



Deeds not Words

Action Plan progress
October 2021 -
September 2022



We build homes, create communities and transform lives.

Introduction

United Welsh signed the Deeds Not Words pledge led by housing equalities charity Tai Pawb in 2020. It outlines our commitment to take action to:

- Mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and communities
- Improve the ethnic diversity of board and staff at all levels
- Communicate and engage
- Develop an inclusive culture.

Deeds not Words launched in 2020 after the Covid-19 pandemic and global protests following the murder of George Floyd brought systemic and structural racial inequalities to the fore.

Two years later, racial inequality continues to be in the spotlight. The UK is currently in a period of political and economic turbulence with a growing cost of living crisis, and similarly to the Covid-19 pandemic, the crisis is highlighting societal inequalities.

Recent ONS data revealed that minority ethnic communities are disproportionately affected by the rising cost of living and sadly falling further below the poverty line.

While everyone will feel the consequences of soaring inflation, the greater impact on minority ethnic groups reveals one of many reasons why the Deeds Not Words pledge continues to be of the utmost relevance and importance today.

United Welsh is proud to be a part of diverse communities across South Wales. We want our customers to feel safe in their homes, with fair access to opportunities to improve their quality of life. We must continue to face the challenges felt by our communities head on.

This is our progress for the past 12 months.

We pledged to:

Mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on our Black, Asian and minority ethnic colleagues and communities

Our commitment	What we have been doing
Immediately adopt the All Wales Covid-19 Risk Assessment Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This was completed in 2021, with the tool used alongside United Welsh's bespoke risk assessment process for Covid-19• We continue to monitor Welsh Government guidance in respect of Covid-19 risk.
Protect the wellbeing of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic staff who might be feeling affected or vulnerable due to the pandemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The appointment of a Wellbeing Officer has led to United Welsh's offer for staff broadening in the past 12 months to include in-house support with grief and loss, healthy eating, exercise, finance management, volunteering, mindfulness and mental health self-care• This is in addition to support with counselling, coaching, resilience skills development and occupational health• We will continue to monitor whether these services are used by minority ethnic members of staff and whether there are any barriers to involvement• An engagement exercise with minority staff is being planned for early 2023 to plan sessions specifically for this staff group based on their feedback.
Investigate reasons for overcrowding and worse housing conditions among people of Black, Asian and other minority ethnicities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A review of our customer data did not show a correlation between minority ethnic households and overcrowding within homes provided by United Welsh. The majority of our larger properties are not occupied by people from a minority ethnic background.

We pledged to:

Improve ethnic diversity of board and staff at all levels

Our commitment	What we have been doing
Adopt the Rooney Rule to improve recruitment of people from different ethnic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This was completed in 2021 to help ensure that applicants from a minority ethnic background are interviewed for each advertised position where all essential criteria are met.
Report annually and act on the findings for pay gap, recruitment, promotion and retention data for minority ethnic groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have calculated and published our 2022 minority ethnic pay gap and gender reports for colleagues in our Annual Report, based on data up to 4th April 2022.• We are continuing to review and build the data already reported within our governance framework to enhance future reporting.
Invest in our recruitment channels to attract candidates of different ethnic minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have reviewed and refreshed the language within our recruitment advertising to try to encourage more applications from minority ethnic communities.• We joined the 'Get Into Housing' programme co-ordinated by Cardiff Community Housing Association to support unemployed people from a minority ethnic background aged 25+ into work. We have offered five people paid work placements, at a minimum of 16 weeks.• Two people have since secured full-time employment within the United Welsh Group and another person has had their placement extended.• The volume of job applications we receive from people identifying as minority ethnic has increased by 5%. The number of minority ethnic staff employed by us has increased by 1.8%.
Train all staff and board members about unconscious bias and raise awareness of white privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A mandatory training programme about unconscious bias and anti-racism was rolled out to all staff and Board members. 239 people have completed the training.• The training is also part of our induction process.• We have created a new monthly 'refresher' training package for staff about protected characteristics. The module focused on race will launch in February 2023.

Ensure our recruitment panels are ethnically diverse

- As part of our recruitment improvement strategy, we have been broadening our recruitment panels to include trained lead staff members and external volunteers from across the business.
- All staff throughout United Welsh have been invited to volunteer on recruitment panels to improve their diversity and the recruitment experience for applicants.
- We are exploring options for mentoring activities so staff who have volunteered before can support other people to take up the opportunity and develop their skills.

We pledged to:

Communicate and engage

Our commitment	What we have been doing
Publicise support for racial equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We use our voice and identify opportunities to support our colleagues and communities from different ethnic backgrounds, making our stance on anti-racist practice clear.• We have continued to publicise our support for minority ethnic colleagues. Examples include a published staff stories collection to mark Black History Month; awareness raising of religious festivals and blogs with new staff members.• We have promoted initiatives to improve racial equality, such as the 'Get Into Housing' programme.• We launched a brand refresh in March 2022, which included new artwork and visuals that are more representative of the communities we serve.
Publish our commitment to take specific actions to tackle the challenges we identify, and report on progress annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are using our Deeds Not Words action plan as a framework for our outcomes and will continue to report on progress.
Disaggregate ethnicity data from customer satisfaction data to learn and improve the experiences of people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Following preparation for the Renting Homes Act and discussions at our bi-monthly EDI Forum, we are considering how to aggregate our data more effectively to enhance our decision-making and customer experiences of our homes and services. We are also considering colleague training for capturing sensitive information and options to increase the amount of data we hold.• We have revised the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data we previously captured to reflect the ONS data set. This will allow for more robust evaluation and comparison between our data and national data. We are exploring how we update our software systems to reflect the changes.• We have also considered how we can disaggregate EDI data in respect of customer satisfaction. System limitations have prevented us implementing this to date but it remains on our agenda.

<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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In September 2022, our Board approved a new Customer Involvement Strategy for United Welsh. This seeks to involve more ethnically diverse customers in the design and use of our services.
<p>In asylum dispersal areas, commit to donating or leasing housing to refugee communities (where they exist)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We remain committed to working in partnership with local authorities to provide housing solutions for refugees and other disadvantaged groups of people.

We pledged to:

Develop an inclusive culture

Our commitment	What we have been doing
Our leadership team proactively champion and monitor our progress for tackling racial inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress against our Deeds Not Words action plan continues to be reported and monitored quarterly within Executive team meetings.• Progress is also reported within our regulatory improvement plan reported to Welsh Government.• The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion on our Board continues to scrutinise progress.• We have created an EDI Working Group which runs in tandem with our quarterly EDI Forum. This has strengthened our capacity to take positive action within our services and consider racial inequality in our planning and decision making.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our 'This is Me' events and Media Club continues to run as staff platforms. These are safe spaces for colleagues to talk about personal issues that are important to them in an open, empathetic forum and learn about each other's lived experiences.• Our annual staff conference was held in September 2022, during which our Executive team reinforced our commitment to our Deeds Not Words pledge to tackle racial inequality.• We have promoted staff stories internally to amplify the voices of our minority ethnic staff and raise awareness, such as Black History Month reflections and blogs with new people joining us.• We continue to use our anonymous employee engagement software TINYpulse to gain feedback and improve our culture and practice.
Invest in reverse mentoring schemes to share experiences and improve opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are training staff to re-launch our internal coaching network. We plan to grow the network and will explore reverse mentoring as part of this.

Summary

United Welsh remains committed to creating a fairer society and tackling racial inequality for people in Wales.

To continue our progress, we will be exploring how we can involve more diverse groups of customers in the design of our services, and options for improving and increasing the information we hold. This will strengthen our ability to scrutinise our services through the lens of race and better evaluate areas in need of development.

We will also continue to evolve our recruitment practice to tackle under-representation, and supporting the wellbeing of people we work with remains high on our agenda.

We look forward to continuing our progress with Tai Pawb and partner organisations to take positive actions for change.

