

# Practicing Excellence in the Housing Sector Organisations 2012 Winner - Cestria Community Housing

Cestria Community Company Association is a registered social landlord which owns and manages 4,200 properties in and around the town of Chester-le-Street, in County Durham. Cestria is an organisation which not only values equality and diversity but is committed to investing the time and resources required to ensure it becomes embedded in the organisation's culture.

For Cestria the key to successful delivery of services is to truly understand their customer base and customer profiling is used to achieve this. Profiling is undertaken across the nine protected characteristic to ensure services are accessible to everyone.

When Cestria first formed they had no profile information about customers, so in 2010 they began a major customer profiling project. By the end of the first year they had collected profile data for 75% of their tenants and following the second year

of the project in 2011 they held information for 93% of their customers. This information has been proactively used to drive service design and innovation and has enabled Cestria to develop a tenant involvement programme.

The Tenant Involvement Programme is about empowering tenants by giving them the opportunity to become involved in Cestria's Equality and Diversity agenda and they used profiling inform to ensure a full cross representation of customers and established a dedicated Equality and Diversity Working Group.

The group is made up of staff, tenants and board members, the overall role of the group is to inform, advise and assist Cestria in all aspects of policy-making, service delivery and employment, to meet their obligations under the Equality and Diversity legislative and regulatory framework and to mainstream the promotion of equality and



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diversity in practice. The group meets on a bi-monthly basis and may work with other

tenant groups when required, for example, delivering specific Equality and Diversity projects.

Members of the working group are known as Equality and Diversity Champions and they are responsible for promoting Equality and Diversity across the organisation, as well as challenging attitudes and behaviours. To support the development of the Champions Cestria has invested in ongoing training to our Equality and Diversity Champions. This has included Equality and Diversity NCFE qualifications, with members achieving Level 2/3, and drama-based training, using acting and role-play to raise awareness of E&D issues.

Cestria is fully committed to ensuring Equality and Diversity is embedded within all activities and service delivery. They have set themselves a challenge of achieving both the 'Leaders in Diversity' and 'Investors in Diversity' accreditations, awarded by the National Centre for Diversity within the next 12 months.

For more information about the North East Equality Awards, please visit our website, [www.equality-ne.co.uk/awards](http://www.equality-ne.co.uk/awards) or contact Equality North East on 0191 426 4399 or email [info@equality-ne.co.uk](mailto:info@equality-ne.co.uk).

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