

Wythenshawe Community Housing Group – Inclusion Strategy

Wythenshawe Community Housing Group Purpose – “To create communities where people choose to live and work, having pride in their homes and services”

Introduction

As outlined in our 2020-2022 Corporate Plan, Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG) is one of the largest Manchester based housing associations providing homes to approximately 29,100 people. We employ 540 people, and 48% of them live in Wythenshawe. We recognise and understand that this context means we have an extensive reach and impact in our role as an influencer and place shaper across our business and the communities we are a part of. We will use our presence as an employer, landlord and partner to promote and embed inclusivity in all we do, and will be an exemplar of good practice to others we work with or provide services to.

We intend to start to transform our business over the next two years and this strategy has been designed to help drive at pace, a step change in our internal and external operating environment. It will be reviewed in line with the timescales of the Corporate Plan, at which time a longer term strategy will be developed, building on the delivery outcomes that have been achieved.

WCHG have chosen to focus on equality, diversity and inclusion now due to a variety of reasons mentioned here, including strategic priorities and guiding principles outlined in the Corporate plan, colleagues’ appetite for change and improvement, recent national, wide-reaching events and changes at leadership level. At the core of this is the desire to change the culture of WCHG to be truly inclusive. There are areas of real strength, ideas for improvement, potential challenges and a will to address inclusion across the organisation – pulling together these different areas of work in one over-arching strategic document.

The wider context of what is happening in the world including impact of the current pandemic on the economy, employment and well-being, the housing and homelessness crisis, increasing health inequalities, climate change, the need for digital inclusion, new ways of working, Brexit and Black Lives Matter – there are a number of challenges facing WCHG similar to many other organisations. Prioritising the Inclusion Strategy and the resulting work demonstrates a commitment to improving the culture and refreshing practices at a critical time.

WCHG have strategies and plans in place including the Corporate plan, People Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Health and Safety Strategy along with other key policies – all of which link closely with the newly developed Inclusion Strategy as they all have customers and staff at the heart of them. The Corporate plan refers to investment in staff, the culture of the organisation, working smarter and importance of equality, diversity and inclusion, the

guiding principles that help establish the impact of decisions and the four strategic aims which can all be viewed through the lens of EDI. Inclusion helps people feel fairness, respect, engagement and development for them in an organisation that values and encourages their contribution and diversity of self and thought.

Purpose

WCHG will use this strategy to take us beyond simply accepting people for who they are, but into a modern, forward thinking organisation of choice, where differences are recognised as strengths in delivering our purpose. WCHG will use this strategy to improve the diversity of our organisation, and critically ensure that we are an inclusive business, one where everyone who works here has a sense of belonging, and where they know their presence is valued, and their contributions are actively sought. This will be reflected in ensuring that we provide our services in an inclusive manner to the community that it serves. This helps to ensure that all services are accessible to current and future tenants and are delivered in-line with their requirements.

This strategy will support the delivery of the range of activity, initiatives and policies that are required to enable us to demonstrate and evidence our commitment to ensuring the values across all areas of the business mean discriminatory acts or language are not acceptable, and not accepted by anyone who witnesses such behaviour.

Business and Moral case

Underpinning WCHG overall purpose are the guiding principles, four strategic themes, five people principles, the four R's model and the 180 plus plan actions identified to deliver the four strategic themes.

All of which provide a strong case for the focus and development of inclusion in the organisation to fulfil its purpose and strategic themes through its people, culture, short and longer-term planning, partners, communities and customers. People are at the heart of everything and inclusion will enable voices to be heard and acted upon while moving towards achieving the organisations overall purpose.

How WCHG embarks on its inclusion journey and communicates it - will impact its wider reputation as a leader in this area, as a place shaper, its partner and customer relationships and ambitions for becoming an employer of choice.

WCHG's values, leadership, management practices, policies, behaviours and culture all contribute to an inclusive workplace culture. By engaging with staff, customers and management, by investing in skills, behaviours and values, by creating strong foundations and expectations for acceptable behaviour through effective policies and processes – the potential for a more inclusive work place culture, more staff and customers to be able to be

themselves, performance to improve and the potential for unlocking creativity, talent and engagement with under-represented customers, are increased.

Legal or Compliance Case

Under the Equality Act 2010 as a registered provider of social housing WCHG is subject to the general public sector 'equality duty' because we carry out public functions. This means that we must, as a minimum, have due regard to the following:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Act explains that having due regard for promoting equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

As a provider of social housing, WCHG is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. Our Regulator specifies the requirements for housing associations through its Standards framework. Under these standards, all housing associations must:

- Treat their residents with fairness and respect.
- Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their residents, including the nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 and residents with additional support needs.
- This is the minimum and something that the Group aim to exceed in all aspects.

Responsibilities

There are positive assets in WCHG's leadership, staff and plans which will be strengthened further through the Inclusion strategy and action plan.

The Board, Leadership, Management, staff, customers and partners/suppliers all have a role to play in taking responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion in and outside the organisation.

The Board and leadership team have a strategic responsibility for EDI across the organisation.

The delivery of the action plan is the responsibility of the leadership and management teams along with the equality and diversity steering group.

All colleagues are responsible for actively championing, promoting and participating in equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of work and the action plan.

Partners and suppliers are responsible for setting out their own position in relation to WCHG's values and purpose.

Customers representing WCHG are responsible for behaviours and values in line with WCHG.

Strategic Themes

The Group has worked with its staff and Housing Diversity Network to develop a clear strategy and action plan. At its core are 5 themes which are:-

1. Leadership and Governance – accountability, commitment and prioritisation
2. Driving Cultural Change – under-representation, celebration and equality of opportunity
3. Training and Development – investment in EDI, skills and inclusive behaviours
4. Delivering Best Practice to Customer & providing accessible services for all– service development, insight and inclusion
5. Data Collection, Analysis and Purpose

Leadership and Governance

Detail	Desired Outcome	Due Date	Lead Officer
Engage Board members with the development of this strategy	Ownership of strategic objectives by the Board and Directors		
Confirm need for an annual Inclusion Board report and specify content requirement	Routine monitoring of progress against Inclusion Strategy by Board		
Group purpose and values recognise the importance of inclusion	Overt acknowledgment of the priority given to an inclusive culture in the Group's behaviour and competency framework		
Undertake diversity monitoring of Board, GLT on an annual basis	<p>Establish the current profile</p> <p>Identify gaps and agree targets to mitigate them</p> <p>Agree the appropriate ways to address areas of under representation including positive action if required</p>		
Identify range of inclusion / diversity metrics routinely reported and monitored by Board	Ensure that the inclusion agenda is recognised as a key area of performance to ensure there is a driver for the allocation of resources needed to drive improvements		

Completed Equality Assessments required in all decision making and for policies and procedures etc	Evidence that all change to strategy, policy, procedure and working environment takes account of the impact on all protected characteristics and personal circumstances		
A communication plan to underpin Inclusion Strategy that involves Board and Directors	<p>Visible and active engagement by Board and Directors in the Inclusion agenda throughout the Year that can be recognised by colleagues, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements of support or otherwise on current issues reported in the media – GLT News, Vlogs, Coffee and Chat • Support for National campaigns • Corporate membership of relevant groups etc • Annual Inclusion event involving Board, Directors and Colleagues 		
Ensure appropriate resource is available to undertake agreed work on EDI	Financial, Human, Time, Environment, Development resources allocated to the Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan?		

Driving Cultural Change

Detail	Desired Outcome	Due Date	Lead Officer
Human Library	Colleagues have a more personal understanding about how E, D and I issues impact on colleagues.		

Annual campaigns highlighting key cultural events (I.e. BLM, Pride etc)	Recognition and celebration of diverse groups A key employer in the area – has a moral obligation to use its platform.		
Celebrate our implicit work as a business around inclusion.	Colleagues understand that the whole premise of our business is one of inclusion. Providing homes, supporting people to live their best lives through digital and financial inclusion, employment support, work with young people, helping people live in their homes fully and safely.		
Review Recruitment and Selection policy (and subsequent induction) to ensure positively encourage applications from diverse groups	A more representative business.		
Understand barriers to applicants from tenants and residents	Applicant and staff profile representative of the community.		
"That's not okay" - a space/person for people who have experienced/heard inappropriate language to share concerns anonymously* *a pragmatic solution for now. Recognising we want to develop a	Give people an outlet in which to 'call out' poor behaviour in a safe way and for the organisation to hear the 'unheard'. ➤ Awareness/promotion of speak out and confidentiality policies/procedures – setting expectations		

culture where people feel they can speak up and challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ safe spaces➤ confidence to challenge through personal development and awareness		
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Training and Development

Detail	Desired Outcome	Due Date	Lead Officer
Audit and research current E, D and I training available	To identify a strong and appropriate E,D and I training provider that is current and responsive to the issues of today.		
Implement basic E ,D and I training across the Group	All colleagues have a basic understanding of E, D including actively involved residents and tenants working with WCHG		
Develop and deliver bespoke E, D and I training to specific services across the Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courageous conversations • Unconscious bias 	Service areas have relevant understanding about how E, D and I may impact (and possibly improve) services for their customers.		
Deliver EIA training to Managers across the Group and embed it into the principles	All services designed with equality in mind.		
Deliver reverse mentoring programme focussed on under-represented groups	Managers and Leaders have a better understanding of how equality issues impact on their colleagues and team members.		

Delivering Best Practice to Customers

Detail	Desired Outcome	Due Date	Lead Officer
Empower staff to tailor services to customers' needs	Treat customers fairly, without bias or discrimination, and within the relevant equality legislation.		
Create opportunities for unrepresented Groups to access and shape services	Continue to deliver services that promote inclusion of disadvantaged groups i.e. Financial Inclusion Services, Digital Inclusion Services, community services for potentially excluded groups such as older people, youth services etc		
Provide accessible services to all staff and tenants	Ensure services are accessible to and welcoming to our diverse customers, for example through provision of the following language/BSL interpretation services, physically accessible meeting space etc		
Provide accessible services to all staff and tenants	Respect customers as individuals and promote equality in customer service and all service delivery		
Review complaints data to ensure open to all and proportionate responses provided	Ensure that customer complaints are dealt with in a fair and consistent manner, promoting a climate where they feel able to make suggestions about		

	unfairness, exclusion or discrimination and this will be acted upon.		
Increase awareness of traditions, events and festivals	Be aware and respectful of cultural traditions and festivities when planning and delivering services		

Data Collection, Analysis and Purpose

Detail	Desired Outcome	Due Date	Lead Officer
Collate information from all colleagues relating to the protected characteristics	To have up-to-date and accurate information provided by all colleagues		
Collate information from all tenants relating to the protected characteristics	To have up-to-date and accurate information provided by all tenants		
Find information on the local community relating to the protected characteristics	To have up-to-date information on the characteristics of the local community		
Review our interactions with colleagues that could be affected by discrimination and ensure systems allow data capture on protected characteristics	Analysis of our behaviours relating to inclusivity		
Review our interactions with customers/ tenants that could be affected by discrimination and ensure systems allow data capture on protected characteristics	Analysis of our behaviours relating to inclusivity		
Review service offer and make any changes which could be impacting	Service offer inclusive for all		

<p>inclusivity e.g. committing to interview all applicants from underrepresented groups who meet minimum criteria</p>			
<p>Consider producing a report on the pay gap based on protected characteristics similar to existing report on gender pay gap</p>	<p>Report published to staff and the community</p>		
<p>Adapt all services in line with individual needs of tenants and the community</p>	<p>Inclusive services delivered leading to increased satisfaction and feeling that WCHG listen to tenants needs.</p>		