



Chartered
Institute of
Housing

Equality in Housing

Making the pledge





The **CIH EDI pledge** has been designed for housing providers to improve business performance through EDI. Working to promote social cohesion, improving access to resources, and better reflecting the needs of your tenants and communities come together to deliver better housing outcomes for everyone. Housing organisations can demonstrate this through four specific actions.

- **Diversify:** Take action to increase diversity in the workplace, including on boards and committees.
- **Upskill:** Ensure that professional development for staff is person specific, reflects individual skills and talents and includes a focus on EDI and marginalised groups.
- **Engage:** Commit to regular engagement with schools, colleges and other relevant groups and organisations about the value and impact of diversity in the workplace.
- **Champion:** Appoint an officer at a senior level to champion and sponsor an EDI workstream.

Guidance

Diversify: Take action to increase diversity in the workplace, including on boards and committees

Promoting and delivering on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is an essential aspect of good people management. It helps create working environments and cultures where individuals feel safe and are empowered to achieve their full potential. It is good business sense.

A successful and inclusive recruitment strategy will consider the mix of existing tenants and customers and how those customer groups are represented in the organisation; this will add value to a landlord, contribute to the wellbeing and equality of outcomes and impact on the whole workforce.

Things to consider may include accent, age, caring responsibilities, colour, religion, race and culture, visible and non-visible disability, gender identity and expression, mental health, neurodiversity, physical appearance, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity/paternity and family status, and socio-economic circumstances, amongst other personal characteristics and experiences.

Identifying gaps

Improving EDI starts with an assessment of staff, board and committee diversity of characteristics, life experiences, expertise and skills (both broader skills and technical knowledge. Using a [skills matrix such as this one](#) produced by CIH and Bailies Partners Consulting can be helpful in this context). Any review should be regularly updated.

For example:

- If there's a significant proportion of tenants under 30, is the voice of under 30-year-olds represented within the governance structure?
- As the prevalence of disability increases for tenants with age, has someone with disabilities had input to assist in identifying potential issues for this group?

Governing board and governance structure composition

There are many issues to consider when putting together or altering the composition of a governing body or its committee groups, such as:

- Size and diversity
- Current trustees' skills and experience
- The balance between having enough people to carry out duties and being too large to operate effectively.

The role of the lead officer: Encouraging diversity

The lead officer has a critical role leading the recruitment process and identifying the skills, knowledge, and experience required to support effective decision-making. They should ensure that appointments support the business need of the organisation.

Succession planning

EDI succession planning and thinking ahead are key to improving housing outcome and KPIs in your business plan. Managers should consider the skills and experience that will be needed in the future so that when vacancies arise, they can incentivise a broad pool of applications.

Work out the interview process

- Gain different perspectives on what is needed from new officers or board members, a small panel can work well with the contribution of the lead officer.
- Consider whether the panel has an appropriate level of diversity or whether another member of staff, or board/committee, could widen the skills, experience and characteristics needed for better representation in the decision-making.

Feedback and performance reviews

- Give other staff the chance to chair meetings by rotation with regular feedback.
- Conduct regular performance and development reviews with individuals and provide them with training and leadership opportunities

Role of managers

Managers can play a leading role in shaping the bridging skills, adaptive thinking, culture and behaviours of an organisation so it is more diverse and inclusive. This will promote good decision-making and skilled engagement with stakeholders. They will need skills such as openness, active listening and perspective to gain support easily and be a successful manager. There should be an inclusive environment from the governing body down, where everyone can contribute. Managers may also want to create a high performing, inclusive culture by:

- Make sure everyone gives and receives feedback on decisions before finalising the action plan to generate shared responsibility
- Make reasonable adjustments to meetings to those that require it
- Clearer papers, preparation time for meetings, chairing to encourage contributions and training that fits with the group's range of learning and communication preferences
- Provide introductory training if the subject matter is complex and/or there are new trustees.
- Ask other staff to share their views before managers or senior staff input
- Encourage everyone to listen to each other's perspectives - to build upon other people's ideas.

Recruitment: Ways to attract more diverse candidates

- **Where to advertise:** Using an intermediary organisation that is connected to those with a protected characteristic will amplify any recruitment campaign. This will be in addition to an organisation's own social media channels and traditional recruitment sites.
- **How candidates apply:** Many organisations seek a traditional approach to recruitment whereby candidates prepare a CV and cover letter. Can this be more flexible? Could there be an allowance for video instead of a cover letter?
- **Where work takes place:** Many organisations take a mixed approach to working with some in person and some online. Be upfront about what the organisational balance is, as it could encourage a wider pool of candidates if the organisation is flexible about where work take place.
- **What the vacancy needs:** Be explicit and let all candidates know what is being looked for and where a skills/experience audit has identified gaps. This will help encourage candidates to know that they have something to offer.

It is also useful to refer to [Housing Diversity Network's recruitment guide](#).

Upskill: Ensure that professional development for staff is person specific, reflects individual skills and talents and includes a focus on EDI and marginalised groups

All staff should be trained to understand that diversity in the workforce helps achieve better business outcomes.

A good practice approach includes:

- Training for frontline, customer service, and other housing staff so they are knowledgeable about inclusive practice, tenant engagement and can identify behaviours and language that excludes, understand the drivers behind exclusionary behaviours, and respond confidently and appropriately.
- Training on the diverse and overlapping needs of different customers and staff according to disability, religion, race, gender, age, and sexual orientation to ensure frontline staff understand particular barriers when accessing services.
- Skills-based training on safety planning, safety protection and risk assessment.
- Training for managers that outlines their responsibilities in providing an effective service response and supporting their team.
- Training for boards and senior management that outlines their responsibility to provide public services consistent with human rights and equalities legislation.

EDI self-assessment

We also encourage all practitioners to use the [CIH EDI framework](#) to help identify how they are demonstrating inclusive practice on their day to day role and where they still have development needs.

Regardless of seniority in an organisation, the framework can help a person consider the steps to take to champion and improve EDI.

The framework consists of four core characteristics that individuals should be focusing on to ensure they are doing all they can to support EDI as part of their housing role:

- Integrity
- Inclusive
- Ethics
- Leadership.

For each characteristic we have identified EDI outcomes and how they could be achieved by an individual.

Remember an equality outcome should further one or more of the following needs:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations.

Details on how to use the self-assessment tool are noted below.



The framework

Professional attitudes and behaviours	As a housing professional I do this by
Integrity: You reflect on your own beliefs, behaviours and unconscious bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaking self-reflection and self-evaluation with regards to my housing practice.• Gaining appropriate knowledge and skills.• Keeping my education and training up to date.
Inclusive: You encourage a diversity of views and experiences, understand variations and listen to all relevant voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I utilise different models of engagement for teams to use to draw out diverse views and opinions.• I listen to plurality of views and demonstrate responsiveness accordingly.
Inclusive: You recognise, value and draw on a wide range of perspectives to ensure you deliver the best possible service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I talk with my colleagues, teammates, peers and/or customers to reflect on my own performance and use this insight to inform service changes.
Inclusive: You demonstrate sensitivity to the customs, cultures and beliefs of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I recognise the cultural sensitivity about different traditions, beliefs, holidays and celebrations and how that may inform the behaviours of my colleagues and customers.
Leadership: You build collaborative relationships across organisation boundaries, cultures and other disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I work across the organisation and outside my immediate team so that I have strategic understanding of different priorities and approaches. This allows me to develop an approach that is considered and sustainable.
Ethics: You have a zero-tolerance approach towards inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I act when I hear any inappropriate offensive or discriminatory behaviour. I create the right environment so all colleagues can contribute and flourish

How individuals should use it

The framework is designed to support housing practitioners embed EDI within their own professional development to help drive business improvement.

You can engage with the framework on a number of levels:

- Use the self-assessment template (below) to assess your current approach to EDI
- Use the CIH professional standards self-assessment tool to provide an objective assessment of your approach to housing practice
- Sign up to the CIH mentoring platform in order to build collaborative and supportive relationships outside your organisation
- Join or initiate a staff EDI group.

Template for individuals EDI self-assessment

EDI outcome to be achieved	Existing actions to achieve outcome	Action/ improvement (if required)	Relevant EDI characteristic
I challenge my own beliefs, behaviours and unconscious bias			Integrity
I recognise, value and draw on a wide range of perspectives to ensure that they deliver the best service			Inclusive
I demonstrate sensitivity to the customs, cultures and beliefs of others			Inclusive
I build collaborative relationships across organisation boundaries, cultures and other disciplines			Leadership
I have a zero-tolerance approach towards inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory behaviour			Ethics
I encourage diversity of views and experiences, understand variations and listen to all relevant voices			Inclusive



Engage: Commit to regular engagement with schools, colleges and other relevant groups and organisations about the value and impact of diversity in the workplace

We know from research that across the UK economic inequity is pervasive, entrenched and linked to protected characteristics. We know that race is deterministic for many with regards to economic outcomes and that [46 per cent of ethnic minority children](#) are living in poverty in Britain whereas [access-to and engagement](#) with career guidance has often been lower for economically and socially disadvantaged groups who would benefit from it most.

Addressing these structural barriers that drive economic inequity is a core priority for many social landlords through their engagement and relationships with local schools.

Working with any school needs to be considered thoughtfully and involves landlords taking their time to get the trust of teachers and pupils early in their education. This, for example, could mean working with primary school pupils on litter picking, nature walks and setting up youth advisory panels. Once the relationship has been built, activity can move towards working with teachers and asking how support could be given to help them deliver on the curriculum, particularly in social subjects such as modern studies.

Collectively, these resources, when used as part of an ongoing engagement programme from housing organisations, will:

- Raise pupils' awareness of the job roles available in the housing sector
- Raise pupils' awareness of skills and behaviours required in the housing sector
- Communicate pathways for people to start a career in housing
- Demonstrate the value of having diversity in the housing profession.

Former CIH president Elly Hoult launched her campaign CHOOSE HOUSING which supports a range of resources on why and how landlords should engage with schools on careers in the sector. These resources help communicate the value of careers in the housing sector.



Champion: Appoint an officer at a senior level to champion and sponsor an EDI workstream

Leadership is vitally important to success. The pledge therefore requires appointment of a named person at senior level to oversee and be accountable for the changes being made and the overall implementation of the policy and procedures. This could be a board member or a senior manager. Consider:

- What is needed from a champion? Do they need to have a strong operational focus, or a more strategic role e.g. be a link to a board or councillors?
- Are they committed to improving business performance and outcomes through equality, diversity and inclusion?



EDI policy

You may want to consider developing an EDI policy to capture all your practice. We suggest that any policy should include the following priorities:

- Professional attitudes and behaviours
- Inclusive leadership and organisational culture
- Involved and empowered customers in the communities where we work
- Better organisational performance and tenant outcomes

We have noted below how a housing organisation may seek to achieve these priorities:

Professional attitudes and behaviours	As an organisation, we do this by:
Staff challenge their own beliefs, behaviours and unconscious bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting staff to undertake self-reflection and self-evaluation with regards to their housing practice• Supporting staff to gain appropriate knowledge and skills• Committing to keeping staff education and training up to date
Our staff recognise, value and draw on a wide range of perspectives to ensure that they deliver the best service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consulting regularly with our tenants and customers, providing clear channels for them to feedback and using this insight to inform service changes
Teams demonstrate sensitivity to the customs, cultures and beliefs of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring there is staff training about cultural sensitivity and different traditions and beliefs that may drive behaviours• Recognising cultural holidays and celebrations.
Our staff build collaborative relationships across organisation boundaries, cultures and other disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilising secondment, job sharing and placements so that staff have experience working in other disciplines and understand different priorities• Leaders identifying cross-organisational initiatives that help catalyse collaboration
All teams have a zero-tolerance approach towards inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing staff training about inappropriate offensive and discriminatory behaviour and a clear channel for staff to raise concerns that may arise• Outlining clear and severe consequence for staff acting in an inappropriate way
Our teams promote diversity of views and experiences, understand variations and listen to all relevant voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing models of engagement for teams to use to draw out diverse views and opinions• Listening to plurality of views and demonstrate responsiveness accordingly

Inclusive leadership and organisational culture	As an organisation, we do this by:
Equality and diversity is driven from the top	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing strong and diverse leadership from our governing board/committee, and senior team by endorsing commitment to equality and diversity across all nine protected characteristics and supporting an understanding of the role of human rights in housing.
Equality and diversity guide our business planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that equality and diversity is part of our business planning process and informs our investment decisions, how we design and deliver value for money services, how we procure services; and how relationships with partners, suppliers, contractors, customers and communities are sustained. Undertaking equality analyses which show how equality and diversity informs our business objectives and equality analyses are transparent, monitored, reported and acted upon. This will include how we review and improve our services to ensure that they are fair and accessible for our existing customers and to future customers.
Equality and diversity influence our organisational culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion inform recruitment and staff development - the staff we employ represent the communities we serve and this improves performance. Making our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion public, clear and transparent. Information is provided in alternative or accessible formats where reasonable changes are required. Operating a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory attitudes or practice from staff, partners, contractors, suppliers, customers and individuals in the communities in which we work. We will continue to work closely with our partners, contractors and suppliers to promote diversity and inclusion to eliminate inequalities. Improving performance by enabling staff to have the opportunity to shape and influence the delivery of services and provide organisation oversight.

Involved and empowered customers in the communities where we work	As an organisation, we do this by:
We know who our customers are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively using customer data to develop insight & information to help us develop fair and accessible services. • Understanding how customer data can improve our organisation and where service improvements have been made - we will share our successes. • Developing our capacity to understand and respond to the housing needs and aspirations of migrants and new arrivals in the communities which we serve. • Developing our capacity to understand and respond to the housing needs and aspirations of future customers in their diversity. • Regularly reviewing, monitoring, refreshing and measuring against our business objectives against equality, diversity and inclusion measures. • Customer data collection is informed by best practice, is undertaken confidentially and in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.
We involve our customers in shaping and scrutinising services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We actively encourage and proactively seek the involvement of all customers in the shaping and delivery of fair and accessible services. • We provide structures, resources, training and capacity building opportunities for customers to enable them to contribute to the delivery of fair and accessible services. • We effectively empower our tenants to scrutinise, monitor and review our services for equality and diversity - we provide our customers with regular, robust and appropriate information in accessible formats which have been agreed with them, and customers are encouraged to challenge our performance in all areas. We will report to our customers on our progress.
We represent the communities we serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We build visible links with local and representative groups to strengthen our relationships with the communities which we serve and to build trust. • We work openly with partners and other service providers in the community to ensure that our services meet the needs of our customers.
We support the communities which we serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work with the communities which we serve and with community partners to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups within the communities which we serve. • We will work with the communities which we serve and with community partners to eliminate discrimination, tackle harassment, hate incidents and hate crime and domestic violence.

Resources

The following organisations and groups have more information about EDI initiatives in the sector:

- Chartered Institute for Housing: CIH has a range of existing resources to support EDI, including their EDI framework: <https://www.cih.org/about-us/equality-diversity-inclusion> and <https://www.cih.org/knowledge-hub/edi-data-and-digital>
- Housing Diversity Network: Housing Diversity Network is dedicated to supporting housing sector organisations address inequality, maximising the potential of their workforce, and catering to the diverse needs of the communities they serve: <https://www.housingdiversitynetwork.co.uk>
- National Housing Federation: NHF supports the sector with a range of reports and tools on EDI: <https://www.housing.org.uk/our-work/diversity-and-equality>
- Tai Pawb works to advance equality and social justice in housing in Wales: <https://www.taipawb.org>
- Shelter Scotland Anti Racism Housing Network https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/were_committed_to_becoming_an_anti-racist_organisation