Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in Housing Group

Terms of reference

National Groups
The National Housing Federation’s national groups are a crucial element in meeting our core values – to put members at the heart of everything we do, and work in partnership together to achieve that. Our National Groups exist to support the Federation’s efforts to deliver against the themes outlined in our 2019-22 business strategy. In practice, depending on the topic area, this might mean that groups help us to develop policy ideas, gather vital intelligence, or support culture change in the housing association sector. They should also provide added value for members through the opportunity to shape debates at a national level, and to bring learning back to their respective organisations and networks, in a dynamic setting and with high quality support from Federation staff.

We are committed to several key principles in relation to national groups; and our approach to member engagement more broadly:

- **Fairness** - all members are clear about who is on the group, the reasons why, and the mechanisms /rationale for involvement;
- **Inclusivity** – all members are clear about the group’s purpose and how to contribute in the fullest way;
- **Transparency** – the group operates in a way which is clear and visible to other members.

Terms of Reference

1. Background
The Federation’s 2019-22 business strategy establishes our commitment to showing leadership on diversity and equality. Housing associations provide homes and communities in all parts of the country, for people with a great variety of experiences and backgrounds. For organisations that want to improve trust with their residents and stakeholders, reflecting this variety and diversity is key. It makes good business sense, as well as being the right thing to do.

Delivering diverse, inclusive workplaces is important to housing associations and to the communities we serve and the Federation’s work will support our members to be an exemplar sector in delivering this.

The Federation will work to understand the challenges our members are facing, to help find solutions to these challenges, and to drive a culture in the sector which values and delivers diverse and inclusive workplaces.

2. Purpose: Diversity, Equality and Inclusion National Group
The group will provide strategic insight and practical input to help shape and inform the Federation’s work to ensure the housing association sector is able to embrace diversity, equality and inclusion. This working group will support us with advice and analysis so that together we can:

- Develop a deep understanding of the challenges facing housing associations in being the best they can be at promoting diversity, equality and inclusion
- Co-create a joint programme of work to support action and progress in this area
- Support the spread of good and recommended practice
- Speak out publicly and with pride about the business benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces
- Embed learning from this programme of work at our respective organisations, and in our respective networks
- Drive a culture which embraces diversity and inclusion, and enhances equality in our workplaces
- Offer constructive advice and feedback on the Federation’s own diversity, equality and inclusion strategy internally
- Act as champions for the cause, including supporting the Federation with media, lobbying and events work as appropriate

2. Membership

The Federation’s National Groups usually comprise of 12 - 15 members, who are each appointed as individual members. All members must be staff of organisations affiliated to the National Housing Federation. Members will be selected in a fair and transparent way, and the Federation’s Member and Business Support Manager will ensure consistency in the process.

The group does not seek to be wholly representative (there is no vote or mandate), but will encourage genuine diversity of members. The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing applications to join the group:

- We will try to ensure there is at least one member from each size band of housing association: large, medium and small
- Group membership should ideally be formed of housing associations from a range of geographical locations
- A diversity of life perspectives and lived experiences will be very important to this group
- This national group needs a mix of skills and expertise in this field. We need the contribution of individuals with expertise in delivering successful diversity and inclusion work, as much as we need members whose organisation is looking to improve outcomes on diversity, equality and inclusion
- The group should strive for a mix of both strategic and operational perspectives on relevant issues among members of the group. In practice this means that group members might play different roles in their respective organisations, but all should be working at level senior enough to have both solid operational input and be empowered to help shape their organisation’s strategy and ambition.
3. Length of term

Appointments are for a fixed term, for three years to 2022, in line with commitments laid out in the Federation’s three-year business strategy. Should the Federation decide to continue this work after 2022, group members may apply to seek re-election or to stand down and allow for a further application process. If the group is in place after nine years, members will come to the end of their tenure and step down from the group, without the ability to re-apply.

4. Meetings and commitment

- Four core meetings per year
- Participation in one Federation event or conference
- Additional ad hoc activity in between meetings e.g. acting as a virtual sounding board on emerging issues, undertaking analysis of particular issues and reporting back, promoting group activity with members’ own organisations and networks etc.
- Authoring blogs or participating in podcasts or webinars where appropriate and possible

We expect the approximate time commitment will be 15-20 hours a year excluding travel time. This will rise to up to 25 hours for the Chair.

Members will be expected to attend at least 3 meetings a year and participate in activity in between meetings. Membership will be individual, and sending substitutes will not usually be permitted.

5. Chairing

The group will be expected to elect a Chair from within their number. The Chair will be expected to:

- Be an active Chair at meetings
- Act as an effective ambassador for the Federation externally
- Work with the Federation lead and the wider group to shape agendas and group activity.
- The appointment is for a fixed term of three years, with a maximum tenure of six years. Upon the end of the fixed term, the group will elect a new Chair.

In order to drive forward joint ownership of this agenda, and to achieve a co-created programme of work, the Federation proposes a co-chairing arrangement to be shared with a senior member of National Housing Federation staff. This is subject to the group’s approval at its first meeting.

6. Expectations of group members

Group members will be expected to:
• Act as a team and work flexibly together
• Actively participate in work to analyse and understand the challenges facing our sector
• Provide creative, critical and constructive feedback in order to strengthen the Federation’s work to drive improved diversity, equality and inclusion, and support us in delivering the objectives in our business strategy.
• Attend as many of the meetings as possible, and at least 3 across the year.
• Act as an effective ambassador for the Federation and the group with both member and external audiences.
• Contribute blogs, articles or other activities from time to time in order to support us in reaching out to the wider membership.
• Take actions forward outside of meetings as appropriate (e.g. provide views on email, canvas opinion from other members).
• Have their names published on our website as part of the group information section, and in alignment with Federation commitments around transparency and openness.
• Proactively identify and propose areas for collaboration and activity for the group and for the Federation.
• Deploy behaviours which enable a truly collaborative approach to working, such as honesty, openness, respect.

7. What group members can expect from the Federation

Overall we promise to ensure our approach is FIT for purpose:

• Fair – in our processes and decision-making
• Inclusive – in that we will always seek to reflect the diversity of our membership
• Transparent – in how we make decisions, and how we work with you

Specifically in relation to each national group members can expect:

• A clear framework, aligned to our business strategy objectives, to support group activity.
• Opportunities to input ideas, test policy proposals and influence the delivery of a critical area of our business plan.
• Support and input from the Federation’s work area lead at every meeting.
• Support and input from a range of Federation staff where appropriate.
• Clear and consistent feedback and evaluation on how the group is making a difference to our work.
• Clear communication with Federation leadership – an opportunity for the group to engage directly with our Chief Executive or another member of the Senior Team at least once a year.
• Flexibility and responsiveness – we will review the format regularly and in partnership with you, to ensure it is fit for purpose.
• Efficiency and Value for Money – we have no desire to create meaningless bureaucracy within our groups; the focus will be on creative thinking and practical action that will help to deliver our business strategy.
In practice, this means:

- Providing dedicated resource to administer the group, which will include holding the mailing list, noting actions at meetings and circulating agendas.
- Regularly demonstrating the added value of the group’s activity to business plan delivery, through evaluation and feedback.
- Ensuring the work of the group is communicated and accessible to the wider membership.

9. Review

We want to make sure the engagement mechanisms we have are strong and successful, and support us in delivering our business plan. We will review the group after the first 6 months and on an annual basis thereafter. We will always involve our members in discussions around changes.

10. Key contacts
For further information about this group, please contact:

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Member and Business Support Team
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