

DEEDS NOT WORDS

THE RACE EQUALITY CHALLENGE FOR SOCIAL HOUSING IN WALES

In October 2020 we shared with you details of a Pledge to action, developed by Tai Pawb in partnership with Social Housing members in Wales, to begin the process of addressing the concerns of communities threatened due to racial inequalities. The Pledge was drafted following recent events which have shone a new light on the racial inequalities and racism experienced by Black Asian Minority Ethnic communities across the globe, in the UK and in Wales. At Pobl we are committed to making lasting changes to eradicate systemic racial inequality and as such we signed up to the Pledge which includes taking a number of actions across a 5-year period. This third update sets out our progress over the past year and our plans for the coming year.

OUR PLEDGES

Mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on
Black, Asian and other Minority
Ethnic staff and communities

Develop an inclusive culture

Communicate and engage

Improve the ethnic diversity of
board and staff at all levels

1

Mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic staff and communities.

We will...

Adopt the All Wales Covid-19 Risk Assessment Tool which recognises the increased risk of COVID-19 to Black Asian Minority Ethnic colleagues and act on findings (we will ensure concerns of Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic colleagues are treated seriously and addressed in a compassionate way, without the fear of being disadvantaged if work is realigned).

In 2020 Pobl applied the All Wales Covid-19 Risk Assessment Tool to 1369 front line colleagues. We have continued to monitor Welsh Government advice in respect of the COVID-19 risk to individuals with Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic origin and no further recommendations have been made.



We will...

Commit to wellbeing/psychological and other support to Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic colleagues who might feel affected or vulnerable right now.

There is broad training available on mental health themes for all Managers and colleagues through Pobl eLearning. There will be a fully digitalised update to the 121/MDP process launched in the coming months. The wellbeing questions will highlight anyone who isn't ok and Managers will be trained to spot early warning signs and signpost colleagues to the wellbeing team. The plan is that all Managers will be able to develop their own 'Mental Health toolkit' by accessing the resources described.

Our dedicated Wellbeing team continue to offer support to individuals and teams across Pobl, either through self-referral or concerns raised through one to ones etc. Our health and wellbeing offer has shifted post Covid with more emphasis on cost of living pressures and providing practical as well as emotional support to colleagues. The 'Time for Talking' external counselling service is also available to colleagues who require bespoke or confidential advice and support.

A 'Race Equality Matters' discussion/support forum for colleagues is available on PoblPoint which acts as a 'safe space' for any colleagues who wish to participate. Although this is underused at present, the **FREDIE** (Fairness Respect Equality Diversity Inclusion Engagement) steering group will be looking to promote initiatives such as this to encourage further interaction from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues.



We will...

Investigate reasons for overcrowding and worse housing conditions amongst some Black Asian Minority Ethnic groups and start acting on findings.

FREDIE

One of the **FREDIE** steering group representatives is part of the Pwllgwenlly joint RSL forum comprising Pobl, Melin, Linc, Newport City Homes and Newport Council.

As part of the Master planning process there is direct consultation with local Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic customers of all RSLs who live in the Pill area in Newport to gauge views on the availability of appropriate sized homes, ideas for future need and any shortfalls in the housing provision for those people living in the area.

2

Improve the ethnic diversity of board and staff at all levels

We will...

Adopt the Rooney Rule in all job levels where we identify under representation.

The Rooney Rule provides for employers to take positive action where our data confirms we have under representation from a specific group in our organisation. Organisations in the UK are specifically looking at BAME and Females in applying this rule and most at senior level. Our data would not allow us to take positive actions based on gender however there is evidence that we are underrepresented at senior level for BAME groups.

Therefore for all 'non-front line' roles we will soon be introducing the same criteria that we use under the 'Two Ticks' scheme. Candidates who have selected 'two ticks' against a **Rooney Rule** statement on their application form and meet the minimum essential criteria during shortlisting must be invited to interview under the 'Guaranteed Interview Scheme'.

The L&D team are working on a new approach to Unconscious Bias training. There is currently a generic, unbranded eLearning module in place. The plan is to strengthen the eLearning offer by peppering unconscious bias throughout other modules which won't necessarily be branded as Unconscious Bias. The aim is to embed Unconscious Bias as part of the learning fabric. The modules are currently being rewritten and 'Pobl-ised' and will be launched in the coming months.

The team are also working on a new approach to recruitment intervention. Unconscious Bias will be central to recruitment and Managers will be upskilled in areas including Ethical recruitment, encouraging and evaluating talent and the candidate experience.

A pilot will be launched in the coming months, the results of which will be evaluated before a full roll out later in the year.



We have signed up to the 'Pathway to Board' development programme for ethnic minority people looking to secure a Board position. The programme is led by Cardiff Community Housing Association and the next recruitment round is underway with the programme expected to commence in late February.

<https://ccha.org.uk/pathway-to-board/>

We will be offering a Board shadowing opportunity within Pobl and the successful candidate will spend 4-5 months attending Pobl Board meetings and events and learning about the role of a Non-Executive. Additional partner organisations within the programme will be offering support with applications, interview skills etc. The FREDIE lead will co-ordinate the placements and one of our Non-Executives will act as a mentor.

We will...

Report annually and act on findings:

- o Ethnicities pay gap (where pay gap reporting is not possible due to small sample sizes – report Black Asian Minority Ethnic employee ratios at different levels)
- o Recruitment, promotion, and retention ethnicity data

In November 2022 we asked our external HR advisors to conduct a piece of work looking at Pobl's Ethnicity Pay Gap for the first time. The data considered the mean (average), median (mid-point) and quartile distribution.

Colleagues who have chosen an option other than White, British make up 2.5% of the overall colleague numbers. The report does not suggest any inequality in pay based on the data provided. The data tells us we are employing people who are representative of our communities but we recognise there are geographic pockets where we need to do more to attract applicants from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population.

This was a good exercise to provide a baseline measurement.

The FREDIE steering group regularly consider colleague diversity data and what this tells us in terms of the way we run our business. Recent reviews have included 'Leavers data by protected characteristic' and 'Improving the diversity of the workforce'. The steering group has made recommendations which have directly influenced the way we recruit and retain colleagues from under-represented groups.

We have also started a piece of work considering the recently published Census data for the areas in which we operate. The findings will influence any changes we need to make around service delivery in our communities.

3

Communicate and engage.

We will...

Publicise our support for racial equality, including voiced support for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority colleagues and tenants/communities, commitment to anti-racist practice and awareness of specific challenges facing our organisation or community.

We are linking in with Victim Support to share best practice with a view to developing a Hate Crime policy for the Group. We will also be running a Pobl Knowledge Showcase on the subject of Hate Crime to raise awareness as part of Hate Crime Awareness week in October.

We continue to promote and celebrate important dates and events in the Diversity calendar, both internally on Poblpoint and externally via our social media platforms. Recent awareness campaigns have included Black History month, Religious festivals and Race Equality week. **FREDIE** themes feature as a standard item in the colleague updates.

Together with the above we will...

- o Publish our commitment to take specific actions to tackle the challenges identified and report on progress annually.
- o Disaggregate ethnicity data in our tenant satisfaction surveys and other tenant surveys. Use other channels to learn about the experiences of BAME tenants and act on findings.



As part of our 'Healthy Homes' project we are reviewing our internal systems and processes to consider how we properly gather, store and use customer data regarding protected characteristics, vulnerabilities, etc. and how we can then use this data to better serve our customers. There is some initial work to do around reviewing existing processes and considering how Dynamics will work once this information has been gathered. The **FREDIE** lead will be part of this project.

In January 2023, 160 customers were surveyed as part of our customer Trust measurement. When asked to rate the comment “I trust Pobl”, the results from different ethnic groups were as follows: –

“I Strongly agree”

11.8% – White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland
0.6% – Black African
0.6% – Asian / Black Asian / Indian
0.6% – Asian / British Asian / Any other Asian background
0.6% – Prefer not to state ethnicity
7.5% – Ethnicity not known to us

“I Agree”

0.6% – Black British
1.8% – Black/African
0.6% – Mixed / multiple ethnic background
21.8% – White/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland
0.6% – White other
5.6% – Prefer not to state ethnicity
12.5% – Ethnicity not known to us

**“Neither Agree
nor disagree”**

0.6% – White other
10% – White/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland
1.2% – Prefer not to state ethnicity
5.6% – Ethnicity not known to us

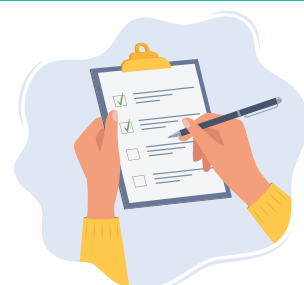
“I Disagree”

5% – White/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland
1.2% – Ethnicity not known to us

**“I Strongly
Disagree”**

5.6% – White/English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Ireland
1.8% – Ethnicity not known to us

Going forward we will also be undertaking a review of customer complaints data through a FREDIE lens to identify any under or over reporting from certain groups of customers.



We will...

Build links with and support Black Asian Minority Ethnic community groups in the area and beyond, invest in building their capacity to support local communities and bring in community knowledge and challenge to the organisation.



We are working closely with Newport Yemeni Association in the East and other similar community groups in the West. This will enable us to break down cultural and language barriers and ensure we hear the voices of people who live in our communities and vice versa. There is a direct link to the Healthy Homes project which seeks to address communication issues amongst diverse and marginalised groups. The Healthy Homes project has also highlighted the issue of hoarding which can compound damp and mould problems in properties. Some hoarders may choose not to report the problems for fear of being targeted by the landlord. We will be working with the Customer Wellbeing team to offer support to these individuals.

In asylum dispersal areas, we will...

Commit to donating or leasing housing to refugee housing initiatives (where these exist).

As reported in previous updates, an innovative solution has been established in partnership with Tai Pawb and The Gap Wales to address Refugee homelessness in Newport. Pobl identified a vacant 3-bedroom property in the City Centre and The Gap took on the property as the landlord at a discounted rent. Pobl provided the investment to convert the property into shared flats and continued to offer maintenance services. The Gap have supported a number of Refugees to move into the property and the community have been really welcoming of the new residents.

The project with The Gap Wales is still going very strong. Every resident that has moved on has sustained their new tenancy using the skills they developed in the shared flat. We are now exploring a second shared home with The Gap Wales and continue to have a great relationship with them. In the Summer, The Gap were successful in a bid for Pobl's Community Chest funding to brighten up some of the local green-spaces in Pill. This included street art on the plain concrete planters that were previously attracting fly tipping.

We are currently bidding for £1M of Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme (TACP) grant funding from Welsh Government to enable us to retain/refurbish/relet 15 properties that we would otherwise have disposed of. The grant rate for this programme is 80%, so Pobl will be putting in around £250K of its own capital money on top. Once refurbished these properties will be let to Ukrainian refugees and/or those in temporary accommodation due to homelessness risk. The work will be carried out during the 2023/24 year.

4

Develop an inclusive culture

Chief Executives, senior leaders and boards will...

Take a proactive role in championing and monitoring progress on these pledges.

There is a direct link between the **FREDIE** strategic lead and the Board and regular progress updates are provided on key projects.

In June 2022 Welsh Government launched its 'Anti-racist Wales Action Plan' following a consultation exercise to which we fed into. Organisations who receive WG funding, including Pobl, will have to evidence how anti-racism will be implemented across the business and regulation of anti-racism and the promotion of race equality in service provision will be monitored by the Regulator. The Plan also includes guidance on how to tackle and report hate crimes. Additionally, tenant involvement is key and building close relationships with customers is necessary to meet their needs. The target date to deliver the Housing outcomes is December 2023. Many of the actions have already been incorporated into the revised WG Regulatory Standards and we have started to report quarterly on the progress we are making.

In November 2022, the **FREDIE** Lead was co-opted onto the Board of Tai Pawb which is the umbrella organisation for promoting and advancing Equality & Social Justice in Housing in Wales: <https://www.taipawb.org/>

Pobl has worked closely with Tai Pawb for a number of years and we continue to support their research and campaign work. The Trustee position will provide a great opportunity to influence policy and procedure, contribute to decision making and broaden our external **FREDIE** network.

Chief Executives, senior leaders and boards will...

Actively support and promote an inclusive culture where people are comfortable talking about race and can bring their whole self to work



Our responsibility as a business is to be clear about behaviours and be willing to challenge. The Group Chair, Group Chief Executive, Group Board and Senior Leadership Team all model the **FREDIE** behaviours by having open, honest discussions with their teams and by being visible to the business.

In March 2022 we reviewed and updated our 'Inclusive by Instinct' **FREDIE** Plan with a clear commitment to having a Diverse and Inclusive approach to our colleagues, customers and stakeholders. The **FREDIE** themes are also woven into 'Our Pobl Ambitions'.

In August 2022 Pobl received confirmation that it had retained the Investors in Diversity Quality Mark for a further two years, demonstrating our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The external assessor was very pleased with the approach we have taken to **FREDIE** and noted several good examples. "...it is clear that **FREDIE** is very much part of the values and ways of working at Pobl." We are working our way through the areas of improvement identified with a view to achieving 'Leaders in Diversity' status at the next review.



We will...

Actively support and promote a culture where Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority colleagues and customers are comfortable to voice concerns related to race and are believed when this happens



In September 2022 we undertook a further Colleague Voices survey. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) questions had an excellent result with no scores below 7.5. The overall score for EDI was 8.6 which is 0.6 above the non-profit benchmark. The EDI results placed Pobl in the top 5% for non-profit organisations. 61% scored 9 or 10; 27% scored 7 or 8; 12% scored 0-6. All scores have increased since the last survey, except 2 scores which stayed the same.

The focus going forward is on Inclusiveness, creating a sense of belonging and making people feel safe and valued, regardless of any Diversity. There is also a need to demonstrate diversity in the workforce with a particular project to improve diversity at senior and management level. The People strategy will address these areas.

The Group Complaints Co-ordinator has recently joined the **FREDIE** steering group. One of the first projects will be to consider customer complaints through a **FREDIE** lens to identify any areas of inequality – either under-reporting or over-reporting of repairs and maintenance issues by certain groups of customers. The January data is available and we are waiting on the February data to give a broader picture. Going forward, this exercise will be repeated on an annual basis. Another area we are particularly interested in is the ‘See it, Report it’ tool used by Neighbourhood Managers to identify issues and defects in our properties. Again, we will be carrying out a trend analysis by protected characteristic, with a particular focus on any language or cultural barriers that may prevent customers reporting issues in their homes.

We will...

Invest in reverse mentoring schemes to share experiences and improve opportunities

The third mutual mentoring programme was launched at the start of 2022 with several **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic** colleagues acting as Mentors. Mentees comprised members of the Board and Senior Leadership Team. Feedback on the programme was positive and all participants referred to the benefit of learning from someone with different lived experiences. There were some open, honest conversations on the **FREDIE** principles (**Fairness Respect Equality Diversity Inclusion Engagement**) and how these could be applied to their role and their personal lives.

We will be launching further mutual mentoring programmes on an annual basis.

We will...

Continue to report annually on progress against the commitments we have made in the Deeds not Words Pledge.

To find out more please contact: Nicola.jones@poblgroup.co.uk

