

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

April 2023

Through our **passion** for housing, more
people have a **safe** place to call **home**





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Foreword

EDI Board Champion & CEO



EDI is so
important to
YHG; it is part
of our DNA



Bhupendra Mistry

Non-executive Director

I've spent most of my life championing social change within communities experiencing isolation and disadvantage and have been on the boards of organisations such as Manchester Metropolitan University, The Body Shop Foundation and other housing associations.

I'm proud to be the board champion of EDI at Your Housing Group as my aim is to ensure equity and parity in all that we do, say and act upon, and this strategy along with the work already taking place, is moving in the right direction.

Ensuring fairness is about trying to understand that everyone's needs may be different, and we can embrace and support all our residents, and each other, to feel part of the same journey.

Jacque Allen

Chief Executive Officer

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is really important to me on a personal level, and I'm proud to be the executive sponsor of EDI for Your Housing Group. *EDI is so important to YHG; it is part of our DNA* and our culture, and a truly inclusive workplace and customer offer is what we are seeking to create.

The purpose of this strategy is to improve how EDI is embedded within our Group, and to encourage openness and inclusivity, and to combat stigma, so that all colleagues and customers feel safe to be themselves at all times.

We've made a number of improvements in recent years, but we know we can and will do better to raise awareness and inclusivity.

Vision and Values

Our vision for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is that we have an environment in which our colleagues and customers can always be themselves, and that we promote inclusivity by embracing differences and allowing our diversity to enrich us.

Our values set out the heart of the business, and offer our colleagues a baseline for behaviours, which will in turn, help to shape our culture.

They must be embedded within our EDI Strategy, as these set the tone for all our interactions and how we will support people.



Honest & Reliable

Our value of being honest and reliable is important to customers and colleagues as it helps to set expectations around what we can or cannot do to offer a service or support.



Caring

Our value of being caring supports the need to be aware of everyone's circumstances, as well as the nine protected characteristics, to ensure that we are doing all that we can to provide support where and when it's needed.



Respectful & Fair

Our value of being respectful and fair is important to understand how we will communicate with others, and how we will listen to understand views and issues.



What is EDI - our definition

EDI is not just about the nine protected characteristics that are set out in legislation, but also about the ensuring no person or group feels marginalised, and that they are able to have a voice and access services as the need.

There will always be groups who experience stigma and social isolation, and people will move in and out of these groups at different times of their lives, so it is vital that we recognise this and ensure this strategy supports those people, as well as the legally defined protected characteristics.

We also recognise that people will identify with the nine protected characteristics, and these can intersect. Everyone has their own unique identity and experience of discrimination.

Our approach to understand stigma is to look at a number of sources and develop a series of actions to raise awareness and better support people towards true inclusivity.

In addition to the nine protected characteristics, Your Housing Group will also consider young people leaving care to be protected and will develop further support services to this group. We have four Foyers which provide housing and support to young people who are at risk of homelessness, and often this does include care leavers.

As well as our Young Ambassadors programme within our Foyers, where young people can gain



skills and development on their scheme, we offer our Change Champions group, which is specifically aimed at young people under 30 to obtain views and seek understanding of what is needed from this age group.

We will also develop a mentoring programme so that young people can benefit from the support of a YHG colleague from another walk of life, which will also have the benefits of reverse mentoring as we learn from the young people and their story.

Our EDI Policy sets out our legal obligations and how we will deliver against these.

Strategic themes

Your Housing Group's strategic themes set out how we run our business.

Our customers and colleagues' safety is our number one priority





Our employee offer

Our colleagues feeling positive about their wellbeing is vital to us being able to, in turn, provide excellent services to our customers.

We also recognise the importance of diversity within our culture, and how having a more diverse workforce will enhance our teams and our offer to customers and supporting one another.

All colleagues receive training for EDI, which is mandatory and bespoke to YHG, when they start with us, and this is refreshed on a regular basis.

We collect data from our colleagues and Board members so that we can understand how we might need to improve our service offer and support, and where we might need a targeted campaign of recruitment to better reflect our communities.

We understand the importance of listening to our colleagues about what is working well and what we might need to focus on to improve, and we will do this in a variety of ways, including surveys, focus groups and “Time to Talk” sessions where one of the EDI leads will lead an informal session to raise awareness of an area, encourage learning and inclusivity and offer support to any colleague who raises concerns.

We acknowledge that we have previously been underrepresented at Board level, and so we introduced a **Board Apprentice scheme** to support applicants from diverse backgrounds into Board roles.

We have an internal group, **Balance for Better**, which oversees EDI and is responsible for the delivery of the strategic EDI plan. The **Balance for Better group** is supported at Executive level by the Chief Executive, and by the Senior Leadership Team with the Director of Housing and the Director of People being key members. Additionally, each member of the leadership team is an advocate for EDI, and has a particular interest, offering allyship to colleagues to raise concerns or seek further advice on any area.

All colleagues receive training for EDI, which is mandatory and bespoke to YHG.

There are a number of workstreams that support EDI, including our **Wellbeing Group and mental health first aiders**, who focus on how to provide better information and support to colleagues who may need to reach out. The **Wellbeing Group** also regularly holds “**Time to Talk**” sessions and will feature a number of topics around mental health awareness.

Balance for Better members strive to be allies to EDI, and other colleagues are made aware of what the group is working on and how to reach out for support by regular updates.

We also understand the importance of valuing the neurodiversity of our colleagues so we can embrace and maximise the talents of people who think differently.

This includes, amongst others, those who have **autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, or ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)**. We have therefore agreed to recruit for potential and values rather than competency to improve the inclusion in our recruitment process, and we will also focus on making it easier for male colleagues to seek advice and support in relation to mental health issues.

We have therefore agreed to recruit for potential and values rather than competency to improve inclusion

We will run awareness campaigns throughout the year to promote a number of diversity days and support groups.

We will develop a mentoring programme for colleagues to engage in, which will provide junior members of our teams support from more senior colleagues and encourage the open culture we strive for.



Our customer offer

Support for customers is varied so we aim to tailor this to an individual's need, where this is known.

We collect data from new customers when they start their tenancy or leaseholder journey with us, so that we can provide better support depending on the circumstances.

We offer a wide range of support services, such as interpreters for people whose first language is not English, accessible buildings for people with physical disabilities, and can offer our printed communication in a range of ways.

We also offer a tenancy support service, so that customers who need additional help can receive this to help them manage their tenancy successfully.

We will seek views of our customers through feedback and engagement, which will include surveys and customer groups, to discuss experiences, and learn from these and improve.

A number of focus groups will be carried out so that we are hearing the customer voice directly

A number of focus groups will be carried out so that we are hearing the customer voice directly, and so that we can understand how diverse groups are accessing our services.



Where we have underrepresentation on our customer groups, we will do targeted campaigns in order to try to attract a wider, more diverse group of customers, including younger people and people with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community.

We are also committed to the wider needs of other socially excluded communities or groups. This includes people on low incomes and facing food poverty, single parents, carers, and young people leaving care, people with drug and alcohol dependencies, homeless communities and those living in areas of deprivation.

We aim to have an inclusive culture, which celebrates the diversity of our workforce and our customers. This will be embedded within campaigns, diversity celebrations, training for colleagues and using lived experience champions to advise us on how we are doing.

We want to encourage our colleagues to challenge wrongs, whilst also promoting inquisitive thinking. Our internal colleague group will review the EDI priorities annually, and our leadership team will act as allies for each of the protected characteristics.



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Strategic objectives for EDI

Our delivery plan will set out how we will deliver against the strategic objectives.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1			
We will publish our current data on representation of all groups for colleagues and board members, and where needed agree actions to improve representation and data collection.			
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleague data – link to annual staff survey. • Board data – to be collated anonymously and published on website. • All data to be reported to Board and Customer Services Committee in the annual update. 		
Assigned	Director of Housing	Completed	September 2023 (repeated annually)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2			
We will improve the data we hold for our customers and use this data to improve our service offer.			
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review customer survey data and develop action plan. • Review use of UDCs for holding customer EDI data. • Review process for tailoring service to customers to include signing, braille, translation services. • Events in communities to raise awareness. • Develop mentoring programme for young people. 		
Assigned	Head of Customer Voice Head of Customer Services	Completed	September 2023

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3			
We will further improve our culture to be inclusive.			
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleague training for EDI – ensure all teams receive including fix360. • Awareness campaigns around EDI themes – at least two per year. • Develop mentoring programme for colleagues. • Develop colleague group (Balance for Better) to become true allies of EDI across group. • Assign Leadership Team lead area and publicise to colleagues. • Develop Change Champions for under 30s. • Amend policy to add in Care Leavers as YHG protected group. 		
Assigned	Director of Housing, People and Asset	Completed	March 2024

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

We will ensure that new customers and existing residents understand how to manage their tenancies and properties, including how to effectively deal with moisture to prevent damp & mould, and will arrange for interpreter services where needed so that this is understood

Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review sign-up process to incorporate advice in relation to managing home in particular around damp and mould.• Review information provided to new tenants in relation to community.• Ensure translation services are available for sign up, and other services that customers may need.		
Assigned	Head of Housing Head of Customer Services	Completed	April 2023

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

We will review our approach to recruitment and will ensure that it is contemporary and that panel members are supported to understand unconscious bias.

Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review recruitment packs for managers on panel.• Ensure Human Resources is supporting panels and challenging where needed.		
Assigned	Director of People	Completed	September 2023

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6

We will hold a number of engagement events for both staff and customers to raise awareness of EDI themes including stigma.

Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Events to be themed around priorities and reviewed each year.• A cultural calendar will also be observed, and events held to coincide with key dates.• Events will be promoted both internally and externally.		
Assigned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Balance for Better Group• Head of Customer Voice and Insight• Head of Communications, Engagement & Marketing	Completed	March 2024

Evaluation & success measures



We will measure the success of this strategy as follows:

% of data held
on staff and
how utilised

% of data held
on customers
and examples
of how services
tailored

% of staff
trained
in EDI

Number of
awareness
events held
in each year

Number of
Comms and
campaigns
delivered
each year

Perception
survey from
colleagues and
customers around
our inclusive
approach

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