



BLACK
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MATTER

Deeds not Words Leaders Briefing

7 December 2022



Culture & race

*This briefing summarises discussions and learning from the Deeds not Words (DNW) Leaders meeting which focused on culture – 07/12/2022. The meeting included focus on **damp and mould issues***

Relevant pledges

Develop an inclusive culture

- *Chief Executives, senior leaders/Heads of Housing and boards to take a proactive role in championing and monitoring progress on these pledges.*
- *Chief Executives, senior leaders/Heads of Housing and boards to actively support and promote an inclusive culture where people are comfortable talking about race and can bring their whole self to work*
- *Actively support and promote a culture where Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority staff and tenants/service users are comfortable to voice concerns related to race and are believed when this happens*
- *Invest in reverse mentoring schemes to share experiences and improve opportunities*

Day of Action Story

[Check out good practice examples shared on the day here](#)

- 7th of December was our day of action. We asked members to take to their social media channels on and **share one or more achievements** from their organisation since undertaking the Deeds Not Words pledge.

- You can see all the Tweets shared that day on [our website here](#). There are some great examples of good practice there, including videos, so have a look.

Context

Alicja Zalesinska provided context for discussion. Presentation is [available here](#). Key points:

- Culture is the foundation of what Deeds not Words is trying to achieve. Some key questions to ask ourselves:
- How deliberate and impactful have organisations been in delivering on our pledges?
- How much focus and resource/capacity have the SMT's/boards given to Deeds not Words commitments?
- Are we looking at how one-off training can be the foundation for anti-racism to be a thread running through everything that the organisation does and continual awareness raising?
- Doctor Andrew Ibrahim's '[Becoming Anti-racist' mental](#) model is a useful benchmark against which organisations could hold themselves accountable on inclusive culture
- Members are encouraged to deliver on their pledge to publish their specific commitments/actions they are taking and progress on these. Link to those that have been [shared with us is here](#).

CHC update

- Laura Courtney from CHC updated members on the work CHC are doing under their [EDI Strategy](#) and [Anti-racist Action Plan](#) including setting up an accountability group, a focus on Equality Impact Assessments and embedding anti-racism and EDI in their policy work.

Deeds not Words panel

- Gemma Watkins and Nazia Azad, Chair and vice chair of [Deeds not Words Panel](#) reflected on the theme of anti-racist culture in organisations with a focus on how organisations deal with service failure in relation to damp and mould in light of the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale. Key questions asked by the panel:
 - What is the organisational culture with regards to service failure?
 - What do we know about the groups who experience service failure and are we responding appropriately?
 - How detailed is the analysis of service failure, concerns and complaints?
- Awaab Ishak's tragic death in Rochdale should prompt us all to ask questions, reflect and continually improve our processes and scrutiny of maintenance and repairs, including racial aspect of how our customers are supported.
- Race (and other EDI) analysis should be embedded into our monitoring and scrutiny and codes of conduct.
- Do we have evidence/data broken down by ethnicity, e.g. complaints, repairs satisfaction, stock condition, repeat repairs, repair reports?
- Complaints data is scarce therefore we should be looking at contact and repeat repairs reports.
- Are we assured that the culture of our services does not put disproportionate amount of blame on so called lifestyle choices?
- In Awaab's case the damp/mouldy condition of the home was partly and wrongly attributed by the landlord to the family's lifestyle issues. The landlord's maintenance staff claimed that

cooking and bathing were adding to moisture issues, including claims that the family practiced 'ritual bathing' involving a 'bucket'. It turned out that the workers never asked the family about this and the father denied it took place.

- Even if the above lifestyle was relevant to a case – the question is 'so what'? To what extent do our maintenance colleagues, practices, policies and designs embed the need to cater for different lifestyles and cultural needs?

Focus on reverse mentoring: POBL Group

- Lucie Thomas, director of Talent from POBL provided an overview of a successful reverse mentoring scheme set up by POBL
- Lucie also described [FREDIE](#) – Pobl Approach to EDI. Pobl have published their specific DNW pledges and update on progress annually [here](#).
- Reverse mentoring involves a group of volunteer diverse individuals (including ethnic minority colleagues) working across POBL who provide mentoring to the senior leadership team.
- Guidance was provided to mentors and mentees.
- Every senior leadership team member and board members in POBL had a mentor assigned to them.
- POBL evaluation of the program has demonstrated that it has been extremely valuable for both mentees and mentors with impacts, including increased awareness, visible and demonstrable during e.g. board level discussions.
- The success of the program means POBL are looking to run the program as a continuous initiative, including expanding it.
- Lucie is happy to share information about the initiative: lucie.thomas@poblgroup.co.uk

Pathway to Board Academy

- Afshan Iqbal, the new manager of the above programme, provided an update on [Pathway to Board](#) – a development programme for ethnic minority people looking to join boards, co-funded by CCHA, TAff Housing, Linc Cymru, Cadwyn and Hafod.
- The first cohort of trainees have just graduated from the programme with two securing board positions so far and others looking for positions.
- Afshan is looking to involve more organisations in supporting the programme, including board shadowing opportunities, partners, offering support with applications, interview skills (e.g. helping with mock interviews)
- Afshan is looking to recruit a new cohort of trainees from December with the programme commencing in February 2023.
- For more info or if you would like to offer support, contact: Afshan.Iqbal@ccha.org.uk

Pledge progress and current practice

- One RSL reported that they are '[ripping apart](#)' their current recruitment process and testing ways to make it more inclusive
- One RSL reported they have focused on supporting [staff facing discrimination](#) and are really 'cracking down' on such behaviours
- All staff in United Wels and Newydd had [unconscious bias](#) training. UW held de-brief sessions after to decide how they will implement learning

- One RSL fed back that a wider picture around inclusivity needs to be embedded in decision making. They are focusing on a culture of constructively challenging decisions internally. Recognising that even decisions are made with best intentions but may have discriminatory effects. Conscious scrutiny and being open to challenge on decisions needs to be embedded in culture.
- Taff Community Academy – Taff, apart from co-funding Pathway to Board and Get into Housing, are also focusing on development opportunities for tenants and colleagues, focusing on progression
- “Grow your own” culture – can sometimes be a challenge
- POBL invite internal or external speakers to their FREDIE meetings, sharing EDI related experiences with colleagues
- We need recognise that behaviour can’t just be changed with a training session and need to constantly reinforce the message and upskilling colleagues on race, anti-racism and EDI
- Clwyd Alyn’s key priority is tackling poverty – they focused on how to embed anti-racism and inclusion within their anti-poverty action/strategy
- Clwyd Alyn developed new EDI guidance and reviewed/scrapped old policies with modern practice embedded into new ones
- Clwyd Alyn developed a staff inclusion network – focused on all protected characteristics. They have also organised ‘learning circles’
- One organisation which has only recently signed up to DNW are currently developing their action plan: in the course they have identified weaknesses in data and tenant profiling and are focusing on strengthening this. They are also looking to support staff to address problems – recognizing a person-centred approach
- Another organization which has recently signed up started with benchmarking culture through a specific EDI staff survey which included 7 core questions. The results went to the board and were fed back to staff. They are currently trying to set up an EDI working group although there is little interest from staff – possibly due to capacity. They are also looking to commission a company to help them hold safe space conversations with team members.
- Another organisation reported that they struggled to recruit to their EDI champions group any staff members other than HR.
- One organisation reported that their Chair is their Board EDI champion. They have an annual EDI plan, including DNW and report on this to the board.
- Cadwyn recently carried out a EDI focused survey with staff and tenants. Currently addressing findings.
- One organisation interrogated their complaints and found that only 18% of formal complaints were from ethnic minority tenants with their ethnic minority tenant population being 24%. Although this looks good, they are looking whether there might be specific reasons for underrepresentation (e.g. lack of awareness etc).
- Several members stressed the need to be able to track and monitor the more informal, pre-complaint contact and analyse this according to diversity.
- Cadwyn are currently introducing software which will enable them to have data dashboards (including EDI) for different departments as well as to track informal complaints.
- EDI data culture– one organisation reported the key challenge being getting managers on board to understand why data is important and why it should be scrutinised and used.
- One organisation identified lack of data as their key challenge and focusing on this in new year. They are also setting up an EDI group and rolling out EIA’s. They have found Tai Pawb’s membership support via membership credits and helpline very useful.
- Another organisation admitted that progress has been too slow due to resources. DNW helped them be more critical of what they haven’t done and raised profile of EDI work with senior

leaders and board. They are determined to pause, refresh and start in the new year. They will definitely take forward reverse mentoring.

- One organisation reviewed their gifts and benefits policy to make it more inclusive – considering different needs and requirements of diverse people
- Newydd have conducted staff lived experience survey with questions on inclusion. It was good to share results and what they are doing with it with colleagues.
- Newydd reviewed their EDI calendar of events. Previously these were linked to specific awareness days. The organisation decided that this was a piecemeal approach with information shared being seen as tokenistic. Going forward they will focus on one protected characteristic per month in terms of awareness raising.
- Hafod this year held an inclusion week: they had a different speaker every day with a focus on lived experience. Looking to hold it next year as was successful.
- Hafod are getting people from across the organization to attend a workshop in January 23 which will feed into their new EDI plan. They are also reviewing the role of board members. They are recruiting in Jan 23 and will use the Rooney Rule.
- Newydd worked with Dynamic Boards to boost their ethnic diversity on board.
- One RSL analysed their complaints by diversity and although there were no trends for ethnic minority people, disabled tenants were more likely to complain. Currently looking into it.
- In light of cost of living crisis – one RSL analysed their data on use of financial inclusion services by protected characteristics.
- Melin Homes set up Listen, Act and Learn – a pre complaint service to report concerns. This includes an email address, phone number and QR codes to report. Contact is made within 48 hours.
- One RSL is trying to focus on talent development. They engaged with each department and considering how to provide opportunities across the organisation (including moving teams etc) to enable people to develop their skills and talents
- One RSL had a race focused staff group but this has stopped with some staff leaving and for some the emotional toll of this. They are looking how to address this in the new year.
- Monmouthshire Housing are launching an EDI strategy in the new year. They have good EDI data but looking at strengthening reporting mechanisms.
- Cynon Taf are launching a new dedicated EDI section on their website. They have also focused on partnering with diverse community orgs to assist them and tenants, providing challenge and advocacy.
- CCHA reported a raft of actions including an active and enthusiastic EDI staff group supported by the CEO, Pathway to Board, Get into Housing project. They have granted days off for religious holidays, provided a faith room and increased their connections with local community groups, amongst others. The ethnic diversity.
- **CCHA – thanks to positive action in recruitment – 15% of their staff are from ethnically diverse backgrounds now compared to 6% in March 2021. CCHA have transformed their recruitment process to be more inclusive and have put focus on valuing lived experience as well as professional experience.**

