



**Black Country
Housing Group**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2024 - 2027



Introduction

We live in a world where there are structural inequalities, notably so across the Black Country and Birmingham where there are higher than average levels of deprivation, lower than average income levels as well as health inequalities. There is evidence to suggest that some disadvantaged groups of people will suffer worse housing services than others. This is clearly unacceptable, and this strategy sets out our stated intent to ensure that equality of access is available in equal measure for all, and that outcomes are fair for all of our customers.

We're keen to learn from our customers and will do this through the actions within our Transparency Strategy. We want to embrace too best practice from others such as the National Housing Federation and the Employer's Network for Equality and Inclusion, who have provided useful intelligence in assessing the maturity of our approach.

Fundamentally though, at the heart of our approach to EDI are our culture and values, and the way these are embraced and demonstrated from our leaders on the Board and Executive Board through all our colleagues. I'm proud that we have passionate and engaged people in our business who want to make a difference and care about the quality of our services. Our EDI Sounding Board leads the way on this front, and the colleagues who sit on this panel and have shaped this strategy are role models for all.

I am optimistic that our new EDI strategy will underpin all that we do in delivering our new Strategic Plan and provide better outcomes for our residents and local communities.



Amanda Tomlinson, Chief Executive

Strategic Objectives

BCHG is a Social Business Investing in People and Communities. We launched our current Strategic Plan in 2023 and our new EDI Strategy will underpin the delivery of our strategic objectives which capture our priorities for the business:

- ✓ Trusted Landlord
- ✓ Quality Homes
- ✓ Thriving Communities
- ✓ Outstanding Employer
- ✓ Sound Business

Culture and Values

We want to make a difference to people's lives by:

- Being a learning organisation
- Setting high aspirations and holding each other to account for what we do
- Being inclusive and supportive
- Doing our best for our customers and colleagues through the positive relationships we build



An important part of our identity is being **'One Team'**. Regardless of role, service area or level of seniority, at BCHG we are One Team, working hard to achieve the same goals.

Our values are not just a set of words but are at the heart of the way our organisation works and how our colleagues interact in their day-to-day activities. Our colleagues have shaped and crafted our current values. We are proud of these new values and excited to embed them across the business.



We not me



We do what we say we will



We care



We do the right thing



We love to learn

We have taken this one step further and have developed Values Based Service Standards which link to our new values and our behaviours framework. We call this **'The BCHG Way'**. These standards have been developed in response to Tenant Satisfaction Measures, set out what our customers can expect from us and shape our approach to the delivery of excellent customer service.

EDI Matters

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is reflected in everything that we do, and colleagues are challenged and encouraged to view the work that they do through an EDI lens. It is important to us that we acknowledge and respect diverse cultures, embrace differences and have conversations without hesitation.

We have developed a number of strategies that are underpinned by our approach to EDI and the positive impacts we want to have on customers and colleagues.



Customer Transparency Strategy

Our Customer Transparency Strategy is framed around Transparency, Influence and Accountability and some of our ambitions include:

- Creating an inclusive environment by sharing information in accessible format and promoting activities so that people of all backgrounds are comfortable to express their views.
- Widening representation by proactively encouraging groups who may be excluded so that diverse views contribute to decision making.
- Reframing the language, we speak to remove stigma and negativity to unleash customer potential.
- Supporting inclusion by making person centred approaches.
- Digital inclusion through improved skills and confidence to use online and digital services.

Customer Success Strategy

The purpose of our Customer Success Strategy is to provide a framework for our colleagues to deliver a high-quality customer focused service, enabling us to understand customer needs and preferences to help us develop a culture of collaboration, communication, and mutual respect. It will ensure we are empowering customers and continuously evaluating and improving services. The three strands of the strategy are Onboarding, Sustainment and Moving on and activities include:

- Ensuring lettings to Ethnic Minority Customers reflect regional diversity.
- Collecting and examining customer data to ensure that our services are neither over utilised nor underutilised by our customers.
- Promoting and delivering EDI activities to celebrate diversity.



People Strategy

In the People Strategy we aim to have an **Inclusive and Respectful Culture**, and an environment where colleagues feel they belong and can be their true selves. A place where everyone feels listened to and has an opportunity to contribute. Activities identified include:

- 👤 Embedding the new values and The BCHG Way.
- 👤 Continued delivery of quarterly engagement surveys and improvement in the way we feedback.
- 👤 Delivery of the annual EDI survey.
- 👤 Delivery of awareness raising activities through the EDI Sounding Board.
- 👤 Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI) Membership.

Asset Strategy

While the Asset Strategy focuses on our homes it does this to make sure they provide environments for our residents to have successful and full lives, removing any barriers that could hamper this. We will continue to do this through the four strands of the strategy making sure our homes are:

Decent – the investment in our homes makes sure they are modern and not in poor condition.

Safe – with all health and safety risks in the home mitigated.

Healthy – that the home promotes positive health and wellbeing.

Green - with all homes being on a journey to be as energy efficient as possible.

We will never let the diversity of each of our residents or their unique needs be a barrier to reporting or resolving health and safety concerns and we will adapt our approach around individuals personal need, prioritising works, including adaptations, to meet their needs.

Strategy Consultation

For this strategy to be meaningful and have the impact we want it to have, we need to understand what people think and feel about being a customer or colleague of BCHG. Through our annual EDI survey to colleagues and consultation with a focus group of customers we have gathered their views and suggestions on what would make BCHG an even more inclusive landlord and employer.

What's apparent from their feedback is that customers and colleagues value the same things. To be treated with **sensitivity** and **respect**, with **dignity** and **kindness** and for **individual preferences** to be taken into consideration.

What our customers say

- It is important for BCHG to promote EDI and what matters most is a personalised approach, being listened to and privacy.
- BCHG is viewed as being a fair landlord, but we need to be considerate in the way we approach customers and respect the rules we expect others to follow.
- BCHG could do more to support diverse communities by being responsive to communication preferences, including those who wish to be left alone.
- We need to be considerate with delivery of our modernisation programme and communicate the why's and when's to customers to minimise perceived unfairness.
- Celebration of festivals to promote cultural diversity are seen as a positive thing by customers.
- BCHG need to make sure that they understand the customer and their individual needs as this will support us in making our services as accessible as possible.
- Female Trades Operatives would be a preference for some of our customers.

What our colleagues say

- BCHG need to listen to colleagues and understand their individual needs and preferences.
 - Colleagues would like more education on neurodiversity as well as more regular EDI related training.
 - BCHG is a fair and inclusive employer, and we need to shout about this more externally.
 - Colleagues would enjoy more events celebrating diversity and value the contribution of the EDI Sounding Board.
 - BCHG should review how accessible we are to customers and colleagues.
 - Break away from gender norms by increasing the number of male Support Workers and female Trades Operatives in post.
- 

BCHG are now a member of the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI). Through their Talent, Inclusion, Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) self-assessment, we have been able to measure the maturity of our EDI journey and have used the feedback from the TIDE report in addition to the feedback from customers and colleagues to help shape the outcomes outlined below.

EDI Strategy Outcomes for 2024 – 2027

<u>What we will achieve:</u>	<u>How we will do this:</u>
<p>Engage and listen</p> <p>We will create opportunities for customers and colleagues to be heard, enabling continuous feedback so that we are alive to, and can respond to emerging issues swiftly.</p>	<p>Create focussed subgroups through the EDI Sounding Board.</p> <p>Continue the annual tenancy visit programme as a mechanism to understand customer needs and preferences.</p> <p>Delivery of the Customer Excellence programme through First Impressions Training (FIT).</p> <p>Continue delivery of the annual EDI colleague survey.</p> <p>Co-design Neighbourhood Plans with customers and local partners.</p> <p>Improve the way we communicate about investment in our properties.</p> <p>Promote the colleague My Good Idea portal.</p> <p>Explore EDI as a theme in exit interviews.</p> <p>Review how accessible we are to customers, removing barriers.</p> <p>Ensure customers are aware of their rights as tenants.</p> <p>Increase consultation around aids and adaptations.</p>
<p>Lead from the top</p> <p>We will promote The BCHG Way at every opportunity and continue to embed the new values, acting as role models and holding each other to account.</p>	<p>Increase the visibility of BCHG Board Members and communications around EDI from senior colleagues.</p> <p>Support the activities of the EDI Sounding Board.</p> <p>Deliver workshops promoting The BCHG Way.</p> <p>Ensure all policies reflect our inclusive culture.</p> <p>Review and improve the way we recruit.</p> <p>Consider the diversity of decision makers to encourage diversity of thought.</p> <p>Develop Leadership Competencies incorporating EDI.</p>
<p>Promote who we are</p> <p>Our aim is to be a Trusted Landlord and Outstanding Employer. We are proud of who we are and what we do, and we will be better at sharing our successes.</p>	<p>Develop a ‘Celebrating Diversity’ page on the website.</p> <p>Do more to raise awareness of EDI with customers and communities.</p> <p>Publicly report our diversity data and benchmark against others.</p> <p>Promote our approach to EDI through our website and social media presence.</p> <p>Promote EDI through our supply chain.</p>



What we will achieve:

How we will do this:

Educate

Our environment is ever changing, and we need to keep up! We will equip our colleagues with quality learning and development opportunities to enable them to do their best for our customers.

- Increase learning and awareness of neurodiversity.
- Roll out the ENEI portal and resources to all colleagues.
- Introduce more regular bespoke EDI training.
- Continued participation in the NHF EDI Data tool.
- Deliver learning opportunities to customers on our panels.
- Deliver awareness raising activities through the EDI Sounding Board.
- Promote Retirement Living schemes as community hubs and develop links with the communities in which they are based.

Review and learn

‘We love to learn’ at BCHG and our commitment to developing and maintaining an inclusive culture never ends. We will look at what we’ve done, what worked and what didn’t so that we can continuously improve.

- Improve the way we capture and report on customer data, using it sensitively to identify potential barriers.
- Use data intelligence to give us customer insights to enable more targeted service delivery.
- Use complaints as an opportunity to learn by identifying areas for concern.
- Carry out post implementation reviews of EDI objectives for projects.
- Revisit and refresh the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
- Review our Job Descriptions and Person specifications to ensure inclusivity.
- Review inclusivity in the way we manage colleague performance.
- Review the Total Reward Strategy, identifying any barriers to inclusion.
- Review and strengthen our Procurement Policy.

Our Success Measures

**TIDE Evaluation
Score > 70%**

**Colleagues from an
EM background
> 15%**

**Increase the number
of Retirement Living
customers from an EM
background to reflect
regional diversity**

**Reduce 'prefer not
to say' responses to
protected characteristic
questions**

**Positive response to the
EDI survey question
'People of all cultures
and backgrounds are
respected here' > 90%**

**EDI monitoring
dashboard in
place**

**Promote and deliver
EDI activities to
celebrate diversity**

**Enhance interaction
with local community
and faith groups**

**Ensure lettings to ethnic
minority customers
reflects regional diversity
(19%)**

**Positive response to
the QES question - 'My
manager cares about
me as a person' > 80%**

**Positive response to
the QES question -
'I am proud to work
at BCHG' > 80%**

**Positive response to the
QES question - 'I feel
valued by BCHG' > 80%**

**Positive response to
the QES question - 'My
manager is a role model
for me and embodies
the values' > 80%**

**100% satisfaction that
the landlord treats
customers with respect
(TSM Measure)**

**85% Satisfaction that
the landlord keeps
tenants informed about
things that matter to
them (TSM Measure)**

**80% Satisfaction that the
landlord listens to tenant
views and acts upon them
(TSM Measure)**

Our Accreditations and Memberships



BCHG are also a member of the West Midlands Housing Diversity Network Forum.