



BUILDEAST
THE FUTURE OF HOUSING

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Library of Positive Practice

BuildEast is a partnership of 17 housing associations in the East of England.

We seek to:

- Lead on policy, insight and expertise;
- Support our communities to grow, thrive, and achieve;
- Provide housing that's fit for the future in the East;
- Meet the needs and ambitions of people and communities in our region; and
- Combine our individual strengths to make a bigger difference.

Our defined area includes Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Essex, Hertfordshire, and Bedfordshire. More information about our members and our collective purpose can be found [here](#).



Introduction to this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Positive Practice Library

We are committed to positively addressing equality, diversity and inclusion in our staff and Boards. We know that a more diverse and inclusive culture will result in a better service for our tenants. Our members are taking

positive action to address this issue and this Library of Positive Practice brings together great examples of the work from across our partnership. This tool offers insight and experience to help us to learn from each other.



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Raising Awareness

Race Conversations

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Eastlight
Community Homes



Eastlight Community Homes are on a journey to challenge racism and discrimination, and they will tackle that in their communities, offices, culture and areas of influence. They believe by fostering an environment that embraces difference will make them more agile to deal with rapid change by having access to many different perspectives.

On this journey they have already held several events with their people to discuss disability and race. These discussions have challenged everyone

to step out of their comfort zone and engage with topics such as white privilege and microaggressions. They wanted to have an open conversation and create an environment that encouraged bravery and openness.

They felt this was important because often conversations around race can be stifled through fear of using incorrect and outdated terminology. They have found that this approach also inspires curiosity which is a fundamental foundation to engaged learning.



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Joint Working

Purple

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Purple offer support to organisations across the UK to help them achieve all three levels of the Disability Confident accreditation.

Eastlight Community Homes are proud to be working with Purple as their National Housing Partner to review their places, policies and culture to ensure they are supporting disabled people in the workplace and in their communities. They want to be a leader, providing an example of how working collaboratively



is vital in ensuring their services are accessible and supportive and that they are an inclusive employer.

They were chosen as the housing sector sponsor for disability inclusion annual event Purple Tuesday. Purple Tuesday is a change programme for organisations of all sizes from all sectors to get involved in, with the common goal of improving the customer experience for disabled people 365 days a year.

Women's Trade Network

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Saffron Housing Trust, and others have joined the Women's Trade Network who are campaigning actively to increase the numbers of women in trades and construction. They will be advertising all trades and construction roles on their website and taking part in activities to promote these types of roles to women and girls.





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EDI with our Boards and Leaders

Board Recruitment



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B3Living used "**Dynamic Boards**" to assist them with their recent Board Recruitment. Not only did Dynamic Boards have a diverse contact base in B3 Living's area, they were able to use their platform to advertise and received help with their messaging. Dynamic Boards don't vet applicants, it is open to anyone making it more inclusive. B3Living wanted significant change.

Lara Oyedele (Black on Board training events) also gave them insight on how to recruit in a way that would reduce bias and encourage a diverse pool to apply. B3Living received 50 applications and 71% of those were from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. They appointed two new board members as a result.

Embedding EDI in a Corporate Strategy and Annual Reports



somewhere to feel at home

e: awilliams@swan.org.uk

Swan Housing publish an Equality Scheme and an annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report to show progress made. Their Equality Scheme 2018-2022 and Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report are available [here](#) and they will soon be publishing their first Ethnicity Pay Gap report.

Aim 2 of Swan's Corporate Strategy 2020-2023 includes the objective 'embrace inclusion, equality and diversity' and commitments to:

- Evolve their language to be about inclusiveness and belonging
- Have plans to address inequalities
- Deliver on 'pledges' and promises
- Ensure that agile working does not create barriers to career progression.



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EDI with our Boards and Leaders

Board Development Plan



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Orwell Housing have a development plan for their Board which includes EDI work and skills matrices. They have also put in

place Board Agency webinar training and are looking at the Housing Diversity Network Board programme.

Board Diversity



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Hightown Housing have achieved greater diversity in their Board and now have 63% female Board members. They also applied the Rooney rule¹ to a recent

recruitment campaign and this resulted in an appointment offering greater diversity in their Leadership Team.



¹The Rooney Rule is a National Football League policy that requires league teams to interview ethnic-minority candidates for head coaching and senior football operation jobs. It is an example of affirmative action, even though there is no hiring quota or hiring preference given to minorities, only an interviewing quota. It was established in 2003, and variations of the rule are now in place in other industries.



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EDI with our Employees

Sharing of Mental Health Experiences



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B3Living encouraged staff to share their own stories around mental health on Workplace, which is essentially their staff networking tool. They co-ordinated it so that a different member of staff shared their personal story each day and these ranged from accounts about living with general anxiety disorder, experiences of depression, coping with autism in the workplace, and a staff member's account of their Dad's suicide and how it impacted

on them. These generated a great deal of support from their colleagues and also got everybody talking about mental health awareness and how important this is. For the staff member with autism, it also helped them to communicate their diagnosis and explain how this may affect him at work. It was very effective and brought them together as a work community.

EDI Training



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Hightown Housing relaunched their Equality & Diversity e-Learning. This is covered in two modules, one for staff and one for managers. The eLearning includes topics such as the use of language and it's impact. The programme aims to raise awareness.

Lunch and Learn



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Flagship Group have secured agreement from 3 volunteers to support the Lunch and Learn programme to talk about mental health, hidden disabilities—specifically hearing loss—and living with a lifelong illness.



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EDI with our Employees

“Just Being You” Mentoring Programme

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Eastlight Community Homes’ “Just Being You” Mentoring programme has been an intriguing insight into the different barriers faced by a variety of protected groups. Their internal programme has partnered Eastlight employees with members of their Leadership Team to discuss how they can do things better. The programme is a great example of

individuals demonstrating their corporate values which are ambitious, inclusive and accountable.

The areas focussed on are: Age, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Gender, Marriage and Religion.

Inclusion Champions

e: nadine.tapp@flagship-group.co.uk



Flagship Group have a group of 35 designated passionate people from across the Group who are responsible for supporting them to create a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Some examples of how they have been supporting them include:

- Starting open discussions about diversity in the workplace
- Supporting with organising events that help celebrate diversity; and
- Identifying areas in which they can

improve their efforts to be more inclusive to ensure everyone has the right circumstances to feel comfortable at work.

They have matched Inclusion Champions to business areas and they attend 2 team meetings a year to raise awareness and support teams.



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EDI with our Employees

This is Me (Data Collection)



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Flagship Group required a robust way to collect, store and analyse equality monitoring data to enable them to support any changes to improve their employee experience and achieve a culture of belonging.

They wanted:

- the ability to manage reporting for pay gaps linked to protected characteristics
- accurate baseline of workforce
- the ability to identify potential new technology to make work easier
- to identify opportunities to deliver training and events that are important to their staff

In 2020, working with their inclusion champions they identified the information they would like to have access to which would support equality monitoring and enable them to achieve a culture of belonging where all of their employees are supported to reach their full potential. They included questions relating to the 9 protected characteristics, learning styles, preferences, and social mobility. Over a period of 3 months,

they collected data from 30% of their workforce. Following a review of the mechanism, questions and communications plan they relaunched in 2021 and have currently received responses from 40%, and it is on-going. They are now sharing insight across the business to raise awareness and to encourage greater sharing of information.

Diversity and Inclusion Manager



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Swan Housing have a long-standing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and their work in this area is supported by their [Diversity & Inclusion Manager](#).



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EDI with our Employees

Listening Groups



e: jeff.astle@bpha.org.uk

Bpha have recently undertaken a series of listening groups where 50 colleagues were able to share their experiences and thoughts on how Bpha can be an inclusive organisation. Some clear themes came from the listening groups which have been shared with their Executive and Senior Management Teams. Their EDI Groups are focussing on these themes within their Action Plans.

Cultural Scan



e: sharon.ault@eastlighthomes.co.uk

Estuary Housing are due to undertake a cultural scan of their policy and processes to ensure they are in a position to reflect the changing workplace and the challenges their residents face with regard to universal credit and furlough schemes ending. This is in partnership with Inclusive Employers.

EDI Policy

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Flagship Group have an 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy', which sets out their intentions to build a culture where all their tenants, and colleagues feel they are treated fairly, with dignity and respect. As an employer and social landlord they hope to attract, retain, develop, reward, support and recognise

the best people for the job in a fair, non-discriminatory and inclusive way. By continuing to create a great place to work and a work environment that embraces diversity they hope to increase employee engagement which results in them delivering a better customer/resident experience.



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EDI with our Employees

Sharing Awareness Stories



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CHP have been running a series of diversity awareness videos where their employees have recorded video messages about their own personal lived experiences in Diversity, Equality and Inclusion supported by internal communications articles. Topics covered include LGBTQIA+, racism, mental health, gender equality, anti-Semitism and autism.

are different cultures, races, religions as well as the prejudices or challenges that others may have faced.

They have had speakers on a huge variety of topics – these have covered many religions, those going through gender reassignment, experts on Mental Health, representatives from Stonewall – as well as speakers in recovery from addictions. In addition to the EDI sessions there's a heavy focus on wellbeing – they offer many taster sessions on physical activities, healthy eating as well as alternative therapies. The programme often concludes with an all staff informal BBQ; online fun quiz or an opportunity to listen to an inspirational speaker such as [Martine Wright](#).

Challenge and Change



e: melisa.rollison@broadlandgroup.org

Broadland Housing Association have a Challenge and Change programme, now in its 7th year. It is a bi-annual event and it's main purpose is to challenge the way they think and live, and to help them find ways to change for the better. The main themes



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EDI with our Employees

Mental Health First Aiders

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Flagship Group currently have 129 Mental Health First Aiders across the Group. They are available to colleagues if they have any questions, need to talk or would like support. Our Mental Health First Aiders are priceless, they provide a listening ear to a colleague, signposting and support. Their work has also been instrumental in opening

the conversation with many more colleagues sharing their stories and mental health journeys via videos, blogs and posts. Our Internal Mental Health First Aid Instructor is available to support the Mental Health First Aiders.

Disability Confident Employer

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CHP are a disability confident employer and have recently refreshed their EDI recruitment training for hiring managers and their mandatory e-learning. Earlier this year, they reviewed and updated their Equality Impact Assessments process (which are completed on all policies) and ran a session for their teams on these.

Inclusive Employer Recruitment Panels

e: mary.swain@wcht.org.uk

Watford Community Housing have launched an internal scheme to train a number of staff members from a broad and diverse background as interviewers. This is to ensure they are an inclusive employer and ensure they demonstrate this during their recruitment process.



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EDI with our Employees

Protected Characteristic Videos



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Flagship Group have produced a series of Bitesize Protected Characteristic videos which provide an introduction to the Equality Act 2010 and an outline of each protected characteristic and are designed to raise awareness of language and the different types of discrimination.

inclusion group which will include the Chairs / leads of Swan's employee network groups and any other Swan employees who want to join. Swan currently has three employee network groups (as follows) and are also in the process of launching a Menopause employee group:

- SwanProud (which focus on LGBT+ equality);
- Inspiring Swans (which focuses on gender equality – re-launched in 2021 with a virtual '[No More Hiding' event with life coach Gemma Stow](#));
- A new staff network that will focus on race equality.

Employee EDI Network Groups



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Swan Housing recently launched 'Belonging at Swan' initiative which focuses on inclusion and has a very simple purpose: 'Create a truly inclusive workplace that enables individuals to become the best possible version of themselves and feel at home at Swan'. They are currently finalising a new

Reporting



e: anne-marie.huff@guhg.co.uk

Grand Union Housing have published their first ethnicity pay gap report this year.



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EDI with our Employees

Belonging Group and Counselling



e: anne-marie.huff@guhg.co.uk

Grand Union Housing have a Belonging Group who meet monthly to ensure delivery of their Belonging Strategy action plan. This group are EDI Champions and Mental Health Champions. They have created a Diversity community on their intranet and invite employees to contribute. They can share their personal

experiences, or share book recommendations, educational posts on religions and festivals, or access presentations from Diversity experts. They also offer the talking therapy, Brain Working Recursive Therapy for colleagues with anxiety, PTSD and other mental health issues.

Mental Health Champions



e: melissa.rollison@broadlandgroup.org

Broadland Housing Association have a group of 8 colleagues who are their trained Mental Health Champions (MHCs) formed in late 2018. These individuals, who come from across the organisation, applied for the positions and after an informal / relaxed selection process underwent thorough training (8 days in total) to give them core skills to offer support to their colleagues. They do this by regularly providing messages to the staff group, sharing top tips or supportive messages as well as useful

information on a range of subjects. They also offer of a 1:1 welfare conversation should anyone need it. Over the last 2+ years, several colleagues have reached out to a MHC. The MHCs meet regularly together and plan/discuss initiatives they can promote – as well as providing a great support network for each other.



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EDI with our Employees

Ensuring EDI is Ingrained into Business Culture

swan
somewhere to feel at home

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Swan Housing's EDI Manager works closely with their People Team, Communications Team, Network Groups and other colleagues to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is part of Swan's DNA. They do this in various ways including:

- Their annual Diversity Day – you can read more about their 2021 Diversity Day [here](#)
- Using various awareness days / weeks / months to share content and stories on their intranet and through Swan E-News, their internal weekly e-newsletter. Where appropriate content is also shared externally via social media.
- Mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training for all staff

They also have a strong focus on wellbeing – including mental health, menopause and domestic abuse through, for example:

- Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Mental health training for all employees
- Mental Health First Aiders
- Webinars on various topics including stress, menopause etc.

- Promotion of Swan's Employee Assistance Programme
- Wellbeing Wednesdays – an initiative through which all employees can take an hour out of each working week to do something (anything) that will contribute positively to their wellbeing.

Conscious Inclusion for Leaders



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Bpha held an externally led session for their leaders on conscious inclusion in September 2021. This encouraged their leaders to consider and share their own experiences around inclusion and prejudice, and how to apply a broader perspective when considering the impact of decisions and actions.



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EDI with our Employees

Human Library Training



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Saffron Housing Trust have commissioned the human library organisation for three days training and awareness in March 2022 for 200 staff across the five members of Independent East including **Freebridge Community Housing**.

The Human Library Organisation will run 3 sessions for 70 staff based on their library and book depository concept. Staff will be invited to join the sessions

and borrow the human books. The human books have a wide range of titles including disability, refugees, transgender people, people with mental health issues, body modifications and eating disorders. Staff will be able to ask the human books questions about their lives and lived experience to expand their awareness and understanding of what inclusion and being yourself really means.

Menopause Champions



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Statistics from the British Menopause Society show that although 25% of women go through the menopause without any symptoms, 75% experience symptoms that can last for several years. There are 34 possible symptoms, all of which can be distressing and have a negative impact on performance at work.

Flagship Group have 23 trained Menopause Champions, who are available to speak with individuals, teams and managers to provide information, guidance and support. Their support is paramount in enabling women to navigate through the symptoms whilst limiting any negative impacts.



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EDI with our Employees

Neuro-diversity Awareness

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Hundred Houses Society have provided Neuro-Diversity Awareness training to all their employees. The training was delivered by [Nathan Whitbread](#). Whilst neuro-diversity affects us all they have over 10% of employees who identify as neuro-divergent. Nathan is now providing coaching and mentoring to both employees and their managers to identify

practical strategies for better working together. Their Board will receive a similar session. They are now considering how they broaden their understanding to integrate with cognitive diversity and the benefits that derive from that. It has also encouraged them to review their leadership styles and how they can support neuro-diversity and cognitive diversity.

Value Everyone Group

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settle have a variety of initiatives that bring EDI into the business, such as an EDI Policy and Strategy, Lunch and Learns and an EDI Training Plan. They also have a colleague led EDI advisory group that take the lead on co-ordinating diversity and inclusion events and initiatives and provide a point of consultation on our EDI strategy and the equality impact of new policies or processes. Chaired by the EDI co-ordinator, they meet every 6 weeks and is attended by colleagues from across settle, with representatives from different departments and roles. The group has

facilitated a variety of awareness building exercises, in particular the sharing of personal stories which has resulted in increased organisational awareness on topics such as Autistic Spectrum Disorder, hearing loss and post-traumatic stress disorder. The group has also been a point of consultation for policies and decision-making processes. They have also produced a short diversity and inclusion film to set out our commitment to equal opportunity, maintaining inclusive environments and tackling discrimination and prejudice.



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EDI in Our Communities

Signing Local Pledges:

Orwell Housing have signed up to two pledges; Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Gender Equality in Business and Suffolk Pride Pledge.

Watford Community Housing are proud sponsors of Hertfordshire Pride 2021 and have signed up to the following pledges: Disability Confident, Houseproud and Harry's Pledge.

Swan Housing are signatories to a number of diversity pledges, including:

- BITC Race at Work Charter
- Halo Code
- Future of London Speaker Diversity Pledge
- HouseProud Pledge (pictured) scheme – they were one of the first seven organisations in the country to be awarded Pledge Pioneer status and have sponsored Essex Pride every year since 2015.
- Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme
- Disability Confident (They are working towards becoming a Disability Confident leader)
- Make a Stand Pledge (CIH / Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance)

They are also looking into the possibility of working with a number of organisations to further increase the diversity of their workforce including Women Into Construction and Ambitious about Autism.





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Accreditations and Awards



Orwell Housing have looked at expanding their accreditation in order to ensure they align with best practice and are aware of any gaps. This includes progressing Disability Confident to L3, gaining a 'MYND' accreditation, trained Wellbeing Champions across the business, HDN DNA accreditation started in September and Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Gender Equality in Business.



Saffron Housing Trust have joined the Inclusive Employers group and are working towards an accreditation with them. Their step-by-step, evidence-based accreditation tool covers all protected characteristics and wider inclusion and diversity issues.



Estuary Housing Trust is proud to be a member of the CIH - Charter for Housing Equality and Diversity. This forms part of their engagement strategy with their residents and their commitment to ensuring all residents have fair and equal access to services, and communities. They are also an accredited Disability Confident Employer and work with an amazing partner ([Networx Recruitment](#)) who manage their campaigns with their own level of EDI knowledge and experience supporting all potential candidates to both apply and successfully obtain a role with Estuary.



Watford Community Housing created and supported a tenant led Single Parents Network (Solo Stars), which was shortlisted for an EDI award by the NHF.



Swan Housing are members of the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) and hold the HDN accreditation for excellence in equality and diversity. They initially achieved this accreditation in 2016 with five distinctions for good practice and were reaccredited in 2019 with eight distinctions for good practice.