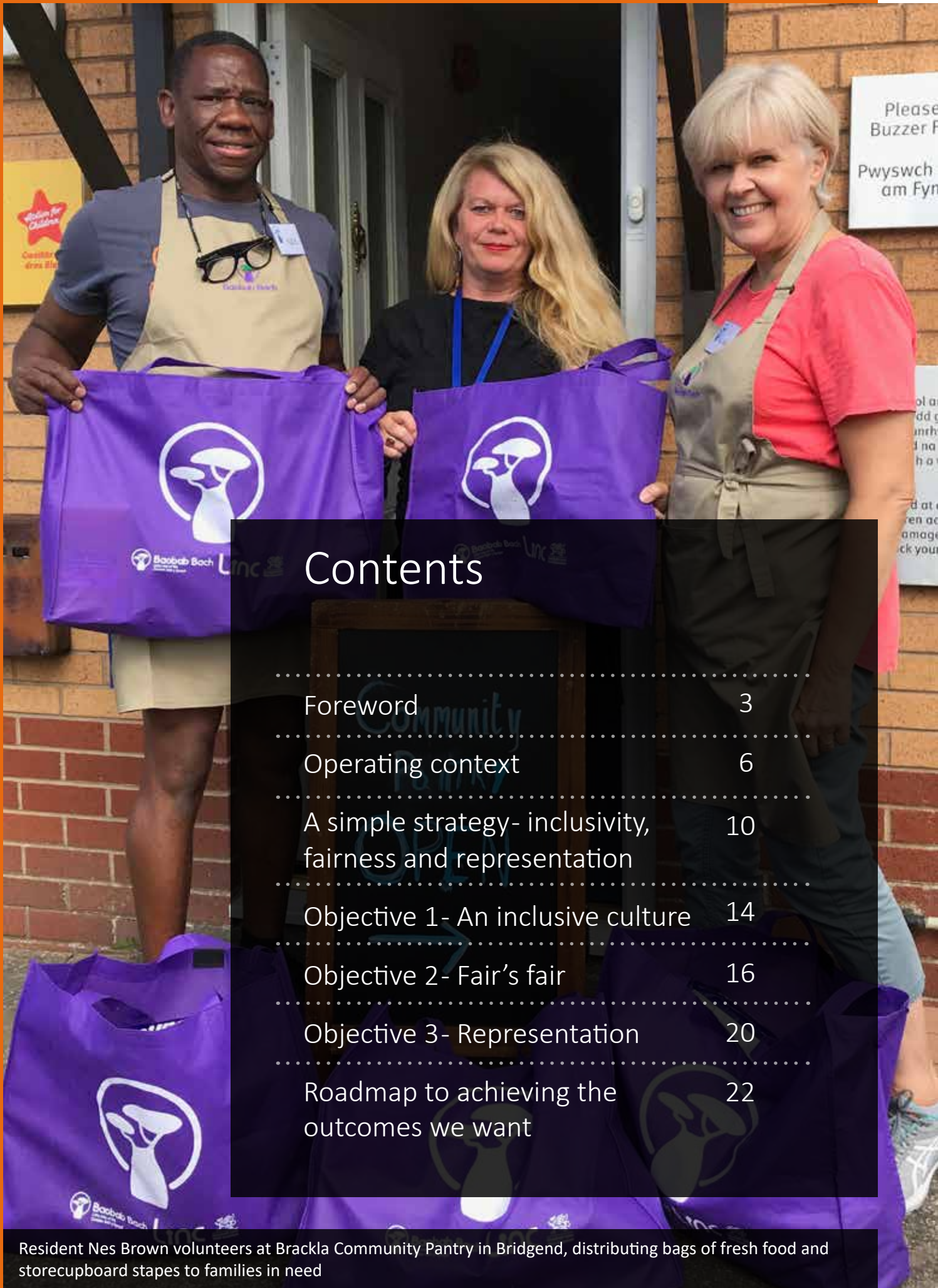




Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023



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Resident Nes Brown volunteers at Brackla Community Pantry in Bridgend, distributing bags of fresh food and storecupboard staples to families in need

Foreword

Strong sustainable growth to make a difference to people's lives, homes and communities is the vision for the Wales & West Housing Group and over time we do make a difference, one person, one contact, one property - everywhere.

Our success relies on being able to provide a safe, secure and decent home for as many and diverse people across Wales as possible. We are in the business of providing homes, and we want them to meet the diverse needs of our residents. We have a large and mixed portfolio because the housing needs of the people of Wales are varied and often complex. Quite literally, one size doesn't fit all, and our success requires us to recognise the diversity of needs and to be creative about how they are met.

Since our first development in Cardiff in 1965, almost 60 years ago, our purpose has been to help people get a decent home they can afford. That challenge is no less now than it was then though we have a much better understanding and appreciation that having the opportunity to live in and keep an affordable home, in which you feel safe and welcomed, is not the same for everyone.

A home is fundamental. It is universally accepted as a pre-requisite to live safely, healthily and well. There are too few affordable homes available, and the reality is that supply is not the only barrier. The inequality that exists in society means that not everyone has the same opportunity to get a home they can afford and where they feel welcome and safe. If we are to genuinely make a difference and be the diverse and inclusive organisation we want to be, we need to recognise and challenge inequality and the complex and difficult issues that are at the root of why some people get a home, get a job and get to use services, while others struggle.

That is why this strategy is so important to us.

Equally important is the need for us to be held accountable for our progress. Our Board will receive regular updates on the implementation of our strategy and we will track our progress against the baseline we have established.



Anne Hinchey
WWH Group Chief Executive



Alex Ashton
Chair of the Board

There are three areas to this strategy - inclusivity, fairness and representation.

Our culture is very important to us and we want it to be inclusive, a culture in which everyone, staff and customers, have a voice, are heard and have concerns and ideas listened to and acted on – one where ultimately everyone can thrive and belong. We believe that to be more inclusive we need to change our thinking. We need a detailed knowledge of the different facets of diversity and to gain an understanding of the implications and impact of these on how people are able to live

their lives. Knowledge and understanding of the diverse differences between people and what these mean for how they experience society helps breakdown fears about differences, helps us recognise the impact of differences and builds greater empathy to support others.

Fairness is fundamental to how we operate and is one of our core values. We see it as a continuous process to understand if the actions we take as a business have led to someone being disadvantaged. We want to do our part to ensure equality of outcomes for both residents and staff.



Residents Ismahann Janna, and Shannon and Kim Stephens

Board members and residents at Ffordd yr Haearn, Cardiff



We want to be representative as a landlord and employer, progressively getting closer to the rich diversity of the communities in which we work. We want more representation in our workforce because we believe that diversity brings different thoughts and experiences that enrich us all, offers opportunity to groups who have historically lost out on opportunities and better reflects the society we live in.

The systems, processes, and formal and informal rules we build to run our businesses and deliver

for customers are based on our thinking – our knowledge, assumptions, prejudices, whether conscious or otherwise, and experiences – and the result is the outcomes and performance we achieve. Our culture, ethos, and way of running means we are diverse, inclusive and fair, but there is more we can do.

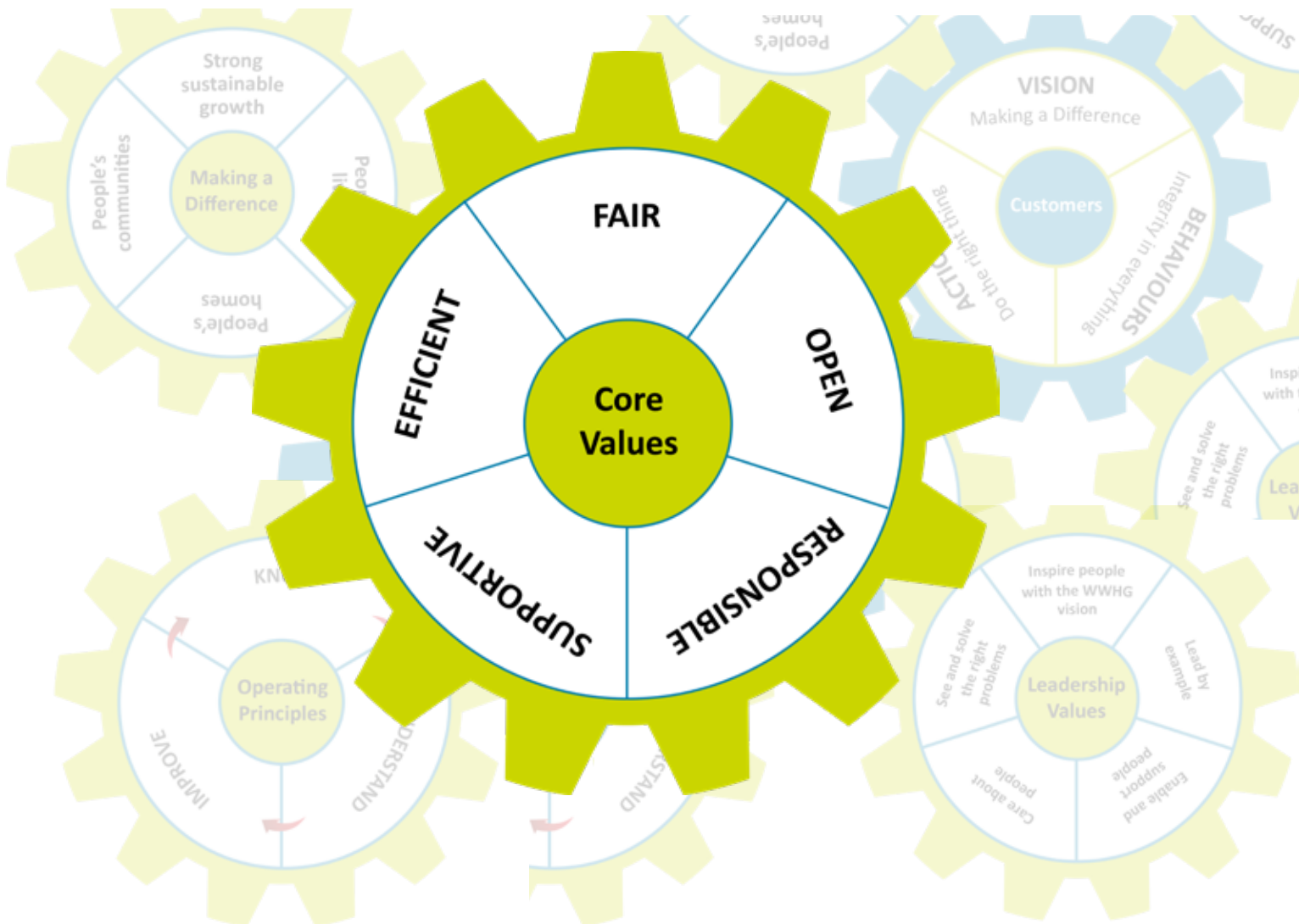
Moving to the next level is what we want from this strategy and the place we will start is with our thinking.

Operating context

We are a large social enterprise and a major provider of affordable housing in Wales. We provide housing to some of the most vulnerable people in society who will often have experienced inequality throughout their lives – discrimination and barriers due to historical ways of thinking about minority groups, education, poverty, health, cultural or socio-economic background. Our values have inevitably been shaped by the circumstances in which we work, and they inform the behaviours that we and our residents expect. Fairness is fundamental, as all too often our residents have many examples where society, for them, has not been fair.

We are regulated by Welsh Government who rightly have expectations of how organisations such as ours are run. The Regulatory Framework for housing associations requires us to set clear and measurable commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion across all areas of our business, as does the code of governance to which we operate.

The Welsh Government has several plans or strategies to tackle inequalities for different protected groups. They include the Anti-racism Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, a gender equality plan and they are in the process of developing a Disability strategy.



They published their anti-racism strategy in 2022 which applies to a range of organisations including housing associations. The strategy sets a vision for 2030 for a Wales that is anti-racist and to make a measurable difference to the lives of ethnic minority people. The strategy recognises that racism is visible and prevalent in many areas of society and ethnic minority people are accustomed to living with racism. The strategy sees that radical action is required by those that hold power, predominantly the 'white majority', and that actions taken to date such as integration, multi-culturalism and race equality have not been successful. Anti-racism is about changing systems, policies and processes that produce radically difference outcomes for ethnic minority groups. We want to play our part in achieving the aims set out in the Action Plan.

The beliefs and rationale that underpin the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan equally apply to other groups of people. Women, people with disabilities, or those who identify as LGBTQIA+ have also experienced prejudice historically and it is equally as visible and as prevalent in society now. People from these groups are also accustomed to living with sexism, ableism, homophobia or ageism.

“Fairness is fundamental to how we operate and is one of our core values”



Resident Elsie Mary Forshore



Resident Amna Yassin



Residents Sabrina and Masood Dagar

To varying degrees, prejudice and discrimination against people because of characteristics such as their ethnicity, age or gender has been systematised and institutionalised over generations. Addressing this requires concerted and deliberate action to identify and eradicate systems, structures and processes which lead to less favourable outcomes.

This strategy is the next stage of our journey, building on the person centric approach that is well established with the Group, to ensure we are inclusive, fair and representative.



The recognised and legally protected characteristics



A simple strategy - inclusivity, fairness and representation

Our aim is that we are a diverse and inclusive organisation that acts fairly in every aspect of our business.

We firmly believe that the more diverse we are, however that diversity is defined, the better we will be as an employer and landlord. With diversity comes different thinking, challenges in how we always do things. Fresh experiences and voices help us to avoid group think and enriches us all.

We believe that we need to do more to create an environment where people's differences are understood, celebrated, valued and respected. We have long embraced fairness and equality of opportunity, and this strategy will ensure that inclusivity and representation are embedded as part of our culture and the WWH Group Way.

We have established a baseline so we can track our progress towards achieving our aim and will engage more often with staff and with residents so we understand their lived experience and how this changes.



“Our aim is that we are a diverse and inclusive organisation that acts fairly in every aspect of our business.”



Residents Hazel Rafter and Joi-Simone Rafter at a Summer of Fun event at Golwg Y Castell, Cardigan

Resident Logan Dagnall outside his family's new adapted bungalow in Carmarthen





objectives

to achieve our aim:

An
inclusive culture where
everyone, staff and customers,
have a voice, are heard and
have concerns and ideas listened to
and acted on - one where ultimately
everyone can thrive and belong

A deep understanding of people's differences and the impact these have on their lives, so that everyone can be themselves at work and in their communities, safe to voice their ideas and be heard because others are willing to listen and learn.

01

02

Providing homes
and services -
suitable, accessible
and fairly

Meeting the varied and different housing needs of our customers, tailoring services to meet their 'what matters'.

03

Representation
to reflect the rich
diversity of Wales and
the communities in
which we operate

Our workforce and communities are stronger, more resilient and harmonious when there is a balance of characteristics, backgrounds and experiences.

An inclusive culture

Central to our strategy is for us to increase our understanding of the differences that exist across society and the impact these have on people's everyday lives.

With that we will be more able to achieve fair outcomes, deliver more tailored person-

centric services and create environments for staff and residents where everyone has the confidence to speak up and be themselves.

Leadership is key and the Board and senior managers will set the example of inclusive behaviour promoting our commitment to

Cathy Knapp-Evans from Mid Wales Arts Centre with Neil Buffton at Llys Glan yr Afon extra care scheme



“Central to our strategy is for us to increase our understanding of the differences that exist across society and the impact these have on people's everyday lives.”

diversity and inclusion to staff, residents, suppliers and other stakeholders. We see all our staff, at every level, as leaders, and expect them to show inclusive behaviours.

We will make our intolerance of discrimination, bias and prejudice absolutely clear.



We will achieve this by:

- Undertaking workshops and training that enables all staff and the Board to appreciate and understand different characteristics and how to recognise and respond appropriately
- Improving understanding across the Group of how certain types and combinations of differences have an impact on people's lives
- Building on the assumption-busting training delivered to staff and the Board to tackle conscious and unconscious bias
- Using In Touch, the website and social media to promote inclusivity and to demonstrate our commitment to diversity and inclusion
- Using the results of the 2023 diversity and inclusion survey to measure and improve employees' sense of belonging and repeat the survey annually
- Comprehensively reviewing all policies and processes to ensure they are fair for everyone
- Reviewing the images, words and promotional material used across the Group to ensure they are inclusive, representative and accessible
- Working with our partners, contractors and suppliers to ensure they share our commitment and are working on their own strategic approach

Fair's fair

We pride ourselves on being fair and want to be confident that the outcomes for one group of people are not significantly different than for any other. Whether a member of staff or a resident of our properties, the best services are those that are tailored to individual needs and circumstances, which we want to understand.

As closely as we measure our business performance, we also want to understand measures of equality of access and outcomes. We want to understand where outcomes are not fair, be open about the action we are taking and demonstrate the progress being made towards improvement.



We also want to understand better the extent to which we successfully tailor services to meet the needs of the diverse range of people that that we employ and that live in our homes.

“We pride ourselves on being fair”



Our Board welcomed to our offices staff and volunteers from the charities the WWH Group are supporting. The EYST (Ethnic Minorities & Youth Support Team) Wales and BMHS (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Mental Health Support) will each receive £30,000 over the next three years.

Fair outcomes

In preparing this strategy we examined every area of service delivery to staff and residents where we have data.

We have looked to see if any group of people with protected characteristics appear less able to access employment or a home, less able to access a service such as getting repairs or help to pay their rent, wait longer for a

home, are more likely to experience anti-social behaviour, or are less satisfied with the services they do access.

The assessment has been comprehensive and has used the 2021 Census data as a comparator to gauge under or over representation.

Herman Valentin, WWH Community Development Officer, with pupils from Fitzalan High School in Lackwith, Cardiff



The results have been reassuring, with fair outcomes demonstrable in most areas. Those areas where this is not clearly the case are included as actions to explore further.

Going forward, we will embed this type of analysis into all service areas as part of their performance management and reporting.



We will achieve this by:

- Establishing a process to gather and update resident profile information at point of contact to help staff in tailoring services and to help in the assessment of fair outcomes for all
- Determining a suite of measures for each service to enable effective regular monitoring of performance and fair outcomes for staff and residents to include quantitative and qualitative measures
- Developing processes to monitor the outcomes resulting from the lettings system to understand better the allocation of homes by protected characteristic
- Working with local authority partners to better understand the relative waiting times for housing across people with different characteristics
- Reviewing all aspects of the recruitment process to ensure fairness at all stages
- Undertaking further research to understand if there is a link between the prevalence of damp, mould and condensation and people with certain protected characteristics
- Review the information collected about the characteristics of staff and residents
- Expand the annual resident satisfaction survey to enable better understanding and comparison with data such as the census.

Representation

We firmly believe that the more diverse we are the stronger and more successful we will be and therefore a better landlord and employer. With diversity comes different thinking, challenges in how we always do things. Fresh experiences and voices help us to avoid group think and enriches us all.

Ultimately, we want to be representative of the communities in which we operate at all levels – our Board, leaders and managers, staff more widely and the people that live in our properties.

Achieving our goal is a challenge. While we cannot solve the historic and enduring inequalities that exist in society, we can

challenge the status quo, and seek to remove obstacles and barriers.

Whilst the profile of people who live in our properties is broadly reflective of the communities in which they exist, we do have a greater representation of women and people with a disability which we believe is consistent with the levels of greatest housing need.

We have good levels of data about most characteristics but not all. We know a lot about some features such as the age and much less about others, such as gender or sexual orientation.

WWH Board members 2023



Building a more complete profile will help ensure we understand representation and the diversity of our residents, which in turn will help us to achieve more equal outcomes for the residents and the communities they live in. Our staff profile is less representative overall, particularly at management level though more representative at Board level.

We want to strengthen the information we hold about our staff and Board so we become the truly diverse organisation we aspire to be and want to understand how we can increase representation.

“...we want to be representative of the communities in which we operate at all levels – our Board, leaders and managers, staff more widely, and the people that live in our properties.”

We will achieve this by:

- Incorporating into routine performance management, data relating to the profile of staff so that progress towards greater diversity is tracked and reported to Board
- Expanding the scope of information gathered about the diversity of staff so we better understand better their needs
- Undertake further research to understand the barriers or actions required to increase representation of certain groups, in particular people with disabilities, people with a non-Christian faith, younger people, as well as attracting more women into roles within Cambria
- Explore what barriers may exist to improve representation at senior management group level across the Group

Roadmap to achieving the outcomes

We are ambitious for change and have already made a start on the back of the work happen overnight and will take time, as we learn and understand the right problems to

ACTION TO DATE

- Used existing profile data to understand current staff and resident profile
- Understand fairness in respect of access to, and satisfaction with, frontline services by protected characteristics, including:
 - Rent arrears and support
 - Anti-social Behaviour
 - Tenancy terminations
 - Lettings and waiting times
 - Repairs use and performance in delivery
 - Major works
 - Damp, mould and condensation, and energy efficiency

- Embedded EDI measures as part of regular performance management and monitoring in all services areas, in particular lettings
- Developed a suite of actions to increase employment of certain groups with WWHG and at managerial level, including understanding what additional support and assistance is required
- Completed the comprehensive review of policies and procedures through an EDI lens
- Revised the WWHG brand, images, words and tone to be more representative and inclusive
- Understood if particular groups of residents are more affected by problems such as damp, mould or poor housing conditions and devised appropriate actions
- Completed the review of the recruitment process
- Developed a suite of training and workshops for staff to raise awareness and understanding of different characteristics and the impact these have on people's lives

YEARS 2 & 3

we want

undertaken to create this strategy. Becoming more diverse and inclusive does not solve.

YEAR 1

- Established the measures and information needed to understand diversity and effectively monitor progress with the implementation of the strategy across the Group
- Developed a robust action plan following the 2023 staff diversity and inclusion survey
- Developed a framework to work with partners, suppliers and contractors in relation to EDI
- Established the range of diversity information appropriate to collect to increase understanding
- Devised the most appropriate method to gather and record resident profile information
- Completed the resident satisfaction survey at a representative level

YEARS 4 & 5

- Created an inclusive culture across WWHG, having supported and trained staff to increase their understanding and awareness of difference as well as their own biases
- Helped improve awareness and cohesion in communities in which we have properties through our communications with residents
- Created a more diverse WWHG with improved representation of different characteristics in the staff and management profile from the 2023 base position

**Head
Office**

Archway House
77 Parc Tŷ Glas
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5DU

**North Wales
Office**

Tŷ Draig
St. David's Park
Ewloe
Deeside
CH5 3DT

**West Wales
Office**

Cwrt y Llan
Church Lane
Newcastle Emlyn
Carmarthenshire
SA38 9AB

0800 052 2526

www.wwha.co.uk

contactus@wwha.co.uk



@wwha



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Other languages and formats

If you would like a copy of this Strategy in Welsh or another language or format, for example, in large print, please let us know and we will help you.