ForHousing▶

Equity Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy

2022 - 2025

Executive summary

Our aims are clear. At ForHousing we aim to create the best possible environment for people and communities to thrive and fulfil their potential. We are an inclusive organisation that 'makes more things possible for more people', challenging inequalities and enabling people to reach their full potential.

This means that we understand tenants, customers and communities so that we can design services to take into account the needs of customers and we recognise the impact of our decisions on people living in ForHousing homes and communities.

If you work with or for ForHousing, our commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) means that we want you to feel a sense of belonging, included and respected for who you are. We want you to be able to reach your potential and perform at your best because our environment supports you to feel confident, valued and secure.

We believe that diversity improves the way we run ForHousing and enriches our culture, both in the workplace and in communities. It is central to our vision that everyone who interacts with ForHousing, internally and externally, treats each other with respect.

This strategy is underpinned by our compliance with the Equalities Act 2010, however we know that an inclusive organisation does not only focus on compliance and legislation, it goes beyond protected characteristics as set out in law. We recognise that a truly diverse and inclusive organisation embraces the experiences and characteristics of everyone, it is true customer focus. We celebrate the diversity that every person brings to ForHousing.

This strategy doesn't seek to tackle all inequalities experienced by colleagues or tenants. There are many strategies and programmes of work across ForHousing communities already underway designed to address a range of these issues. This strategy sets out the overarching commitment and framework in respect of EDI, it is not an isolated document. For this strategy to be achieved, its principles must be delivered through the Corporate Plan and the rest of the organisation's strategies so that our EDI vision is felt in the experiences of colleagues and tenants. It is not intending to reproduce or duplicate but provide a supporting framework to link them together and create a clear view of our vision and ambition to advance EDI in everything we do.

This three year strategy gives direction on how ForHousing will deliver strategic outcomes equitably, diversely and inclusively.

Context

Background

The development of this strategy has been against a backdrop of continued cuts in public sector funding and services, wide ranging reforms to the welfare benefits system and targets to increase the supply of affordable home ownership. All this has directly impacted social housing providers, tenants, customers, clients, colleagues, partners and stakeholders. Compared to national averages, some social housing communities are truly diverse, but there is a great deal of inequity: in access to good education; healthcare; to a living wage; employment; and in the potential for and likelihood of happiness and

wellbeing. All these things relate to poverty, which is not inevitable and for which there is no justification.

The Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission makes a distinction between horizontal and vertical inequalities. Horizontal inequalities are between groups of people who share different characteristics such as those protected by the 2010 Equality Act. Vertical inequalities run across society from top to bottom, such as disparities in income and wealth, and access to resources and power.

The regulatory framework we operate in expects us to treat all tenants with fairness and respect and demonstrate understanding of tenants different needs. We are also guided by the NATFED's Code of Governance 2020 which requires us to embed resident focus, inclusion, integrity, openness and accountability within the organisation.

Society has learnt much about equity and inclusion from the Covid-19 pandemic. Building upon our last strategy, now is a time for change - to build fairer and more inclusive systems in which we all live.

What we mean by equity, diversity and inclusion

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under-served and under-represented populations. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of systems.

Diversity in this context focuses on creating communities that contain a disparate and valuable mix of backgrounds, experiences, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, and any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another. Everyone brings with them a diverse set of perspectives, work and life experiences, as well as cultural differences.

Inclusion is the organisational effort that provides individuals with a sense of belonging. Everyone's contributions and opinions are valued and people feel that there are no barriers to being open and true to themselves. The goal is for people to feel a sense of involvement and the ability to contribute to the success of the organisation.

Where we are now
Through the 2019 - 22 strategy we have delivered high engagement, motivation, and belief in EDI across the organisation with good progress being made.

Staff surveys regularly return positive feelings about fairness and belonging.
The December 2021 Pulse Survey results* are as follows;

- o   I trust this organisation to be fair to colleagues" **92%**
- o   "The colleagues I work with treat each other with respect" **98%**
- o   "There are leaders here who I can relate to" **90%**
- o   "I feel like I belong here" **92%**

We have developed our wellbeing, tenant voice and people strategies which have a focus on driving influence and inclusivity. The pandemic allowed us to galvanise our plans with new ways of working, giving more flexibility, agility and customer focus.

We have continued to place EDI in the centre of all internal and external communications and events and we are making progress in engaging staff in conversations. Our regular webinars allow a two way discussion visible to the whole organisation.

These activities have had a positive impact on our culture and EDI progress. However we know that we can do more.

*(61.75% completion rate – 260 colleagues out of 421)

Priorities, outcomes and delivery

How we make a difference
Our drivers for EDI are ingrained in our purpose and vision which are to *Improve Lives and make more things possible for more people.* To create the best environment for people and communities to thrive and fulfil their potential we know that we must make systemic change and we will do this by utilising our resources, leadership and influence.

Aim and outcome areas

The key aim of the ForHousing EDI strategy is:
"**We will deliver our strategic outcomes equitably, diversely and inclusively.**"

Outcomes are the results or effects of our actions and we have aligned the EDI Strategy outcomes to those detailed in our Corporate Plan. These are; sustainable, safe and green environments. As well as stable homes, digitally able, continually learning, person centred, prosperous, healthy and connected. The actions we will undertake will seek to provide equitable access to achieve these outcomes.

Delivery of our outcomes will mean specifically**;**
> **For tenants and customers**
> We understand tenants, customers and communities and design services to take into account their needs. We recognise the impact of our decisions on people living in ForHousing communities.
>
> **For colleagues**
> If you work with or for ForHousing, our commitment to EDI means that we want you feel a sense of belonging, included and respected for who you are. We want you to be able to reach your potential and perform at your best because our environment supports you to feel confident, valued and secure.

Delivery of the ForHousing Corporate Plan
The EDI strategy is closely aligned to the ForHousing Corporate Plan. We will align our work to the Corporate Plan themes.

- **Providing quality homes and places** - it is important for people to have a safe and inclusive environment to live and work in.

- **Making more things possible for more people -** being customer focussed allows us to understand people better and aim to deliver what works best for them, increasing inclusion and empowerment. **Providing opportunities to increase skills and access to learning** are critical for ensuring everyone has the opportunity to be included and connected – physically and digitally.

Our actions

Actions are the interventions we take to create change at a systemic level. The actions we will take to deliver our EDI strategy have been approved by and will be monitored by ForHousing EMT.

Our existing strategies already provide the basis for our EDI work. Each of our strategies are aligned and contain important EDI considerations and have a focus on customers. They are driven by our approach to being a responsible employer and social housing provider, recognising the operational context in which we work. A new deal for social housing and the post-Grenfell landscape help to provide a greater focus on tackling stigma and the importance of tenant (and employee) voice channels.

The actions we will focus on through other ForHousing strategies are;
- Build and maintain an inclusive culture for colleagues throughout the employee lifecycle.
- Provide quality homes, places and services that promote diversity.
- Enable greater equality for home energy costs for tenants.
- Contribute to creating the right conditions for community cohesion, playing our role in increasing awareness and respect of EDI.
- Deliver inclusive and well-connected services that are easily accessible, appropriate and flexible to changing needs.
- Invest in technology allowing customers easy digital access, more choice of access to services and digital inclusion.
- Support data literacy to drive devolved, data-driven decisions with real time information to deliver the best customer focused services, remove barriers and optimise the tenant and employee experience.
- Provide a wide range of channels, methods and structures for customer involvement, promoting digital inclusion and a customer voice representative of the diversity in communities.
- Develop an agile, innovative workforce able to form productive relationships across teams with enhanced collaboration and communication to support connectedness.
- Promote continual learning for staff and residents to gain a deeper understanding of EDI.
- Develop procurement processes to increase opportunities for new organisations, diversify the supply chain and work with people who genuinely demonstrate commitment to EDI.
- Through our Value for Money Strategy assess how well we are providing inclusive products and services that reach their intended audience.

Our strategic design principles set out how we operate.

We are **agile** so we can have a greater positive impact on communities and improve

lives. By supporting people to acquire skills and knowledge needed for life and work, tenants, customers and colleagues can thrive and fulfil their potential.

We are **customer focused** so we can understand customers' opinions, feelings and needs recognising that everyone is different. We develop and embed processes to turn customer data into meaningful insight so we can understand better how to deliver an outstanding experience at every stage of the customer and staff journey.

We seek **economic value creation** because running ForHousing well means we can make more things possible for more people with our resources. Providing stable homes is essential for putting down roots in a community and capitalising on opportunities. The stability and safety this provides supports people to flourish and increases social mobility chances.

We recognise that socio-economic factors are increasingly linked to EDI outcomes. We also seek **social value creation** through investing in initiatives that create tangible social value – improving individuals' lives and playing a part in creating resilient, healthy and cohesive ForHousing communities.

Measuring success

There are four main ways in which we will measure success:

EDI key performance indicators
Using our existing data as a baseline, we will regularly report on EDI to the groups contained in our governance structure to give a data-driven picture of EDI in ForHousing and monitor movement against the baseline. Actions will be identified from analysing this data to drive improvement. An initial list is below which recognises that we need to improve our EDI data and how we use it to drive action.

The role of the Board is to provide the strategic direction and scrutiny. It will receive an annual report which includes our workforce and customer profiles with a trend analysis to show movement. This data will be provided so the Board can see where barriers and inequalities occur.

The Group People and ForHousing Customer Committees, on behalf of the Board, will review in more detail the indicators relating to colleagues and tenants respectively. They will include:

People
- o Overall workforce profile
- o Staff satisfaction & experience – results from diversity indicators in the staff surveys and Employee Net Promotor Score
- o Staff turnover and workforce fluctuation - new starters and leavers data by division overlaid with diversity data
- o Performance and conflict – diversity data relating to grievances, disciplinaries, capabilities and formal absence processes
- o Learning – access consumption and attendance data
- o Pay – pay levels overlaid with diversity data (building on from gender and ethnicity pay gap formulae)

Customers and tenants
- o Overall tenant diversity data
- o New tenants' diversity profile to show the change in overall tenant profile and communities
- o Diversity representation across all tenant involvement groups
- o Customer satisfaction (including services and complaints) intersectioned with diversity data, building up to access to services broken down by key services through an EDI lens
- o Reach of community activities in line with Wellbeing Strategy metrics

These numerical performance indicators should not be focussed on solely. They make up one element of monitoring improvement. The above elements do not intend to duplicate any measurements within existing strategies and will be removed if they do so.

Use of the Inclusive Decision Making Framework
We will track the use of the Inclusive Decision Making Framework, showing where we are designing services to take into account tenant and staff needs and where we have recognised the impact of our decisions on people living in ForHousing communities and ForHousing colleagues

Progress of ForHousing strategies that deliver EDI outcomes
Our EDI strategy does not sit alone but is delivered through all the work we do and therefore is integrated through our other strategies and deliverables. The ForHousing strategies have measures to demonstrate delivery. Our implementation plan includes bringing these measures together so we can view how we are jointly contributing to ForHousing's strategic outcomes.

ForHousing strategic Measures
In addition, the EDI strategy will contribute to the organisation's strategic outcomes, focussing on excellent tenant and staff experience, recognising that the EDI strategy's specific contributions cannot be separated from those of other strategies. These strategic outcomes will be measured via the tenant and staff net promotor scores. Our targets for 2022/23 are a NPS score of 45 for staff and 50 for tenants.

Monitoring success

In addition to strategy measures, the following will be monitored;

EDI implementation plan
In addition to the activities contained in our strategies, our EDI implementation plan contains specific actions to improve EDI at ForHousing which will be monitored through EMT.

ForHousing outcome statements
Each year we produce outcome statements which show the outcomes we have achieved through our strategies. Through these existing statements, which contain case studies and insights, we will show how we are making more things possible for more people across the organisation and how we challenge inequalities through our work.

Challenge

We will continue to seek external challenge and evaluation on our approach to EDI using external accreditation, which will be identified in year one of the strategy.   Our internal challenge is through our governance structures, see Appendix 1. Relevant KPIs and progress against the EDI strategy are presented to each forum to allow them to fulfil their terms of reference.

Governance

Structuring our work

The EDI governance structure has been carefully developed enabling EDI information to flow through the organisation from tenants' living rooms to our Board room.   We need to build a solid framework for information sharing, data analysis, insight, employee and customer voice channels, action planning, scrutiny and challenge.

We seek to avoid reliance on individuals but to build a resilient framework that allows EDI to be embedded in all that we do. This means we have different lenses looking at the equity, diversity and inclusion of the organisation monitoring the delivery of the actions we have committed to. We will ensure that we measure the outcomes we seek to achieve, recognising that systemic change takes years to fully embed. The structure is highlighted below and summarised in Appendix 1.

ForHousing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy governance overview
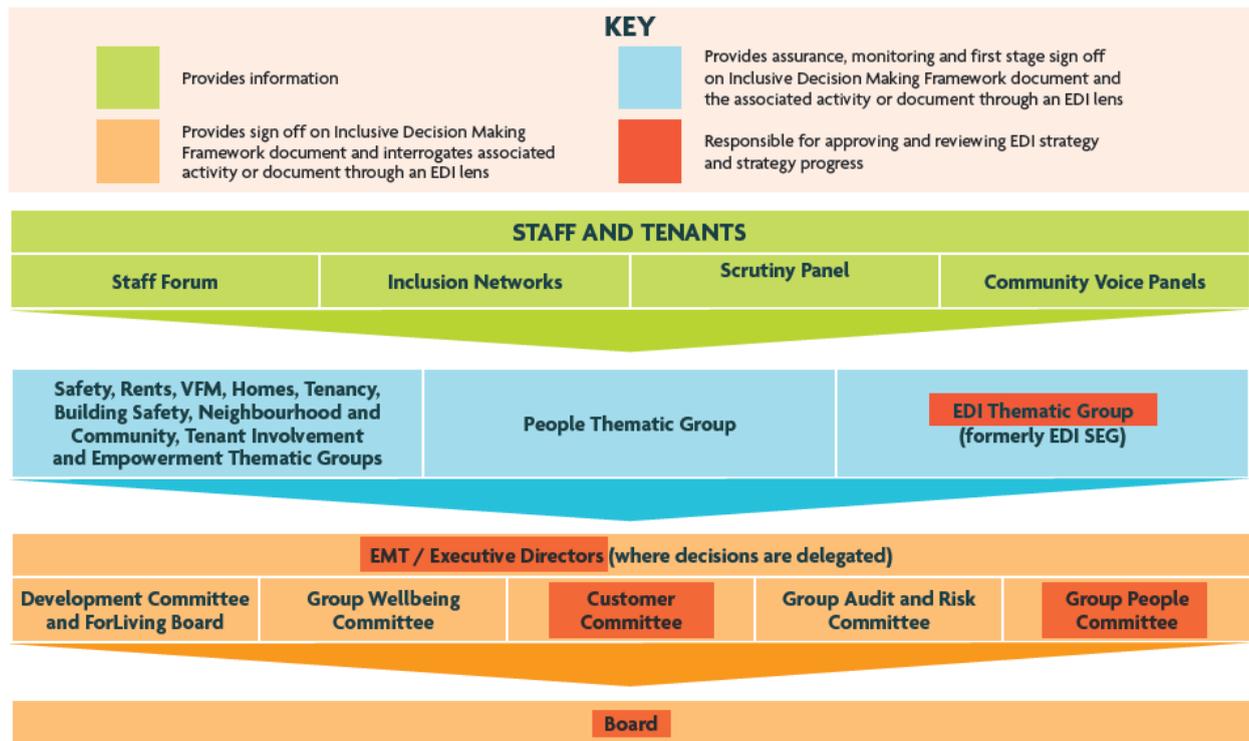
Our progress will be reported annually to the ForHousing Board and tenants in an open and transparent way through our public facing annual EDI report. We want tenants and colleagues from marginalised groups to feel more engaged and have a voice over matters that affect them.

It is crucial therefore that people see individuals like themselves visibly represented in our decision-making structures and in leadership roles. To demonstrate this commitment, there are Board and Executive EDI sponsors/leads. The Staff Forum is chaired by Executive Team members, the EDI Thematic Group is chaired by the ForHousing Chief Executive and is made up of people from all levels and areas across the organisation.

Equality analysis

Guidelines for inclusive decision making have been produced as part of this strategy and are contained in Appendix 2. These guidelines are used for all new or revised policies, strategies, procedures and service design. They involve ForHousing's people and community voice structures and support the author to include people affected by the potential decision. The guidelines provide a framework to record the co-creation and challenge of the potential decision, replacing the equality impact assessments previously used.

The strategy design has followed the Guide to Inclusive Decision-Making at the point at which the guide was developed.

Date of approved equality analysis	28th February 2022
Actions taken forward to mitigate any potential negative impact	No actions

Engagement

The table below shows the engagement programme followed.

Date	Forum	Report Title	Purpose/Decision
January 2022	Board & Executive Team, followed by Operational Directors	EDI Induction and Strategy Engagement	Engagement with stakeholders to capture their input into the development of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
February 2022	Tenant workshops and social media	EDI Strategy Engagement	Engagement with tenants to capture their input into the development of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
February 2022	Colleagues representing all	EDI Strategy and proposed Governance	Engagement with Thematic Groups to capture their input into the development of

	Thematic Groups and L&D Council	Structure and Inclusive Decision Making Framework Engagement	the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
8 February 2022	All staff - staff webinar	EDI Strategy Engagement	Engagement with staff to invite feedback on the development of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
15 and 25 February 2022	EDI SEG	EDI Strategy and proposed Governance Structure and Inclusive Decision Making Framework Engagement	Engagement with EDI SEG members to capture their input into the development of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
07 March 2022	EMT	ForHousing EDI Strategy	Approval of the Strategy, Implementation Plan, Measures and production of an annual EDI report as well as the proposed governance of the EDI Strategy
06 April 2022	Customer Committee	ForHousing EDI Strategy	To highlight the Customer Committee's input into the delivery and monitoring of the strategy and Tenant Measures
25 April 2022	Wellbeing Committee	ForHousing EDI Strategy	To enable the Committee to understand the implications of the strategy and plan in relation to community impact initiatives and social value creation
28 April 2022	Development Committee	ForHousing EDI Strategy	To enable the Committee to understand the implications of the strategy and plan in relation to development schemes
04 May 2022	Audit and Risk Committee	ForHousing EDI Strategy	To enable the Committee to understand the implications of the strategy and plan in relation to risk
11 May 2022	People Committee	ForHousing EDI Strategy	To seek approval to recommend the strategy to the ForHousing Board and to enable the Committee to understand the implications of the strategy in relation culture, the workplace, staff and governance

Search words linked to this document

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, EDI, Belonging, Inclusivity, Inclusive Decision Making Framework, People, Colleagues, Staff, Tenants, Board

Areas where this document should be accessible

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Control data and approval history

Strategy owner	Executive Director of Corporate Services
Lead officer	Director of Communications & EDI
Review date	April 2025

Issue	Approved by	Date
Approval	Relevant lead or director	28.02.22
Approval	Executive Management Team	07.03.22
Approval	People Committee	11.05.22
Approval	ForHousing Board	24.05.22

Version 7 10 May 2022