



The Mix

Equality and Diversity

Introduction

First Ark Group is fully committed to ensuring that all customers, board members, employees, and stakeholders are treated equally and fairly. First Ark values and embraces diversity because we believe this will help us achieve better outcomes for our stakeholders by working together and taking everyone's needs into account. Equality and Diversity is core to our business and our aim is to reflect this in all our policies, practices and services.

Creating the right mix of people, cultures and approaches will stimulate ideas and innovation and release potential which is crucial to ensure our vision of providing world class services.

That's why our equality and diversity strategy is called **The Mix**.

Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given a fair chance. It's not about treating everyone the same – instead it recognises that people's individual needs are best met in different ways.

Diversity is about valuing difference. It's also about recognising what employees can do and what each customer needs, so that everyone can make a worthwhile contribution and achieve their full potential. Diversity challenges us to welcome difference so that our communities become better places to live, and the First Ark group becomes a better place to work.

The equality groups

The Equality Act 2010 states that people must be protected from unlawful discrimination and from harassment, under the following nine groups:

- * ethnicity
- * age
- * sexual orientation
- * pregnancy and maternity
- * marriage and civil marriage/partnership
- * disability
- * gender
- * religion
- * gender re-assignment

What is unlawful discrimination?

Unlawful discrimination can take many forms:

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have.

Discrimination by association occurs when someone is unlawfully discriminated against because they are associated with another person who has a protected characteristic.

Discrimination by perception is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess the characteristic.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a requirement is applied to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating intimidating hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated less favourably than normal, for example because they have made a complaint about our organisation. If this happens, they can pursue their rights under our equality and diversity policy or the law.

We oppose all these forms of discrimination. We'll work hard to eliminate discrimination and to promote good relations between people. The Mix helps us do this.

What The Mix covers

The Mix outlines how we will ensure that the Group's services and employment practices are fair and inclusive and how we will contribute to the development of good relations between and within our diverse communities.

Services to meet your needs

To treat all our customers fairly and with respect we need to collect information about their circumstances. This helps us create a profile of who our customers are. We collect profiling information under the nine groups set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Collecting and using this information will help us ensure we are providing services that meet individual needs. The information you provide will also help us ensure everyone has fair access to our services.

We will use our IT systems to ensure we are providing services that take into account customers' individual circumstances. This could include providing information in large print or only visiting customers at home when it's convenient for them.

We will also use profiling information to find out more about different groups of customers so that we use the right resources and develop the services that best meet their needs. For example, we may find that young men are more likely to fall into rent arrears, so we could help them more by giving them specific welfare and benefits advice or by finding out how they prefer us to contact them about their rent, such as by text or email rather than by letter.

Monitoring and measuring progress

We have developed an action plan which focuses on the key actions that we want to take to continue developing the way in which we deliver services fairly and equitably to our customers and our employees.

We also carry out equality impact assessments, which enable us to assess our policies and services to see how they affect different groups. We use the findings to redesign or develop services so they meet customers' needs and ensure we don't discriminate unfairly.

We will only know if we are successful in meeting individuals' needs if you tell us how we are doing, help us identify anything that prevents you accessing our services, and suggest how we can improve. So please get in touch and give us your feedback.

Further information

The Mix

You can find out more about our approach to equality and diversity in The Mix, by:

- * going online to www.k-h-t.org
- * phoning us on **290 7000**
- * calling in to any of our offices.

If you require this leaflet in an alternative format please contact KHT on 0151 290 7000

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