

United Welsh Anti-Racist Action Plan

December 2023 – December 2024

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Foreword

“The United Welsh Group provides homes and services across South Wales, and we are very proud to be a part of culturally rich communities.

“Our mission is to build homes, create communities and transform lives, and when we talk about creating communities, what we really mean is creating and contributing to places where our customers enjoy spending their time and feel they belong.

“Our journey to becoming anti-racist started in 2020, when we signed the Deeds Not Words pledge led by housing equalities charity Tai Pawb. Deeds Not Words launched in 2020 after the Covid-19 pandemic and global response to the murder of George Floyd brought systemic and structural racial inequalities to the fore. Three years later, there is still much work to do.

“Within the not-for-profit housing sector, we pride ourselves on being values-based, providing services that are built around respect, honesty and integrity, but ultimately, the actions we take are what counts.

Our job is to help customers to feel valued as individuals and safe in their homes, with fair access to opportunities and the services they need.

“As an organisation and as individuals, we have spent time educating ourselves, addressing our biases and accepting how systemic racism exists in today’s Wales. This plan is United Welsh’s next step in our contribution to a more equal Wales.

“To create it, we have consulted with colleagues to gain feedback and shape our course of action. As we deliver the plan and evolve it in the coming years, we want to further involve customers in our progression.

“Becoming anti-racist is a long-term commitment. At United Welsh, we intend to build on good practice developed in the past few years to play our part in achieving an anti-racist Wales for everyone who lives here and works here, and for everyone who enjoys the place we call home.”

Richard Mann

Group Chief Executive



Introduction

Welsh Government launched its Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan in June 2022.

After consulting with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people about how to make Wales a stronger, fairer nation, the government said that an anti-racist approach was required to “look at the ways that racism is built into our policies, formal and informal rules and regulations and generally the ways in which we work.”

In creating the plan, Welsh Government has outlined its vision for Wales to become anti-racist by 2030. The plan speaks to all aspects of public life – housing, education, health, employment and more.

As a provider of homes and services in diverse communities across South Wales, United Welsh has an important role to play. We currently provide almost 6,500 homes and we aim to build 1,300 more in the next five years. Our services also support thousands of people to live happily and independently.

United Welsh’s Anti-Racist Action Plan consists of three focus areas:

1. Representation
2. Service delivery
3. Communication and engagement.

The plan will be updated and published each year, and we will include information about how we are progressing our actions.



Vision

United Welsh becomes an anti-racist organisation.



1. Representation

What?

We will work to continuously improve the ethnic diversity of the United Welsh Board and staff at all levels.

Why?

Because we need to represent the communities that we serve. We want to be able to relate to and understand our customers' perceptions and experiences. Being a diverse workforce will strengthen our ability to provide more accessible, compassionate services.



Outcome	What we did in 2022/23	Actions for 2023/24
<p>Improve the diversity of Board membership, advisory groups, and the wider workforce (including senior leadership positions)</p>	<p>We launched a recruitment campaign for new Board members in March 2023. Our value of diversity was a focal point of our campaign messages. One applicant applied for a Board member role via Pathway to Board, a programme aimed at Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people to support them to be ‘board ready’. This applicant is training with us as a prospective new Board member.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to deliver the Pathway to Board project with housing association partners to support ethnically diverse people into Board member roles. We will also support our staff to participate in the programme.
<p>Provide anti-racist training to Board members and senior leaders as a priority, and across the wider workforce</p>	<p>EDI and unconscious bias training is mandatory for all United Welsh staff and Board members, including refresher training. In 2022/23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 192 people completed an online Introduction to Equality Action module • 104 people attended Equality and Diversity and Unconscious Bias training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will arrange refresher training for our Board, including anti-racism and unconscious bias training to be completed by December 2023. We will plan this training with our Board EDI Champion. • We will arrange refresher training for our staff, including anti-racism and unconscious bias training. • We will include anti-racism and unconscious bias training in inductions for new staff members.

Report annually and act on the findings for pay gap, recruitment, promotion and retention data for ethnic minority groups

We calculated and published our 2022/23 minority ethnic pay gap and gender reports for colleagues in our Annual Report, based on data up to April 2023.

This showed that the pay gap based on median hourly pay is 13% (2022: 24%). 6% of our workforce are ethnically diverse (2022: 6%).

For the United Welsh Group (including Celtic Horizons and Celtic Offsite), the pay gap based on median hourly pay is 14% (2022: 21%), and 6% of the total workforce is ethnically diverse (2022: 6%).

- We will develop reporting for the Board about the diversity of our workforce, staff development and culture. We will design this report to be included in our Board Newsletter. There will be one main report annually, with six monthly updates on some aspects. It will include gender and ethnic pay gap results.
- We will create a new annual staff diversity report for internal and external publication. This will identify gaps in representation at the United Welsh Group. We will also report on how many ethnically diverse candidates are applying for roles with us, and how many people are being appointed and retained. This will be published by May 2024.

<p>Invest in our recruitment channels to attract candidates of different ethnic minorities</p>	<p>Following a robust improvement process, we relaunched our recruitment policy and procedure in September 2023. Any staff member can volunteer to join a recruitment panel and support Employing Managers with the hiring process.</p> <p>This helps to make recruitment more inclusive, as a more diverse group of people shape the assessment and make decisions. It also means that seeking people that contribute positively to our culture is an integral part of our recruitment assessments.</p> <p>It is a compulsory requirement for all staff who participate in recruitment to have completed timely unconscious bias and EDI training.</p> <p>We have also continued to fulfil our pledge obligations with the Community Jobs Compact to help tackle under-representation within our staff group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to monitor the number of job applications from ethnic minority people and subsequent appointments, and we will consider how we can proactively reach ethnic minority communities and professional groups with our job advertising.
<p>The leadership team proactively champions and monitors progress for tackling racial inequality</p>	<p>Quarterly monitoring of progress regarding our Deeds Not Words pledge actions within United Welsh Executive team meetings has helped to keep anti-racism high on our agenda.</p> <p>At least one member of United Welsh’s Executive team attended every EDI forum held in 2022/23. These meetings are held bi-monthly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will monitor and report our progress for tackling racial inequality in line with our Anti-Racist Action Plan, within quarterly Executive team meetings • The Executive team and other leaders in the business will continue to attend our staff EDI Forum and will be ambassadors for our anti-racism work.

2. Service provision

What?

We will embed anti-racism and race equality throughout our service design and delivery.

Why?

To be a part of the solution. To become anti-racist, we must look at our structures and services through the lens of race, and 'design out' racism from our systems.



Outcome	What we did in 2022/23	Actions for 2023/24
<p>Improve data collection, analysis, usage, and publication across service delivery.</p>	<p>We started an EDI Data Working Group to identify what EDI data we hold, and to consider where the gaps and inconsistencies lie.</p> <p>An early analysis indicated that ethnicity data is recorded for 66.9% of people who rent with us (and are named as the contract holder), and 46.51% of occupants (the family of contract holders), although not all data was collected recently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to review the existing EDI data we hold, and we will consider its reliability and quality. This will help us to better understand what we know, and don't know, about our staff and customers from ethnically diverse backgrounds. We will complete this work by April 2024. • We will develop a suite of measures and reporting to establish how we are delivering services and how accessible our services are for the communities we serve. This will help us to ensure information, advice, and advocacy needs (where applicable) of ethnic minority people are met. We will complete this work by October 2024. • We will re-design and embed how we collect and use customer demographic data to inform user-centred services, and implement a new reporting system. • We will demonstrate where we have used ethnicity data to improve and shape our services.
<p>Commissioning meets the needs of ethnic minority people</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will engage customers in developing and reviewing our Equality Impact Assessments. We will assess the number of customers involved and the number of decisions made because of that engagement.

<p>Review policies and processes for reporting racism and discrimination including hate crime and harassment and monitor regularly</p>	<p>In March 2023, 73 staff members completed an anonymous Tai Pawb survey to feedback about how inclusive they feel United Welsh is as an organisation.</p> <p>The survey results were shared with staff, with advice provided about reporting racism, support available following a racist experience, and what to do if you witness racist behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will review our staff policies and procedures through an EDI lens. This will include a review of our process for reporting racism and discrimination, including hate crime and harassment. • We will complete Equality Impact Assessments for our marketing communications policy and procedures, identifying potential areas of racial inequity, by February 2024. • We will review our Money and Income Advice policies to consider potential areas of racial inequity.
<p>Ensure the barriers faced by the full diversity of ethnic minority people are specifically addressed to ensure they have equal access to homelessness services and homes.</p>	<p>We have started to analyse council housing register data to help us to better understand why people who currently rent from us are signed up to council housing lists to find a different property.</p> <p>Through this data collection, we will contact residents to find out what we can do to support them to stay renting with us, or to assist them with their move.</p> <p>This work will help us to ascertain if our residents who are aiming to move are disproportionately from an ethnic minority background, and if so, what issues or barriers they are experiencing to motivate their decision, such as overcrowding or housing conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review housing waiting list data with Caerphilly Council and Cardiff Council, identifying current residents from an ethnic minority background who need support to stay in their home or move properties, and why, by May 2024. • Through training and engagement, we will raise awareness among staff working in homelessness services about the barriers facing ethnic minority people, so they are able to take positive action to tackle discrimination.

3. Communication and engagement

What?

We will show our support for racial equality and provide platforms for people from ethnic minority backgrounds to shape, influence and change the services we deliver.

Why?

Because we have a platform to amplify the voices of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and we want to use it. The experiences of ethnically diverse people matter, and we must always actively listen. We can't effectively remove barriers if we don't listen to the people facing them.



Outcome	What we did in 2022/23	Actions for 2023/24
<p>Improve communication and engagement with ethnic minority people and reflect diversity within communication strategies and campaigns</p>	<p>We have continued to publicise our support for minority ethnic colleagues and communities. Examples include promotional support for the Black History Wales launch at St Fagans Cardiff; a staff information session about Black History and the Windrush legacy; awareness raising for Ramadan; new brand artwork to represent more people of different skin tones in our communications; promoting the results of our Deeds Not Words staff survey, and new photography.</p> <p>This year United Welsh also implemented business changes because of the Renting Homes Wales Act legislation. Guidance was created in Somali, Arabic, Polish and Ukrainian to better support customers from ethnic minority backgrounds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to celebrate multiculturalism and promote our commitment to racial equality through service delivery, case studies, and educational and training content • We will continue to use diverse images and artwork across United Welsh brand communications and consider the needs of ethnically diverse people in our campaign work.
<p>Maintain a Delivery Plan to outline how anti-racism and race equality will be embedded throughout service design and delivery</p>	<p>In October 2022, we released our second annual progress report about the actions we have taken since signing the Tai Pawb Deeds Not Words pledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure our actions to become anti-racist are clear, and to streamline reporting, we will absorb our Deeds Not Words pledge actions into our Anti-Racist Action Plan. This plan will be reviewed and updated annually. Our progress will be reported to the regulator, Welsh Government. We will also publicise the action plan and United Welsh’s commitment to anti-racism and our progress, including publishing this action plan in December 2023.

<p>Build more links and support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community groups to build their capacity to support local people and bring in community knowledge and challenge to the organisation</p>	<p>United Welsh was a delivery partner of the Get Into Housing project. The project works with people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to start a career in housing or gain work experience, offering bespoke mentoring, on-the-job experience, and paying at least the Real Living Wage.</p> <p>We offered a total of five, six-month work placements. Afterwards, three individuals went on to gain permanent employment with us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to deliver the Get Into Housing project with our housing association partners. This will include the delivery of paid six-month work placements for customers from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background • We will relaunch United Welsh’s volunteering offer, encouraging people from a variety of different backgrounds to volunteer with us.
<p>Promote an inclusive culture where people are comfortable talking about race and can bring their whole self to work, and people we work with are comfortable to voice concerns related to race and are believed when this happens</p>	<p>In October 2022, 30 staff members participated in an online information session with Sean Wharton about Black History and the Windrush Legacy.</p> <p>In March 2023, 73 staff members completed an anonymous Tai Pawb survey to feedback about how inclusive they feel United Welsh is as an organisation. 93% of those surveyed felt that there had been an improvement in our approach to tackling racism. 65% felt we were ‘Excellent or good’ at providing services that were accessible to ethnically diverse people. 13% (9 people) felt we were ‘Poor or very poor’.</p> <p>The survey results were shared with staff, with advice provided about reporting racism, support available following a racist experience, and what to do if you witness racist behaviour.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our EDI Forum will identify and lead opportunities for staff conversations about race and racial equity, facilitated in spaces of safety and trust • We will also use our anonymous employee engagement software Limeade Listening to gain feedback and improve our culture and practice.

Summary

United Welsh remains committed to creating a fairer society and ending racial inequality for the people of Wales.

While consulting with ethnic minority communities to create their vision for an anti-racist Wales, Welsh Government were told that working towards 2030 to eradicate racism was a very short time, given it follows decades of oppression.

As an organisation we recognise that we are still in the early stages of our anti-racist journey, but we have started, and we are determined to continue our progress in this decade and beyond.

In May 2023, we launched our Strategy 2023/27, which clearly states our dedication to equality, diversity and inclusion.

We look forward to continuing our work with customers and partner organisations such as Tai Pawb, other community landlords, local authorities and Welsh Government, to take positive action and deliver change.





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Proud to be part of the United Welsh Group
We **build** homes, **create** communities and **transform** lives