have an overall understanding of language, cultural and other issues that would help staff in their individual dealings with people, as well as relevant information on the particular individual.

The aims outlined in our Tenant Participation Strategy includes reaching out to more people from diverse backgrounds to increase representation and encourage discussion about what's important about our services, how we can support people to reach their own goals and build stronger communities. We also need **more people to get involved and work alongside us** to improve our communities and services, providing the training and support needed.

We see participation in terms of:

- Participation in the community and society generally, which is of value in its own right, in terms of people's wellbeing and quality of life.
- Participation in the decision-making and/or improvement processes of the Association, the fundamental aim here being to ensure that decisions reflect service user experiences, needs and wants.

The role of digital in fostering participation (and ensuring it is not a barrier) is emerging as an important one. Digital options for participation can be of particular benefit to people that may find it more difficult to travel to events, but only as part of a range of engagement options including telephone and face-to-face as well.

Over the period of the pandemic we have learned a lot about **digital communication**. Without it, we would have struggled to redesign our services so quickly and to respond to people's immediate needs, such as food and meal deliveries. Digital communication is not for everyone but, for those who are online, it offers quick access to information, more opportunities to get involved, give feedback and develop ideas together. That's why we're broadening our digital inclusion service, reaching more customers to help them get online and take advantage of the benefits this type of communication does offer.

Any Queens Cross customer will know that we are keen on customer surveys. They are important to us in gaining understanding of service satisfaction and how our services are performing over a period of time. Our annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey also means that we can report to the Scottish Housing Regulator on our progress. Over the period of this strategy we will **review our Customer Feedback Framework** looking particularly at the equalities aspects survey returns, how we can make surveys more accessible to more people and what they tell us about diversity in our area of operation.

We'll consider and **address the many possible barriers to involvement** that may exist for tenants and residents so that we gain more meaningful input. For example, we know that around 54% of our tenants surveyed in *Getting to Know You* are living with a health condition or disability.

Issues getting in the way of getting involved may include: chronic illnesses; mobility issues; addictions; mental health issues; shame at reduced ability to care for oneself or home; language and cultural barriers. **People who have these experiences often have the most useful insight**

on unintentional barriers in service design and delivery, but are the most likely to be unable to participate in standard methods of engagement.

The better we reach people in Queens Cross, the more opportunities we'll have to involve them in working with us as close partners. We're going to take **a more active approach** to recruiting a more diverse range of volunteers, especially those in our service and community development groups. We'll actively promote membership, for example, to our Board, Community Involvement Groups and Residents Task Force especially among people who are currently under-represented.

Objective 2: Language and communication

Addressing language and other communication needs

Over the next three years we aim to:

Take forward a number of new activities to **address language and communication barriers**:

- More extensive translation of common communications such as information for new tenants
- Appropriate use of digital translation devices; this might include use of speak to translate applications that can be used on smartphones and other devices
- Adoption of plain language as standard
- Helping service users that need language or other communication support by extending and promoting it.

We recognise that language and communication issues can be a really significant barrier to service access to some people and communities. This can mean that they do not feel comfortable in engaging and taking part in wider community activities and decision-making. Our research shows, for example, the extent to which people in the Chinese community rely on the Association's member of staff to hear about things of interest to them and to be able to feedback their own issues. This also reflects the longer-term goal of developing a more diverse workforce.

Our **Sharing Lives Sharing Spaces** project has been maintained successfully for six years with tenants who speak Mandarin and Cantonese as their first language. We have used this experience to increase and broaden a programme **English classes** more widely in the community. This work will continue through the period of this strategy.

Review the methods used to contact tenants and service users from the perspective of a range of different identities. Telephone contact will work for some, but not all. Similarly, visiting tenants' homes may be the best form of communication for some people but intimidating for



others. Additionally, some may prefer to have control over the gender of staff who visit their home.

We will make appropriate investment to ensure that **other common disabilities** (for example, in relation to hearing and vision) are neither a barrier to service access nor to employment with the Association.

Cultural norms can be different depending on people's experience and background. Tenants from many cultural groups strongly prefer staff to remove their shoes when they visit their home. For many, this has the level of importance of a religious belief and staff should have access to this information. Staff health and safety should be considered but need not be a barrier.

We'll build on our engagement with **local organisations** to support wider community cohesion and integration efforts. A new mapping exercise will be undertaken to identify current and potential partners and initiate a relationship with them. Examples include: Maryhill Integration Network; Glasgow Mela; Concrete Gardens; Lambhill Stables; and Scottish Refugee Council.

Reassessing the use of **translated information** continues as a priority. We'll translate key written material, such as tenancy agreements into the top 5 local languages. We'll look at improving our communication in other small but significant ways such as using multi-lingual appointment cards and interpretation services, giving staff the resources they need to feel confident about using them.

Objective 3: Being a diverse employer

Demonstrating inclusivity in recruitment and employment practices

Over the next three years we aim to:

Work towards a **more diverse workforce**. Increasing diversity in terms of employment is recognised as a major challenge, particularly in terms of ethnicity. The benefits include more effective engagement with individuals and communities, improving help in very practical ways for tenants to access the services they need and encouraging participation in wider community activities. Proposals for inclusive recruitment include:

- Communication across communities about the nature of jobs and other opportunities in the Association. In particular, using appropriate locations and platforms to reach target groups such as local facilities used by local people, social media and radio stations.
- Highlighting the positive experiences of people of different backgrounds that already work at the Association.

We'll continue work on creating **employment opportunities for people with a disability**. Role profiles and person specifications will give appropriate weight to wider experiences, values and qualifications that people from different communities could bring. Job roles and person specifications will also be carefully assessed to ensure they do not unintentionally dissuade certain groups or individuals from applying.

We'll develop **additional partnerships** with organisations that support employability of under-represented groups. We'll engage with volunteering placement organisations like Volunteer Scotland, to create a more effective, supported and diverse volunteer-base. Other organisations' experiences tell us that this often increases the diversity of the staff-base as ex-volunteers see opportunities to become staff members. It also serves to support under-represented and marginalised groups into employment.

We want to **increase the equalities data** we hold on our employees and will continue to clearly explain why equalities data is taken from each job applicant and member of staff, and how it benefits colleagues and the organisation. We'll focus on giving assurance that private data will only be accessible to a small number of staff and for recruitment and monitoring purposes.

Tailored **training** for all of our employees that focuses on specific equality and diversity themes will continue throughout the period of this strategy. We know that EDI training programmes are welcome and popular as they provide staff members with knowledge, understanding and insight that they can then use in their roles and to put forward ideas for improving service delivery.

Place **equality and diversity in our mainstream day to day activity**. We will, for example, put objectives for every staff member in place through regular Performance & Development Conversations discussions with their manager. Employees will, for example, be asked to identify and address their own patterns of indirect discrimination in relation to the internal working of the organisation and in service delivery.

We'll continue our **membership of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI)**, an employer-led network that assists with a range of equalities issues including recruitment,

retention and organisational reputation. We will maintain our status as a Stonewall Diversity Champion and Disability Confident Employer. We aim to improve our Investors in Young People accreditation to gold level.

We aim to **improve the diversity of volunteers, including Board members**. Our recruitment, retention and succession planning will include a planned channel of access to Board membership from other forms of engagement with the organisation including community involvement and scrutiny groups and tenants.

Our **contractors and suppliers** are as important to the successful delivery of this strategy as Association staff. All employees who work with Association customers in Queens Cross communities are visible representatives of our values and standards. Our procurement and supply chain requirements must therefore include commitment to the principles set out in this strategy and we will put more focus on ensuring those values and standards are met.

We'll put **training in place for employees** around:

- **Religious and cultural diversity:** training to include the impact of religion and belief on the needs of tenants and service users; the perception of choice in relation to beliefs; the impact of culture on communication, and on perceptions of rudeness and politeness.
- **Violence against women including FGM and domestic abuse:** to cover the many forms that violence against women take; the societal and cultural elements that underpin it; myth-busting; how to support and advise someone who may be experiencing violence; and a focus on the particular patterns and dynamics around domestic violence.
- **Mental health and wellbeing:** Psychosocial difficulties are growing across Scotland in the post pandemic period. We want to be sure that our staff are aware of all the different schemes we have in place to support them and customers if and when they need it.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) help us review our strategies, projects, policies and procedures from an equalities perspective. We'll encourage staff to use the EIA system and teach employees how to conduct them in a way that is effective, revealing but not overly-arduous.



Objective 4: Service access

Addressing practical barriers to access and recognising that social and psychological barriers exist for many

Over the next three years we aim to:

Carry out further work to address the **physical layout** of all common area premises for which the Association is responsible to maximise equality of access and to ensure that this is not a barrier to employment with the Association.

The design of shared public spaces also have an impact on how people come together in local communities. We will give greater consideration to how such spaces are incorporated in to places where people have opportunities to meet. For the new development of 600 homes in Hamiltonhill, our existing community engagement strategy will continue to include **Equality Impact Assessments** for a number of elements of this major project: procurement; housing accessibility and design; community cohesion, safety, facilities and amenities. There is an ongoing need to fully engage with many stakeholders over this significant development.

Social and/or psychological barriers are faced by many people, including people with mental health issues and people with learning difficulties. An understanding of these barriers and how they could be overcome will be developed. It's considered to be important that appropriate training be offered in relation to all of the above. We'll encourage **greater community cohesion** and understanding between different groups through training for our Board, Community Involvement Group members, Residents Task Force, volunteers and other groups of tenants who work alongside us.

Other specific services have a significant impact on people's lives. In particular, the support provided through the **Wellbeing service** impacts positively on different groups in different ways but generally enables older people, young people at risk of homelessness and people with mental health issues to retain their independence and play a full part in society. The same is true of services which ensure that young people and young families, often with multiple challenges, are supported to be active members of society.

In common with other organisations, the Association is looking at **new ways and times of delivering services** and, in part related to this, at agile working arrangements. The equalities impact of this needs to be understood fully, both in terms of how it impacts on service users and

staff. Such new ways of working may create opportunities in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion by, for example, supporting employees with disabilities or with caring responsibilities.

Similarly, a greater emphasis on being able to carry out Association business remotely could be beneficial to some people who, for example, have difficulty making contact during standard office hours, cannot attend meetings due to physical or psychological reasons, or who may want to be in touch by writing. For example, some people for whom English is not their first language have indicated that they preferred to communicate in written English, at their own pace.

Objective 5: Focus on economic inequality

Helping mitigate economic inequality through our service delivery

Over the next three years we aim to:

Consider the **affordability of rents and other charges**. The Association already undertakes affordability assessments as part of making major decisions but there may be potential, over time, to move towards more rigorous assessments across all services to consider their impact on economic inequality and how this could be addressed.

Investment in the long term **energy efficiency** of homes as well as more generally in windows, doors, insulation and heating systems, is another way in which the Association currently contributes to addressing economic inequality.

The Association has wider services where the essential purpose is to address aspects of economic inequality. The Financial Inclusion Team who offer money, benefits and debt advice is a notable example. A new **Energy Advisor** joined the team recently helping tenants to understand how to make best use of heating systems and to switch energy supplier to get the best home energy deal.

A new **Community Opportunity Project** is delivering increased learning opportunities, additional free childcare and health awareness sessions for people living in Westercommon and Woodside. A Scottish Government award means we can deliver the project to 2023 allowing us to focus on achievable results to support families and reduce child poverty.

Digital access and digital literacy is becoming a basic requirement. Getting online helps people with social isolation and allows access to jobs, training, better shopping deals, new skills and social activities. Our Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator supports people to get online and, our charity, the

Queens Cross Community Foundation has helped many young people and children get the equipment they need.

Jobs and training are valuable opportunities and we will work within the **Queens Cross Group** of companies to create more routes that widen access to these and to work opportunities in our own organisation through training, apprenticeships and jobs.

The Pantry at the Courtyard in Westercommon has made a significant difference to its service users. A particularly positive aspect of the Pantry was the manner in which it supported people by reducing their costs but does so in a way that is dignified, respectful and empowering, avoiding the stigma that some residents might feel about directly requesting help (for example, from a foodbank) when they need it.

People may not participate in our community clubs and activities for all sorts of reasons. They may not be aware of what we do or how to find out when classes are on. The times or days when activities are held might not suit them. We know also that a lack of confidence in making that first step to join a new club can be daunting or that living on a very low income makes it difficult to join a club. We want to **extend our reach to people and communities who don't take part right now** by doing more work on who is attending and who doesn't attend and then adapt our programmes to increase inclusion.

Objective 6: Diversity in events and activities

Extending our range of events and activities to promote diversity and celebrate difference

Over the next three years we aim to:

Strengthen our support for inclusion and diversity through existing and new **celebratory events**, developing an integrated programme of activity to evolve and develop from year to year such as:

- The annual Queens Cross Gala Day
- Annual Chinese New Year celebration
- Pride of Queens Cross Awards
- Café Conversations
- Community events, clubs and activities
- Showcase events celebrating different groups and achievements.

Informal and ongoing activities already make a significant contribution to celebrating diversity and bringing people of different ages and backgrounds together. This includes a wide range of community activities delivered by the Social Regeneration Team with free or low cost activities such as football, walking football, walking, cycling, school holiday clubs and gardening groups. We will enhance the Association's ongoing community activities to maximise opportunities for participation across different groups and communities of people.

Engagement with people would **best take place in less formal settings**, which could realistically be anywhere that service users come together. Some tenants had been involved in Café Conversation events and commented very favourably on their informal style and format. From our conversations with tenants, they emphasised:

- The importance of very local and informal settings that people are comfortable with
- The branding of activities as social and entertainment opportunities (and not using words like 'participation' or 'engagement')
- The diversity of things that people might be motivated to attend like food, music, cultural celebrations, religious events
- The attraction of a personal invitation.

The Association will further develop the **celebrations and awareness diary** covering religious and other community festivals as well as other dates of interest in relation to different characteristics. This diary would involve social media communications but also potentially link to activities and celebrations mentioned above.

We will continue to develop and use social media, publications and noticeboards to display information about **specific social issues** such as: domestic violence; hate crime; child abuse; and human trafficking. Communicating this way tells customers something about our organisation's values and provides practical information on where and how to access support.

How the strategy will be monitored and evaluated

Everyone at Queens Cross has a duty and a role to play delivering this strategy. We consider equality and diversity to be an integral part of everything we do.

Additionally:

- An action plan will be created to ensure that the commitments set out in the strategy are monitored and evaluation.
- The Association's Equality and Diversity Working Group will monitor the progress of Equality and Diversity Strategy actions on a six monthly basis, reporting progress to the Executive Team.
- We will further develop the Working Group with greater representation and shared ownership of objectives and their implementation across the organisation.
- An evaluation report will be submitted to the Board every year.

This Strategy will be subject to a full review in 2025 in consultation with employees, customers, suppliers, Board members, ambassadors and partner organisations.

The Association will make any necessary alterations to this Strategy in advance of a full review in the event of any significant legislative or statutory changes or practices.

Glossary of Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 Introduced the term 'Protected Characteristics' to describe groups of people that are protected by the law. These are outlined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in *New Equality Act Guidance Protected Characteristic Definitions*.

- Age – Refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18-30 year olds).
- Disability – a person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.
- Gender Reassignment – The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- Marriage and Civil Partnership – Marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple⁶. Same sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as civil partnerships. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act 2010).
- 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 twenty six weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- Race – 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 or Belief – Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including a lack of belief (e.g. atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- Sex – A man or a woman.
- Sexual Orientation – Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Appendix 2

Related Strategies & Documents

1. Tenant Participation Strategy
2. Digital Business Strategy
3. Customer First Strategy
4. Asset Management Strategy
5. Investing in Our People
6. 5 Year Investment Plan
7. Queens Cross Workspace Business Plan
8. Queens Cross Community Foundation Business Plan

Appendix 3

Footnotes and references

1. Equality Act 2010, HMSO
2. Scottish Social Housing Charter 2012, HMSO
3. Human Rights Act 1998, HMSO.
4. The Equality Act 2010 Statutory Codes of Practice, Equality and Human Rights Commission 2011
5. Equality and Human Rights Commission in Scotland
6. Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014

Appendix 4

Are you or do you know a Queens Cross customer who has difficulty communicating with us in English?

This could mean that you don't get access to the information and services you need. Queens Cross can provide translation and interpretation services for customers. If this is you, or someone you know, get in touch and we'll do our best to help.



هل تعلم أنه يسعدنا أن نترجم؟

هل تعرف أحدا من عملاء كوينز كروس أو أنك أنت عميل كوينز كروس وتجد صعوبة في التواصل معنا باللغة الإنجليزية؟

قد يعني ذلك أنك لا تستطيع الوصول إلى المعلومات والخدمات التي تحتاجها.

يمكن لكوينز كروس تقديم خدمات الترجمة الكتابية والشفوية للعملاء. إذا كان هذا الخطاب يعنيك أنت أو أي شخص تعرفه، تواصل معنا وسنبدل قصارى جهدنا للمساعدة.

Czy wiesz, że jesteśmy otwarci na korzystanie z tłumacza - Happy to Translate?

Czy jesteś klientem lub znasz klienta Queens Cross, który ma trudności, aby komunikować się z nami w języku angielskim?

Może to oznaczać dla Ciebie brak dostępu do potrzebnych Ci informacji i usług.

Queens Cross zapewnia tłumaczenia ustne i pisemne swoim klientom. Jeżeli chcesz z nich skorzystać lub znasz kogoś, kto chciałby z nich skorzystać, skontaktuj się z nami, a dołożymy wszelkich starań, aby Ci pomóc.

您是否知道，我们乐意提供翻译？

您本人或者在您认识的人中，是否有难以用英语与我们沟通的女王十字（Queens Cross）的客户？

这可能意味着您无法访问所需的信息和服务。

女王十字（Queens Cross）可以为客户提供笔译和口译服务。如果您或您认识的人存在这种需求，请与我们联系，我们将尽最大努力为您提供帮助。

کیا آپ جانتے ہیں کہ ہمیں ترجمہ کر کے خوشی ہو گی؟

کیا آپ بذات خود یا کوئینز کراس کے کسی ایسے کسٹمر کو جانتے ہیں جسے ہمارے ساتھ انگریزی میں بات چیت کرنے میں دشواری کا سامنا ہو؟

اس کا مطلب یہ ہو گا کہ آپ اپنی مطلوبہ معلومات اور خدمات تک رسائی حاصل نہیں کر پائیں گے۔

کوئینز کراس صارفین کے لئے ترجمے اور ترجمانی کی خدمات فراہم کر سکتی ہے۔ اگر آپ یہ بذات خود ہوں یا کسی اور کو آپ جانتے ہوں اور رابطہ فرمائیں تو ہم مدد کرنے کی پوری کوشش کریں گے۔

