



Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

2020 – 2024

CONTENTS

	PAGE NO.
1. Introduction	3
2. Why Diversity & Inclusion is Important	4
3. Our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy	4
4. Our Aims	5
4.1 Meeting and Going Beyond our Statutory Requirements	6
4.2 Maintaining our Representation Where We Are Doing Well and Improving in Areas Where We Could Make Further Progress	7
4.3 Creating an Inclusive Culture that Values Diversity in How We Treat Employees and Customers	8
4.4. We Want Diversity & Inclusion to be a Natural Part of What We Do and Firmly Embedded in Our Bring Your Best Self to Work Culture	10
5. Responsibility	10
10. Measuring and Reporting Progress	11

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1. Introduction

“Diversity is being asked to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance”
Verna Myers

Bolton at Home is committed to promoting Diversity and Inclusion and it forms a critical part of our People Strategy, because it is integral in achieving our aim of building a stronger, viable and effective organisation creating an engaging supportive culture and cultivating leadership and talent for our people to bring their best selves to work.

The commitment to promoting Diversity & Inclusion involves promoting the importance of Diversity & Inclusion, the benefits and doing so beyond the legal minimum as well as ensuring the organisation creates a culture of ensuring we embed the core basics of fairness and respect for difference, equality of opportunity and treatment across gender, disability (mental and physical) and different abilities, BAME and LGBT+ rights, supporting those with caring responsibilities, including dementia care, part time workers and more.

We want to create a diverse and inclusive environment, where every employee feels encouraged to bring their best self to work, has a great work experience within a culture where everyone feels comfortable sharing information about who they are (if they want to).

We are proud of the impact of the work that has already been done within and by Bolton at Home and the visible and lasting change that has been achieved, particularly the work on promoting employment and training opportunities in our communities, for example with our diverse Apprenticeship Programme, our involvement in the ERASMUS projects, the Working Wardrobe initiative and many other projects that take place in the community.

Our Organisational Development programme (Bring Your Best Self to Work) BYBStW involving all managers and staff is designed to encourage dialogue and conversation that will go beyond the immediate programme and ripple across the workplace giving the important messages of how we create culture, understanding ourselves and others, the importance of diversity and inclusion through exploring and understanding that everyone has a map of identity which makes them unique and we all have a story to tell.

This document sets out our strategy for maintaining current areas of success and addressing areas for improvement. It also includes the aims we will put in place to achieve our goal.

2. WHY DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT

We are keen to continue our progress with Diversity and Inclusion. We recognise the benefits of having a diverse and inclusive workforce, not only because our credibility and impact is only strong, if we reflect and respect the hugely diverse nature of the communities we serve but also because being truly diverse and inclusive brings many benefits including:

- Driving business growth and productivity from being open to different ideas (33% higher than average profits McKinsey & Co report 2018)
- Attracting and retaining talent which is key to our Workforce Plan
- Higher workplace performance
- Greater resilience as more effective problem solving
- Increased creativity from the inclusion of different viewpoints
- Greater individual and cultural sensitivities
- Better understanding and mindfulness of customers and staff
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Better staff satisfaction, happiness and engagement
- Improved mental and physical wellbeing
- Better employee relations and less absenteeism

3. OUR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY

As a housing association one of key goals is to ensure the business can thrive and inspire trust, so that people can improve their lives and strengthen society.

To do this effectively we need to ensure we are outward looking and understand and appreciate the diversity of the communities we serve and that internally we have a workforce which is inclusive and diverse. A diverse workforce brings a range of experiences and perspectives, which strengthen our performance and impact as a housing leader. This Diversity & Inclusion Strategy seeks to add value to the business, contributing to its effectiveness and to its employee well-being and engagement.

We are committed to building an inclusive culture that is intolerant of discrimination, bullying and harassment. We get the best out of and support our employees and take

steps to ensure they feel included, supported and are treated fairly. We do not tolerate bullying, harassment, discrimination or other negative behaviours.

We welcome respectful, constructive and professional challenge at all levels, without boundaries across roles and pay grades.

The government's Diversity & Inclusion Strategy focuses on equal treatment and equal opportunity. It states that 'It is not right or fair that people are discriminated against because of who they are or what they believe. Therefore, we want to breakdown the barriers that could hold people back and we want to ensure opportunities are open to people based on their ability, potential and their hard work and we want to support them to succeed. We are conscious that just having a strategy or making statements will not achieve Diversity & Inclusion and we have to work hard and challenge ourselves to actually make a real difference.

Bolton at Home's Diversity & Inclusion Strategy focuses on 2 key goals, to:

1. Continue to increase the representation of currently under-represented groups at all levels across the Group
2. Enable employees to Bring Their Best Selves to Work with a focus on diversity and inclusion to build our culture and reputation as a place that attracts, develops, creates opportunities, supports, retains and fully engages all of the talent across our organisation

These goals encompass a range of aims and outcomes that we want to achieve and are outlined further in this document.

Bolton at Home is starting from a promising position, with higher representation from women than the national average. Half of our senior management roles are held by women. Our Gender Pay Gap is approximately 5% in comparison to 17% at a national level. However, there is more work to be done.

We will strive to:

- eliminate all forms of discrimination
- advance access to opportunity
- encourage good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

We want to improve our representation in all areas, particularly at senior and Board levels, whilst ensuring we continue to maintain strong foundations in terms of female representation as this is an area where we are making excellent progress. We want to improve our reporting data to enable better analysis and decision making.

4. OUR AIMS

Some of what we need to do to achieve our aims is embedded as business as usual. However, we will also take some specific actions to complement business as usual and achieve further changes. These are contained in the plan outlined further in this document and recorded within in our People Strategy.

To achieve our goals we recognise that to realise the benefits of diversity and inclusion, we will need to focus on 4 key strategic aims:

- 1. Meeting our statutory requirements and going beyond this by taking positive action and building a culture that promotes and supports diversity and inclusion**
- 2. Maintaining our representation where we are doing well and improving our representation in areas where we could make further progress**
- 3. Creating an inclusive culture, that values diversity, in how we treat each other and interact with our staff and customers**
- 4. We want Diversity and Inclusion to be a natural part of what we do and be firmly embedded in our Bring Your Best Self to Work culture**

4.1 MEETING AND GOING BEYOND OUR STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Bolton at Home will continue to meet its core statutory responsibilities by ensuring that we are compliant with the Equality Act.

The Equality Act legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. Bolton at Home does not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment in relation to the below protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race

- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

We will ensure:

- produce regular statistical reports regarding our people to show where we are and where we could make progress
- our internal policies and procedures remain up to date, are compliant with the law and reflective of best practice, where achievable
- there are clear, well communicated procedures in place explaining how to raise concerns or complaints. All issues will be taken seriously, no matter who they are from or who they are involve. They will be considered and acted upon with a focus on independence, timeliness and impartiality. We will ensure that appropriate support is in place for those who raise complaints. As an organisation, we will learn lessons from complaints and encourage the individuals involved, to do so too
- that equality training forms an important part of our Learning & Development programme especially in relation to Customer Service, management training and recruitment training.
- we raise awareness of our equality duties specifically around protected characteristics and our wider commitment to equality and inclusion;, ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibilities and the behaviours we expect through use of training and consistent messaging and role modelling from Directors and the Board.
- report our gender pay gap on an annual basis and take action to address disparities as well as aspire to further expand this going beyond gender and reporting in relation to other groups
- ensure transparency, we will report on the progress of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to the Board and review our strategy every 4 years

4.2. MAINTAINING OUR REPRESENTATION WHERE WE ARE DOING WELL AND IMPROVING IN AREAS WHERE WE COULD MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS

Increasing representation is one indicator of how successfully we are creating an inclusive workplace and building strong diverse teams. Diversity at all levels within the organisation will improve our effectiveness, staff satisfaction and productivity.

Ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to be in the top-performing quartile (McKinsey, 2015, 'Diversity Matters'). Plus, it's the right thing to do - the chances provided to people should not be linked to skin colour, race, age, religion, sexuality, gender or disability; just as they should not be linked to where they grew up or went to school.

We want to:

be open and transparent about our representation

- We will be open and transparent on both areas we do well in and where we want to improve. We will ensure the results are discussed at Board, Director and senior management levels, as well as with our Trade Unions and employees

take action to improve under representation for those groups at all levels

- We will ensure we recruit and promote talent from and opportunities to all sections of society to ensure Bolton at Home is open to all.
- We are committed to going beyond our statutory requirements; our focus on diversity and inclusion will not be limited to protected characteristics. For example, we want to be mindful of social inclusion issues.

take action to ensure our recruitment is fair, open and inclusive by

- Carrying out a review of recruitment practices
- Training to raise awareness of unconscious bias
- Ensure an open and inclusive approach to assessing candidates
- Encourage mentoring and step up programmes for development
- Offer quality Apprenticeships
- Offer work based qualifications
- Embed a flexible working culture

We have already taken steps to train our managers with regards to the dangers of unconscious bias and we will incorporate strength based assessments further in to our processes, to ensure a more open, inclusive approach to assessing candidates.

Our managers are required to hold regular development and career conversations with staff, to help ensure all staff have opportunities for learning, training and professional

development. The Learning and Development team will also analyse and report on the requests that they receive and the progress of staff.

4.3. CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE THAT VALUES DIVERSITY IN HOW WE TREAT EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS

Encouraging and supporting a culture of inclusion will enhance our reputation, increase customer satisfaction and engagement and improve our business outcomes.

We will develop greater inclusivity in our culture by:

- ensuring that diversity and inclusion is a key objective in our organisation's People Strategy, with our Leadership Team and senior managers championing the delivery of these objectives.
- raising awareness of protected characteristics, our responsibilities and the benefits of diverse and inclusive teams through mandatory training modules.
- educating our workforce to improve understanding of barriers faced by particular groups so that all employees can help to remove these barriers, for example, increasing cultural awareness and understanding of others
- create an environment of understanding and respecting customers
- creating an environment that promotes disclosure of diversity characteristics and understanding of why that is important
- consistently demonstrating inclusive and involvement, nurturing leadership at all levels – learning and development activity will support this
- create a positive customer engagement approach fostering a desire to resolve problems at early stages
- taking seriously and acting upon allegations of inappropriate language, situations or practices and have the skills to mediate and investigate issues as soon as they arise, promptly at the root cause
- committing to getting the basics right – appropriate reasonable adjustments being consistently put in place for colleagues in a timely manner, with sufficient budget set aside to do so
- continuing promotion of mental wellbeing so it is prioritised equally with physical health

- promoting flexible working and job share to deliver excellent working arrangements which meet business needs, whilst providing innovative and flexible solutions tailored to and supportive of individual needs and differences
- promoting our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion in our relationships with partners and suppliers
- promoting our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion throughout the Bolton at Home Group

4.4 WE WANT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION TO BE A NATURAL PART OF WHAT WE DO AND BE FIRMLY EMBEDDED IN OUR BRING YOUR BEST SELF TO WORK CULTURE

Our Organisational Development programme (Bring Your Best Self to Work) BYBStW has helped managers and staff to start having conversations about Diversity and Inclusion and what this means in the workplace. The key message of the programme is that to be successful as an organisation and as individuals, Diversity & Inclusion needs to be embedded into our Bring Your Best Self to Work culture.

We will continue this journey through:

- ensuring all staff and managers participate in the BYBStW programme
- ensuring all staff and managers participate in the Understanding & Respecting Identity module
- create activities that managers can utilise Insights with their teams as a way to further understand each other to work effectively
- ensure managers carry out the BYBStW Conversations on an annual basis and this is supported through effective one to ones
- create agile thinking groups to address key areas to consider where the organisation can further embed BYBStW
- review of our Learning & Development programme to ensure these key messages are incorporated across our training modules

5. RESPONSIBILITY

Diversity and Inclusion is the responsibility of all staff to contribute to creating an inclusive culture and environment.

The Leadership Team will both be ultimately accountable for, and hold other staff to account for, the delivery of the 4 aims that are outlined within this Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

6. MEASURING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

The plan will include measurement against the following below criteria:

- a suite of diversity statistics to be produced and analysed by HR annually reporting to the Leadership Team, HR & Governance Committee as well as the Board
- gender pay gap data
- learning and development data
- employee relation casework data
- feedback from managers and staff via surveys and audits
- benchmarking against the broader sector

This strategy is to be reviewed in 2024