



Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

“Leveling the Playing Field”

2024-2027

Introduction

Calico's purpose is 'To Make a Real Difference to People's Lives'. At Calico we understand that everyone is unique, and we recognise and celebrate our individual differences. We believe Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) ensures fair treatment and opportunity for all, with the aim of eliminating prejudice and discrimination.

EDI aims to advance equality of opportunity between groups of people of diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs and foster and promote good relations between all people.

EDI is at the very core of our Group Vision:

"A community of people, working together with customers to close the equality gap and to show others how we create a fairer society."

Our values and behaviours reflect our approach to EDI and describe how we work within the Calico Group, supporting us to deliver this vision and develop a truly inclusive culture where people can bring their whole selves to work, feel they belong and can thrive to realise their full potential.

Our Customer Strategy is rooted in the belief that all humans should have an equal chance to live their best life. We know that people have different needs and as an organisation we work to level the playing field.

Our People Strategy sets out how we will create a place where people want to work now and, in the future. A place where the work is meaningful, the culture fair and inclusive, where people feel safe, cared for, and are supported to perform, learn and grow and stay well. Where the leaders are visible, honest and listen.

Our EDI, Customer & People Strategies form the 3 pillars of how we will achieve our Group Vision of being "A community of people, working together with customers to close the equality gap and to show others how we create a fairer society."



OUR BEHAVIOURS

Living our Values



Background

As the gaps in society continue to widen, those with the highest need are suffering the most. Calico knows now, more than ever that customers need us to stand alongside them. This is also true of colleagues.

When people feel they belong, wellbeing and engagement become a natural part of a Company's culture. People need to be accepted for who they are and feel safe in bringing their whole selves to work.

As a result of this belonging, trust, connection, collaboration and understanding are continually developed, creating a culture to be proud of.

When it comes to our people, we recognise, value, and celebrate difference in its broadest sense; creating a culture and practices that embrace our unique attributes for everyone's benefit. We want people to bring their whole selves to work and feel safe in doing so.

We firmly believe that understanding the different needs of our colleagues, customers and partners is essential to maximising our organisation's potential.

The focus on EDI at the Calico group has evolved, and so our strategy needs to evolve.

Since the last EDI strategy, we have seen a perceived societal trend in polarisation, often fuelled by social media, whilst conversely more and more people try to understand and embrace EDI. EDI has undergone profound shifts reshaping society, individual and workplace mindsets.

This transformation has been propelled by external events in the world, and an awareness of the divide amongst people.





Calico has to ensure we keep up to date with current and emerging developments in EDI whilst also locally being influential in our stance, our communications and our actions.

Key achievements during the lifetime of the last EDI Strategy include: the growing This is Me movement and development of our Inclusion Forum, review of EDI employment measures with more stretching targets reflective of the population in the Northwest and more robust monitoring of recruitment and selection practices to ensure they are fair and inclusive.

We have introduced a New Generation training programme to attract more diversity to our boards.

We recognise we have more to do, especially within our services to level the playing field for our customers, regardless of social class, personal characteristics or background. Our new Customer Strategy- The Humanity Offer, is providing the blueprint for the work we need to do to ensure our customers can access and receive the services they need to live their best life.

Our Ambition Statement

We believe all humans should have an equal chance to live their best life.

We know people have different needs and different opportunities.

We work to level the playing field, valuing every individual, sharing our strengths, to the best benefit of everyone.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Here we provide more specific language for Calico, to raise awareness and understanding and support our discussion on EDI issues.

Equality: is the state of being equal, especially in rights and opportunities. At Calico we believe that all humans should have an equal chance to live their best lives.

Equity: recognises that each person has different circumstances/needs and has had different opportunities in their life and may need different resources and opportunities to reach a particular outcome. At Calico we work to provide more support for those who need it, with an aim to level the playing field.

Diversity: is about welcoming all the ways we are different (both visible and invisible) and promoting a wide range of people and perspectives. At Calico we recognise the benefits of having different thoughts/skills/experiences within a group. We see the person not the label.

Inclusion: is about valuing people's unique ideas and lived experience and ensuring they feel involved, respected, connected, and have their voice heard. At Calico we approach others with care and curiosity, not fear or judgment and believe everyone has strengths to contribute.

Belonging: creating a culture where people can be themselves, have psychological safety, appreciate each other, and feel part of something bigger.

Protected Characteristics: the characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010 which are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Discrimination: to treat a person differently or less favourably based on a protected characteristic. Discrimination may also be indirect – putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage.

At Calico we go beyond the protected characteristics in our approach, to ensure we do not discriminate against any groups, classes or categories to which people belong or are perceived to belong.

Bias: a favourable or unfavourable, unreasonable judgment against another. Bias is often unconscious, meaning we aren't fully aware of it.

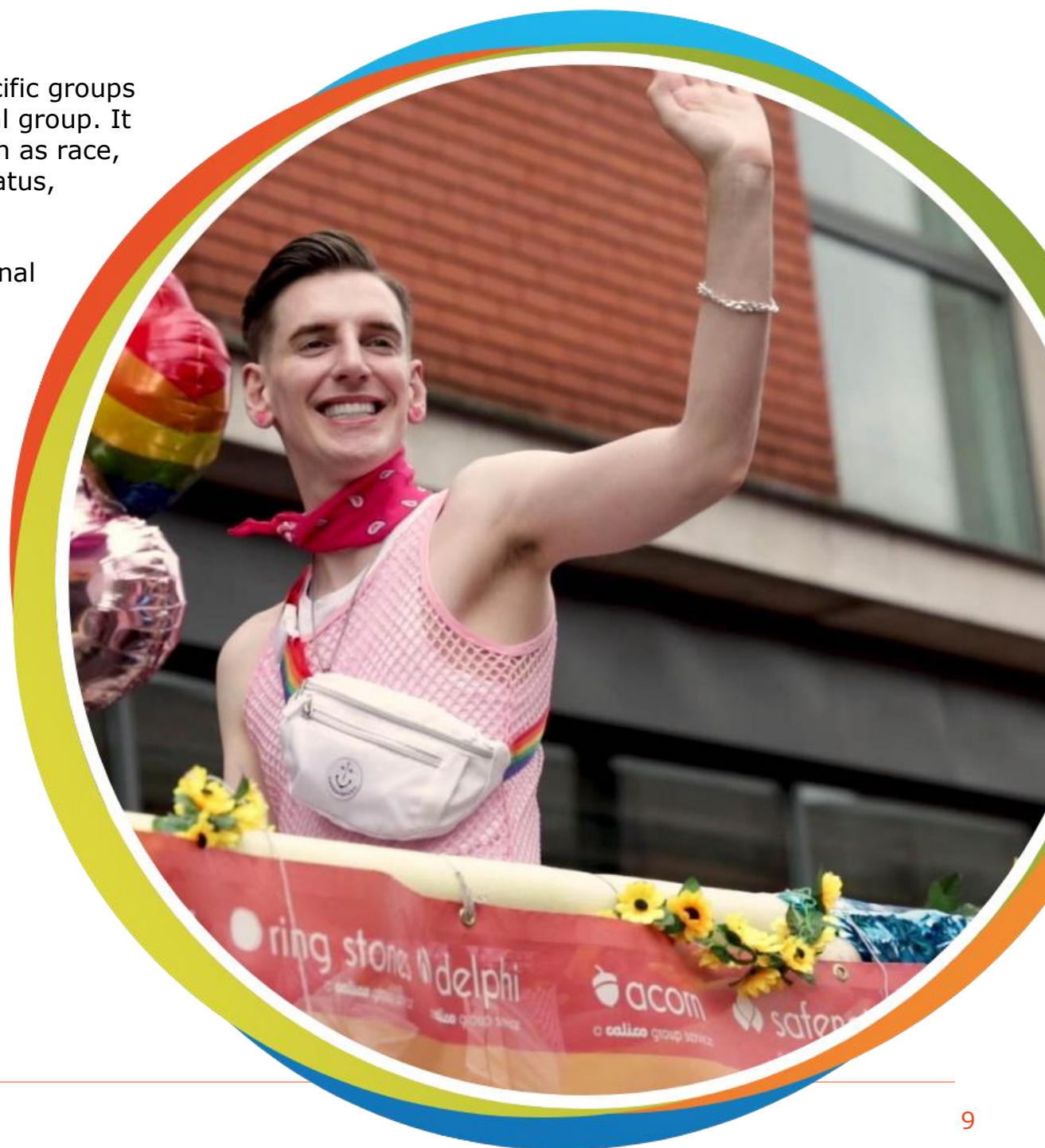
Positive Action: is a range of measures allowed under the Equality Act 2010, which can be lawfully taken to encourage and train people from under-represented groups to help them overcome disadvantages and improve representation in the workplace.

Privilege: access or advantages granted to specific groups of people because of their membership in a social group. It can be based on a variety of social identities such as race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, ability status, sexuality, age education level and more.

Oppression: is the result of the use of institutional privilege and power at the expense of another.

Intersectionality: the recognition that identity markers (e.g. women, black, gay) do not exist independently of each other, and that each informs the others, often creating a complex convergence of discrimination, bias or oppression.

Allyship: active support for the rights of a minority or marginalised group, without being a member of it.



Why is Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion important to the Calico Group?

It's morally right.

Everyone should work in a culture which is truly inclusive, and people can bring their whole selves to work and thrive because of who they are. We are committed to EDI, promoting dignity and respect. This allows us to live our values and share our inclusive behaviours across the Calico Group and its diverse communities.

Our customers are some of the most vulnerable people in society; the diversity of our customers should be reflected in the diversity of our colleagues; this helps us understand and empathise with our customers, knowing their circumstances enabling support and making a real difference to their lives.

It makes good business sense.

By having a diverse organisation which represents, supports, and celebrates our diverse colleagues, customers, and communities, we will be able to deliver creative solutions resulting in the best services which will result in: -

- Empathy and understanding with our colleagues and customers.

- Developing our existing and new services in ways which are relevant to those customers.
- Innovative approaches to products and services.
- Building trust and understanding with colleagues and customers.
- Empowering and engaging our colleagues, so that they positively represent the Calico Group.
- Greater ability to identify risks and concerns and take action to create better community cohesion.
- The opportunity to create business growth in communities.
- A celebration and championing of diversity throughout the Calico Group.
- The ability to support and influence other companies to 'do the right thing'.

It's a legal duty.

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It is based on the 5 key principles of dignity, fairness, equality, respect, and independence.



Under the Equality Act (2010) companies are legally required not to discriminate against employees or potential employees based on a protected characteristic. This includes equal pay for work of equal value.

To support the Equality Act's legal requirements, we undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to ensure our services, policies and procedures consider not only these protected characteristics but other vulnerabilities in society.

The EIA provides questions (appendix 1) to consider when developing or reviewing policies and delivering new projects or pieces of work. These questions ensure consideration has been given to anyone who could be affected by the policy/piece of work.

In addition, we must comply with a range of regulation, including:

- National Housing Federation Code of Governance
- RSH Consumer Standards
- Charity Commission Code of Governance
- Care Quality Commission Standards
- Women's Aid Standards

Our People

The Calico Group want to attract and retain people who reflect our values and behaviours from all backgrounds and with diverse lived experiences. We want to breakdown stereotypes, creating an inclusive culture where people feel empowered to be their best. This will realise the potential of our colleagues and communities.

To attract a diverse community of people, we will: -

- Challenge “traditional” stereotypes (e.g., construction and care) and we will work closely with schools and colleges to encourage the opportunities that are available to all.
- Promote Calico careers, work experience and volunteering opportunities through diverse means, ensuring we are accessible to all members of our communities, including those who may find it difficult to gain employment.
- Work with partners and agencies to offer work experience placements for those who may find it difficult to access mainstream work.
- Ensure our website, literature and imagery reflect the communities we serve and demonstrate our commitment to EDI.
- Support people with neurodiversity challenges to work with us through reasonable adjustments and initiatives such as Project Search.
- Actively encourage people to learn and grow to develop their careers across the Calico Group, regardless of differences, in ways that are right for them. This could be through developing skills, broadening experience, or building knowledge.
- Work to achieve a more diverse leadership community across the Group, both at managerial and board level by supporting people to develop their leadership potential through appropriate leadership development programmes and encouraging all our people, should they wish, to apply for leadership roles across the Calico Group.
- Ensure our recruitment and selection practices promote EDI at every stage to allow people to bring their whole selves to the process, so that we

can assess for potential as well as current knowledge and skills. This will include having diverse selection panels.

- Deliver training for all recruiting managers to strive for selection processes that are free from unconscious or conscious bias.
- We will consider Section 159 of the Equality Act 2010 which relates to positive action provisions if we need to address imbalances in our workforce.
- Collect and analyse applicant data at each stage of the recruitment process to ensure we are fair, and our campaigns are accessible to all. We will challenge trends across the Group if they indicate any potential discrimination.
- Recruit for values and potential, challenging experience requirements to ensure we are not disadvantaging younger people in the selection process.
- We will continue to challenge ourselves to attract people from areas in which we are underrepresented.
- Reciprocal mentoring will develop Calico's knowledge and allow more innovation and creation. Reciprocal Mentoring creates an effective support

system for underrepresented groups, whilst educating Senior Leaders to truly understand and recognise any structural and/or cultural barriers that affect certain colleagues at Calico.

- Use our diverse workforce to help us bridge the engagement gap with under-represented communities and groups.



Once people join Calico, we must ensure we live up to our promise of being an inclusive organisation if we are going to retain our diverse community of people. Our commitment to being an equitable, diverse and inclusive organisation, where everybody can be themselves and bring their whole selves to work is at the heart of our People Strategy.

As the Calico Group grows, both in services and in geography, we must ensure that everyone feels part of The Calico Group, as One Calico, with a voice that is heard. We will encourage colleagues to collaborate, connect with each other and learn from each other to build and strengthen themselves and the organisation, fostering a culture of understanding, inclusion, and acceptance.

In the way we work at Calico we will:

- Ensure our teams comprise not just the right skills and professional experience, but also a breadth of viewpoints and life and career experience, including diversity of mind-set. This will ensure any decisions made will be inclusive and reflective.
- Provide education and training for all colleagues, appropriate to the level of their role.
- Listen to the viewpoints of all colleagues. We will do this by having listening groups with senior leaders, and our engagement surveys will ask pertinent questions. The engagement surveys will be filtered by demographics and protected characteristics to understand the employee experience of people from different backgrounds, ages, and Companies, enabling us to identify any trends or issues.



- Act on the feedback we receive from colleagues to make improvements to their experience of working at Calico.
- Provide the technology to support different ways of working and collaboration, whilst recognising that for some they will need additional support or adaptations to use this technology.
- Enable people to work flexibly where possible and in line with the needs of the team and the organisation. This may include flexible hours, working part time, or some working from home, so our people can balance personal responsibilities and interests with their work commitments.
- Support people returning from any Personal, Safe, Maternal or Paternity leave, considering their requirements in a flexible and positive way.
- Provide a range of support to help colleagues with their mental health, including Mental Health First Aiders and access to counselling.
- Ensure our workspaces, facilities and the environment in which we work meet the needs of all our people, whether these relate to accessibility, engagement, prayer or wellbeing facilities.



Our Communications



Calico needs to be demonstrative in its support of the most vulnerable people and campaigns. In the past, we have supported people and causes, but taken a passive approach to publicly supporting causes that we care about or condemning activities that threaten our values.

Going forward we will champion causes that align with our values more publicly and seek to challenge and educate those people and campaigns that support causes or ideologies that conflict with our values. By doing this we will safeguard our reputation and demonstrate our commitment to our vision of showing others how we create a fairer society.

Inclusive communications benefit both colleagues, customers, partners, and commissioners. Inclusive communications foster understanding, trust, connection, and collaboration. By embracing diversity in our messaging and interactions, we will create an environment where people feel heard, valued, and considered. This will lead us to having stronger loyalty from colleagues and customers and enable us to influence others.

The Calico Group will endeavour to publicly condemn acts of discrimination and we pledge to support movements that challenge discrimination and prejudice.

To ensure our communications, both internal and external are inclusive we will:

- Ensure that our communication channels enable us to connect appropriately with all of our customers and colleagues, and we are not missing any marginalised groups.
- Review our corporate publications, our websites, and social media presence, to ensure our language and imagery is inclusive and appealing.
- Ensure EDI is an influence in all employee communications, considering how the message will be received by different groups.
- Ensure we are active in response to external events and advocate for causes that align with our values.
- Communicate in a trauma informed way for colleagues and customers.
- Review and impact-assess our policies to ensure they support all our customers and colleagues fairly.
- Deliver innovative EDI training in accessible ways. This training starts at induction and is offered throughout the journey of a colleague's career at Calico. This training is considered essential for all colleagues.
- Create an annual calendar highlighting events and dates which recognise and promote diversity & inclusion to foster understanding and wellbeing.

Our Customers

We know we have more to do in ensuring our organisation and our services provide equal chances for customers to live their best lives. The companies that make up the Calico Group describe their own particular focus within this Strategy:

Calico Homes

We are committed to treating customers and prospective customers with fairness and respect.

We will achieve this in a number of ways including:

- We will actively collect customers EDI and vulnerability data and update our systems with this information.
- We will use this information from customers to ensure our services are accessible to all customer groups, taking action to work with customers to address this where necessary.
- We will ensure that communication with and information for customers is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate to the diverse needs of our customers.
- We will focus our volunteering and recruitment activity in our neighbourhoods, providing

opportunities for our customers to learn and grow.

- We will be clear and open about the application of reasonable adjustments, ensuring we tailor our services to meet the needs of communities and individuals.
- We will allow customers and prospective customers to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about our services.

Ring Stones

We are committed to treating customers and prospective customers with fairness and respect.

We will achieve this in a number of ways, including:

- We will ensure that communication and information is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate for the diverse needs of our customers.
- We will promote the use of active listening throughout Ring Stones ensuring that a focussed intent and respect is shared amongst all our customers.

- We will take every opportunity to learn, develop, and progress our knowledge and awareness with feedback from our customers around EDI.
- We will actively promote and support apprenticeships, volunteering opportunities, and work placements from within our communities and continue to upskill current employees.
- We will positively support community initiatives reflecting the areas and communities where we continue to work.



Syncora (Treatment & Recovery, Homelessness Services, Skills & Enterprise)

We are committed to treating customers and prospective customers with fairness and respect.

We will achieve this in a number of ways, including:

- We will ensure that we continuously review and improve accessibility to our services, including options around digital inclusion.
- We will listen and act upon customer feedback, holding the customer at the forefront of service delivery.
- We will have a continued focus on ensuring our environments are physically inclusive, working towards developing trauma informed spaces within all our service provision.
- We will ensure our staff teams engage in opportunities to learn, build knowledge and develop their understanding of EDI in order to best support customers.
- We will actively support customers who wish to explore volunteering opportunities within our services, ensuring all have access to relevant information and support.

SafeNet

We are fully committed to delivering safe and equal access to domestic abuse services as well as equal and inclusive support in our service delivery and provision. We accommodate and support a very diverse range of survivors; we value the differences they bring and ensure inclusion in all our activities.

We will achieve this in a number of ways, including:

- We will ensure our services are survivor led with consultation and listening groups to maintain clarity around survivors changing needs and survivor co-design of services, taking actions to continually change and improve.
- We will provide open and fair access to our services with no discrimination on grounds of gender – women, men, non-binary and transgender - and no discrimination on grounds of complexity including financial (no recourse to public funding), and additional health needs.
- We will enable living spaces and systems with faith and cultural support for survivors to observe faith and cultural needs, such as Halal foods, prayer areas, work rotas and systems to support faith events e.g. 24 hr cooking around Ramadan
- We will ensure our communications are accessible, including written, verbal, sign language, large print, clear English, translation, and interpretation into common community languages.
- We will monitor EDI data, identifying gaps, making improvements to make sure our services are meeting the demand around diversity and to identify any areas for improvements.
- We will commit to an equal and fair representation across SafeNet reflected in the composition of SafeNet workforce with the understanding that the fair and equal delivery of services is intrinsically linked to a fair and equally representative workforce.

Our Suppliers & Partners

Calico should be an example to the businesses and communities we work with to ensure they stand alongside us in our commitment to EDI. Our approach is to encourage and influence, showing others how we can create a fairer society.

We therefore choose to work with ethical suppliers and partners whose values align with our own. We will work with our suppliers and partners to achieve a wider social impact for our customers and communities and promote good news stories in our networks.

When choosing to tender for work, whether as a lead provider or a sub-contractor, part of the decision-making process includes looking at the EDI approach and social value outcomes of the organisation tendering for the work, to ensure there is a good fit.

Where we are the lead provider, we ask any partner agencies that we subcontract to, to self-certify that they have an EDI policy, which they can supply if required. If they do not have one, we suggest they adopt ours with appropriate adaptations. We offer our support to help them with this.

In addition, we will partner on a more informal basis, with organisations that are better positioned than us to support specialised and/or grass roots causes that complement our services. We will offer a range of support, including financial and expertise, as may be appropriate.

As part of the procurement process for contracts with suppliers of significant value and over a long term, EDI prequalification questions are asked around EDI policy and the need to provide on request further details of their EDI plans, including any news stories or performance measure that promote their EDI achievements.



Our Boards

Our Boards are required to bring effective challenge, critical thinking, and scrutiny to processes and practices, so they can ensure the organisation can achieve its EDI ambition.

Key areas for Board responsibility and oversight are:

Strategy

Our Boards have overall accountability for the delivery of our Group EDI Strategy and fulfil the role of being a strategic critical friend to the business in this area. In addition, collectively, Boards will develop their own objectives to set out how they will place EDI at the heart of all decision making and discussion with an action plan of how they will get there.

Governance

Through their governance arrangements, the Boards will document and communicate the expectation that it's members will practice inclusive behaviours.

All decisions have an EDI component, and the Board will challenge management to consider the impacts to EDI when making strategic decisions. Boards are committed to reviewing how they do business, including meeting formats, to create environments that are welcoming and inclusive to all.

Succession Planning

Our Boards recognise the need for increased diversity in their makeup and has commissioned a New Generation Board training programme, run in partnership with the Housing Diversity Network to identify and develop future talent.

The Boards take care in their recruitment practices, not to over rely on traditional work experience, but rather to embrace diversity of thought and lived experience to reach out and attract a more diverse range of talent that is more representative of the communities we serve.

Learning & Development

For all Board members to actively embody inclusive traits it is recognised that further learning and development will be needed.

Through our Boards Together Programme, membership of the Housing Diversity Network and additional bespoke training interventions as appropriate, we will endeavour to provide the education and training required.

Board members will also be given the opportunity to learn from our customers and colleagues through hearing their stories and visiting our services.

Performance

The Boards will identify the performance measures and reporting mechanisms they require to monitor the progress of this strategy as well as for their own performance against their Board EDI objectives.



boards together

calico boards connected

Challenging Discrimination & Non-Inclusivity

Calico is committed to challenging discrimination and promoting social inclusion and equality of opportunity.

Within the Calico Group, to promote and uphold an inclusive and positive environment, maintain a culture of anti-discrimination and a culture that values difference, any, and all discrimination will be challenged directly and promptly and in a way that encourages change.

Discrimination should never be accepted, excused, or dismissed and should always be challenged to ensure that the discriminating individual understands that their behaviour is unacceptable, whether it was deliberate or unintentional.

Sometimes discrimination can occur unintentionally and, in most cases, informing and educating the individual of their mistake and the reasons why it is unacceptable is enough to stop it happening again. If a colleague continues to be discriminatory, more formal training may be required or disciplinary action taken.

We will be courageous, and with our Relationship Pledge in mind, challenge any discrimination by a colleague or customer face-to-face with the individual as soon as it occurs. This is the most effective way of ensuring that it does not re-occur.

At Calico our different Companies have their own operating procedures for working with customers in place to address discrimination and anti-social behaviour.

All Companies are committed to addressing and tackling discriminatory behaviour and anti-social behaviour in accordance with this Strategy.

How are we doing?

Delivery of this Strategy will require focused leadership at all levels of the organisation.

We will develop a Group EDI Plan each year for the life of this Strategy detailing the specific actions we will undertake to deliver this Strategy, with clear measures and targets (where appropriate) to monitor progress. Oversight of this will be provided by the Paying Attention to EDI group, comprising a group of senior leaders from across the organisation. In addition, we will provide an Annual Report to Group Board of our progress in implementing this Strategy.

We are working toward producing customer EDI information and determining how we use this to improve services in line with our Customer Strategy.

The ways in which we measure/monitor EDI internally with regards our colleagues include:

- Undertaking confidential employee engagement surveys with the aim of monitoring and improving the employee experience across Calico. The results are analysed by demographics/characteristics to help us understand how inclusive our culture is.
- Encouraging colleagues to provide their personal information; both protected characteristics and lived experiences. We will utilise this information to support our colleagues through Group-wide and tailored initiatives. In addition, we will monitor how many colleagues are withholding this information, potentially indicating that they do not feel safe to share.
- Reporting and acting on Recruitment monitoring statistics, ensuring we are inclusive in our attraction, assessment, and induction processes, resulting in a more diverse workforce.
- Reporting on the Gender, Disability, LGBTQ+ and Ethnicity pay gaps for all Companies.
- Monitoring the diversity make-up of our colleagues and our board to assist us in reflecting the communities we serve and sharing this information internally and externally as is appropriate.
- Producing a bi-annual HR KPI report which provides a detailed analysis of EDI information.

- Producing a bi-annual 'spotlight' report on a diversity theme to highlight progress and identify further improvements required.
- Regularly reviewing our equality indicators to ensure they remain reflective and stretching; we will take action to influence and improve any negative indicators or trends.
- Review and reflect on the learnings from employee relations cases with a view to making improvements to our people practices.
- Monitoring the completion of EDI training.
- Partnering with or being members of organisations such as the Housing Diversity Network and Inclusive Companies to keep up to date with current thinking and benchmark how we are doing.
- Seeking to gain accreditation from leading diversity bodies and/or entering awards which allow us to assess ourselves against best practice.

Related Documents

Corporate Plan 2022-25 – A new Us

People Strategy 2023-26 – Embracing Change Together

Customer Strategy 2022-2025 – The Humanity Offer

Code of Conduct

Our Shared Commitments



Appendix 1

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS – KEY QUESTIONS

The following questions must be asked before any policy/procedure/framework or project is undertaken. This should then be sent to the One Calico email address for review.

1) Will this process/policy/framework/project unfavourably affect any particular group?

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender reassignment**
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership**
- **Pregnancy and Maternity**
- **Race**
- **Religion or belief**
- **Sex**
- **Sexual Orientation**
- **Part time workers**
- **Flexible/hybrid workers**

- **Parents**
- **Carers**
- **Socio Economic**
- **Others**

2) If so, how you are going to redress this?

3) How does this policy promote equity? *

4) Have you engaged/consulted with any clients/customers/colleagues in developing this piece of work? Please give details.

*Equity means recognising that we do not all start from the same place and that each person has different circumstances, different access to resources and lives with/without the different opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

The Equality Impact Assessment is available on Microsoft Forms via the intranet.