

“There are teams that are almost exclusively white, it is hard not to feel disenfranchised.”

South Yorkshire
Housing Association

Race Action Plan 2021

Many hands

Our first Race Action Plan is the combined effort of many people over the last 10 months. This plan is a product of their collective hard work and wisdom.

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We also thank the many members of our workforce who added their voices through responding to our calls for feedback and challenge.

Contents

Introduction	4
The process used to develop this plan	6
Why we need to do more	9
Our diversity data	14
Insight from colleagues	18
Our commitments	19
Tracking, learning and sharing progress	26

Introduction

2020 was one of the most significant years in our history. In the midst of a global pandemic, two events led to a stark awakening to the way that structural racism and inequality impacts the lives of racially and ethnically diverse people.

- Firstly, the murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter protests highlighted how racial inequality continues to pervade our society with dire consequences.

- Secondly, the Fenton Report into the disparities in the risk and outcomes of Covid-19 exposed the disproportionate impact on racially and ethnically diverse people.

The Kings Fund said of the report **“We’ve known for many years that these groups typically have worse health outcomes, but there has been disappointingly little effort over the past decade to address inequalities and improve people’s health.**

The scandal is not that the virus has disproportionately affected certain groups, but that it has taken a global pandemic to shine a light on deeply entrenched health inequalities.”

These events have led us to reflect on and question whether we have been doing enough to tackle this issue.

We have spent the last 10 months working hard to understand issues of race and diversity through the experience of our customers, colleagues and partners.

We've looked at the systems we operate in and the data in our own organisation to determine where we need to do more.

This report outlines our findings and the actions we'll be taking to make meaningful and enduring change.

“I personally have been lucky that my line manager and immediate team have been diverse and inclusive.”

“More awareness around race equality is needed.”

“I haven’t experienced any inequalities personally but have started noticing subtle differences in the wider team.”

“The skills required to make change can’t just be developed through e-learning or training. There needs to be a space for conversation and challenging practice.”

The process used to develop this plan

One of the defining features of organisational work on diversity and structural inequality is its high failure rate. There is a growing frustration that we’ve been having the same conversation for decades with very little real change.

In the wake of Black Lives Matter, many organisations published public statements on their response to tackling racial inequality. At South Yorkshire Housing Association, we felt that our actions should start with listening, learning and reflecting.

We wanted to set actions that would deliver systemic impact on the things that most matter to our racially and ethnically diverse colleagues and customers.

We gathered wisdom and insight from a range of sources:

- We carried out a deep dive into our diversity data and identified trends and gaps. We have reviewed the data on our workforce, customers and utilisation of our services. The quality of our data will need further work as part of this plan.
- We held two Black Lives Matter workforce events to generate feedback. These were attended by around 100 people.
- We reviewed external research on the impact of racial inequality.
- We spent time learning from other organisations, building more diverse networks and benchmarking. These include collaborations with both of Sheffield's universities and dialogue with experts on race and ethnicity, locally and nationally.
- We held a board awayday with input and challenge from racially and ethnically diverse leaders from outside our organisation.
- We carried out a workplace survey to gather the views of our racially and ethnically diverse colleagues on their experiences at South Yorkshire Housing Association.

In October 2020 we set up a working group to develop this plan.

Our working group followed the principles of co-design. It included people from across our business with lived experience and with a passion for seeing South Yorkshire Housing Association improve its diversity. It also included those with a responsibility to drive strategy and change.

The working group has used all the learning we gathered to set this action plan. The commitments and actions in this plan are not plucked from the air, but are firmly rooted in what we learned from the data, our external research and feedback from colleagues.

In developing our plan we looked at the outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse people across the systems we and our customers rely on. The evidence on structural inequality is stark.

Across housing, employment, health, social care and education, racially and ethnically diverse people fare considerably worse than their white counterparts.

We are an operator in these systems – racial inequality isn't someone else's problem to solve.

“We're doing lot of good, but something isn't right here. Mentor people of colour in a targeted way. The opportunity might be there for progression but we haven't had exposure, experiences, etc. We will sit at a professional table where language we don't understand will fly over our heads.”

“Continue looking into the reality of pay scale and promotion for BAME staff with many years experience of working in this sector.”

“We need to provide training on unconscious bias, particularly around recruitment.”



Employment

People from racially and ethnically diverse groups experience significantly higher unemployment rates at 12.9% compared with 6.3% for white people.

Black workers with degrees earn 23.1% less on average than white workers.

In Britain, significantly lower percentages of racially and ethnically diverse people (8.8%) worked as managers, directors and senior officials, compared with white people (10.7%) and this was particularly true for African, Caribbean or black people (5.7%) and those of mixed ethnicity (7.2%).

Black people who leave school with A-levels typically get paid 14.3% less than their white peers.

(Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission)



Poverty

People from racially and ethnically diverse households in the UK are more than twice as likely to live in poverty as their white counterparts.

(Source: Social Metrics Commission, July 2020)



Health

People from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds constitute 14% of the population but, according to a recent study, account for 34% of critically ill Covid-19 patients and a similar percentage of all Covid-19 cases. These patterns are not unique to the UK – in Chicago, black people constitute 30% of the population but account for 72% of deaths from the virus.

(Source: The Kings Fund, July 2020)



Mental health

Detention rates under the Mental Health Act are four times higher for people in the ‘Black’ and ‘Black British’ group than those in the ‘White’ group.



Housing

In every socio-economic group and age group, White British households were more likely to own their own homes than all racially and ethnically diverse households combined. 63% of White British households own their own homes, compared with 20% of Black Africans.

(Source: Gov.uk, Home Ownership, 2020)

White British households were less likely to rent social housing than households from all other ethnic groups combined. In Yorkshire, 20% of racially and ethnically diverse households live in social rented accommodation, as opposed to 17% of white British households.

(Source: Gov.uk, Rented Social Housing, Feb 2020)



Education

Just 6% of black school leavers attended a Russell Group university, compared with 12% of mixed and Asian school leavers and 11% of white school leavers.

Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean children have rates of permanent exclusion about three times that of the pupil population as a whole.

(Source: Equality and Human Rights Commission)

“Keep doing what you are doing for race equality and cultural diversity. I find it refreshing that SYHA are so open, honest and positive about inclusion and change.”

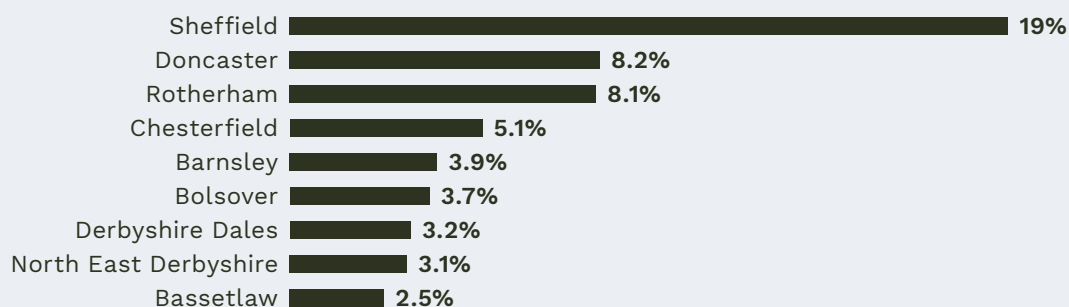
“Create more opportunities for open discussions.”

“It doesn’t always feel like other cultures are taken seriously or respected here.”

“I’ve witnessed my white colleagues gain favour (affinity bias) with our managers, getting unofficial mentorship by being taken under their wing and progressing into very influential roles. I used to think it wasn’t about the colour of my skin but I’ve been here for years, in the same position, still witnessing the same thing. None of my managers have ever been non-white. It’s impacting my progression.”

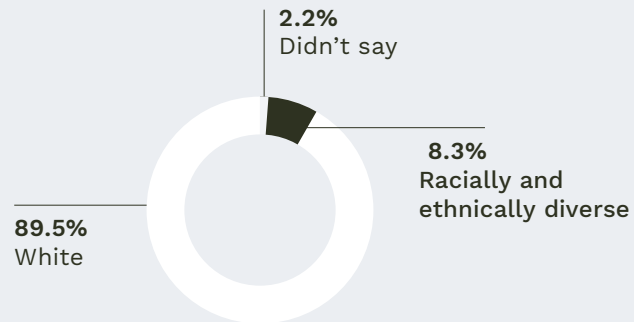
Ethnicity across the Sheffield City Region

Racially and ethnically diverse citizens:



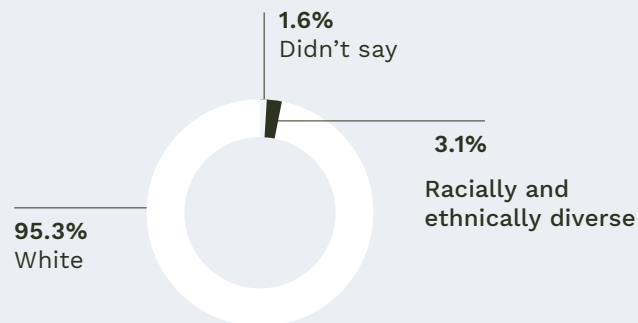
Our people

We currently have 582 employees.
Their ethnicity statistics are as follows:



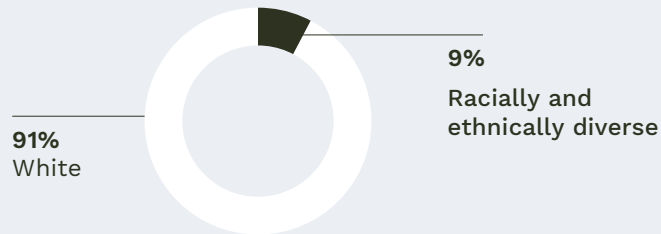
Our managers

We have 128 managers.
Their ethnicity statistics are as follows:



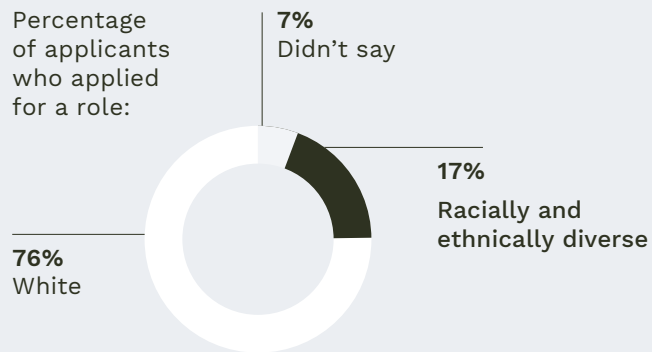
Our volunteers

We have 67 active volunteers.
Their ethnicity statistics are as follows:

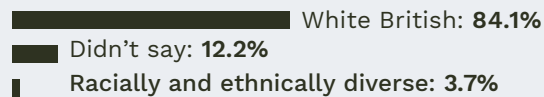


Our recruitment

In the financial year 2019/20 we employed 216 people.
Their ethnicity statistics are as follows:

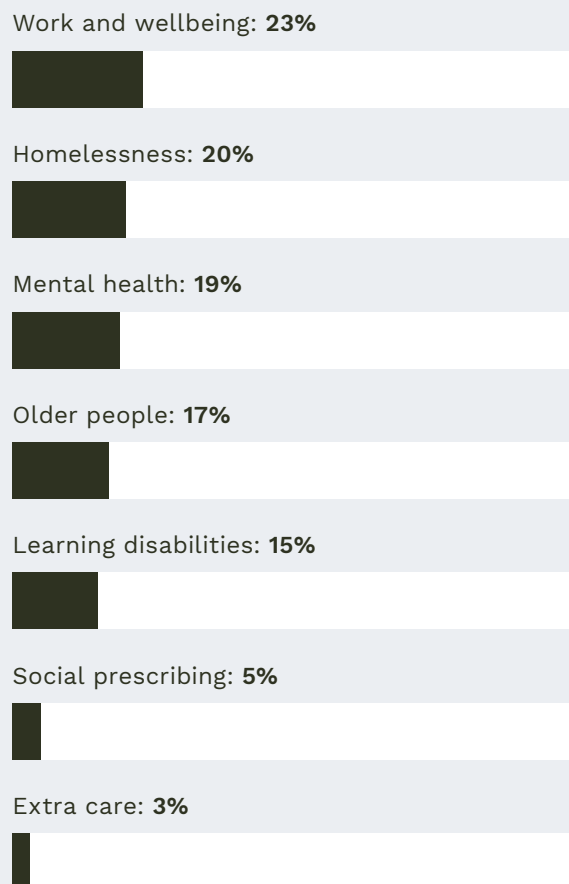


Percentage of applicants appointed:



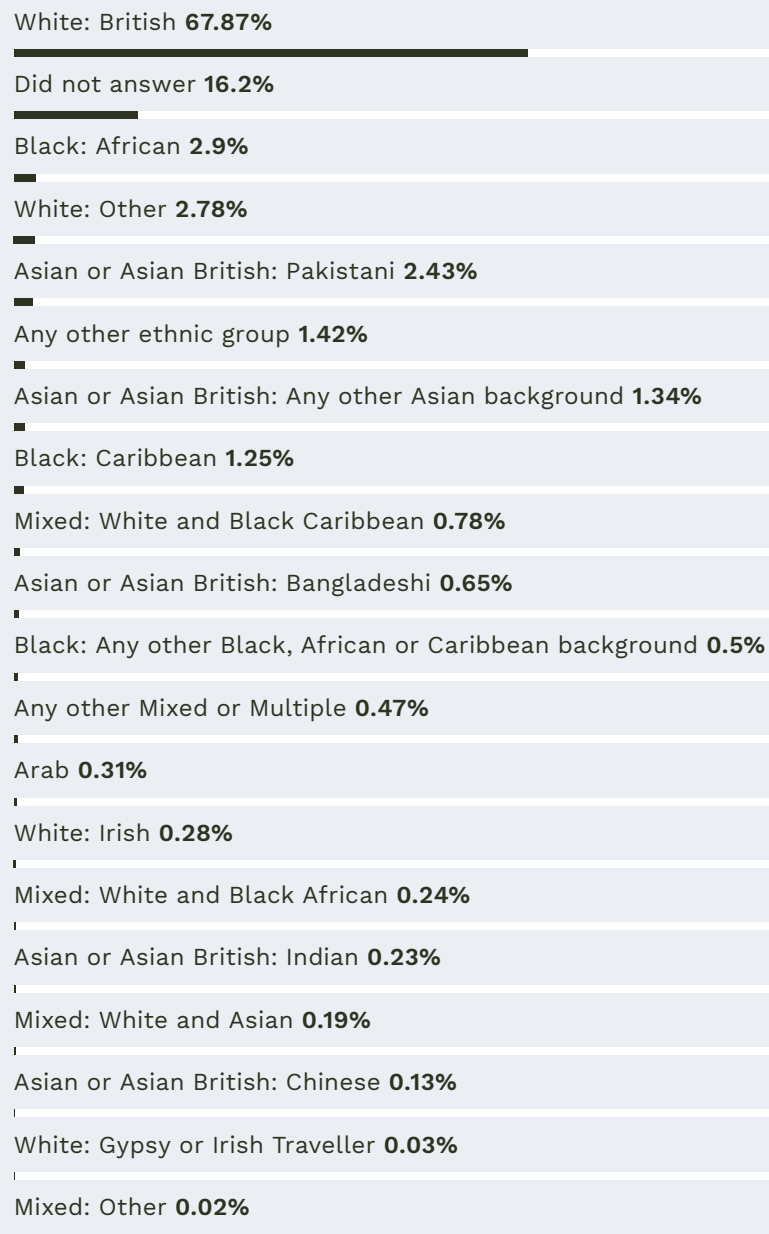
Our LiveWell customers

Here are the percentages of racially and ethnically diverse customers accessing LiveWell services:



Our general needs customers

Here are the percentages of general needs customers accessing housing services:



Insight from colleagues

We asked our racially and ethnically diverse colleagues to share their experience of working at South Yorkshire Housing Association. We are grateful for their openness – their views have been critical to shaping this plan.

Thanks go to Nisa Chisipochinyi for leading this work.

“How can you mentor your staff if there is no-one who looks like them? Who is there to help me or to mentor me that looks like me?”

“The management structure has not changed in terms of diversity. More women are now on board at director and senior level, but what about ethnic diversity? How do SYHA expect to learn or gain perspective from the communities we serve if there is not representation from the black, Asian and ethnic community?”

“I think it’s good that there is lots of opportunity to discuss culture and identity at SYHA.

As I don’t get to meet other colleagues in other projects, I don’t really comment about the organisation.

I do know that my colleagues at my project are brilliant and I cannot appreciate their support enough.”

“Take more chances and have more faith in BAME staff members, specifically in higher job roles.”

“I grew up in a country where my race was in the majority. I find it hard to identify subtle signs of racial inequality unless someone else points it out or it is blatantly obvious.

Conversations around BLM in SYHA, like the first event on Zoom a couple of months ago, were very useful for me because listening to other people’s experiences made me reflect on my own.”

“Share the data on staff diversity.”

“I would like to see more people of colour in managerial/leadership positions. I notice that there are hardly any black workers in the organisation, particularly in LiveWell. I would like to see more black key workers.”

Our commitments

This plan outlines six commitments and the actions which will underpin them over the next two years. We will use a ‘test and learn’ approach and so this plan will be a living document – updated and developed as we learn more.

Our commitments are designed to cover the triple aims of all of our work at South Yorkshire Housing Association – delivering impact for our customers, the business and the wider system.

Commitment



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.

Actions

- Co-design and publish a set of standards that racially and ethnically diverse customers can expect from our services.
 - Gather insight from our customers on how to improve our services. We will do this through a co-designed taskforce made up of racially and ethnically diverse customers.
 - Undertake a review of the referral pathways into and across all our services to remove barriers to access where it is in our power to do so.
-

Commitment

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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.

Actions

- Redesign our recruitment process to ensure the success rate of all candidates is equalised.
- Develop and implement a clear plan to increase the percentage of racially and ethnically diverse managers and leaders in our business.
- Design and implement a range of positive actions to increase the diversity of our workforce from 9% to 15%.
- Review and strengthen our Conflicts of Interest process and challenge recruitment practices that get in the way of achieving racial equality.
- Provide a well curated programme of learning and development to build organisational competence and drive continued commitment to this work.

Commitment



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.**

Actions

- Determine our diversity measures and set targets to help us reduce inequalities. Track and share our progress in a transparent way.
 - Implement a systematic approach to gathering regular feedback from our workforce and customers on how we need to change and improve on race.
 - Implement processes to ensure that diversity data, insight and intelligence is used to shape decisions in our business, e.g. our strategic planning.
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Commitment



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.

Actions

- Leaders and managers will have clear objectives that ensure they are delivering the ambitions set out in our Race Action Plan.
 - Find new opportunities to open up our 'home' to all, through events and sharing our spaces.
 - Develop and fund a programme to celebrate key cultural events with our workforce and communities. All of our marketing content will celebrate the diversity of those we serve.
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Commitment



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.

Actions

- Develop a partnership offer for how we will work with racially and ethnically diverse organisations, including how we share resources such as buildings, speaking platforms etc.
 - Identify a smaller subset of racially and ethnically diverse organisations, and work closely with them to develop our partnership offer.
 - Review our procurement process, remove barriers to entry for racially and ethnically diverse businesses, set improvement targets and monitor progress against these.
 - Explore opportunities to earmarking some SYHA Enterprises investment for racially and ethnically diverse businesses.
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Commitment



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.

Actions

- Undertake stakeholder mapping and actively engage with organisations where we feel we can make a significant collective impact on this issue.
 - Make time available for members of our workforce to partner and share learning with other organisations.
 - Host a day of learning and celebration in the latter half of 2021 with cross-sector partners and led by our racially and ethnically diverse partners.
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Tracking, learning and sharing progress

Our **Race Action Plan** will be a live document and will be shared openly on BASE. It will be regularly reviewed, updated and amended as we progress our actions and continue to learn from our partners, customers, workforce and experts in the field.

Our new **Race and Diversity Lead** will provide oversight and steer on our progress against this plan. They will work across the business to ensure that this work becomes a part of everyone's day job.

Our **Diversity and Belonging Steering Panel**, made up of people with a diverse range of lived experience from across our workforce, will drive and shape this plan. Outputs from Diversity and Belonging Steering Panel meetings will be shared on BASE so that those not involved in the group can chart our progress and engage with this work.

Each and every member of our organisation will have a significant part to play in helping us meet the ambition of this plan.

We look forward to working together to achieve change in our organisation.

Juliann Hall

Director of Care, Health and Wellbeing
South Yorkshire Housing Association

Tony Stacey

Chief Executive
South Yorkshire Housing Association

