

# **Equality and Social Justice Committee: Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP) inquiry**

## **September 2023**

### **Context**

CHC recently issued a survey to Chief Executives of housing associations (HA's) to establish a baseline understanding of their progress of the Welsh Government's ARWAP and to produce a sector representative response to the Environmental and Social Justice Committee's [consultation](#) on the implementation and delivery of the ARWAP.

The survey also aimed to gain a clear understanding of the challenges experienced by our members to establish where we can best support the sector, as well as collating best practice across the sector.

### **Summary of findings**

Our findings are representative across 21 housing associations.

These responses demonstrated:

- A range of some limited awareness to a good level of awareness of the ARWAP across all structural levels of HAs, with executive teams demonstrating the most awareness
- Housing associations have received a reasonable offer/amount of support in relation to the ARWAP, most dominantly through Tai Pawb
- The majority of requirements for December 2023 are on track for completion, with the exception of implementing 'Reflecting Wales in Running Wales', where this has caused some confusion in terms of applicability.
- A range of reasons have been identified that have prevented the deliverability of some of the December 2023 requirements. The most common reasons were due to timing and other competing pressures
- The majority of HA's have achieved their ARWAP obligations through Tai Pawb's Deeds Not Words (DNW) pledge
- Alongside this survey, 7 HA's have provided us with best practice/case study evidence



## **Full findings**

### Awareness of HA's obligations under the the ARWAP

Responses showed a range of some limited awareness to a good level of awareness across all structural levels of the organisation, with executive teams generally having the highest level of awareness.

- Board members: only 9.5% were not aware of the ARWAP
- Executive team: 38% have good awareness, 29% have some limited awareness and 29% of executive teams fully aware and making progress/completed work
- Staff: Awareness is the lowest overall amongst wider staff, with just 20% with either good or full awareness

	Not aware of it/not completing any work	Some limited awareness	Good awareness	Fully aware and making progress on/completed work
Board	2 (9.5%)	9 (42.9%)	7 (33.3%)	3 (14.3%)
Executive team	1 (4.8%)	6 (28.6%)	8 (38.1%)	6 (28.6%)
Staff	2 (9.5%)	15 (71.4%)	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.5%)

### Offers of support in relation to the ARWAP from the Welsh Government or any partner organisations

- 67% of HAs had received an offer/some report - 15 members cited services provided through Tai Pawb memberships, including regular catch ups with the Anti-racism Manager, Deeds not Words meetings, advice and support, training by its board members and two members cited advice from CHC
- 33% of HAs had not received an offer/amount of support

### Requirements under the ARWAP with a completion date of December 2023

- 17 HAs have either completed or are on track to producing a **delivery plan**
- 16 HAs have either delivered or are on track to delivering **anti-racist training** to board members and senior leaders
- 17 HAs have either begun to/are on track for **improving the diversity** of board membership, advisory groups, and the wider workforce - including senior leadership positions
- 9 HAs have not started to implement **Reflecting Wales in Running Wales**: the diversity and inclusion strategy for Public Appointments



- 18 HAs have started/are on track to improving **communication and engagement** with ethnic minority people and reflect diversity within communication strategies and campaigns
- 15 HAs have started/are on track to **improving data collection**, analysis, usage, and publication across service delivery

Members identified a range of obstacles to the delivery of the above actions. These include:

- Time pressures (9 HAs)
- Other protected characteristics being of more relevance to the demographic of the organisation itself and/or the communities they represent (7 HAs)
- Other competing pressures such as damp, mould and condensation and the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 (8 HAs)

There also appears to be mixed understanding around the applicability of Reflecting Wales in Running Wales and whether this should be treated as best practice or as an obligation, given that it's public appointments status.

#### Achievements through Tai Pawb's Deeds Not Words (DNW) pledge

80% of our members are currently signed up to the DNW pledge. Our survey shows that the majority of respondents (62%) have achieved their ARWAP obligations through DNW.

Examples of actions taken by HAs:

- Adopted All-Wales Covid-19 Risk Assessment
- Adopted Rooney Rule in recruitment and reviewed recruitment pages on website to ensure they are inclusive & welcoming, emphasising commitment to EDI
- Reviewed overcrowded households
- Creation of a stand-alone Head of Culture and Inclusion

#### Other priorities currently being addressed from a racial equality perspective

- 5 HAs are currently addressing overcrowding.
- It is also noted that once WHQS23 is published, it is likely that it will have areas for consideration.

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### **Evidence and best practice**

#### **Bron Afon**

##### Engagement with Syrian families:

- Visits were completed this year to understand more about the needs of the Syrian families housed by the HA
- The visits were linked to the Deeds Not Words commitment and the introduction of the Renting Homes Act
- Bron Afon talked with the families via a service level agreement with the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS)). They identified their understanding of English and their first language, information they did not already hold
- Knowing more about these customers means that;
  - The customer relationship system now holds the correct language information;
  - These customers can contact the HA and vice versa using telephone interpretation (through our SLA with WITS), ensuring there are no communication barriers.

#### **Newport City Homes**

- Continued focus to increase Board Diversity through participation in Pathway to Board scheme
- Reviewed and refreshed recruitment processes, achieving more diverse and representative applications and appointments
- Delivered targeted recruitment campaigns, resulting in increased racial diversity across our customer voice panels
- Continued focus in supporting and engaging 'hidden communities', including refugees and asylum seekers
- Enriched education and awareness, utilising customers, communities, and colleagues voices and lived experiences
- Enhanced colleague experience through a sustained passion in creating an inclusive working environment, delivering EDI initiatives at pace



## Monmouthshire HA

- Set-up an EDI Steering Group with two sub-groups for Communities and Colleagues
- Following a Health Check by Tai Pawb, we have developed an Action Plan which also includes Actions from Deeds Not Words Pledge
- We are currently working through these actions which include training, improving data, and comparison of data to test our processes, to make improvement

## Pobl

### Board and workforce diversity:

Pobl have signed up to the CCHA 'Pathway to Board' development programme for ethnic minority people looking to secure a Board position. There is currently a placement in Pobl learning about the governance process and developing their Board skills. An underrepresentation of some minority groups at more senior levels in the organisation has also been identified - specifically those from ethnic minority communities and people with disabilities. Pobl are taking positive steps to try to improve diversity and representation throughout all levels of the organisation.

As such, Pobl have implemented a Positive Action rule to our Talent Attraction process. This Positive Action rule is a combination of our commitments as a Disability Confident Employer and our commitment to the Rooney Rule for people from ethnic minority communities as set out in the Deeds not Words pledge. The Positive Action rule ensures that those applicants who are from underrepresented minority groups and meet the essential shortlisting criteria are always offered an interview. In doing so, we are ensuring that underrepresented groups are afforded equal opportunities at Pobl Group.

During the application process, individuals may choose whether they wish for this rule to be applied to their application and it will only show if they do. A guidance document has been developed to ensure Managers understand and adhere to the process.

### Communication and Engagement:

Pobl are working closely with Newport Yemeni Association in the East and other similar community groups in the West. This aims to break down cultural and language barriers and ensure the voices of people living in the community are heard. 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. Pobl will work with the Customer Wellbeing team to offer support to these individuals.



### Addressing overcrowding in our homes:

One of the FREDIE (EDI) 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.

### Asylum seekers & refugees:

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.

Pobl 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 greenspaces 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.

### Tackling Hate Crime:

A Pobl Knowledge Showcase on 'Understanding Hate Crime', was held during August to raise awareness amongst Pobl colleagues. The Showcase, hosted by Victim Support introduced hate crime, shared insight from people's real-life experiences, and outlined the support available to victims and practitioners working in communities. Pobl are currently working with Victim Support to help us achieve the trust mark for the Hate Crime Charter.

### Mutual Mentoring:

Pobl have successfully introduced a Mutual Mentoring programme to the organisation. The third 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 of Fairness Respect Equality Diversity and Engagement and



how these could be applied to their role and their personal lives. Pobl will be running further mutual mentoring programmes on an annual basis.

## Taff

- Undertaken loft conversations in our homes to specifically address the issue of overcrowding. More tenants from black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds are affected by this issue - this initiative has had a positive impact on the equality of housing services provision.
- Expanded accommodation provision for refugees, with 5 homes now dedicated to this type of accommodation.
- In regards to recruitment, Taff have set community language as essential criteria for some customer facing roles where they consider this a genuine occupation requirement
- Get Into Housing Programme as an example of the sector coming together to address this issue

## Melin

- Currently piloting the Tai Pawb QED leaders programme and have worked on diversity across our Board
- Currently looking at diversity across our staff and recruitment process
- Collecting equality monitoring data from our residents that would impact service delivery across all diverse groups

## Coastal

- Further work on their EDI strategy and commitments therein
- Staff, SMT & Board training is booked from September through to November 2023
- Built further relationships with partners and have expanded those partnerships - working to learn from partners and seek their support to move forward
- EDI thread to increase learning and awareness through Learning & Development activity (especially Learning at work week)
- Ongoing work to improve data capture and learn from the data (staff & resident)
- More targeted drive on recruitment including engaging with communities has led to greater diversity at Board level, and is resulting in increased applications when recruiting Coastal wide
- Work being undertaken to understand how best to support residents based on cultural needs