

Our strategic commitment to

# **Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

2021-25



# Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

At Newport City Homes (NCH) we know we have a responsibility to treat everyone equally, whether you are our customer, colleague, or partner. But we believe it goes much further than that, our true responsibility is to ensure that we create an environment that is equal and fair for all, but this does not mean simply treating everyone the same. Equality and diversity are about promoting and accepting the things that distinguish us from each other. Being inclusive means that we ensure that we are receptive and adaptive to the needs of everyone and take account of those with unique characteristics.

As an employer we want everyone to feel supported, valued and treated with respect and kindness, this touches on every aspect of who we are as an association and is one of the cornerstones of how we work. That is why inclusion is one of our values and why we are building our systems, processes and actions around positively promoting a sense of belonging.

As a social housing provider, we recognise that we must step up and play our part in reducing the systemic and pervasive inequalities that exist within our society and communities. Recent global events have brought into focus the clear disadvantages experienced by different groups in society and within the housing sector we must work hard to identify and remove the barriers to equality. Individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds, individuals with disabilities, those who experience drug and alcohol dependencies, individuals on low incomes, single parents, and carers are all

potentially at risk of reduced access to services, discrimination, and bias. We will focus on deepening our understanding of the individuals in our homes and communities and providing not just great homes, but support and access to services that may be otherwise difficult to access.

Our ambition for NCH is to provide an excellent customer and colleague experience, we want to grow and develop our homes and communities and to be agile and innovative in our approach to solving problems and making decisions. There is compelling evidence that inclusivity and diversity directly and positively impact upon these aims, it now goes far beyond a business case that says, it is the right thing to do. In our ever-changing world, it is now the only thing to do.

We have got a long way to go to truly understand and represent the needs of all our customers, colleagues, and partners. We also recognise that it is human and natural to have innate bias, so we do not blame people for not knowing what to say or how to treat people who are different. Instead, we will work towards supporting our colleagues to be educated, compassionate, understanding, and open in all we do. We will collect and use information about our customers and colleagues to build our plans and focus on what matters most.

# How this strategic commitment helps deliver NCH Strategy 2025

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is one of three strategic commitments that cut across all our activities and decisions. Collectively, they enable us to achieve our corporate strategy – NCH Strategy 2025, by ensuring we make joined up decisions and choices that make the best use of our resources, have the greatest combined impact and make a positive difference.

## NCH Strategy 2025

Our five-year corporate strategy set out the association's four priorities and our vision of providing "homes in communities where people want to live". Delivering the best possible outcomes means embedding EDI into everything we do.

### Quality homes and services



Investing in our homes and communities to ensure they are affordable and desirable places to live will be achieved by understanding the different needs of our customers and the potential barriers they face in accessing our services. We will ensure that all our customers are treated with fairness and respect and we will endeavor to identify any additional support needs and wherever possible redesign our services in response to the diverse needs of our customers and communities.

### Social purpose



EDI plays a central role in supporting the delivery of our social purpose, and it sits at the heart of everything we do. Our EDI strategic commitment acknowledges that we need to understand our customers and the communities they live in and the exceptional circumstances they face and how disproportionately some are affected. We know our social purpose is now more important than ever and by delivering on our EDI principles, we have an opportunity to play a meaningful role in tackling inequalities in our society. We are committed to developing an employability offer that will treat individuals fairly and equally no matter their race, gender, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.

### Provide more new homes



We are playing an important role in tackling the housing crisis in Wales. Learning more about our potential new customers and community's needs, by understanding their diverse cultures, backgrounds, and personal needs, will ensure that we are building new, accessible, and affordable homes and communities.

### Strong and effective organisation



Being an employer of choice involves showing our current and future colleagues that we are taking the responsibility of embedding EDI in everything we do seriously. The association's new values have an increased focus on inclusion. We want all our colleagues to feel a sense of belonging, and to know that they are valued and respected for who they are. We will ensure our customers and colleagues have a meaningful voice, and that everyone is involved in driving improvements and shaping the decisions we make.

Our EDI strategic commitment is fundamental to achieving our corporate strategy and links with our strategic commitments to growth and environmental sustainability.

## Growth strategic commitment



We are committed to delivering new homes, regenerating our communities, and playing our part in tackling the housing crisis in Wales. We understand that we need to be an association that can influence, by working with policy shapers and decision makers to improve customer's lives. Our focus is to tackle housing inequality and strive to deliver homes that are accessible, environmentally sustainable, affordable, and must meet the diverse needs of our customers and communities.

## Environmental sustainability strategic commitment



Climate change is not just an environmental issue, with many people thinking that sustainability is just about the environment, but it encompasses much more than that. A truly sustainable future involves meaningful participation from all members of society. We know our customers, who are among those who have contributed the least to climate change, are feeling and will bear the impacts. We can become a more inclusive association by recognising equalities, understanding the needs of our customers and being open in the way we deliver on this commitment. While there is a need to act with urgency, we must be conscious of this and the potential unintended consequences.

### Our values

We recognise the importance of clearly defining our values, behaviours and priorities that are most important to colleagues and customers to deliver NCH Strategy 2025. We have developed a new set of values that we will live by in delivering on our EDI strategic commitment.

**Active:** We take action and get things right first time

**Collaborative:** Individually we're good, but together we're great

**Trusted:** We work hard to earn the trust of customers and colleagues every day

**Inclusive:** We celebrate our differences and embrace diversity in people and ideas



# Our EDI principles

Focusing on EDI helps the association to have a better understanding of the communities it serves and to make better and informed decisions to meet our customer's needs. This is reinforced with EDI being one of the key principles of the new CHC Code of Governance. Furthermore, the Welsh Government is looking to deliver a race equality action plan, which includes housing, to demonstrate its commitment to an Anti-Racist Wales by 2030.

We believe that by focusing on five key principles, we will be able to deliver a strong, evidence based and long-lasting approach to EDI:

## 1. Data and Information at the heart of our EDI Strategic Commitment

At NCH we have a strong desire to overcome all the challenges we face to create a more equal environment. But we recognise that by attempting to address everything at the same time could result in us being less effective at seeing real sustainable change. Instead, we want to understand the real issues faced by our colleagues and customers and use data and information in an intelligent and systematic way to respond to these challenges. In building a targeted action plan for our long-term approach, we are focusing on gathering and maintaining data, which can then be used to direct activities and monitor progress.

## 2. Tackling bias in our established ways of working

We know that all humans have inherent biases, they come from our experiences, childhood, social norms and media. Bias can be very compelling and often invisible to ourselves. That is why they call it unconscious bias. But there are some things we can do to reduce the amount of bias in the way we work. We will need to tackle our systems and processes to ensure they reduce or eliminate the opportunity for bias and at the same time, take a look at ourselves and understand our own biases, become aware of them and actively work to reduce them.



### 3. Create an environment that means everyone feels included and can thrive

We want everyone to feel they belong whether they work for NCH, receive our services or partner with us. We believe that at the heart of this is the ability to have great conversations, be open about who they are and be respected for their differences, no matter what. That means, we must develop an approach where we can learn about each other, understand each other's point of view, provide support and have genuine empathy for each other.

### 4. Enable clear and transparent decision making

We must develop a clear process for decision making that involves our customers and colleagues, that does not mean every decision is made by committees, but it does mean that when decisions are made, they are easily understood by all and are communicated with clear actions and outcomes. Even if everyone is not involved in the decisions, everyone should be able to understand their contribution to the overall outcomes and objectives.

### 5. Work in partnership to meet our aims

The challenges we face in EDI are not just ours at NCH, our customers, colleagues, suppliers and many other organisations including other social housing providers and the Welsh Government also have committed to tackling inequalities. We believe that by working closely with each other we can leverage the experience and knowledge gained within the wider society to deliver better outcomes for all.



# Our EDI commitment

To deliver our EDI commitment we recognise that we must focus on areas that will make a real and sustainable difference to the lives of our colleagues and customers.

## ■ **We will increase representation across all levels**

At NCH we have chosen not to set targets for our representation ambitions, we accept that we currently do not adequately reflect the communities we serve in particularly in relation to ethnicity or disability. We believe that representation is important because it increases our education and understanding of our colleagues and customer's needs whilst providing vitally important role models to encourage further diversity. Increased diversity improves our team working, innovation, problem solving and service provision and benefits the whole association.

## ■ **We will publish EDI data**

Whilst we have stated that we will not set targets we are clear that we must be able to demonstrate progress towards increased diversity across NCH and make this information available both internally and externally. We will ensure that we collect data from our colleagues and customers in a consistent, sensitive, and focused way. It is extremely important to understand the makeup of our customers and colleagues to ensure that we build a targeted approach to the services we deliver and better reflect our communities. We will increase understanding and acceptance of different ethnic groups and we will publish a statement that outlines our intention to actively work against inequalities.

## ■ **We will be an anti-racist association**

Whilst we will work towards a positive outcome in every aspect of EDI, we cannot ignore the growing relevance and importance of how we actively work to eliminate racism and racial inequalities for our colleagues and customers. We are clear that it is no longer good enough to have a policy that suggests we are not racist; we must become far more proactive and positive in our actions to become an anti-racist association. We will have a zero-tolerance approach to racism; in our policies, procedures and ways of working, ensuring every individual who comes in contact with NCH feels confident that they will not see, hear or experience racism.

## ■ **We will remove inequalities in our services**

The services we provide and the way in which we deliver those services enables us to influence the opportunity to provide equality in an otherwise unequal environment. We will develop our services and teams to bring us closer to the customer, to understand their needs and to review our processes and ensure that they are free from bias. We will have structures and service offerings that will be community led which tackles discrimination, bias, and socio-economic inequality. We will support customers and colleagues with different needs and develop simplified processes, increasing access to services for individuals with disabilities.



## ■ We will educate and engage

We know that we must talk more openly about equality, diversity, and inclusion to have the greatest impact. As an association, we will build the knowledge and understanding of our colleagues and customers to enable people to make informed decisions, increase their understanding and appreciation of difference and be in the best position to provide support where it is needed. We will have teams and managers educated in the value of EDI, to understand the legal requirements and how to hold meaningful conversations.

## ■ We will build an inclusive culture

We want all colleagues, customers, and partners to feel that they will not be judged, prejudiced, or disadvantaged for being themselves. As a result, we will constantly review the way we work, encouraging engaging and open conversations and ensuring transparent decision making. We will also look at our extended service delivery arms by having a procurement approach that will ensure that our partners and suppliers are able to commit to our Values and our EDI commitments.





# Our actions

We have developed a robust implementation plan to deliver our EDI strategic approach to achieving a fairer and more equal society. Our initial actions will set us up to truly demonstrate our commitment and provide leadership in this vital area. We have organised the approach to demonstrate the journey we will take to lead us to an inclusive workplace.

## Designing our future (by April 2022)

This stage enables us to create the building blocks for a sustainable plan, it involves education, gathering data and intelligence, reviewing our current ways of working and building our teams to be closer to our customers.

Commitments	Actions
We will increase representation across all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review approach to job descriptions to eliminate inherent bias and focus on the nature of work and attributes and values of applicants.</li><li>• Review approach to attraction, recruitment and selection and take positive action, including recruitment of female within the Trades teams.</li></ul>
We will publish EDI data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a suite of required information for colleagues and customers.</li><li>• Close gaps in customer data through targeted activities.</li></ul>
We will be an anti-racist association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update and communicate EDI policy and impact assessment tool.</li></ul>
We will remove inequalities in our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand and eliminate barriers in accessing services.</li><li>• Develop clear decision-making routes that are closest to the customer.</li></ul>
We will educate and engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Roll out EDI learning and workshops with colleagues to increase awareness and understanding of matters and responsibilities relating to EDI.</li></ul>
We will build an inclusive culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicate the new NCH Values and outline expected behaviours and outcomes for colleagues, customers, and partners.</li><li>• Develop leadership skills to 'lead inclusively'.</li><li>• Create an Allyship scheme to generate support for under-represented colleagues</li></ul>

## Building our inclusive future (by April 2023)

This stage involves developing our plans based on the data we have gathered and taking more proactive steps to ensure that we are practically changing the way we work to ensure we have processes and systems in place that will make a tangible difference to the lives of our customers and colleagues.

Commitments	Actions
We will increase representation across all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a pathway into housing through education programmes, taking positive action to better represent our communities.</li> <li>• Deliver against requirements of a Disability Confident Employer.</li> <li>• Targeted recruitment in customer facing and leadership roles.</li> </ul>
We will publish EDI data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and publish EDI annual performance report to demonstrate direction of travel against EDI commitment.</li> </ul>
We will be an anti-racist association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree a zero-tolerance approach to racial harassment and discrimination in our policies and procedures.</li> </ul>
We will remove inequalities in our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share stories and encourage conversations from different and diverse groups to increase awareness of lived experiences.</li> <li>• Review HR policies to enable those with different needs and requirements to succeed at work</li> </ul>
We will educate and engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a series of tactical communications and awareness sessions with invited guest speakers for colleagues and customers.</li> <li>• Unconscious bias training to reduce the likelihood of bias in the workplace</li> </ul>
We will build an inclusive culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with partners to ensure they work to this commitment and our values.</li> <li>• Review procurement approach to ensure that our partner organisations align to NCH Vales and EDI commitment.</li> </ul>

## Living and working inclusively (on-going)

These are our on-going and long-term actions, they will help us adapt our culture to ensure that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is built into everything we do.

Commitments	Actions
We will increase representation across all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted recruitment to improve the diversity and representation of the association's board.</li> </ul>
We will publish EDI data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refine data and performance reporting to support informed decision making on EDI.</li> </ul>
We will be an anti-racist association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building a race equality and anti-racism into policy and service provision.</li> </ul>
We will remove inequalities in our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand and eliminate barriers in accessing services.</li> <li>Collaborate with partners to ensure best practice is shared.</li> </ul>
We will educate and engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver on-going EDI training and awareness sessions to colleagues and service delivery partners, that will focus on lessons learnt through analysis of lived experience information.</li> </ul>
We will build an inclusive culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed an environment where matters of inclusion are discussed openly and provide support for those with specific requirements open dialogue, ensuring every colleague and customer has a voice.</li> </ul>

# Measuring our impact

We will develop our data sets in order to effectively monitor and assess our progress and apply data to our decision making. Our measures have been aligned to enable the association to understand our progress against our commitment and the effectiveness of our actions. In line with the association's strategic planning framework, progress will be reported annually to board and key strategic measures included in quarterly integrated performance reporting. This will be supported by assurance reviews and operational metrics that will guide decision-making during the delivery of our actions.

## Measures

Commitments	Measures
We will increase representation across all levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of colleagues with protected characteristics</li> <li>• % of applicants with protected characteristics relative to those appointed</li> </ul>
We will publish EDI data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual EDI report on colleague and customer data</li> </ul>
We will be an anti-racist association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and nature of complaints, grievances and disciplinarys from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background.</li> <li>• % of customers reporting hate crime</li> </ul>
We will remove inequalities in our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % decrease in customer complaints on protected characteristic issues</li> <li>• % increase in customer satisfaction</li> <li>• % increase in accessible service provision options</li> </ul>
We will educate and engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of community engagement activities attended</li> <li>• % of colleagues and customers attending 'education' events</li> </ul>
We will build an inclusive culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % increase in colleague engagement score</li> <li>• Number of colleagues who are members of the ally scheme</li> </ul>

## Customer and colleague satisfaction and feedback

Listening and engaging with our customers and colleagues is critical to successfully delivering on our EDI commitment. We will utilise customer engagement groups and strengthen links with community programmes to ensure that the services we provide are user friendly and inclusive of needs. Through our existing mechanisms for capturing and analysing customer and colleague feedback and satisfaction, we will monitor and develop 'lived experience' case studies that will ensure all our colleagues are equipped to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of our customers and fellow colleagues.



