

Respect & Inclusion Strategy

2021-2025





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Why do we need a strategy?

We share a mantra here: Doing the right thing. At Housing 21 we recognise the importance of championing respect and inclusion throughout everything we do and that it is absolutely the right thing to do – but we know we're not there yet. By ensuring that we are a diverse and inclusive organisation we can ensure we can continually improve in meeting the needs of our people now and into the future; ensure we are an attractive place to live and work; ensure everybody who lives and works with us has a positive experience.

What do we mean by Respect & Inclusion?

Commonly, when we talk about Respect & Inclusion, we can draw straight line to the Equality Act 2010. This is a piece of British legislation that aims to protect people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation, in addition to promoting equality of opportunity for all.

There are nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Outside of the Act there are a host of 'characteristics' that are also commonly subjected to prejudice and unfair treatment either consciously or unconsciously which can lead to inequality.

It is important to consider these too as treating people with respect and ensuring their inclusion isn't just for those who are protected by law but also for those who have had different experiences or perspectives. There are many other characteristics that could be included:

- Ex offenders
- Social mobility
- Mental health & wellbeing
- Ex Armed Forces
- Appearance
- Experience
- Thought

Other legislations that inform the way we approach Respect & Inclusion include The Human Rights Act 1998, **The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, and the Equal Pay Act 1970.**

We know that treating all of our residents and employees in the same way will result in inequalities. This strategy seeks to change that.

Our Respect & Inclusion vision:

Housing 21 is recognised as an overt **champion** for Respect & Inclusion, with the **diversity** of our **people** and **residents** fundamentally important to our **success**.

At Housing 21 we are all driven by doing the right thing: for our people, our residents and our partners. Over recent years, people have become more aware of the strengths diversity of thought and culture bring to organisations.

By recognising the value that diversity brings we can better understand our people, both employees and residents, the impact of our decisions, and attract more people to live and work with us.

Increased diversity of thought can help us be to more innovative and make better decisions.



Where are we now?

Over the last three years we have formed several Respect and Inclusion-based networks covering a number of characteristics, including Gender/Gender Reassignment, LGBT, Age, Disability, Religion & Race. Additionally, we have developed workstreams in mental health, with a group of Mental Health First Aiders and our Financial Wellbeing Network. We also created a menopause action group of 'Menovists,' who have supported employees by building a new policy and keeping the conversation alive. Extra Care has also formed their own generalist Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Network, who have helped to support diverse interview panels and feed into bespoke training.

We have launched our first cohousing projects, whereby we work closely with local communities to design new homes framed around promoting the benefits of living in a community, which brings with it a sense of wellbeing and belonging. Our future work in will focus on areas in the lowest five categories of the English Indices of Deprivation and/or where 30% of the population is identified as from a minority ethnic group.

We have a learning package covering equality, diversity and inclusion from the perspective of the Equality Act 2010, which grounds employees in the necessities of compliance with legislation, with regard to discrimination, harassment and victimisation. All Housing 21 employees are required to take this learning every two years. All those with line management responsibility are expected to complete face to face training in 'Inclusive Leadership,' which explores the implicit associations that can lead to biased decision making.

We have aligned with many national events, such as Pride, by adopting iconography or temporarily altering our logo. This helps to position our brand and demonstrates that we respect celebrations of diversity and that we recognise the disadvantages of various groups. On occasion, we have issued communications in response to seismic events, such as the killing of George Floyd in the US. Although we issued a communication in support of Black people everywhere, and in recognition of ongoing inequalities against Black people in the England, some of our employees and residents felt that this was a political move, suggesting we need to be clearer in our messaging.

Although we do hold some data on our employees and residents, it is patchy at best and not always synchronised, meaning we ask slightly different questions on our equality monitoring forms for each group. Although this may seem like a minor point, it makes both measuring representation across our people and residents, and comparisons with big data, such as census results very difficult. Also, this means that some of our residents and employees may not find a category that represents them. Additionally, our ethnicity pay gap reporting is unreliable without comprehensive ethnicity data on our workforce. Without accurate and clear data, measuring the impact of our decisions, or planning ahead in an equitable way becomes very difficult.

Our Four Principles:

We have devised a series of fundamental Respect and Inclusion principles to underpin our thinking and that will help us to embed inclusive thinking into the DNA of Housing 21.

“I called up a Housing organisation and spoke to a receptionist to ask who was in charge of EDI. She replied that they were all responsible for EDI there.”

Lucy Malarkey, Positive About Inclusion

1. Respect & Inclusion is not standalone but is embedded in all of our activities

We expect all of our residents, employees and partners to recognise their personal responsibility to create a respectful and inclusive environment and to take the necessary measures to create a positive culture.

2. Differences in our employees and our residents are actively encouraged, recognised and appreciated and we strive to take value from them

Different perspectives are important and we know that seeking a range of viewpoints and experiences can improve the service we offer. Learning from each other enables us to develop confidence and understanding as we recognise that people come with a host of experiences which sometimes require a personalised approach.

3. We develop understanding through insights and robust data

To challenge groupthink and make the best decisions, we must create platforms for diverse input to be heard, engaging with different communities and perspectives as a matter of course. We must also understand the characteristics and experiences that make up our people and residents.

4. Respect & Inclusion is a continual journey and will require ongoing activity and a clear, overt organisational stance

The Respect and Inclusion landscape is forever changing, with new terminology, activities and celebrations all maturing over time. We know much more about equality now than we did 10 years ago and it is likely that things will continue to change in future. We will keep up to date with best practice to ensure we are creating the most positive environment possible for our residents and employees.



Our Priorities

In order to help us achieve our vision we have identified four key priorities.

Priority One



Housing 21 has an inclusive working culture

We want our people to be excited about the opportunities that good Respect and Inclusion practice brings.

For a culture to be inclusive, we must empower our people with the facts, knowledge and experience they need to create sustainable success. We know that diverse organisations make better decisions and so we must ensure our people feel comfortable to bring their whole selves to work, that we actively seek their perspectives and encourage them to be the best they can be. We must also ensure that as an employer and a provider of quality homes, we attract those from diverse groups and those with differing characteristics to come and work or live with us.

Whether a resident, an employee, or a partner everybody has a home here.





Actions:

We will do this by:

We will create an inclusive culture by:

- Cultivating employee EDI network groups that are sponsored by senior leaders and can support with the delivery of awareness raising, reviewing policies and procedures, and developing guidance
- Providing pathways to progression for our diverse employees to ensure we are doing the best for our people and giving everyone the chance to succeed
- Creating an excellent experience for our employees that have disabilities by identifying and removing barriers and tackling ablism
- Reviewing our existing policies for impact on experience of diverse groups and creating new policy and guidance where there are gaps
- Conducting a tone of voice review to identify the impact of how we speak to our employees in our imagery and communications
- Introducing more inclusive recruitment practices with a root and branch review on the way selection is currently undertaken and making a series of recommendations unique to each business stream
- Ensuring that the language we use is inclusive and that we do not make microaggressions that will impact on our diverse employees
- Getting it right from the start by building a comprehensive diversity induction process so that expectations are clear.

Delivering these initiatives will result in:

- ✔ More diverse talent pipelines that will help us to meet our leadership diversity targets
- ✔ Employees who feel confident in their prospects
- ✔ A shared belief from employees that diversity is important to the organisation
- ✔ Reduced opportunities for bias in hiring processes and an improved diversity of applicants
- ✔ Increased confidence in calling out inequalities or discrimination
- ✔ An improvement in our gender pay gap

Priority Two



We will support an amazing experience for residents of all characteristics

We recognise that a positive experience of older adult living will mean different things to different people. No research into the diverse needs of older adults has been done since 1998 and we think the time to change that is now. We want to ensure that we can provide the best experience possible for people of all backgrounds, where they are afforded the standard of care which is right for them, community and support, and access to services. We will need to listen to diverse groups of adults and conduct research into their requirements.

We have already developed a Cohousing Strategy which seeks to develop intentional communities in areas where 30% of the population is identified as being from a minority ethnic group. The strategy will use the learning taken from our collaboration with diverse groups in cohousing to inform our new developments.

We fully support the commitments set out for residents in The Social Housing White Paper of November 2021 which sets out a charter for residents and comprises seven commitments that every social housing resident should expect from their landlord. Actions taken to support these commitments are embedded within this priority.





Actions:

We will do this by:

- Listening to the diverse voices of our residents by establishing new forums for engagement and involvement
- Ensuring our complaints process is effective, discreet and free from bias, alongside monitoring the diversity of complainants to check that no group is detrimentally impacted
- Developing a new resident induction process, so that our commitment to diversity is clear and our residents have access to the information they need in order to be inclusive
- Creating LGBTQ+ affirmative developments where our residents feel safe, accepted and able to thrive
- Initiating new research into the diverse needs of older adults in the 2020s, so that we can support our sector to create inclusive housing for everybody
- Developing court respect & inclusion standards that can measure the inclusivity of each of our locations and highlight areas for improvement
- Creating accessibility champions so that we respond to the needs of our residents by creating accessible information and communication
- Reviewing policies that have an impact on residents, with our diverse residents, so that every perspective is heard

Delivering these initiatives will result in:

- ✔ Diverse residents feeling that their views are listened to and that they are treated fairly and with respect
- ✔ Residents are confident in how to talk about diversity
- ✔ Our residents feel safe and able to be their whole selves
- ✔ The needs of diverse groups are collected and inform our approach to making the most inclusive homes possible

Priority Three



We will make brilliant decisions

Information and data are important to Respect & Inclusion, as without it we don't know the impact we are having or where there is cause for concern. Having a solid information base means we can produce accurate Ethnicity and Disability pay gap reports, measure progress against greater population statistics, professionally address bias, and learn from the diversity of our organisation.

Yet despite this, there are notable challenges around gaining complete data. Most prominently, there is a notable lack of trust in supplying personal information in addition to misunderstandings about its use. Additionally, many aren't certain exactly what equality monitoring questionnaires are asking, or who will see the information.

Clearer data also helps us to make the bigger organisational decisions that will impact upon large groups of people. If we don't know the characteristic make-up of the people who will be impacted, it can be difficult to analyse the effect a decision will have. Strong, reliable data means we can gain the best possible results for people whilst reducing any negative impacts.





Actions:

We will do this by:

- Creating new Respect & Inclusion impact assessments that are engaging, collaborative and rich in detail
- Developing a Respect & Inclusion steering group of senior leaders that ensure diverse priorities are always in conversation and who take on accountability for the success of diversity
- Standardising equality monitoring questions and capturing complete equality information on our residents and employees so that we have consistency across our data and we can make informed decisions when comparing with big data
- Externally benchmarking our progress so that we can continue to iterate and improve

Delivering these initiatives will result in:

- ✔ High quality analyses of the impact our decisions have on diverse people and clear actions to take to ensure we have equity
- ✔ Equality Impact analyses of areas for new development that lead to a better experience for residents
- ✔ Reliable data for our ethnicity pay gap reports, allowing for more meaningful analytics and focused action planning to close any gaps
- ✔ Senior Leaders driving diversity and inclusion in the organisation
- ✔ Actions taken to mitigate inequalities will be much more effective

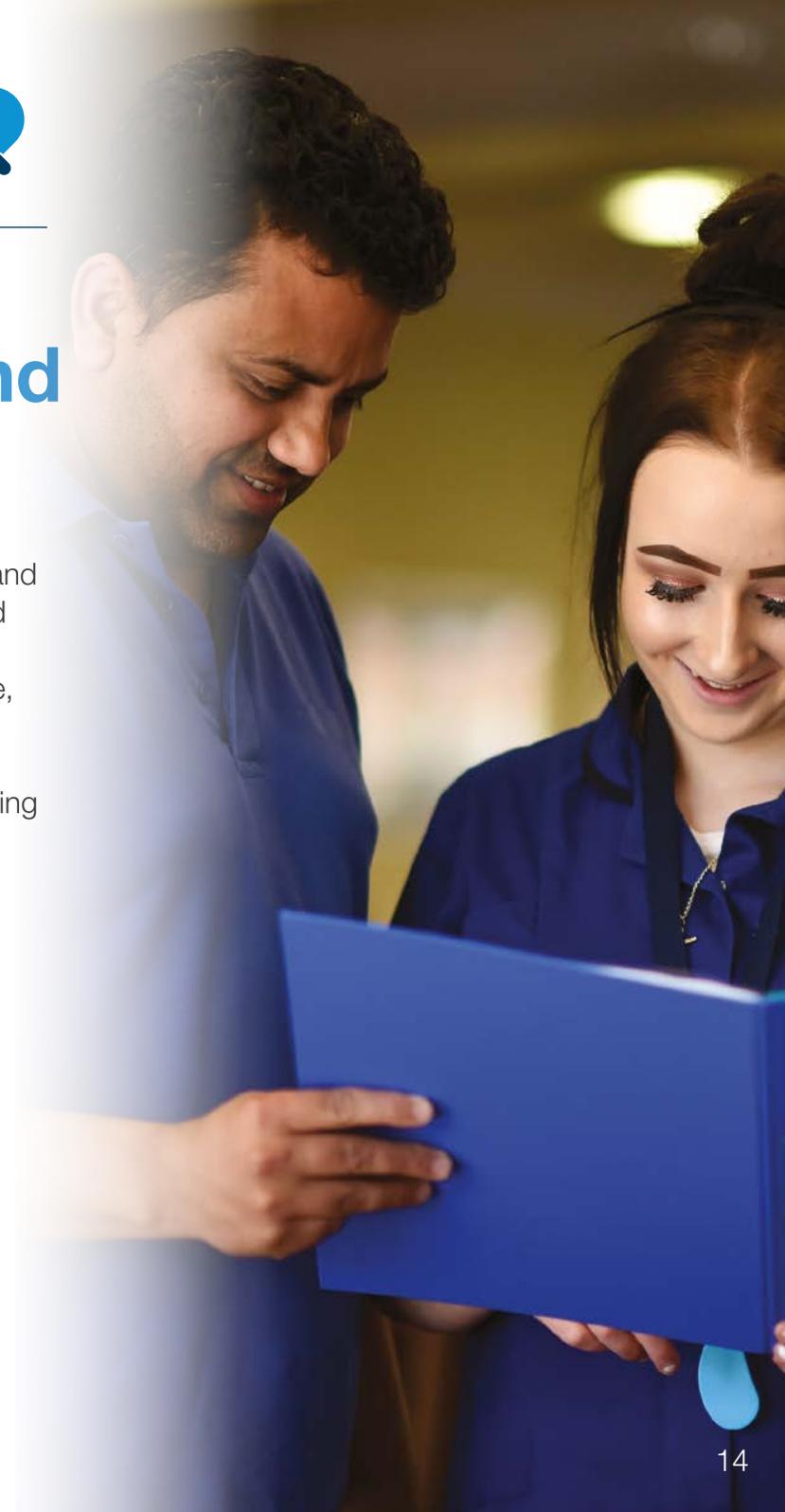
Priority Four



We are an organisation that promotes diversity and inclusion and has a clear commitment to respect

For Respect and Inclusion to become embedded in our DNA it needs to be evident in all spaces and with regularity. We must clearly set out our expectations of our employees, residents, partners and suppliers. We recognise that there are people within our sphere of influence who will need a lot of support, whether that be through clear organisational stances, or by providing advice on language, behaviours and what may qualify as discrimination.

We also know how important it is for our brand to be reflect diversity, not just as a means of showing that we value a broad range of backgrounds but also so that we can support role modelling of under-represented groups, who might never see themselves in positions of success.





Actions:

We will do this by:

- Developing an organisational charter that sets out our expectations of our employees, residents and partners and that sits prominently within our identity
- Launching '100 diverse role models' to identify and celebrate the achievements and experiences of our diverse residents and employees
- Ensuring that our website is accessible and supports our commitment to inclusion
- Developing a calendar of diversity and inclusion events and activities
- Aligning with national diversity related schemes
- Working collaboratively with suppliers and partners and considering how we can use our position to influence those who we work with

Delivering these initiatives will result in:

- ✔ A reputation and brand which clearly reflects our commitment to diversity and inclusion and where stakeholders know that we will be supporting equality and calling out inappropriate behaviours
- ✔ Residents, employees and partners know that diversity is a priority for us and that we are committed to equality of opportunity
- ✔ Acknowledgement and celebration of our diverse residents, employees and partners
- ✔ Encouragement of inclusive behaviours

Where will we be in 2025?

- Our people and our residents will feel empowered by their characteristics
- They will have the opportunity to actively shape their experiences and those of prospective Housing 21 employees and residents
- We will have an environment where diverse groups feel they belong and have the opportunity to progress
- We will highlight and celebrate the successes of diverse groups
- We will have access to trusted, accurate and more comprehensive data that can, in turn, help us to build future Respect and Inclusion strategies
- We will be recognised both internally and externally as an organisation that values diversity and supports an inclusive environment
- Housing 21 will be perceived as a highly inclusive brand and a diverse place to work and live



Our initial targets:

Our overarching target for 2022 is to achieve 95% equality monitoring data completion across our residents and employees so that we can gather a true picture of how we are currently represented. Achieving this target will allow us to set ambitious and more informed targets on areas where we currently have big gaps in our data, such as ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.

Specific targets that have been previously approved by the Extra Care, Retirement Living and Investment & Development Committees linked to this strategy are set out below.

Extra Care

15% of employees working in Extra Care are from Asian, Black and other ethnic backgrounds

15% of Care Workers to be male

15% of employees working in Extra Care to be aged between 18-24

15% of employees in leadership roles are from Asian, Black and other ethnic backgrounds

Retirement Living

100% of schemes in Retirement Living feel welcoming and inclusive to people from a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences

100% of our employees feel knowledgeable and confident in discussing respect and inclusion and ensuring a welcoming environment on their scheme

Development

Deliver **10%** of the development program each year in Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) level areas with 30% or more Black, Asian or minority ethnic population from 2024

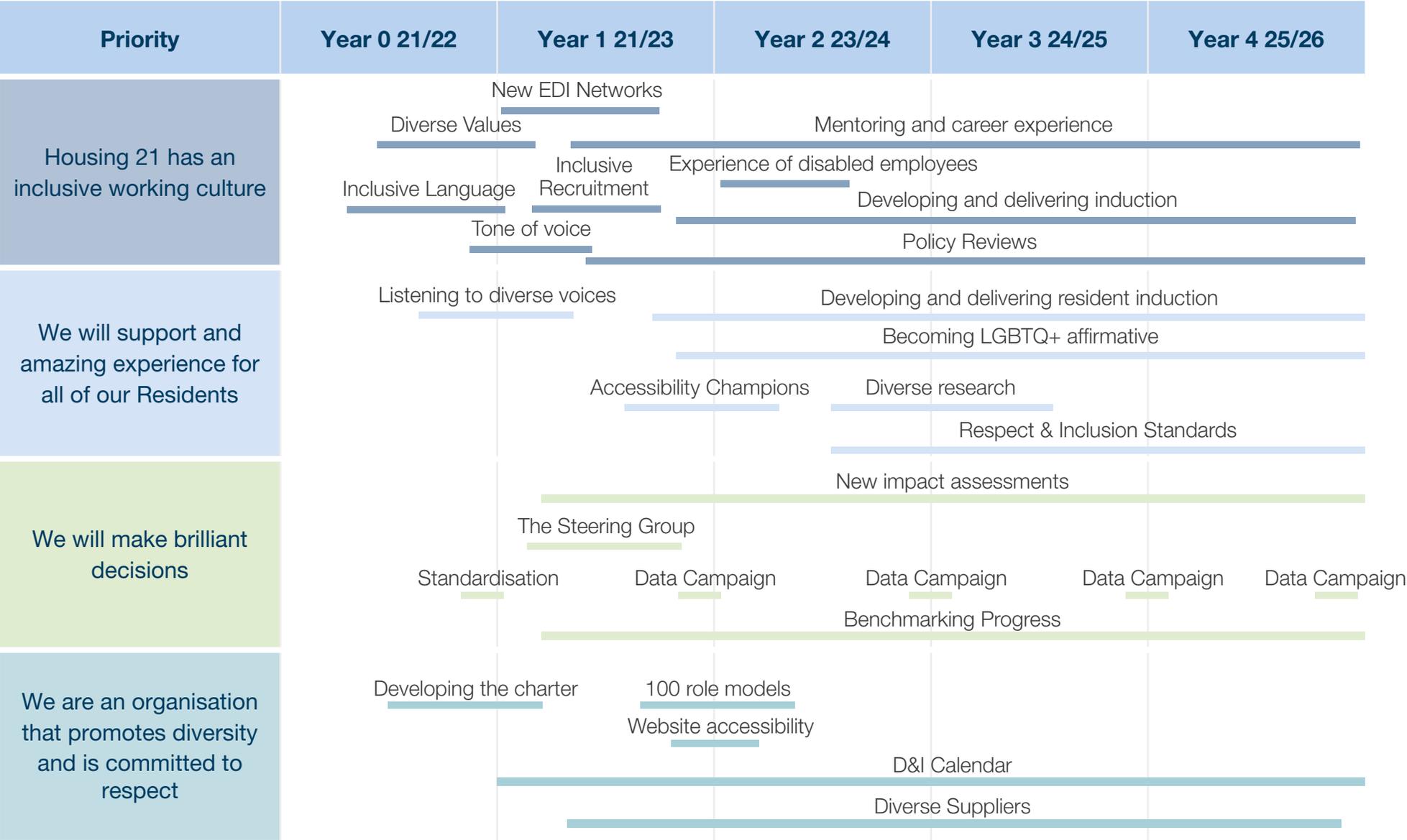
High level strategic outcomes:

- Better equality monitoring data for all employees and residents
- Better equality monitoring categories
- More opportunities for diverse employees to progress
- More equitable decisions
- Greater diversity amongst our employees and residents
- Residents and Employees are empowered to deal with and respond to discriminatory comments and behaviour

Additional Reading

- [Cohousing Strategy](#)
- [Extra Care Strategy](#)
- [Retirement Living Strategy](#)
- [Resident Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Social Housing White Paper](#)

High level road map





Housing²¹

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