

# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023/24





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# Introduction

**We are committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at the very heart of our culture. We strive to create an environment where everyone can succeed and grow together. Valuing diversity of experience is embedded in our vision and values, in our governance and strategic decisions; in how we shape services and champion positive change, and in how we support each other, our tenants, and our customers.**

## Our EDI journey so far

We know that achieving true equity is a journey, one where we will need to continually adapt our services to overcome barriers, and one whereby listening to our customer and tenant voices and learning from our colleagues, we'll continue to champion our collective diverse needs and strengths to provide the best possible services.

Our different backgrounds and experiences make us stronger together. We learn from each other, and we also recognise that we may have to do things differently to ensure that people are treated fairly. We believe that we all have a role to play in tackling inequity, which tends to impact disproportionately on people in our communities.

Our first EDI report aims to highlight our work, commitments and achievements during 2023/24 which we feel demonstrates our strong commitment to inclusion.

# Board foreword

We are delighted to present this report summarising the impactful work and achievements of the past year. Equality, diversity and inclusion are themes which run strongly through Progress Housing Group, underpinning our services and shaping our ethos and approach.

For us, EDI isn't a tick-box exercise; it defines our organisational culture, fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated and embraced. The board sets the tone, ensuring

that all our decisions consider the effects on individuals, groups and communities who may be disadvantaged or under-represented.

By welcoming and supporting EDI, we make better-informed decisions and succeed in our work. We are committed to continuing this journey to build on the excellent work already undertaken and achieve our aims.

**Maggie Shannon, Non-Executive Director and EDI Board Champion**



# Our approach to EDI



## EDI Impact Statement

In 2023, our board approved our EDI Impact Statement. It sets out our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and our principles, which guide us in providing equality of opportunity and facilities to its diverse workforce, tenant, and customer base.

**Our people promise | Progress Housing Group** ([corporate.progressgroup.org.uk/policies-and-reports/strategies/](https://corporate.progressgroup.org.uk/policies-and-reports/strategies/))



## EDI Strategy and action plan

Our 2023-2026 EDI Strategy and action plan set our EDI objectives. The action plan aims to make positive changes and create benefits for others from an EDI perspective.

**Strategies | Progress Housing Group** ([corporate.progressgroup.org.uk/about-us/our-promises/our-people-promise/](https://corporate.progressgroup.org.uk/about-us/our-promises/our-people-promise/))



## Our EDI Working Group

Our EDI action plan is monitored by our EDI Working Group which is a dedicated group of colleagues from across the organisation.

The group meets quarterly and oversees the operational delivery of the EDI Strategy and action plan. Feedback from colleagues in our 2023 Investors in People report shows that people believe that this approach to our EDI work is 'sincere and effective'.

The EDI Working Group is chaired by our Group Chief Executive, Jacqui De-Rose.

**“We all have a personal responsibility to ensure we challenge discrimination and promote equality, diversity and inclusion. At Progress, we are determined to ensure people are treated fairly and respected as fellow human beings. Many things are wrong in our society, but we are committed to ensuring we contribute to making it a fairer place for all.”**

Jacqui De-Rose, Group Chief Executive





In 2022, the Group invested in an EDI Business Partner role to support on all EDI matters across the Group.

**“The feedback we receive from the employee engagement survey and the results themselves are very encouraging and shows that our actions are benefiting our colleagues. But of course, we can and always want to do more.”**

Jude Williamson, EDI Business Partner



# Our culture

**We recognise that people from diverse backgrounds bring valuable insights and experience to the Group and enhance the way we work; creating an inclusive organisation where diversity is valued, respected and built upon, with an ability to recruit and retain a diverse workforce and board of management that reflects the communities we serve.**

We are committed to ensuring our working environment reflects our equality, diversity and inclusion objectives and to enabling a sense of belonging for our colleagues.

Our values and culture are key to supporting this.



Supported living scheme party



Celebrating Black History Month



Jude, EDI Business Partner and Typhoons RUFC Team Captains





Our culture promotes openness; we want all voices to be heard, and we encourage feedback. We value and appreciate difference and strive to create an inclusive environment in our organisation and wider communities where people can be themselves.

Colleagues are expected to take personal responsibility for inclusion, and are actively encouraged to learn about equality, diversity and inclusion at the Group.

**“Working with our board and our colleagues, we have undertaken a series of culture workshops to continue the development of our Culture Charter.”**

**Debbie Atherton, Executive Director  
(Governance, People and Communications)**



## Board Diversity Programme

2023/24 was the second and final year for three individuals completing the Group's Board Diversity Programme.

Working with Housing Diversity Network (HDN) we support trainee NEDs to improve their skills with the aim of either becoming a part of the Group's governance arrangements or moving successfully on to other boards and committees.

This year, two out of our three trainees have secured positions on our committees.

**“It’s been brilliant to have been part of bringing diversity into the boardroom. It’s so important that our boards reflect the people we support, so programmes such as this one which has provided NED opportunities for younger people, and people with different life experiences, ethnicities and backgrounds, are fantastic.**

**“I’ve got over 20 years’ experience in housing and in particular supporting people who are really in need, but I was ready to gain a deeper insight into the housing sector and thought I could bring a different perspective to the board.**

**“Working with the Group and Housing Diversity Network gave me the opportunity to observe the board and committee meetings whilst also having the support of a mentor. It’s subsequently led to me gaining a position on the RWP Committee this year.”**

**Jennifer McGuinness,  
RWP Independent Committee Member**



## Leadership, values and culture programmes

In 2022 and 2023, four culture workshops took place with a cross-representation of colleagues from across the organisation to provide insight into the Group's culture. This will help shape future initiatives and ensure our shared values and purpose are aligned with how our organisation makes people feel.

## People Strategy

People are at the heart of our organisation. We are driven by our social values and by our social purpose, which includes a genuine belief in equality and in our contribution to making a fairer society.

Our People Strategy was updated in June 2023 and shows we are on track to deliver objectives to support our colleagues.

## Employee engagement surveys

Questions on equality, diversity and inclusion are included within our colleague surveys to promote openness and transparency, maintain a 'pulse' on life at Progress, and ensure that we are hearing from our colleagues regularly so that we know that we are meeting our EDI commitment to our people. 85% of colleagues responding to our 2023 employee engagement survey agree that they can 'be themselves at work'.

## Training and learning and development

Our EDI training includes equality and diversity in the workplace, learning disability awareness, autism awareness, LGBTQ+ awareness, the uncomfortable conversation, unconscious bias and understanding inclusion and belonging.

## People Forum

The People Forum is an informative and consultative body providing an opportunity for dialogue and exchange of views between the Senior Leadership Team and employee representatives on issues of mutual concern and interest.

The People Forum represents all occupational groups of employees (excluding the Senior Leadership Team), ensuring equity is considered in the Group's decision making. This year the Forum welcomed new representatives and also provided feedback on the annual pay review and team restructures.

# Our EDI employee networks

**In addition to our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, we have several employee networks initiated by colleagues and sponsored by the Group.**

Our four employee networks meet regularly to connect colleagues, raise awareness, challenge inequality and stereotypes, increase confidence in leading conversations about EDI, offer support and guidance to colleagues through sharing their experiences and stories, and contribute to our culture approach so that colleagues feel that they can be themselves at work.







Tola Adesemowo

## Roots Network Group

“2023 was a busy year for the Roots Network. From learning about the Battle of Bamber Bridge at our Black History Month launch to making a pledge for Race Equality Week we are really trying to support our aim of ‘respecting the dignity and worth of each individual and promoting mutual respect based on understanding and valuing diversity’.

“Going into 2024, we are exploring the possibility of a multi-cultural day for colleagues to celebrate our diversity. We are also keen to learn more about our recruitment process, with a view to influencing inclusivity in recruitment.”

**Tola Adesemowo, Head of Housing Operations and Roots Network Group lead**



Diane Nash



## Carers Together Network Group

“Over the last year, the Carers Together Network has continued to provide support and a friendly ear at our informal get-togethers. It is not always what is said that provides value, but just knowing there is someone there to listen and understand as we continue our carers journeys that makes the biggest difference.

“Following feedback from members of the group we know that time is often a barrier; with this in mind we will be trialling a reduced number of get togethers over the next year, where we plan to meet every quarter at different times of day to provide the opportunity for all our carers to get involved when they can.”

**Diane Nash, Customer Voice Manager and Carers Together Network Group lead**



Carina Lynch



## Pride in Progress Network Group

“Pride in Progress has been well established since 2021 and in 2023, the network distributed rainbow lanyards as a visible sign to colleagues and customers of the Group’s inclusion and support of the LGBTQ+ community.

“Our lanyards have proven very popular across the organisation with colleagues embracing the opportunity to show their support for the LGBTQ+ community as well as adding a pop of colour to their day! We value diversity within the Group, and they are a signal of inclusivity that can be recognised by our employees, contractors, and tenants and customers to encourage everyone to be their whole self.”

**Carina Lynch, Head of Performance and Planning, RWP Group and Pride in Progress Network lead**



Catherine Parkinson

## Meno Movers Network Group

“During 2023/24, 40 colleagues joined the regular conversation on our Teams group, sharing stories, offering support, and signposting interesting information or articles. The Teams page also holds some useful resources for members to access.

“We have met for lunch, walks and talks, informal online catchups, and talks. With support from our Learning and Development Team, we helped launch the Menopause Toolkit, which is full of useful resources and conversation guides for colleagues and managers to aid open discussion and identify possible support and adjustments.

“Meno Movers has also helped broaden the conversation beyond menopause to women’s reproductive health generally, helping to raise awareness of issues like

endometriosis, painful periods, and related mental wellbeing. Throughout the year, Meno Movers helped highlight these issues on the colleague intranet, promoting women’s health training for managers and colleagues.

“For 2024/25, we intend to keep the conversation going. Our goal is to be an informal support network where people experiencing menopause can feel heard and find sources of support. We will also continue to raise awareness and help normalise conversations around menopause, health issues and mental wellbeing to help build an inclusive workplace where people feel they can be open about how they are feeling and where they may need support.”

**Catherine Parkinson, Rewards and Benefits Specialist and Meno Movers Network Group co-lead**





Kulwant and family



Annette Stevens



Progress Housing Group tenants John and Andrew

## Volunteering

In 2023, we continued our offer of one paid volunteering day per year for colleagues, and we provided opportunities throughout the year to volunteer in our communities to benefit our tenants, and the local communities that we serve.

## Policies

We have various policies in place to ensure we are meeting our commitment to equality and diversity, for our tenants and customers, and for our colleagues.

“When adopting our son, I was supported a lot through the Group’s Family Friendly Policy and my manager at the time. I was allowed time off to attend meetings and appointments before my adoption leave.”

**Kulwant Paddan, Supported Living Housing Manager**

In 2023, our Reasonable Adjustment Policy was developed which ensures that all tenants have equitable access to the services that we provide and that we can tailor services to meet need. Our approach helps tenants to sustain their tenancies, safeguards our tenants, helps promotes wellbeing, independence and opportunities, and contributes to achieving our vision.

“We will, where required, make any reasonable adjustments to facilitate access to all the services we provide.”

**Annette Stevens, Director (Housing Operations, RWP)**

## Equality impact assessments

To support us in developing effective policies, in 2023 we reviewed our equality impact assessment (EIA) process, helping ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion remains central to our operations. EIAs help align our strategies, policies, services and functions with their intended purpose, benefitting everyone.



## DFN Project SEARCH - providing diverse opportunities

Now in our third year, we have partnered with DFN Project SEARCH, Runshaw College, South Ribble Borough Council (SRBC), Lancashire County Council, and the Department for Work and Pensions to offer 25 young adults aged 17-21 with a learning disability or autism a year-long training and employment internship.

The internships provide work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills, to help our young learners transition successfully from college to paid employment.

In 2023 eight interns graduated, two have secured roles within the Group, three with SRBC and one has an apprenticeship with the BBC.

**“In my internship at Progress I worked in various roles, from housing operations to recruitment to marketing and communications - and it gave me the opportunity to get stuck into the world of work and learn as much as I could.**

**“It was a dream come true when I successfully got the BBC apprenticeship after my internship.”**

George, BBC Production Fast Track Apprentice at BBC Audio North.

**Making Progress - George**



# Recruitment

**We are a Disability Confident Employer, committed to inclusive recruitment practices and supporting applicants with disabilities. We're also proud to be an Age Positive Employer, actively encouraging applications from individuals over 50.**

We understand that our strength lies in the diversity of our people and is critical to the success and growth of our organisation. Our goal is to create diverse teams, recognising the richness and benefits that diversity of experience, skills, and cultural backgrounds can bring to our organisation.

In 2023, we launched our new application tracking system which enables us to more effectively support applicants who may require additional assistance and revised our job postings to include inclusive language and introduced bias-reduced hiring practices. Where possible, our interview panels include members from diverse backgrounds.

We foster an inclusive workplace by implementing robust strategies within our recruitment processes. However, we acknowledge that data collection remains a challenge, limiting our ability to measure the full impact of our diversity initiatives.

We are committed to improving our metrics and analytics, refining our recruitment strategies, expanding mentorship programmes for underrepresented employees and strengthening community outreach.





## Our recruitment processes

We aim for every employee to progress and enjoy their career with us, and we are committed to maintaining an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcomed and valued.

We continuously review our recruitment processes to ensure they remain inclusive and accessible. Over the coming year, we plan to introduce further innovations to our recruitment methods.

'We are committed to attracting diverse and capable talent whose personal values align to the organisational values.'

**People Strategy (2023)**



## Gender pay gap

Our 2023 Gender Pay Gap Report shows a mean pay gap of 6.9% (remained the same from 2022) and a median pay gap of 14.8% (up from 10.8% in 2022).

We publish our full report on our website annually.

**Gender Pay Gap Report - November 2023**



## Ethnicity pay gap

The ethnicity pay gap reporting is being developed and for 2023 we can report a mean pay gap of 4.6% (down from 6.5% in 2022) and median pay gap of 0.0% (down from 3.4% in 2022).

# Diversity statistics - employees

December 2023

Working pattern	Age range	Head count	%
Part-time 21%	Age range 16-24	Head count 27	3%
Full-time 79%	Age range 25-34	Head count 120	14%
	Age range 35-44	Head count 243	28%
	Age range 45-54	Head count 213	25%
	Age range 55-64	Head count 201	24%
	Age range 65 and over	Head count 42	5%
	Age range unknown	Head count 8	1%
Gender	Ethnicity	LGBTQ+	
Female 55%	2.93% ethnic minority	3.04% LGBTQ+	
Male 45%	68.62% white	65.81% heterosexual	
	28.45% prefer not to say	31.15% prefer not to say	
Disability as declared by individuals			
92.86% not disabled			
7.14% disabled			

The percentages of declaration rates across the following protected characteristics show a percentage of the number of declarations on our people and culture systems, rather than a percentage of our total workforce.



# Wellbeing

**“The wellbeing of our people is paramount. We recognise the importance of wellbeing in helping to sustain a positive culture to enhance the health and wellbeing of our colleagues.”**

**Catherine Parkinson,  
Rewards and Benefits Specialist**





Colleagues at our annual Colleague One Team event



Anthony Johnson

## Wellbeing outcomes

In 2023, we focused on strengthening the relationship between EDI and wellbeing, promoting opportunities for social connection and peer support, and equipping colleagues with the tools and resources they need to support their own wellbeing (and that of colleagues, family and friends).

As part of this we developed a menopause toolkit, introduced four weeks paid paternity leave, rolled out free period products in the workplace, provided financial and pension webinars, developed a wellbeing library and published frequent wellbeing articles and promotions on the intranet.

## Wellbeing Champions

Our 24 Wellbeing Champions offer a listening ear and signpost to appropriate support, as well as taking an active role in developing and implementing wellbeing initiatives. Mental health first aid trained, they are a point of contact for colleagues experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress.



“Through the years I’ve struggled with my own mental health. My girlfriend also recently passed away very unexpectedly - so, as a Wellbeing Champion, if I can now help other people with what I’ve learned from my own experiences, then I’ll feel like I’ve done something really worthwhile for others.

“Although it has started to get better in recent years, working in trades, there can still be a bit of stigma about opening up or talking about mental health, so I wanted to be part of supporting people in our area of work, and promoting the Wellbeing Champions and the help that’s out there for people.”

**Anthony Johnson, Lead Tradesperson - Joiner, and Wellbeing Champion**



## Accessible spaces

We have committed to making our offices and community spaces as accessible as possible, and being a carer friendly employer.

As part of our Purple Tuesday pledge - we commissioned an accessibility review of our reception area. This will inform redevelopment plans in the future.

Our buildings have level access, lift access, accessible toilets and accessible welfare and contemplation areas. We have private breastfeeding rooms and quiet/low-level noise spaces.

## Employer brand

During 2023, we worked on raising awareness of our employee experience and unique employer offer, focusing on the Group's values and culture. Our employer brand communications are inclusive and accessible, reflecting our colleagues' diversity of origin, identity, thinking and lived experience. This can be seen in our employee-generated content and stories of equality and diversity on our website.

An internal project is in development to build on our employer brand and to develop our employee value proposition to continue to attract diverse talent to the organisation, promote our values, culture and reputation to position us as an employer of choice, and enhance our employee experience for our existing colleagues.

# What Progress feels like

**“Lovely place to work and that comes from the top. Jacqui is so approachable and sets the tone for everyone.”**

Investors in People report, 2023

**“I like the ethics of the Group and the way they treat employees - they’ve shown that they are really concerned about people’s wellbeing.”**

Investors in People report, 2023

**“Fantastic employee benefits and it’s a really inclusive organisation to work for.”**

One Team colleague event, 2023

**“The values are absolutely clear in everything here. You are encouraged to carry the values with you through the day and beyond.”**

Investors in People report, 2023

**“I feel proud to be part of an organisation that promotes diversity, that provides diverse services and accommodation for people with disabilities, and that shows in lots of other ways how they support equality, diversity and inclusion.”**

One Team colleague event, 2023

**“I’ve seen lots of improvements over recent years - for example with increased mental health and wellbeing support and services available to colleagues. Progress has gone the extra mile in giving assistance to employees where it’s needed.”**

Investors in People report, 2023



# Our homes and communities

Our core purpose is that of a social housing provider, and we deliver services that reflect the needs of those we serve and help tackle inequality and disadvantage in our society.

Our response to the Better Social Housing Review and the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) consumer standards means that we are working with our tenants more than ever to improve and tailor our services and responses to meet our tenants' individual requirements and deliver our services more equitably.

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code also places greater emphasis on how we learn from complaints, and we've been strengthening our approach, demonstrating and evidencing how we have listened and acted upon the voice of our tenants and customers.

## **Based on tenants' feedback, in 2023, we:**

- created more information in Easy Read, large print and clear print format for tenancy information
- produced animated video explainers for audio and captions for key tenancy management information
- created accessible information in Easy Read and video format to address a challenging no access compliance check and support tenants to understand the electrical testing process
- introduced a Tenant Disability Group, who will play a role in ensuring that our services are equitable, accessible and supportive for everyone.



Progress Community Champions Awards 2023

# Homes



## Person-centred repairs and maintenance

Our repairs and maintenance service takes a person-centred approach, and all our programmes consider the individual needs of tenants, whether this be when completing a planned replacement such as a bathroom and offering level access or installing doors with low/no thresholds for example.

The same approach applies to our responsive repairs service, offering extended appointment hours to cater for a wider variety of needs, or on a more practical level, offering alternatives, such as Disability Discrimination Act-compliant window handles and restrictors for tenants with



limited dexterity. In addition, our repair priorities place a great emphasis on working with tenants with disabilities, and the contractors we used are appointed based on their experience of working with tenants with such needs.

We work with external partners where required and offer core services to respond to the changing needs, aspirations and quality of life of our tenants and customers.

We provide an aids and adaptations service to meet the changing needs of our tenants with disabilities over their lifetime and help them maintain their independence.



## Social housing

As a social housing provider, we play a key part in tackling the chronic housing shortage. In 2023, our stock included more than 6,400 general needs and independent living homes for social and affordable rent.



## Shared ownership, refuge, supported housing

**Shared ownership:** With over 325 shared ownership and supported shared ownership homes in 2023, we supported people to buy their own home in an area they want without having to save for a large deposit or having to secure a large, standard mortgage.

**Refuge:** We provide safe accommodation to women and families at our refuges in Chorley and South Ribble. In 2023, new

kitchens and bathrooms were fitted and we achieved Women's Aid Accreditation for our domestic abuse services.

**Supported housing:** We continued to support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including the provision of supported housing, through our charity arm, Key Unlocking Futures.





## RWP, supported living and specialised supported living

RWP is the Group's provider of supported living for people with a learning disability, autistic people and those with a mental health condition, managing 4,272 supported living tenancies.

Supported living enables people to live independently in the local community - our RWP tenants can choose high-quality housing and, in most cases, choose a support provider or a care organisation for their daily personal care.

Specialised supported living is where housing is adapted to meet a tenant's needs. We are one of the country's leading providers of this type of housing.



## Lancaster Extra Care

In 2023, we started work on our Extra Care scheme at Lancaster, which will include wheelchair-friendly apartments and affordable rent housing. It's our first large-scale Extra Care scheme. It will offer people aged 55 and over the opportunity to enjoy an active and more independent lifestyle in their own homes with the reassurance of care and support from an on-site team as and when needed.



## Independent living

We offer independent living accommodation for people who are aged over 55. We offer communal facilities and 24-hour emergency alarms.



# Diversity statistics - tenants

**As of April 2023, the Group held 52% of characteristic information about our tenants. This percentage of known characteristic data varies across categories.**

## Gender and household

- 55.1% of tenants are female
- 44.8% of tenants are male
- 0.1% of tenants are transgender.

Of the 11,243 tenanted homes, 29.1% are households with children, and 81.1% are single-person households. 27.7% of single-person households are people aged 60 or over.

## Ethnicity

5.8% of tenants consider themselves to be from an ethnic minority background.

## Disability

82.5% of tenants within the homes we manage (known response from 32% of tenants) state that they have some form of disability.





## Customer voice

Working with our tenants and communities as a means of advocating inclusivity is of particular importance. We work with our tenants and customers on community-led projects, forum groups and scrutiny activity to provide feedback on how services provided can be improved. The initiatives we promote seek to raise awareness to break down barriers.

We collect EDI data on attendees which informs us that we have a balanced representation for age and gender, but we need to improve our reach for ethnicity and disability.

We host an annual cultural and community celebration event, bringing people together and celebrating our diverse communities with all the activities and support they have to offer.





Celebrating at the Soup Dragon's Den event



Members of Tenants' Voice - Improving Services group

## Tenant Sustainability Team

We support households through early intervention and improve tenancy sustainability in the first 12 months.

Newly formed in 2023, our Tenant Sustainability Service provides financial, practical and emotional support to new tenants and ensuring existing tenants are fully supported so they can maintain their tenancies.

Through the Tenant Support Fund, the service has awarded more than £129,000 and supported more than 350 households since April 2023.

## Tenant Disability Network

A Tenant Disability Network is one of our new initiatives for 2023/24 that aims to foster collaboration, understanding and communication between the Group and our tenants. It is still in its initial phase of development, with meetings now planned quarterly across the region. The hybrid meeting approach enables tenants to join the conversation in-person or remotely.

## Tenants' Voice - Improving Services

Tenants' Voice - Improving Services is our tenant-led scrutiny group. It completes reviews on different areas of the organisation to identify what we do well and make recommendations for improvements in areas where we could do better.

## Tenant committees

In 2023, we approved plans to set up tenant committees to improve representation at a strategic and influential level.

These committees will look at the way we do things and enhance how our tenants can help us to improve our services. The purpose of the committees will be to help listen to the customer and tenant voice. Our aim is to have tenants on our committees by autumn 2024.



Key Unlocking Futures

## Key Unlocking Futures (Key)

Key provides prevention and critical support to people in our communities, helping people in crisis through their services, which include:

- The Base Community Centre and low-cost community food shop
- Support to those living in our supported housing accommodation and young people who are homeless
- Women's refuge accommodation
- Employment coaching
- Counselling.

Key trains its employees in autism awareness and transgender non-binary awareness, ensuring we deliver a tailored service for all.

## Progress Lifeline

Our technology enabled care service provides lifeline alarms, telecare and 24/7 emergency home response for people of any age who require peace of mind, assurance or additional support to live independently.

## Progress Futures

Through Progress Futures, we work with our tenants and their families to enhance opportunities and provide access to resources and support. Tenants are offered advice and support, tailored specifically to peoples' needs, to increase their chances of gaining employment, develop their skills and obtain further training or qualifications.

We recognise that people living in social rented housing are more likely to experience poverty, social exclusion and worklessness compared to people living in other tenures.

In 2023, Progress Futures launched Brighter Futures, a programme which provides six-month fully paid work placements for Progress Housing Group tenants to gain relevant skills and experience to help them achieve their goals, prepare for the future and back into employment.



Alex Bailey

"The Job Centre signposted me to Progress Futures who supported me to apply for a Brighter Futures opportunity. I felt nervous because it had been over ten years since I had been through an application process for a new job, but I was successful in the interview, and I've been part of the People and Culture Team for four months now.

"This role has been a chance for me to grow and develop professionally. I feel I have grown more and more confident. I'm still learning about different parts of the organisation, but I absolutely love this job and the team I work with."

**Alex Bailey, Talent Administrator  
(Brighter Futures)**





Typhoons RUFC

## Social value

Social value is important in demonstrating the difference we can make through the provision of services. Our social value work includes supporting our tenants, investing in new and existing homes, volunteering and investing in community projects - amongst much more.

Some of our social value projects for 2023/24 included community clean-up days, funding youth projects across South Ribble and Fylde, and working with local policing teams and councils to create positive communities and tackle hate crimes and anti-social behaviour.

“We believe in building stronger communities that work together to take pride in the areas they live.

“We want our tenants and residents to

feel empowered to look out for each other and report anti-social behaviour.

“The work we do in the community builds on this and goes some way to creating happy and safe places to live.”

**David Prew, Community Safety Manager**

We were also delighted to fund and fit a new oven in our Wade Hall Community Centre to support community cooking sessions.

“Our Wednesday group uses the kitchen for the back-to-basics sessions and it is so much better. The double oven gives us extra space, so our group can bake so much more. It makes such a difference. We love it.”

**Joan Musker, Chairperson, Wade Hall Community Association**



Culture and Community Celebration event

## Community centres

We provide funding for four community centres in Lancashire where tenants and residents run their own activities to benefit everyone in the community.

The Base, owned by Progress Housing Group and managed by Key Unlocking Futures, supports more than 700 people living in Broadfield, Leyland.

This year, we finished renovating two unused shops to open a new community centre, The Base 2, which will enable more tenants and residents to access the centre's services and support including: a larger community café and shop, a laundry facility to alleviate the financial burden of energy costs, a larger kitchen space to support eating and cooking sessions, and a community hub.





## Typhoons RUFC

We are passionate about supporting our local communities and delivering on our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and were delighted to extend our sponsorship of inclusive rugby club Typhoons RUFC into autumn 2024.

Typhoons RUFC regularly engage with local communities in and around Lancashire and support their members through their own mental or physical health challenges.

**“The support we have received from local businesses has been invaluable. It provides valuable funds, which helps our club grow, and it signals to our players that their community values them. Partnering with Progress Housing Group has meant so much to our growing team and makes sure we’re able to help more people than ever before.”**

**Kris Barber-Midgley, Typhoons RUFC**



# Our partnerships

We believe we can achieve more by working in partnership and bringing people together.

We work closely with our external partners, including local authorities, commissioners, the police, NHS, groups and charities such as Stop Social Housing Stigma, Learning Disability and Autism Housing Network (LDAHN), Mencap, and the Housing Diversity Network (HDN) amongst others, to ensure we have access to expert and up-to-date information for our tenants and customers.

Working collaboratively in this way also helps us extend our services out into our communities and reach more people who may be some of the most disadvantaged in our societies, or have different accessibility requirements, and help them get the right, expert, help and information they need.



## Accessible communications

We make sure our communications meet the needs of physically, learning and sensory disabled tenants and customers.

We have guidelines in place to support colleagues in providing accessible and inclusive written, digital and image-based communications. We work with tenants and customers to regularly review

communications such as letters, newsletters, websites, information leaflets and performance information.

We offer voice interpretation services via Language Line and BSL services.

Where possible, we provide tenancy information in accessible formats as standard, including Easy Read, large print, audio, captioned and clear print.



# EDI highlights 2023/24

**Typhoons RUFC  
sponsorship**

**One Team  
Colleague event**

**Cultural and  
Community  
Celebration event**

**DFN Project  
SEARCH partnership**

**South Asian  
Heritage Month**

**Big Team Walking  
Challenge**

**Black History Month**

**LGBTQ+ History  
Month**

**International  
Women's Day**

**National Supported  
Internship Day**

**Board Diversity  
Programme**

**Paternity leave  
extension**

**Meno Movers  
Network established**

**LGBTQ+ lanyards  
distribution**

**Easy Read/clear print  
communications  
project**

**Tenant Disability  
Network created**

# Accreditations, pledges and commitments

**We're proud to be recognised as a fair and inclusive employer by the following external organisations:**

- ISO9001
- Investors in People - Silver
- Living Wage
- Disability Confident
- Age Friendly
- Customer Service Excellence.

**In addition, our list of pledges, commitments, accreditations and awards aligned with our values and our commitment to equality and diversity include:**

- Disability Confident Employer
- Time for Change
- Dementia Friends
- Age Friendly Employer
- Starts at Home
- Purple Tuesday
- Supported Housing in Partnership (SHiP).

**Memberships:**

- Learning Disability England (LDE)
- Learning Disability and Autism Housing Network (LDAH)
- Voluntary Organisations Disability Group (VODG)
- Housing Diversity Network
- Stop Social Housing Stigma.



# Reflections and continued focus

**We are proud to highlight in this, our first EDI annual report, our achievements during 2023/24 in driving our EDI agenda.**

This report demonstrates our commitment to promoting EDI and a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from diverse backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to our organisation and enhance the way we work. The range of our activities from how we provide services to our tenants, how our network groups respond to colleagues needs, how we recruit, and how we work in partnership with external agencies underpins our EDI approach.

Whilst we are proud of our successes as highlighted within this report, we know that achieving our EDI goals requires ongoing effort and dedication which is derived from embedding key principles throughout all aspects of our work. We recognise the role we need to continue to play to support the national agenda to drive improvements

in the quality of social housing with focus on how we can help to address structural inequalities as highlighted in the Better Social Housing Review. We will seek to implement our action plan objectives as a priority.

Our tenant base covers a range of people with different housing and community needs. We want to make sure that we continue to put our tenants' needs first and we will do this by understanding their requirements, actively engaging with, and seeking feedback from, our tenants in a range of different ways. We will establish our two new committees this year which will be tenant-led to enhance and build upon how we listen to and respect our tenants' views. We will be open and transparent in how we deliver services, and we'll continue to publish our performance and highlight where and how we can improve.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our report and we look forward to achieving our EDI ambitions in 2024/25.



**Debbie Atherton, Executive Director**  
(Governance, People and Communications)

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