Black Country Housing Group

Equality, Diversion & Inclusion Strategy
2021-2024

CONTENTS

Integrity

Positivity

Respect

Quality

FOREWORD

As a social business operating within a distinct and tight geographical area, Black Country Housing Group has a long and proud history of working with local communities within the Black Country and Birmingham, an area of rich diversity which is reflected in our customer base and colleague makeup.

Our values are integral to the way we work: Integrity, Respect, Positivity and Quality. As Chief Executive I work with the Leadership Team to ensure that these values underpin our culture and in doing so we are creating a positive customer and colleague experience and importantly, that we are an inclusive organisation. However, we need to test this in practice, hear what individuals are feeling, act upon what we are being told and embed the learning for the future.

Black Lives Matter and the negative experiences of individuals from ethnic minorities suffering from Covid-19 draw matters of race into particular focus, and this strategy acknowledges and seeks to address areas where we need to improve, such as improving diversity of our Board, Leadership Team and colleague base. This focus does not detract from any of the other protected characteristics and their importance, as raising the profile of one will raise the profile of all.

We need better intelligence and data to support our improvement plans so that we target our energies to best effect. Putting tenants at the heart of what we do is an essential part of this, ensuring that we hear all views and dimensions. Nurturing talent and supporting our colleagues will create an inclusive environment in which employees give their best and create positive experiences for our range of customers and all stakeholders.

Our role goes beyond that of a housing and care business, as we are uniquely placed as an anchor institution to address the wide-ranging inequalities that exist in our locality. Our warm and open culture gives us a good platform for the future shape of a diverse and inclusive Black Country Housing Group moving forwards.

Amanda Tomlinson
Chief Executive

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

What does an inclusive organisation look like?

For the EDI Strategy to be meaningful to our customers and colleagues we need to listen to what they have to say. These suggestions were pulled together using feedback from a number of customer and colleague surveys and workshops:

- ✓ Leaders should be visible and act as role models for inclusion initiatives.
- ✓ Diversity is reflected at all levels of the organisation.
- ✓ An inclusive organisation should demonstrate fairness through its policies, processes and actions.
- ✓ The EDI conversation becomes the norm and doesn't feel pushed or contrived.
- ✓ Colleagues and customers, irrespective of background, values or beliefs, should have a voice and be able to have a say on matters that affect them and contribute to decision making.
- ✓ Customers should be treated fairly and not negatively labelled.
- ✓ Our localities/neighbourhoods should not be stigmatised but have mechanisms in place to influence change through Neighbourhood Plans.
- ✓ We should communicate in ways which are sensitive to the needs of our customers and colleagues.
- ✓ Housing management procedures should reflect issues of concern such as hate incidents.
- ✓ Progression opportunities should be accessible to all.
- ✓ EDI specific targets put in place to measure performance and progress.
- ✓ Colleagues and customers should have access to networks, groups or individuals to support a sense of belonging and should never be left thinking 'what about me?'

OUR VISION

Our vision is to create a diverse and inclusive environment where our customers and colleagues have a sense of belonging, where they feel their voice is heard, their opinion matters, and their input and contribution is valued. At BCHG we want to celebrate difference and embrace diversity of thoughts and ideas.

The accompanying EDI Action Plan shows in detail how we intend to achieve our vision. These actions can broadly be broken down in to the following four key objectives of the EDI Strategy:

We want to celebrate difference and embrace diversity of thoughts and ideas.

Culture	Raise the profile of EDI at BCHG and keep it there so that everyone becomes an EDI Champion.
People	Increase the diversity of our colleagues including Board and Leadership.
Data	Improve the data we hold for our customers so that we improve relationships and tailor support.
Performance	Introduce a suite of EDI specific KPIs for both customers and colleagues so that we can monitor our performance and be held to account.

MISSION, VALUES AND STRATEGIC AIMS

Black Country Housing Group's mission statement is 'A Social Business Investing in People and Communities'. We are proud to serve the Black Country and of our standing and reputation in the boroughs in which we work. It is important that our workforce is reflective of our communities so that we can relate to, hear and understand the challenges that our customers face. Our customers are the test and voice of whether we are achieving our mission.

In 2020 we launched our new three-year Strategic Plan with six strategic aims for the business:

- ✓ Hearing the Customer Voice
- ✓ Housing and Care Services we are Proud of
- ✓ Shaping Society through Communities
- ✓ Investing in Homes and People
- ✓ Great Days at Work
- ✓ Learning, Changing, Improving

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion weaves through each one of these strategic aims and for BCHG to be successful in their delivery, we recognise the importance of making sure that any barriers to inclusion are identified and removed.

Organisational culture is informally defined as 'the way we do things round here', and is the shared values, beliefs and assumptions that guide behaviour and action. For us to shape a culture of openness and respect, one where difference is celebrated, we all need to share the responsibility.

One of our strengths at BCHG is our values and how effectively these are deployed, recognised and embedded across the business. Our expectations of our people are clear and simple, and we have a behaviours framework that underpins our four values.

INTEGRITY – ensuring that the way we behave, and the organisations activities are underpinned by sound moral principles

POSITIVITY – having constructive and optimistic attitudes to colleagues and customers and finding solutions to any challenges we face

RESPECT – treating everyone we have contact with, with respect and making sure that people feel valued, important and heard

QUALITY – exploring the diverse needs of colleagues and customers and adapting our offer to be as inclusive as possible

WHO ARE OUR CUSTOMERS?

Understanding the diversity of our tenants helps us deliver more targeted services and support better and stronger community relationships. As of 31st August 2020, this is how our tenants' profile looks:

Gender (based on lead tenant)	Percentage
Female	55%
Male	45%
Transgender	0%

Ethnic Origin	Number (lead tenant)	As a Percentage	Sandwell	Dudley	Lettings	% of Portal Users	Arrears Enforcement Action (144 Cases)
White British / Other White	1987	85.0%	70%	90%	74.2%	87.5%	78.4% (113)
Black/Black British	178	7.6%	6%	1%	10.8%	6.7%	11.8% (17)
Asian/Asian British	110	4.7%	19%	6%	6.8%	2.5%	4.2% (6)
Mixed	49	2.1%	3%	2%	6.8%	3%	5.5% (8)
Other	14	0.6%	2%	1%	1.4%	0.3%	0%

Age	Number	Percentage
18 - 24	47	2%
25-34	352	15%
35-44	397	17%
45-54	467	20%
55-64	467	20%
65+	608	26%

*Vulnerability	Number	Percentage
Mental Illness	120	5%
Deaf	13	0.6%
Blind	19	0.8%
Drug Addiction	9	0.4%
Physical Disability	68	2.9%
Mobility	112	4.8%
Chronic Illness	40	1.7%
Learning Impairment	18	0.8%

*A percentage of tenants may have indicated more than one impairment. This relates to the disabilities rather than people.

Languages spoken amongst tenants

- ✓ Punjabi
- ✓ Polish
- ✓ Arabic
- ✓ Spanish
- ✓ Portuguese
- ✓ Urdu
- ✓ Bengali
- ✓ French

CUSTOMER VOICE

In September 2020 we carried out a telephone survey of 100 tenants, selected at random through IFF Research, an independent company. Questions tested the strength of relationship and specifically examined our attitude toward tenants, tenant safety and security, and how well we perform.

Overall, the results were positive:

- We had an overall satisfaction score for the service we provide of 89%
- The Net Promoter Score - 'how likely are you to recommend Black Country Housing Group to family and friends' achieved 57% (the score is based on achieving top mark of 9 or 10 out of 10, anything above 50% is excellent).

Amongst ethnic minority tenants we see a more positive response to questions:

Question	Strongly Agree / Agree Responses - Overall	Strongly Agree / Agree Responses - Ethnic Minorities
BCHG cares about my community	68%	100%
BCHG care about their customers	77%	100%
BCHG respects their customers (fairness)	81%	100%
BCHG listens to my views and acts upon them	76%	100%
I trust BCHG to do what they say	80%	100%
Do BCHG help you feel safe and secure within your home?	83%	87%

Overall feedback from tenants provides us with further insights on areas we can improve, we have 4 key themes:

- Communication – frequency and slowness to feedback
- Repairs – mixed expectations
- Estate Service – issue with trees and service standard
- Anti-Social Behaviour – allowing poor behaviour to persist

Further in-depth interviews were undertaken independently through IFF Housing Research with ethnic minority tenants that shows:

- Equality resonates more strongly than recognising diversity
- Concerns of ethnic minority tenants were the same as others on repairs and neighbourly issues and not perceived as a race matter.
- Age was cited as a community concern more frequently than race and the need for inter-generational work between older and younger residents, especially in shared schemes.

It is positive to see that BCHG is viewed as a fair, non-discriminatory organisation and whilst this is good, we do recognise we have areas where we can improve.

Ethnic minority tenants also told us we have opportunities to improve equality and inclusion by creating:

- Consistency in the way we manage our housing in different geographical arrears with clear service standards
- Recruiting wider tenant representation within involvement activities
- Clarity on our position on home ownership options

WHO ARE OUR COLLEAGUES?

We regularly report to our Board on our colleague demographics and at 31st August 2020 this is how we look:

Gender	Percentage
Female	80%
Male	20%
Transgender	0%

Ethnic Origin	Number	Percentage	BCHG Tenants	Sandwell	Dudley
White British / Other White	256	85.9%	85%	70%	90%
Black / Black British	13	4.4%	7.6%	6%	1%
Asian / Asian British	11	3.7%	4.7%	19%	6%
Mixed	7	2.4%	2.1%	3%	2%
Other	3	1.1%	0.6%	2%	1%
Prefer not to Say	8	2.7%	0%	0%	0%

Sexual Orientation	Number	Percentage
Bi	2	0.7%
Heterosexual / Straight	242	81.2%
Gay Man / Gay Woman	4	1.3%
Prefer not to say *	50	16.8%

Disability	Number	Percentage
No	252	84.6%
Prefer not to say	35	11.4%
Yes *	11	3.7%

Age	Number	Percentage
Under 21 *	6	2%
21 – 25 *	19	6.4%
26 - 34	44	14.8%
35 - 44	56	18.8%
45 - 54	94	31.5%
55 - 64	69	23.2%
65 +	10	3.4%

*We are concerned that 50 colleagues, (more than 16%) chose to not share their sexual orientation. We have also seen a reduction in the number of colleagues under the age of 25. Of the 11 colleagues who responded that they have a disability, do we know enough about what their disability is and how we can support them?

COLLEAGUE VOICE

In August 2020 we issued a Diversity and Inclusion survey to all colleagues. Questions were broken down into four sections, Attitudes and Culture; Discrimination and Harassment; Supervision, Training and Promotion and Belonging.

Overall, the results were positive and gave a good indication of what we are doing well. For the following questions we scored particularly well with over 85% of respondents choosing strongly agree or agree:

✓ Employees who are different from most others are treated fairly at BCHG
✓ BCHG is committed to diversity and inclusion
✓ People of all cultures and backgrounds are respected here
✓ I feel included and respected at BCHG

- ✓ I am comfortable talking about my background and cultural experiences at BCHG
- ✓ Colleagues of different backgrounds interact well at BCHG
- ✓ If I had a concern about harassment and / or discrimination, I know where and how to report it
- ✓ BCHG's policies discourage discrimination
- ✓ I believe that BCHG would take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination
- ✓ Within BCHG everyone has access to equal employment opportunities regardless of their difference

The results were less favourable against the following questions:

- ✓ Promotion decisions are fair at BCHG
- ✓ Employees of different backgrounds are encouraged to apply for higher positions
- ✓ I feel like my colleagues really understand who I am
- ✓ I feel that my pay is fair in relation to similar level roles at BCHG

Further data analysis and with a focus on responses from our ethnic minority colleagues we can see some of the differences in results:

Question	Strongly Agree / Agree Responses - Overall	Strongly Agree / Agree Responses - Ethnic Minorities
I am comfortable talking about my background and cultural experiences at BCHG	82%	64%
At BCHG I can be successful as my authentic self	74%	59%
I feel able to bring my 'whole self' to work	74%	65%

It is positive to share the following responses:

Question	Strongly Agree / Agree Responses - Overall	Strongly Agree / Agree Responses - Ethnic Minorities
BCHG provides an environment for the free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs	74%	82%
If I had a concern about harassment and / or discrimination, I know where and how to report it	89%	94%
My manager demonstrates commitment to and support of diversity and inclusion	76%	82%
I can voice a contrary opinion without fear of negative consequences	70%	82%

OUR CHALLENGE

So, what do we need to challenge from the data we have, the survey results and customer and colleague feedback?

- ✓ How can we assimilate older and younger tenants on estates?
- ✓ How do we close the data gaps on sexuality and disability?
- ✓ Do we have a culture where everyone feels comfortable talking about equality and diversity?
- ✓ Do we have strong visible leadership and diversity and inclusion role models?
- ✓ Is our culture inclusive and do our leaders and managers live our values?
- ✓ Do we understand our demographics, and do we capture and analyse the right data in the right way at the right time?
- ✓ Why would people choose to work for us, live in one of our properties or use one of our services over one of our competitors?
- ✓ Do we ask customers the right questions, give opportunity for feedback and listen to the feedback?
- ✓ Do we present a positive external window into our organisation?
- ✓ Do we make progression opportunities available to all?
- ✓ Do we analyse and use data to inform decision making?
- ✓ Do we analyse repair requests to understand gaps and trends?
- ✓ How can we measure influence and the impact of customer voice?
- ✓ How are we communicating to communities – how do they know what we think they should know?
- ✓ Are service standards and expectations clearly communicated?
- ✓ How are we recruiting to involvement activities; is it open enough?

WHY IS THIS EDI STRATEGY IMPORTANT?

We do EDI not because of compliance but because of our values.

We want our customers to see social justice in practice by having access to information and opportunities to influence issues that affect them. It's about being fair in our approach, to build strong and inclusive communities, put simply, it's about doing the right thing and enabling everyone to be comfortable to be themselves.

Our colleagues deserve the opportunity to develop their skills and talents to reach full potential, to work in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment, be rewarded and recognised for their work and have a meaningful voice on matters that affect them. Everyone stands to benefit when we embrace and value the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working that people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities bring to an organisation.

Equality, Diversity and inclusion often go hand in hand but are different from one another.

EQUALITY – is the state of being equal. Where our customers, service users and colleagues regardless of their personal characteristics experience, equality of opportunity in all of their transactions with BCHG.

DIVERSITY – is about engaging customer views and harnessing their vision to influence service delivery. To live in harmony with neighbours who are different.

It is about recognising difference. It's acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives in decision-making and the workforce being representative of the organisation's customers.

INCLUSION – is about seeing the talent and aspiration of all customers and enabling them to use personal power for the greater good.

It's where people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive at work. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity or circumstances.

An inclusive workplace has fair policies and practices in place and enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively. Even though people have many things in common, they are also different in a variety of ways. It's important to recognise that a 'one-size-fits all' approach to managing people does not achieve fairness and equality of opportunity for everyone. People have different personal needs, values and beliefs.

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, are 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010 to give people protection against being treated unfairly. But differences also include personal characteristics including background, work style, accents and personality.

> ## We do EDI not because of compliance but because of our values.

EQUALITY	DIVERSITY	INCLUSION
EQUAL ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES	EVERYONE IS INDIVIDUAL AND DIFFERENT	FEELING A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR WHO YOU ARE

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Action Plan which accompanies this EDI Strategy details how we plan to meet our objectives over the next three years.

It is important that we are able to measure our performance against the plan and have identified the following targets:

Customers:

✓ Overall Customer Satisfaction is at 92%
✓ Net Promotor Score (NPS) at 65%

What does Net Promotor Score mean?

The NPS stands for 'Net Promoter Score' and it refers to a tool which is used to measure customer loyalty. Normally the results are based around one question and customers are divided into three categories based on their scores. The categories include;

Promoters	These customers score you a 9 or 10. They are loyal customers.
Passives	Customers who don't feel strongly either way and scored a 7 or 8.
Detractors	Those who are unhappy will score you between 0 and 6.

A good score is anything above 0 and an excellent score is anything above 50:

• Trust and respect at 92%
• 19% ethnic minority letting target based on West Midlands region
• Survey satisfaction achieves 15% ethnic minority input per quarter
• 100% customer visitation program and all profiles updated
• Repair satisfaction aligns across all protected characteristics

Colleagues:

✓ Ethnic minority colleagues at 15% or above (monitored to be reflective of our locality)
✓ Under 25's at 10%
✓ Reduced number of 'Prefer not to say' responses in all areas to 5%
✓ 5 active Apprentices in post each year
✓ Female operatives make up 5% of trades workforce
✓ Minimum 50% response rate to EDI surveys
✓ Improved engagement scores from quarterly pulse surveys – particularly in response to the question 'I feel able to bring my whole self to work'.

CONCLUSION

The BCHG Board will have continual oversight of this strategy and will receive an annual report on performance. BCHG is committed to cultural change and to ensuring that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion has a platform across every level of the organisation and that the embedding of this strategy and the accompanying action plan has a positive impact on our customers and colleagues.

APPENDIX: ACTION PLAN

Customers

Activity	Lead
Review customer metrics and analyse data to identify inequality.	Head of Customer Voice
Review our customer data collection and what we do with it.	Head of Customer Voice
Deliver Complaint Handling training to improve customer care, achieve high customer satisfaction and resolution.	Head of Customer Voice
Publish 'You Said, We Did' to demonstrate impact of hearing the customer voice.	Head of Housing
Set parameters of influence on policies outside business need to manage customer expectation. Clarify scope of an area where customer voice can influence and achieve transparency.	Head of Customer Voice
Create a wide representation on panels to reflect our local communities.	Head of Customer Voice
Implement Engagement Strategy creating diverse platforms to capture customer voice.	Head of Customer Voice
Strengthen our stakeholder support networks to be responsive to the needs of our customers.	Head of Housing
Neighbourhood plans involve customers in shaping improvements.	Head of Housing
Review and carry out Equality Impact Assessments on core Customer related policies.	Head of Customer Voice
Consult customers on outcomes for new developments.	Head of Customer Voice
Review our letting and marketing of properties, where we place them and how we advertise.	Head of Housing
Ensure care plans address the need of ethnic minority residents.	Head of Care
Implement our Retirement Living Offer.	Head of Housing
Be clear on our housing offer and standards, managing expectations.	Head of Housing
Capture and monitor data to influence service design and delivery.	Head of Housing
Create a digital development and training course for less able tenants.	Head of Customer Voice
Deliver awareness campaign on hate incidents – encourage communities to report hate.	Head of Housing
Raise awareness of fuel poverty and identify how we can better support customers. Measure monetary value to our tenants and communities through Energyextra and LEAP partnership.	Head of Social Business
Deliver employability advice for most disadvantaged.	Head of Social Business
Improved reporting on volunteer organisations supported by the Social Business Team.	Head of Social Business

Measure outcomes of employability contracts against protected characteristics.	Head of Social Business
Assess whether customers think we deliver value for money.	Head of Customer Voice
Outperform against the new National Housing Federation Code of Governance requirements.	Head of Corporate Services
Be explicit in our communications that we adopt a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination.	Head of Housing
Annual report to Board on progress made.	Head of Customer Voice / Head of People
Deliver a high-quality repairs service with a diverse workforce.	Head of Assets and Investment
Develop new homes meeting the diverse needs of our local communities.	Deputy Chief Executive
Create Apprenticeship opportunities for young people.	Executive Board

Colleagues

Activity	Lead
Implement a talent delivery platform (applicant tracking and on- boarding system).	Head of People
Deliver Recruitment and Selection training for Hiring Managers.	Head of People
Review our Performance Management process and improve our approach to Personal Development.	Head of People
Actively encourage applications from diverse groups for jobs and learning opportunities.	Executive Board
Deliver the commitments of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy.	Head of People
Issue regular 'pulse' surveys to colleagues and monitor performance.	Head of People
Issue an annual EDI survey to all colleagues.	Head of People
Strengthen our approach to metrics and analyse workforce data in more detail to uncover barriers.	Head of People
Review our recruitment processes from end to end including job adverts, their language and where we place them.	Head of People
Enforce 'blind' recruitment to reduce unconscious bias.	Head of People
Capture demographics of candidates to inform future decision making on how, when and where we recruit.	Head of People
Continue our commitment to the Armed Forces.	Head of People
Sign up for the Disability Confident Scheme.	Head of People
Deliver LGBTQ training to Managers and frontline staff.	Head of People
Explore Apprenticeship opportunities in all services.	Executive Board
Be clear on our expectations of strong visible leadership from the top, role modelling inclusive behaviours.	Chief Executive
Create a diverse Board, representative of our local communities.	Chair of the Board
Introduce equality implications into Board reports.	Chief Executive

Be explicit in our communications and documentation that we adopt a zero-tolerance approach to any form of discrimination.	Head of People
Increase the diversity of our workforce.	Executive Board
Review our EDI related training offer to colleagues	Head of People
Create management development opportunities through training and coaching.	Head of People
Introduce regular listening opportunities for colleagues to share their experiences.	Head of People
Agile working to be encouraged and inclusive, family friendly policies developed.	Head of People
Be accountable and set targets to measure our performance.	Executive Board
Improve data capture and monitoring of colleague health.	Head of People
Review and carry out equality impact assessments on our people related policies.	Head of People
Introduce Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting.	Head of People
Reduce the number of 'Prefer not to Say' responses to questions around protected characteristics.	Head of People
Revisit and relaunch our values, ensuring they are truly embedded.	Executive Board
Introduce a Diversity Calendar to promote multicultural events.	Head of People

Black Country Housing Group

www.bchg.co.uk

134 High Street,
Blackheath,
West Midlands,
B65 0EE