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South Yorkshire
Housing Association

One year review of our Race Action Plan

August 2022

Our Race Action Plan

In 2021, we listened to our people's experiences, and learned from research, data and best practice, to create our [Race Action Plan](#). The purpose of this report is to provide a progress report one year in, and will cover the following:

- An overview of what we've have put in place to drive systematic change in the organisation
- A summary of key areas of progress under the 6 commitments outlined in the Race Action Plan
- The priorities for the next 12 months.

South Yorkshire Housing Association - like all organisations - still has a huge amount of work to do to address structural racism in the system and to improve our own organisation. We are, however, heartened by our progress so far - not least because it has been achieved during the pandemic. Changes can only be achieved through collective effort, and the progress outlined in the report is the work of many hands across the organisation.

"I think SYHA's admission of previous failings gives the organisation's Race Action Plan more credibility. It reassures me and my colleagues this is not merely a performative attempt, but a genuine bid to achieve racial equity."

"Being part of an organisation that works hard to understand the issues of race and diversity through the experience of its customers and colleagues is something that is really important to me. It's critical that this is front and centre of everything we do, and is led from the top. It's important that I look to apply everything we have learnt over the last year with my team, and give our customers a better experience."

"Half of the customers on my caseload are racially and ethnically diverse. Recruitment and hiring should reflect the customers we work with and, currently, it does not - we still have a lot of work to do on this."

Feedback from some of our racially and ethnically diverse employees.

Building the architecture for systematic change

When we embarked on our work on race, the Board and Executive Team set a clear organisational objective that the Race Action Plan would deliver change that would be systematic, enduring and organisation-wide. The following steps were taken:

Progress against our commitments

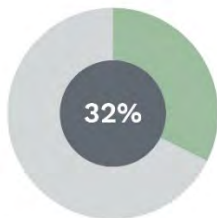
Commitment 1

“We will develop a deeper understanding of our customers. We will make sure our services are open to all. When people come to South Yorkshire Housing Association, they will feel that they belong here and can have high expectations of us. We will use a strength-based approach and co-design to achieve this.”

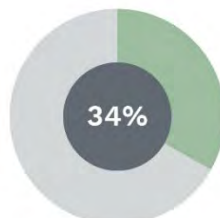
Key areas of progress

- Our Customer Collaboration Team implemented a targeted approach to involving racially and ethnically diverse customers in the design of our new Customer Promises, and in recruiting racially and ethnically diverse customers for our Customer Engagement Pool and Scrutiny Panel.

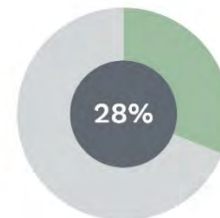
32% of customers on the Engagement Pool list are now racially or ethnically diverse.



34% of the customers involved in the design of the promises being from racially or the ethnically diverse backgrounds.

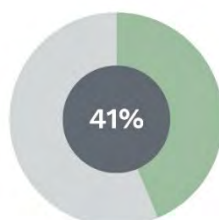


28% of the Scrutiny Panel are racially or ethnically diverse.



- We put in place a range of targeted interventions to increase diversity on our Work and Wellbeing programmes to respond to the disproportionate impact of the cost-of-living crisis, the pandemic and unemployment on racially and ethnically diverse people.

41% of customers in Sheffield referred into our work and wellbeing services are now racially or ethnically diverse.



- Our Head of Development and Asset Management has been assessing how effectively our homes meet the requirements of racially and ethnically diverse people. She has built our network of racially and ethnically diverse professionals, and used this network to explore the three lines of enquiry – the suitability or where we develop, what we develop, and how we offer it. This has generated some useful learning, for example...
 - the preference for urban sites due to proximity to cultural or faith centres, and amenities which cater for diverse customers.
 - larger family housing in the social rented sector.
 - incorporating some of the design elements which emerged in the review e.g. a porch for the removal of footwear.
 - We have already started to apply the learning to our programme - for example, we are currently redeveloping our site at Gell Street in Broomhall to create three 4-bedroom family homes.



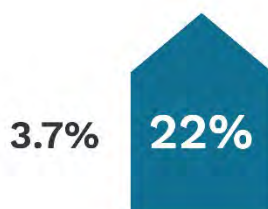
Commitment 2

“We will have a robust contribution to developing racially and ethnically diverse talent, both at South Yorkshire Housing Association and within the wider sector. Our workforce will be diverse, mirroring the make-up of our communities. We will achieve balance in leadership across our business and pay grade. South Yorkshire Housing Association will be known as a great place to work if you are from a racially and ethnically diverse background.”

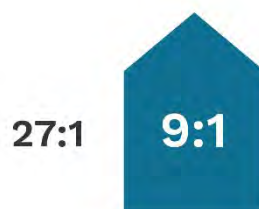
Key areas of progress

- Our People Team led on the implementation of our new Independent Panel Member programme to improve the representation of racially and ethnically diverse staff in our recruitment processes. In the last 12 months...

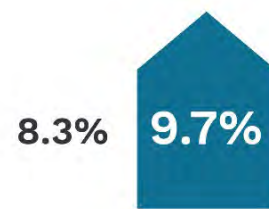
We have increased the number of racially and ethnically diverse people appointed to the organisation from 3.7% to 22% of new starters.



We have improved the ratio of racially and ethnically diverse candidates applying for a role vs offered a role from 27:1 to 9:1.



We have increased the overall percentage of racially and ethnically diverse employees across the workforce from 8.3% to 9.7%.



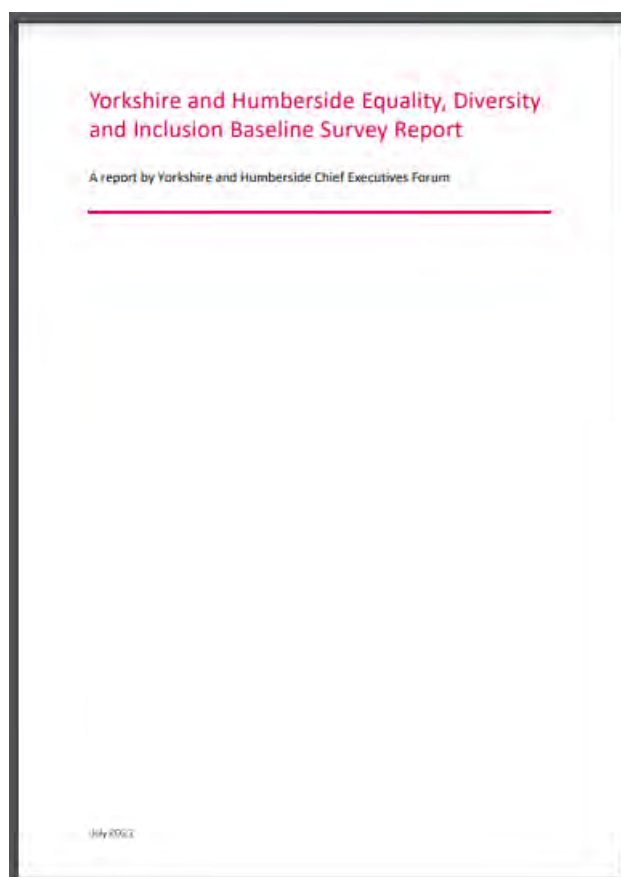
- Our Volunteering Team worked to increase the numbers of racially and ethnically diverse volunteers from 9% to 29%. This has been achieved by offering new types of volunteering opportunities, and building partnerships with local universities.

Commitment 3

“Our approach will be driven by data, insight and lived experience. We will keep our knowledge alive. We will have the most up-to-date picture of a fast-moving situation.”

Key areas of progress

- Developed a Race Action Plan that was driven by data and lived insight.
- Created a the Racially and Ethnically Diverse Resource Group so that our approach would be shaped by regular insight and feedback from our colleagues.
- Our People Team completed a review of our recruitment diversity data across all protected characteristics.
- Our CEO worked with the Yorkshire and Humberside Chief Executives Forum and Joseph Rowntree Foundation to produce an [Inclusion Baseline Survey Report](#).



Commitment 4

“Everybody in our business will take responsibility for tackling racial inequality in and outside of South Yorkshire Housing Association. We will keep our commitment to this work alive. Our organisation will have a culture with a sense of belonging for all.”

Key areas of progress

- Our Race and Diversity Lead worked directly with teams across the business to launch the plan, and to support them to consider their role in delivering it.
- Our Marketing Team continued to ensure that our communications campaigns celebrate the diversity of those we serve. A big thank you to our customers, employees and partners that have taken part in creating and sharing content, including:
 - [Our Landlord of the Year video.](#)
 - [Our Customer Promises videos.](#)
 - [Videos](#) to help with the recruitment of our new Chair, Finance Director and other vacancies.
- Our Age-friendly Sheffield team led a communications and engagement campaign called '100 Voices', where the focus was specifically about hearing and sharing the diverse voices of people of all ages across Sheffield. This led to over 150 interactions with people from different communities, and involved capturing opinions in multiple languages too. You can view some of the voices captured in this video: [All about 100 Voices and Age-friendly Sheffield.](#)



All about 100 Voices and Age-friendly Sheffield

- We improved our calendar of cultural events to celebrate the diversity of workforce and customers - this included our Black History Month programme, events for Pride month, and fundraising for Miles for Refugees.



Some of our Miles for Refugees fundraisers.

Commitment 5

“We will review our approach to partnership. We will develop much stronger and deeper partnerships with organisations working with racially and ethnically diverse people. We will learn from others and we will support where we can.”

Key areas of progress

- Developed our relationships with a more diverse range of partners, including Faithstar, BME National, and New Beginnings at Voluntary Action Sheffield, Fossu Group.
- Formed a new partnership with ASSIST Sheffield to offer emergency accommodation for asylum seekers, and successfully delivered a pilot project to utilise our void properties as a replacement for the ASSIST night shelter accommodation which closed during the pandemic.
- Supported ADIRA with funding through our Age Better programme and offered bid writing support.
- Our SYHA Enterprises Team formed a partnership with Fossu to deliver a business development contract for Brightbox Makerspace.

Commitment 6

“We acknowledge the privileged position South Yorkshire Housing Association holds. We will use this to set the standard for tackling structural inequality across the systems we operate in.”

Key areas of progress

- We held an online learning summit in September 2021 to share how we developed our Race Action Plan and our learning so far.
- We challenged Sheffield City Council on the exclusion of housing as one of the themes for the Race Equality Commission, and submitted evidence and were invited to present to the commission. We are featured in the Race Equality Commission’s [recent report](#).
- Hosted a joint seminar for Yorkshire and Humber Housing Associations on improving on the recruitment of racially or ethnically diverse CEOs and NEDS. Our CEO Chaired the event.
- Charlotte Murray, in her role as Chair of Women in Social Housing (Yorkshire,) planned and hosted a seminar on race and diversity. SYHA shared their approach to the Race Action Plan at the event.

Our priorities for the next 12 months

1. To gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse customers using our LiveWell services, and use this knowledge to improve the offer of support.
 - Conduct a specific piece of research to review the experience of racially and ethnically diverse customers using our LiveWell services.
 - Work with our partner ADIRA to introduce mental health workshops specially designed for our racially or ethnically diverse customers, and delivered by racially and ethnically diverse people.
 - Review the learning from our Work and Wellbeing services, and implement relevant learning to the review of referral routes to our other LiveWell services.
2. Targeted interventions to increase the number of racially and ethnically diverse managers in our business.
 - To undertake a piece of co-design work with racially and ethnically diverse colleagues to better understand the organisational barriers to succession into management roles, and possible solutions.
 - Create and develop a leadership programme to grow and support our diverse talent into leadership.
3. Improve the reporting of diversity data of customers and employees across the business.
 - Implement agile reporting for managers on the HR diversity data for their teams.
 - Review the Board Reporting Cycle and clearly define which reports should include diversity data as standard. This is to ensure that our reporting on diversity is not contained to standalone reports, but becomes systematic and routine across all key business processes and areas of activity.
4. Complete stakeholder mapping to identify those areas where our influence can deliver most impact for our racially and ethnically diverse customers and colleagues – for example, fair access to mental health services.
 - Continue to develop partnerships with organisations in our region working with racially and ethnically diverse people.

- Complete the review our procurement process, and reduce barriers to entry for racially and ethnically diverse businesses.
5. To support teams in the business to deliver Race Action Plan objectives specific to their area of work
- Our Race and Diversity Lead will work in a targeted way with teams where there has been less progress on diversity.
 - We will recruit advocates from each department to support the implementation of the Race Action Plan within their teams.
 - Implement a learning programme specifically for managers and leaders on a range of topics related to successful implementation of the Race Action Plan.
 - Continue the work the Racially and Ethnically Diverse Resource Group, and use their insight to shape and refine the year 2 priorities and delivery of the plan.

Conclusion

Much work has been done across the organisation, and we are grateful for to our racially and ethnically diverse colleagues and customers for their insights and support. However, there are still areas where there is a need for change to improve the experiences for our racially and ethnically diverse colleagues and customers. Our focus this year will be to hold on to the progress we have made, sustain the momentum and ambition of the plan, and making sure that the changes touch every colleague and customer in our organisation.