

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: 2025 -2028

## 1. Introduction

This strategy supports B3Living’s “Better Futures” Corporate Strategy. In the table below describes how our work will support our corporate strategy, and how we will measure our success.

Better Futures vision aspiration:	‘A great, inclusive place to work’
To achieve this we will:	<p>Ensure our business is inclusive and diverse, ensuring this is reflected in our employer and customer offer and champion this agenda within our communities.</p> <p>Consider whether an external diversity accreditation can help us improve as a business or is a valued recognition of progress made.</p> <p>Invest in our people ensuring that we attract and retain motivated great people who want to do the best for our organisation while developing their own skills and experience.</p> <p>Live our values and constantly work on our culture, guided by the results of the 2024 survey.</p>
We will know we are succeeding when:	<p>We achieve above 40% engagement when conducting EDI surveys with our colleagues, allowing us to understand their perceptions of EDI and experiences at B3Living.</p> <p>We meet our Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) regarding the diversity of our colleague population,</p>

	<p>which ensures that we are representative to our areas of operation and customer population.</p> <p>We achieve applications from a diverse population of applicants and retain our existing diverse colleagues, which will be analysed through our recruitment and exit data.</p>
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<p>Better Futures vision aspiration:</p>	<p>‘Excellent customer experiences’</p>
<p>To achieve this we will:</p>	<p>Continue to develop a deep understanding of who our customers are now, and who are customers are likely to be in the future. Understanding their housing needs, health, home life, family situation and financial status will enable us to provide suitable homes, and continually tailor and adapt our services to meet their needs now and throughout their lives.</p> <p>Listen to our customers and ensure their voice is heard at all levels of the organisation, allowing that voice to shape services and our strategic direction.</p>
<p>We will know we are succeeding when:</p>	<p>Our customers feel comfortable to share their diversity data, and any reasonable adjustments that they may need.</p> <p>We consistently put in place adjustments based on the information shared with us by our customers and utilise their demographic data when designing services and to gain insights on their experiences.</p> <p>We achieve satisfactory engagement with our customers when sending out EDI surveys so that we</p>

	can understand their views and the areas which are of most importance to them.
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## 2. Scope

Our ability to deliver Better Futures 2024-27 relies on the hard work and capabilities of our people. They have the biggest single influence on our ability to deliver an inclusive service both internally and externally and hold significant knowledge of the communities we serve. To achieve this, we rely on all colleagues to take responsibility for role modelling inclusive practices and behaviours, as culture is everyone's responsibility. Key enablers of this rest on our ability to recruit and retain diverse talent, provide opportunities to develop knowledge on specific Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) topics and ensure that our Executive and Leadership Teams consistently role model inclusion to enable us to embed this in our culture.

We have identified six core themes to support this work, which are set out below and are prioritised in a separate, more detailed action plan (appendix 2).

- ▶ Understanding our people (colleagues).
- ▶ Increasing our EDI awareness and knowledge.
- ▶ Fostering a safe and inclusive culture.
- ▶ Developing our diverse talent.
- ▶ Providing a personalised and inclusive service for our customers.
- ▶ Creating an inclusive and diverse workplace.

## 3. Statement and long-term goal

At B3Living, we are committed to achieving equity of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion in all our activities, ensuring that our colleagues and customers are treated fairly, equitably, without bias and with respect and dignity. We aim to foster a culture which enables people to thrive and to be appreciated and valued for their own unique contributions, without being constrained by their identity or background. We recognise that there is still much to be done and that we

need to review our strategy regularly to remain in step with the changing external and internal environments.

#### 4. Background

The EDI agenda, our political landscape and regulatory requirements within housing are constantly shifting and evolving. This can have a direct impact on our EDI work. Regulatory requirements can alter the behaviours and service delivery that is expected of us. The political landscape can influence public attitudes towards EDI and therefore our customers views and feelings which will shape our interactions with them. Our EDI work is also underpinned by three key pieces of legislation. We have provided more detail in Appendix 1 of the external landscapes we expect to influence our work in this area at the time of writing.

#### 5. The Strategy

This is B3Living's third EDI strategy, aiming to build on past successes while exploring new opportunities and deepening our commitment. We have made good progress over the course of the previous EDI strategy. Notable achievements include:

- ▶ Improving the diversity of our workforce. We have exceeded diversity targets in relation to disability and LGBTQ+ and continue to work towards becoming consistently representative of our areas of operation across all equality groups.
- ▶ Designing and embedding an equality impact assessment process which helps to ensure our policies, strategies and services are developed with customer and colleague needs in mind.
- ▶ Building inclusion into our recruitment system and processes, e.g. supportive materials, blind applications, inclusive language in job adverts.
- ▶ Raising the profile of EDI and improving awareness of key topics internally by various means, e.g. training, munch and learns, intranet articles, EDI activities.

Unlike many other housing associations, we have a dedicated EDI resource, a Board champion and an Executive level sponsor. While leadership sets the tone, we all share responsibility for EDI and our strategy's success relies on collective engagement and effort. We acknowledge the need to fully embed our commitments and ensure colleagues view EDI as integral to their work. This is especially important for our front line and community-based colleagues, whose daily interactions with customers significantly influence our reputation as an inclusive landlord.

Where would we like to be?

Customer engagement will feature more prominently in our future EDI work. Meeting the needs of our diverse customer base is integral to our new customer strategy and we will support the business in ensuring our services are accessible and tailored to their needs, and our customers have equal access to our services.

We have begun a project looking at how we identify and respond to customer needs and vulnerabilities and are planning a comprehensive programme of customer service training in 2025-26 which will have an EDI focus. We will use existing customer groups where possible to influence and gain feedback on our EDI work.

Embedding EDI so that it becomes an integral part of our work across the business rather than a separate function will form an important part of our work over the course of this strategy. Inclusive leadership and role modelling, promotion of our EDI commitments, using different methods to raise awareness of EDI topics, broadening our networks to learn from other housing associations with similar challenges to us and developing our policies and working practices to create a sense of belonging are all a part of this.

Embedding EDI in our work and culture is key to our reputation as a values-led business and inclusive landlord. Inclusive practices will not only help to create safe communities, with a sense of pride, but also offer significant business benefits. Research shows that fostering a culture where people can be their authentic selves leads to:

- ▶ Attracting top talent
- ▶ Considering diverse views for better decision making
- ▶ Enhanced understanding of our customers
- ▶ Increased colleague engagement and retention
- ▶ Boosting creativity and innovation

These benefits enhance customer experiences, as happy and safe colleagues are more likely to provide an excellent service, improving satisfaction scores and reducing complaints.

### 5.1- Understanding our people (colleagues)

Our colleagues are key to our success in this area. They deliver our operational work and interact with customers within their homes, the community and in the office. We are committed to creating and maintaining a workplace where colleagues feel appreciated, motivated and inspired to contribute their best work. To do this, we need to understand our colleagues and their needs. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ Understand our organisational composition and how representative this is of our customers and areas of operation by regularly collecting/monitoring colleague and board demographic data and creating a culture where our colleagues understand the rationale and feel safe to share this information with us.
- ▶ Analyse trends relating to applications from prospective colleagues, the demographics of new recruits and data regarding retention, disciplinarys, grievances, capability proceedings and promotions into management/leadership roles by demographic. This allows us to understand colleague experiences across the employee lifecycle and identify ways to address any disparities in the way people are treated and put improvements in place to ensure people are treated equitably.

- ▶ Analyse and transparently report on pay gaps to understand where we are currently and remedy any inequalities. We will continue to report on gender and ethnicity pay gaps and assess the feasibility of expanding this to include the disability pay gap, in line with best practice across the sector.
- ▶ Understand our colleagues' perceptions and experiences of EDI at B3Living by utilising surveys, focus groups and pulse checks, providing feedback to colleagues of any actions taken.

## 5.2- Increasing our EDI awareness and knowledge

We are committed to continuous learning and development. Our colleagues told us during our culture audit carried out in January 2024 that we have a welcoming and friendly culture where there is a desire to be supportive and inclusive. To harness this, we will:

- ▶ Provide and evaluate learning opportunities to increase knowledge, buy-in and inspire curious conversation. We will provide spaces for colleagues to develop their knowledge in a safe and non-judgemental environment and evaluate the impact of learning opportunities.
- ▶ Develop 'how to' guides to upskill managers and colleagues with best practice approaches and support them to have challenging, sensitive and compassionate conversations. Topics will include supporting trans and non-binary colleagues and customers and guidance on agreeing and implementing reasonable adjustments, amongst others. This reflects our current commitment to the LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge, areas where we are under-represented when compared to the demographics of our areas of operation (disability) and areas where we would benefit from greater consistency.
- ▶ Raise awareness by utilising storytelling approaches to move beyond the theoretical and ensure that lived experience is front and centre. We will highlight how this can influence our day-to-day work and interactions with

customers.

- ▶ Continue to raise awareness of key EDI events as highlighted in our EDI calendar, both internally with colleagues and externally with customers.

### 5.3- Fostering a safe and inclusive culture

The right culture will underpin the success of our EDI work. We strive to develop a culture that allows people to feel safe, included, represented and able to have open conversations. This is dependent on role modelling of inclusive practices by our leadership in a way which is seen and felt by colleagues and cascaded to teams. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ Implement leadership and management development that encourages and supports role modelling of inclusive practices.
- ▶ Identify ways to continuously promote EDI in our day-to-day operations to increase a sense of belonging for our colleagues and customers, e.g. rainbow and sunflower lanyards, workshops on how to support someone wearing a sunflower lanyard, introduce an allyship scheme and a mechanism for recognising EDI contributions that make an impact.
- ▶ Fully utilise our current EDI accreditations including the Disability Confident Scheme and the LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge, which we hope to secure in May 2025, that demonstrate our commitment to inclusion to our colleagues, customers and stakeholders. We will consider whether other external accreditations will help to further embed our EDI commitments, being clear that participation must have a meaningful impact rather than being a 'tick box' exercise.
- ▶ Review and further embed our EIA process and review our employment and customer policies for inclusive language and accessibility.
- ▶ Use the opportunity presented by our impending office move to clarify cultural expectations and work to ensure alignment with our values,

customer ethos and Ways of Working across the whole organisation so that the colleague and customer experience is consistent.

- ▶ Revive the Inclusion Champion role, secure representation from across the business and tap into this group to understand the colleague experience, temperature check new initiatives and support the delivery of the EDI strategy.
- ▶ Provide opportunities to connect colleagues with external EDI networks to increase their sense of belonging and facilitate learning from other housing associations.

#### 5.4- Developing our diverse talent

Our people have the single biggest impact on our delivery of EDI work. It is important that we invest in them ensuring that we attract diverse and motivated colleagues who want to do the best for our organisation while developing their own skills and experience to support their progression and career aspirations and retain them in a competitive market. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ Consider the needs of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, disabled, LGBTQ+ and under age 30 colleagues (who are under-represented, particularly at a leadership level) in our succession planning activities.
- ▶ Provide guidance and mentoring for the next generation of leaders, as we all benefit from diversity in leadership. However, the 'soft' skills and networks needed to achieve this are not always clear. This is most acutely experienced by colleagues with diverse identities. We will share stories of the career journeys of our leaders, provide workshops on key behaviours needed for progression and develop mentoring opportunities, benefiting both the mentor and mentee.
- ▶ Develop alternative entrance routes to employment at B3Living to reduce the disadvantage certain groups face, despite the contributions that they can make. We will consider the feasibility of increasing our apprenticeship offer at B3Living, and ways to encourage our own customers to apply for

vacancies at B3Living. Likewise, we will continue to create opportunities within the local economy, developing relationships with colleges, schools, job centre and other partner within the Borough of Broxbourne.

#### 5.5- Providing a personalised and inclusive service for customers

Meeting housing needs and providing good landlord services to customers is at the heart of our Better Futures strategy and supports our core aim to provide better homes, better communities and better businesses for people priced out of the housing market. We are committed to supporting our most vulnerable customers by considering their needs in our processes and policies and making reasonable adjustments. Our work to date has largely focused on ensuring that our internal processes, values and behaviours are designed with EDI at the forefront. We are now keen and confident to engage with our customers regarding EDI. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ Use data to drive our EDI work, ensuring we understand the make-up of our community, the experiences they have when interacting with us and to champion the issues which matter most to them. We will make the adjustments that our customers need and understand where there are trends on customer experiences (positive or negative) to learn and put in place interventions, supporting the ambitions of our Customer Strategy. A key enabler is to analyse Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to gain insights.
- ▶ Understand the EDI needs of our community by engaging with the customer community and Customer Advisory Panel to ensure that they are included in our work and that we reflect this in our offer. We will monitor themes from complaints to understand where we can improve. We will conduct surveys to understand customers experiences relating to EDI and will provide updates on our work, informing customers how their feedback has helped to shape our services and the way we work.
- ▶ Have a digital and in-person EDI presence in our community by sharing information on awareness days/months and how these have been used to

impact the way we work at B3Living. We will explore opportunities to invite customers to EDI themed events alongside colleagues and look to set up spaces for customers to share the areas of EDI which are important to them.

## 5.6- Creating an inclusive and diverse workplace

Attracting and retaining diverse talent is key to ensuring that we learn from multiple viewpoints and experiences which will in turn, positively influence our work and the extent to which colleagues and customers feel that they belong. A key enabler for this is to ensure our organisational identity and employee value proposition are clear and inclusive. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ Use existing external communication channels to communicate about our work and raise awareness of EDI issues and our progress. We have several platforms to communicate with external groups (customers, stakeholders, prospective applicants and other bodies within the sector), presenting us with opportunities to share our learning and progress in the EDI space. We will also ensure our presence on the B3Living website is visible and that our content is accessible and inclusive.
- ▶ Update recruitment materials and processes to encourage applications from people who are qualified but hesitant to apply unless they can evidence every point in the criteria. This most commonly relates to people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background, people with disabilities/long-term health conditions and women. We will aim to represent ethnically diverse colleagues, colleagues with disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ+ in our recruitment materials to encourage applications from these groups, who are currently under-represented at B3Living. Likewise, we will review the platforms on which we advertise vacant positions to attract the most diverse applicant pool. We will also ensure that we are proactive in encouraging applicants to share any reasonable adjustments they have, or to feel able to contact us with any concerns.

- ▶ Review our pay and Employee Value Proposition to attract a diverse range of people. A review of our pay mechanisms is scheduled, during which we will check that there is no discrimination and that our commitment to equal pay is considered.
- ▶ We will ensure that we promote the features of working at B3Living which are likely to be important to attracting a diverse pool of candidates, as we know that this is a key consideration for prospective applicants. Examples include our wellbeing/multifaith room and gender-neutral toilets. We will demonstrate our commitment to financial inclusion by promoting our discounts (via Perk Place) and ensuring that we remain a Living Wage employer.

## 6. Monitoring and review

It is important that we are accountable for the commitments made in this strategy. Our progress against the delivery of this strategy will be measured using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data such as:

- ▶ Data and insight across the employee lifecycle.
- ▶ Data on the uptake of development opportunities and insights from evaluating said development opportunities.
- ▶ Qualitative feedback from colleagues and customers on their experiences with regards to inclusion at B3Living- captured through comments in surveys.
- ▶ Consistent improvement in responses to questions which measure awareness of and satisfaction with inclusive policies and practice at B3Living.
- ▶ Demographic data and data on pay gaps, including performance against our diversity demographic KPI which is reported on monthly to the Executive and Leadership teams.
- ▶ Customer and colleague case studies.
- ▶ Leadership and Executive Teams having a visible and active role in EDI.

- ▶ Progress against the action plan which details more information on how we will implement each of the 6 themes in the Strategy and which is included in Appendix 2.

Overall performance against the action plan and strategy will be reported on an annual basis to the Board.

## 7. Equality and diversity

We are committed to treating everyone equitably, without bias, and with respect. We aim to foster a culture where people can thrive and be their authentic selves. Our strategy integrates EDI into our operations, and applies to colleagues, customers, and job applicants.

An initial equality impact assessment (EIA) has been carried out and concluded that this strategy does not disadvantage any of the identified equality groups and that a full EIA is not required but it will be important to complete an EIA on any projects we implement because of this strategy.

## 8. Customer voice

With several customer-facing strategies currently being formalised and the customer engagement activities under review, we have not prioritised this strategy for direct consultation at this stage. The strategy has been informed by the ambitions in Better Futures, our people strategy, customer strategy and ethos, colleague data and feedback and best practice in the sector. We did carry out a customer survey on EDI issues in 2022 and this strategy endeavours to respond to the key themes of adequately supporting customers with disabilities (including hidden), ensuring that we ask customers and record information on communication preferences and act on this consistently and communicating clearly with customers about the EDI work we do and the support that is available to customers. We will consult the customer community and customer advisory panel on projects which are implemented as a result of this strategy.

## 9. Health and safety considerations

We anticipate our work under this strategy will help to create a safe and supportive work environment, enhance colleagues' sense of belonging and positively impact colleague and customer wellbeing. Other than this, there are no immediate health and safety considerations.

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## APPENDIX ~~ONE~~ – EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Political context-

Labour Government- The UK has a new Labour government after 14 years of Conservative leadership. Despite this, our areas of operation remain

predominantly Conservative. As an organisation, we will need to comply with the direction set by the labour government and any changes to legislation and guidance. At a local level, we have strong ties with councillors and MPs, positioning us well. The Labour Government's EDI commitments include:

- ▶ Introducing a new Race Equality Act
- ▶ Championing the rights of disabled people
- ▶ Reviewing the classification of hate crime
- ▶ Simplifying and reforming the gender recognition act
- ▶ Mandatory reporting on ethnicity and disability pay gaps for organisations with over 250 staff (B3Living currently has 170 staff)
- ▶ Mandatory development of Menopause Action Plans for organisations with over 250 staff (B3Living currently has 170 staff)

Grenfell Tower Fire- The Grenfell Tower fire, which claimed 72 lives, continues to influence social housing providers. The September 2024 Phase 2 enquiry highlighted the breakdown of the relationship between the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) and residents, characterising it as being based on 'distrust, dislike, personal antagonism and anger' and noting the TMO's failure to fulfil its responsibilities. This has led to increased focus from the ombudsman and social housing regulator on engaging residents in decision-making, reflecting our existing commitments in Better Futures in relation to customer involvement. The fire's impact is inextricably linked to EDI, as 85% of the victims were from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and most were social housing tenants from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This may influence our interactions with customers, and the levels of trust that they may have with us as a social housing provider.

Awaab's Law- The tragic death of 2-year-old Awaab Ishak from damp and mould exposure whilst living in social housing led to the creation of Awaab's Law, effective October 2025 which mandates timely responses to such cases. We will need to comply with this new legislation. This incident has EDI implications as it highlights the disproportionate impact on Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic residents, who are more likely to live in damp housing compared to their white British counterparts, as referenced in the October 2020 English Housing Survey. We need to understand how the experience of our Black, Asian and Minority

Ethnic customers compares to these findings, and consider that these experiences may impact the way in which our customers interact with us.

Far right violence following the Southport attacks- In July 2024, the tragic murder of three children in Southport led to an outpouring of emotion. It also sparked widespread, far right riots across the UK. Although the Borough of Broxbourne did not experience riots, the events likely caused fear and distress among our customers and remains a risk for us given that counter protests to the Black Lives Matter movement occurred in Hoddesdon in 2020, which we believe some of our customers were involved in.

#### Regulatory Changes-

Increased regulatory and legal compliance aims to drive culture change in social housing. The Regulator of Social Housing's 'Reshaping consumer regulation: our new approach' requires providers to:

- ▶ Understand and respect residents' needs.
- ▶ Listen to and include residents in decision-making.
- ▶ Learn from complaints.

These behaviours are core to effective EDI interventions. Providers must monitor satisfaction through Tenant Satisfaction Measure data, which highlight residents' experiences and can be filtered by demographic, guiding appropriate interventions. Communication with tenants must be clear, accessible, relevant, timely, and appropriate to their diverse needs.

The National Housing Federation code of conduct has a clear focus on EDI, requiring organisations to commit to, measure, and publish information on:

- ▶ It's clear and active commitment to achieve equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all its activities and its own composition.
- ▶ The culture and behaviours that will best enable the organisation to deliver its mission and goals.

- ▶ Access to insight on the views and needs of the organisation's residents and other customers.

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code expects providers to 'make reasonable adjustments for residents where appropriate under the Equality Act 2010. Landlords must keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed, as well as a record of any disabilities a resident has disclosed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments must be kept under active review'.

Legislation-

Our EDI work is underpinned by three key pieces of legislation:

- ▶ Equality Act 2010- This consolidates former legislation into one act which aims to protect people who identify with nine protected characteristics from discrimination (Age, Sex, Pregnancy and Maternity, Disability, Race, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief and Marital Status). At B3Living, we have chosen to look beyond the nine characteristics by including Gender Identity and Socio-economic status.
- ▶ Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)- This emerged from the Equality Act and requires public organisations, and those which carry out public functions to:  
Demonstrate due regard to eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and  
Advance equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. *Note: Although B3Living is not a public body, case law (Weaver v London and Quadrant Housing Trust, 2008) indicates that social housing providers perform a public function and are therefore bound by the PSED.*
- ▶ Human Rights Act 1998- This outlines several fundamental rights that all UK citizens are entitled to and relates to EDI work as it legislates for 'freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment' and 'protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms.