

Embracing Diversity

A good practice guide



Contents

Foreword

The Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, MP for Greenwich and Woolwich	1
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Customer Experience

Leeds Housing Construction Partnership	2
One Vision Housing	4
Kensington and Chelsea TMO	5
Broadacres Housing Association	6
Harlow District Council	7
Kier Building Maintenance	8
Ealing Homes	10
Nashayman	12
Kier Building Maintenance and Stonewall	14

Procurement

Wales and West Housing Association	16
Trinity Property Maintenance	18

Recruitment

Family Housing Association (Birmingham)	20
Milecastle Housing	21
London Borough of Islington	22
Bradford Community Housing Trust Group	24
Sheffield Homes	26
Wales and West Housing Association	28
Community Gateway Association	29
New Charter Housing Trust Group and Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society	30

Training

Kier Building Maintenance	32
Ease Project	33
Calico Housing	34
Nashayman	36
Metropolitan Housing Partnership	38
Southern Housing Group	39
Kier Building Maintenance and the Garnett Foundation	40
Richmond Housing Partnership	41

Another Perspective

Ridge - Property and Construction Consultants	42
Glendon Property Services	43
Useful Contacts	44

Foreword - Rt Hon Nick Raynsford



The Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, MP for Greenwich and Woolwich

It is now common practice for social housing landlords to embrace and address diversity issues. It is less common – and more challenging – to ensure they are properly considered when delivering repairs and maintenance services.

All landlords know that the quality of their repairs and maintenance operations, above all their services, determines how they are judged by their customers. These customers are an increasingly diverse group – including households headed by women, individuals with disabilities, elderly or young residents, people of different ethnic or faith backgrounds, or households comprising lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

In a value for money driven environment, how do social housing landlords understand, prioritise and meet the needs of their diverse and often fast-changing customer base to provide an excellent and accessible service? How do organisations embed the values of diversity and ensure that the composition of their repairs and maintenance workforce reflects the communities they work for in what is often seen as a traditional industry?

This guide provides examples of how a variety of social housing landlords and repairs and maintenance service providers have successfully risen to these challenges. The case studies that follow detail practical ways of addressing diversity issues and demonstrate that additional funding and dedicated resources are not always necessary to providing opportunities or a sensitive, responsive and accessible service.

I have been impressed by the way that Kier and HouseMark have addressed the key issues and brought together the case study material that forms the basis of this guide. I thank and congratulate all the local authorities, housing associations and consultants who have developed the best practice show cased here. I hope that it proves useful and thought provoking and, above all, inspires more social landlords and service providers to tackle the complex issues of diversity.

*The Rt Hon Nick Raynsford
MP for Greenwich and Woolwich*



Leeds Homes Construction Partnership

Striving for the platinum standard - equality and diversity monitoring for contractors

Initiative

Leeds Homes Construction Partnership (LHCP) oversees the procurement and delivery of Decent Homes work for Leeds City Council. Delivering Decent Homes work is only part of a wider commitment to benefit the local community. Equality and diversity were identified as fundamental issues that LHCP wanted to address. Towards this end, LHCP developed an innovative equality and diversity assessment and monitoring system.



How it works

As a part of the procurement process, contractors and suppliers are carefully vetted on equality and diversity criteria and volunteer to join LHCP's unique assessment and monitoring framework.

Assessments are based on a fine metal standard – bronze, silver, gold and platinum – each with specific criteria. Contractors and suppliers are visited in their work premises and on active construction sites by independent equality and diversity assessors. LHCP then works with the companies to implement a continuous improvement programme based on a stepping stones approach to achieve the next fine metal standard.

The LHCP Board set up a dedicated equality and diversity monitoring project team, which includes tenant and community representatives and representatives from partner contractors, ALMOs (arms length management organisations) and Leeds City Council. The team oversees the monitoring process and supports contractors in improving their performance. Contractors are assessed on a quarterly basis and, at the end of the year, if progress continues as planned, will achieve the next level of the standard.



“I’m really glad we are doing this, our staff have taken to it as well”.

Large northern construction contractor

While challenging and rigorous, LHCP has found that all its partners recognise the business advantages of the initiative. Adhering to this framework enables large, small, specialist and elemental contractors alike to meet their social responsibility and can help them to win or retain more work from the public sector. Some firms have even taken this initiative as the impetus necessary to drive forward equality and diversity improvements in their own operations, and some are actively offering to cascade their new knowledge to their subcontractors and others in the LHCP project.

Funding

No specific funding was required for this initiative.

The future

Many LHCP partners are looking forward to their annual reassessment and receiving their upgrade certificate, with one specific partner determined to attain the platinum standard during 2008. The success of LHCP’s initiative in the Decent Homes arena has prompted interest from other parties such as Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services, Leeds Metropolitan University and Kier – the first responsive repairs partner to join the programme.

LHCP intends to promote and share this unique scheme as an example of best practice and believes that, with appropriate adaptation, its assessment and monitoring scheme could be suitable for a whole range of organisations.



One Vision Housing

Efficiency savings and diversity

Using contractors to build a diversity profile

Initiative

One Vision Housing (OVH) is a housing association based in Sefton. OVH has recently started work to bring its stock up to the Decent Homes standard. With contractors visiting so many properties in the course of refurbishment work, OVH capitalised on this ideal opportunity to build up a diversity profile of its residents.

In addition to meeting Housing Corporation and Audit Commission standards, this initiative works towards fulfilling OVH's aims of:

- providing high quality homes in thriving, inclusive communities through fostering equality and diversity and working in partnership
- providing a value-for-money service.

How it works

As with most Decent Homes work, a contractor-employed customer liaison Advisor (CLA) visits each property prior to refurbishment work being carried out, to determine customer design choices, special access requirements and any other details that may affect the work. As part of this initiative, CLAs now also gather data on the diversity profile of residents, through a questionnaire.

The questionnaire and methodology used was created in partnership by OVH, contractors and residents, and obtains information on: ethnicity, age, religion, disability and gender.

When conducting this survey, CLAs stress that residents do not have to answer questions if they are uncomfortable about doing so.

The information collected is then collated and entered into OVH's Anite Housing Management System. This data can then be extracted and analysed to give a picture of the diversity of each estate.

Information about the visits, and the data gathered, are relayed to residents via newsletters and are also available on OVH's website.

Funding

No specific external funding was used for this initiative.

The future

This simple and cost effective initiative has significantly increased the volume and accuracy of diversity data to which OVH has access. This has allowed OVH to target its services more effectively by, for example, offering aids and adaptation services to otherwise hard-to-reach groups such as elderly, black and minority ethnic (BME) residents.

Now that a precedent has been set, OVH will consider using contractors to undertake other on-site intelligence work traditionally carried out by housing management staff. Future plans for this kind of data capture include profiling non-tenant members of the household.



Kensington and Chelsea TMO

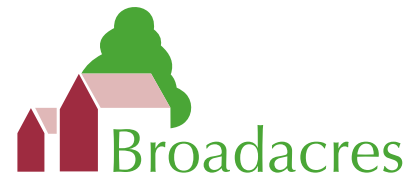
Demystifying diversity

Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) recognises that trying to meet the diverse needs of residents can sometimes be a daunting prospect for staff, especially when different cultures are involved.

To help with this, the TMO devised a culture and diversity handbook to provide guidelines for staff and contractors. The handbook includes general guidance on clothing, gender issues, hospitality, festivals and their timings, and communication issues such as shaking hands and the appropriate names to use. Also included is a multi-faith calendar.

The handbook is not intended as a comprehensive book of rules, but rather a tool to promote understanding. It is based on the fundamental premise that everyone should be respected as an individual and is entitled to fair and equal access to services. The handbook is regularly updated, and staff and residents are invited to contribute and suggest improvements.





Broadacres Housing Association

Embracing diversity in an unlikely setting

Initiative

Based in Northallerton, Broadacres Housing Association (BHA) manages around 4,600 homes across North Yorkshire.

One of BHA's core values is to recognise the diversity of residents and staff and help individuals reach their potential. BHA has developed its diversity policy so that staff are encouraged to move from a narrow perspective of dealing just with issues such as race, ethnicity and gender, to a much broader approach where each person is treated as an individual.

However, given that only 1.2% of the local population are from BME communities, BHA has faced significant barriers to implementing diversity policies and procedures.

How it works

Working towards its goal of promoting diversity, BHA entered into a partnership with Open House. The aims of the Open House Partnership are to increase awareness of the social housing sector within BME communities and to increase access to housing and employment within the sector throughout the Tees Valley sub region of the North East.

BHA and Open House worked together to develop a programme of sheltered traineeships for unemployed people from BME communities. However, given the small numbers of BME people, BHA had trouble finding local trainees. To overcome this, BHA found interested trainees from nearby Middlesbrough and contributed to the trainees' travel costs.

In addition, the partnership created a directory of BME companies based in the region. While many services, such as accountancy and HR



consultancies, were well-represented in the directory, there were very few BME-led repairs and maintenance contractors. While using BME-led contractors may not therefore be a viable option, BHA nevertheless works hard to promote diversity in its partnerships. Contractors who work on behalf of BHA are required to have an equality and diversity policy or adopt BHA's policies, and diversity is a standing item on the agenda for review meetings with contractors.

Funding

The fact that its catchment area was relatively affluent, and had only a small BME population, meant that BHA found it very difficult to secure external funding for this initiative. However, by working with Open House, the partnership was able to obtain a grant under the EU Equal Programme which tackles inequalities in the labour market. BHA matched this funding to ensure the effectiveness of the partnership's initiatives.

The future

BHA's experience demonstrates the challenges that rural-based housing associations can face when attempting to secure funding to promote diversity. In addition to finding ways around funding and geographical barriers, BHA employs simple measures such as ensuring that its board and staff are comprised equally of men and women and are representative of the area's BME population. BHA is an example to all that diversity can indeed be embraced in all settings.



Harlow District Council

Celebrating diversity through cultural events

Like BHA, Harlow District Council has a relatively small BME population.

Nevertheless, the council recognises the importance of community cohesion.

To promote and embrace diversity, Harlow Council celebrates a programme of multicultural events and festivals. For example, during the Hindu and Sikh festival of Diwali, the council invites the local Indian community to set up activities and displays in the council offices, located in the centre of town. All are invited to participate and questions are encouraged. This event is used to raise awareness of Asian cultures and religions and help break down barriers between communities and neighbours.

Events such as these are well-publicised and encourage community engagement. They provide an excellent vehicle for counselling residents on repairs and maintenance issues in a fun and pleasant environment. Harlow Council is aware that over time its population profile will continue to change, and believes that by promoting the value of diversity and multiculturalism to its residents, especially younger people, it will be better-placed to respond to future challenges and meet the needs of its diverse tenants and leaseholders.

Customer Experience



Kier Building Maintenance

Speaking the language of our customers

Initiative

Kier provides a repairs and maintenance service to local authorities and registered social landlords across the country. With access being a key issue for social housing clients, translation cards have proved an innovative way to communicate with customers for whom English is not their first language.

This initiative is in line with Kier's aim of providing a flexible, accessible and sensitive service that is responsive to the needs of individuals and the wider community.

How it works

Kier works in some of the most diverse areas of the country and ensuring equal access to services is a top priority. Letting an operative into your home to carry out a repair can be daunting, particularly if there is no common language in which to communicate.

Kier operatives are required to take translation cards out to all jobs. The translation cards indicate the purpose of the operative's visit, ask the resident

to double check the operative's identification card and assure the resident that they do not have to let the operative in if they are not comfortable about doing so. Translation cards are passed to residents who appear to have difficulty with English prior to the operative entering the property and the resident selects the language they wish to use. Available in the most frequently-used languages of the area, Kier works in partnership with clients and residents to tailor the translation cards to the specific needs of each contract.

Operatives are given specific training on how to use translation cards effectively. Once a specific language requirement is identified, the operative is asked to report this back to their supervisor who will ensure that operatives who attend future jobs are adequately prepared. Further translation support is provided via Language Line, a telephone interpretation service available via Kier contact centres.

Funding

As the cost of producing translation cards is relatively low, no additional funding was required.

The future

Kier translation cards are in the process of being updated and, at the suggestion of residents, will now include a Braille card. This initiative is a part of a broader strategy to provide a more personalised service to residents by understanding their diverse needs.





“These cards are a great idea, Kier has involved BME tenants in their development and has taken our views into account. I’m confident that they’ll make a big difference to both customers and operatives.”

A tenant representative from Kier Sheffield



Customer Experience



Ealing Homes

Using data from the schools census to improve service delivery

Initiative

Ealing Homes is the (ALMO) set up to manage 18,000 homes in the London Borough of Ealing. Teaming up with Ealing Council's education department, Ealing Homes uses data gathered in official school censuses to improve service delivery.

This innovative use of data works towards the aims of the strategic partnership between Ealing Homes and its two maintenance partners, Kier and Mears. The objectives include:

- improving the repairs service internally
- improving service delivery to tenants
- ensuring diversity is fully recognised.



How it works

This initiative was made possible by Ealing Homes and Ealing Council working together to cultivate a strong relationship.

The government requires local authorities to undertake school censuses three times a year. The data collected covers the language, religion, ethnicity and gender of each child. This information is shared with Ealing Homes through the following process:

- Datasets are supplied to the ALMO in an anonymous format, but including the pupils' postcodes.
- This dataset is matched against a housing spreadsheet to flag the postcodes of pupils living in properties managed by Ealing Homes.
- Summary information by estate is fed through to Ealing Homes maintenance and asset investment teams for use in contract management.
- The fact that every pupil in the borough is surveyed so frequently ensures an up-to-date proxy measure for diversity that would not necessarily be captured accurately by a survey of residents.
- To protect privacy, the information is analysed internally. The data is used, for example, to understand which languages should be used at repairs surgeries, setting contractor standards for local/ BME employment, and in regular toolbox talks where operatives are briefed on diversity issues.



Funding

No specific external funding was used.

The future

Detailed information on the diversity of its residents has allowed Ealing Homes to bring diversity issues to the forefront of its service. All contractors working on behalf of the ALMO are aware of the need to take diversity into account, and they readily utilise the available information to improve the service.

Ealing Homes and Ealing Council are constantly looking for new ways in which the datasets can benefit the repairs service, and more generally, all of the residents of Ealing.



Nashayman

Adapting properties to meet diverse cultural needs

Initiative

Nashayman, a part of the Home Group, is a small BME-led housing association operating mainly in the Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees areas. It specialises in providing housing and services to BME communities. Nashayman designs homes and refits voids to meet the needs of its diverse BME customers.

Fitting homes to a specification that addresses the cultural needs of its residents fulfils three key aspects of Nashayman's diversity policy. These are to:

- regularly review how the housing association can contribute to meeting resident needs by developing new homes or by using existing stock
- work in partnership with specialist agencies who are better equipped than Nashayman to meet resident needs
- work with partner developers to design new homes to meet the cultural and other needs of the people to be housed.

How it works

Nashayman relies on its BME staff to identify design changes that better meet the needs of its diverse customer base. Specifically, the housing association transferred a BME member of staff, with hands-on experience of interacting with residents, from the housing management team to the home development team to provide specialist knowledge.

This has resulted in the following changes to the design specification of Nashayman's housing stock:

- Number of rooms:
 - Nashayman aims to develop homes with a minimum of three bedrooms. It also builds four, five and six bedroom houses. This gives families the space to accommodate three generations in the same property.
 - Two reception rooms are built to allow for separate socialising where necessary.
- Kitchens:
 - Storage areas are substantially increased from normal specifications. This allows large cooking pots and containers to be stored without causing a hazard
 - All properties are built with gas supplies. Gas-fired cooking is more suitable for the cooking needs of many of Nashayman's customers
 - Cooker space is expanded to allow for large burners and pots
 - Sinks are deeper so larger pots can be cleaned easily
 - More powerful ventilation is used or additional ventilation added to cope with cooking that generates a lot of steam.
- Bathrooms:
 - Toilets do not face Mecca
 - Floors are sealed to the top of the skirting board – to prevent leaks after washing
 - Toilets are fitted with a shower hose for sanitary cleaning.



- Mixer taps are installed on baths and basins
- Larger properties may have wet rooms installed downstairs as a second bathroom, to provide easy access for elderly members of the household
- To meet the preference for running water, both showers and baths are provided.

Funding

No specific external funding was used for this initiative.

The future

The culturally-sensitive service that Nashayman provides has resulted in high demand for its stock and low turnover of BME customers. This has knock-on benefits of low rent arrears, low void loss, and low spend on repairs associated with voids.

Home Group has recently taken on a project consultant to provide advice and support on delivering culturally sensitive services to ensure that Nashayman's model of best practice is shared across the group.

Customer Experience



Kier Building Maintenance and Stonewall

Championing diversity in the workplace

Initiative

Kier provides a repairs and maintenance service to local authorities and registered social landlords across the country. In April 2007, Kier joined the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme. Stonewall is a professional lobbying group working to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual (LGB) people.

Becoming a Diversity Champion is in line with Kier's commitment to celebrate, support and protect the diversity of its staff and to be an organisation that reflects the diversity of its customers and clients.

How it works

The criterion for joining the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme is simple – the organisation must demonstrate a clear commitment to improving the working environment for LGB staff.

The programme brings together top employers from across the UK, allowing them to network and share good practice. To support Diversity Champions, Stonewall hosts best practice seminars, exclusive networking events and provides discounted in-house training and tailored benchmarking services.

As a part of joining the Diversity Champions programme, Kier implemented three new diversity initiatives:

1. Pilot LGB mentoring scheme. An innovative scheme open to LGB employees who would like professional support from a more senior LGB member of staff.

2. Management training for LGB staff. This training is externally delivered through Stonewall's Leadership Programme and open to all Kier LGB staff.

3. An Employee Diversity Group. The group is aimed at providing a forum for staff to discuss diversity and equality in the workplace, including BME issues, women at work, and LGB issues.

Additionally, Kier participated in Stonewall's 2008 Workplace Equality Index. The Index is a national benchmarking exercise showcasing Britain's top LGB employers. It is also a key benchmarking tool, allowing Kier to measure its performance in relation to competitors and help ensure it provides a continually improving service that meets the needs of clients and customers.

Funding

No special funding was used for this initiative. Stonewall provides special membership rates for public sector organisations.

The future

Kier and Stonewall both look forward to continuing to develop their relationship. Using Kier's Workplace Equality Index submission as a benchmark, Kier and Stonewall will look at ways to further develop the business to be more LBG-friendly and identify long-term goals. As the first contractor to be included in the top 100, Kier together with Stonewall, are keen to encourage other maintenance firms to consider the same approach in the interests of their LGB customers.



Kier Building Maintenance was recently assessed to be one of the top 100 LGB friendly employers in the 2008 Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.



Wales and West Housing Association

Making diversity a priority in procurement

Initiative

Wales and West Housing Association (WWHA) is the largest housing association in Wales, providing homes and services to more than 25,000 people.

As one of its procurement criteria, WWHA requires contractors and their subcontractors to have effective equality and diversity policies.

This procurement initiative is in line with WWHA's commitment to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, and with its expectation that organisations working on their behalf will uphold their commitment.

How it works

WWHA operates a staged procurement process and as part of the first stage, contractors are assessed on their commitment to and performance in relation to equality and diversity. Working in partnership with Tai Pawb, a voluntary organisation set up to promote race equality and social justice in housing in Wales, WWHA has developed a bespoke questionnaire addressing issues such as:

- how do you advertise your vacancies to ensure a diverse range of potential applicants?
- do you undertake equality monitoring in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and disability?
- is your statement on equal opportunities set out in:
 - recruitment advertisements and other literature?
 - documents available to employees, recognised trade unions or other representative employee groups?
 - instructions to those concerned with recruitment, selection, remuneration, training and promotion?
- in the last three years has any contract with your organisation been terminated on the grounds of your failure to comply with legislation prohibiting discrimination or contract conditions relating to equal opportunities in the provision of services?
- what is the breakdown of your staff by gender and ethnicity?





If evidence presented by the contractor indicates unlawful discrimination, provided the contractor can demonstrate that steps have been taken to prevent recurrence, the contractor is not necessarily precluded from working with WWHA.

Questionnaires are reviewed by WWHA's diversity officer. A formal response is then provided highlighting areas for improvement. WWHA provide good practice advice and other assistance where required.

Funding

No specific external funding was used for this initiative.

The future

By monitoring the equality and diversity practices of new contractors, WWHA is better able to ensure its repairs are carried out by companies that adhere to its principles of equality and diversity. WWHA uses a similar questionnaire with its existing contractors.

Looking forward, WWHA hopes to offer training to contractors, providing practical assistance on how to tailor their approaches to meeting the diverse needs of WWHA's residents.



Consortium of Black Contractors

Finding work as a BME contractor

Initiative

The Consortium of Black Contractors (CBC), is a BME-led repairs and maintenance contractor based in West Yorkshire. Part of Trinity Property Maintenance, it employs many operatives from BME communities.

Despite the fact that many organisations have policies to make greater use of BME contractors, CBC, as a small firm, often struggles to find work.



How it works

The formation of the CBC took a great deal of hard work itself, with the founding members conducting a 'door knocking' campaign to gain further members. Comprised of BME sole traders and local small businesses, the CBC provides training and qualifications for local members to enable them to tender for social housing contracts.

The training provided includes:

- basic health and safety training (Construction Skills Certification Scheme)
- equality and diversity training
- training in customer care in social housing
- NICEIC (electrical industry) accreditation
- Corgi accreditation.

In addition to the substantial benefits of such training, the CBC also provides its members with invaluable networking opportunities. Operatives from different trades are able to share experiences and build up contacts. As a result, small contractors can obtain a greater variety of work by utilising their contacts in other trades.

Without a track record or references, however, many social housing providers would not consider placing the CBC on their approved contractors list. Even when West Yorkshire Housing Association recognised the benefit of using the CBC, the approval process took about three months. This process, however, often takes longer, and for many small contractors this is quite detrimental.



Moreover, the CBC often feels that it is employed simply as a token gesture, often only getting work that has been turned down by mainstream contractors.

In spite of these barriers, the CBC's relationship with West Yorkshire Housing Association proved fruitful in 2004 when the CBC was offered the chance to become the main partnering contractor by merging with another firm, Property Maintenance Services, becoming Trinity Property Maintenance. This is a five-year partnering arrangement, which has seen the organisation expand on the base the CBC built up and the expertise of Property Maintenance Services.

Funding

No specific funding was used for this initiative.

The future

Trinity is now in a position to grow and start to compete with larger contractors. Its experience demonstrates the difficulty that all small, local contractors face when competing for work in the sector and highlights ways in which social housing clients can encourage such contractors.



Family Housing Association (Birmingham)

Breaking down gender barriers

Initiative

Family Housing Association (Birmingham) (FHA) manages over 2,000 affordable homes in the West Midlands. A strong positive response from residents to the appointment of FHA's first female operative inspired a Women into Construction initiative, which had the following objectives:

- to ensure operatives are drawn from, and reflect, the community FHA serves
- to offer meaningful training placements for women in construction
- to diversify the existing direct labour organisation team.

How it works

Working in partnership with Pertemps People Development Group and the Learning Skills Council (LSC) EQUAL programme, FHA delivered an extremely successful Women in Construction project. The project was a pilot for Agender, part of the EQUAL programme which looks at challenging gender stereotypes and promoting non-traditional gender roles in the workplace.

Backed by the LSC's European

Social Fund, FHA provided ten trainee placements within their maintenance team in July 2007, giving women a chance to gain skills in carpentry, tiling, plastering, bricklaying, painting and decorating through a buddy system with FHA staff. All trainees were previously unemployed for six months or more.

While on the project the trainees were provided training in health and safety to prepare them for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme card test. At the end of the ten weeks, FHA achieved excellent results as six trainees then found ongoing employment – five of the trainees found jobs in the construction industry, including two within FHA's own painting and decorating team. The remaining four trainees continued to train at a local college to train for a recognised qualification in General Property Maintenance.

Funding

Obtaining funding can often be quite a daunting, bureaucratic process for first time applicants. In addition to support from the LSC, FHA worked together with Urban Living – the housing market renewal

pathfinder in the Birmingham/Sandwell area – to put funding bids together and ensure that funds were received. Apart from Agender, other funding streams include Enterprising Communities programme of actions, which is a comprehensive community-led regeneration scheme.

Overall, the more funding bids FHA completes the easier the process becomes.

The future

Women into construction is not the only community employment project in which FHA is involved. It also takes on work placements from Birmingham University's Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (which supports refugees), Dorcas Housing and Community Support Association and the North Handsworth project. These schemes provide vital work experience for local people living in deprived areas.

The next step is to form a training academy to enable trainees to build houses from scratch and learn the order in which stages are completed. This will go ahead if FHA is successful in obtaining further funding.



“Milecastle’s willingness to give me a chance filled me with confidence and enthusiasm. I love the job and I’m having a great time.”

Milecastle Housing

Challenging gender stereotypes without funding



Embracing diversity doesn’t always have to be grant-funded or confined to inner city areas. Gender stereotypes can be challenged simply by recruiting women into jobs normally associated with men.

Milecastle Housing Association recently took on its first female apprentice, who four years earlier had begun working for Milecastle as a financial assistant.

Embarking on a plumbing apprenticeship, Bev Armstrong spends four days doing a variety of jobs

with experienced tradespeople. This is supplemented by one day per week at college.

Bev is doing extremely well in her new placement and enjoys her work thoroughly, enthusing:

“I’m sure there are many women stuck in more traditional-type administrative jobs would love the opportunity to do this. Milecastle’s willingness to give me a chance filled me with confidence and enthusiasm. I love the job and I’m having a great time.”

London Borough of Islington

Addressing skills shortage through local employment

Initiative

The London Borough of Islington set up a partnership with local contractors to recruit local labour for all major construction projects. Called Construction Works, the council acts as a job brokerage between local unemployed people and contractors.

Construction Works aims to:

- help the long-term unemployed
- help those who want or need work experience as part of their college course
- increase the number of women and BME groups working on site to 10% and 25% respectively – above the industry average.

How it works

Construction Works was set up by Islington Council's regeneration team, which identified a gap between the apparent growth of construction work in the area and the employment opportunities for local people. Construction Works instigated a partnership, called Work4Islington, consisting of Islington Council, Homes for Islington (ALMO) and their Decent Homes contractors. This looks to recruit local labour for the Decent Homes programme.

As a result of this agreement, for every £1 million of Decent Homes work awarded, the contractor must take on a work experience placement. For every £3 million of work awarded, the contractor must take on one new apprentice. If the main contractor does not have the capacity to take on new people, the responsibility can be passed down to subcontractors. This has the added benefit of introducing non-traditional employees to smaller building firms.

Construction Works:

- finds local unemployed people
- helps with the application process
- puts forward a handful of candidates
- supports the new employee for 13 weeks.

The 13 weeks of support is crucial to ensuring that employees stay on long term: people who have previously been unemployed for a long period often have confidence or psychological issues that require extra support.





Funding

The scheme uses funding pooled from various sources such as the London Development Agency (LDA) and European Social Fund (ESF).

The future

Work4Islington has helped more than 30 people find work in the construction industry in a variety of trades from plumbing to carpentry to surveying. Although Work4Islington will end when the Decent Homes programme finishes, the wider Construction Works programme will continue. Although Work4Islington will end when the

Decent Homes programme finishes, the wider Construction Works programme will continue.

Construction Works has also been working closely with the neighbouring borough of Camden so that its residents can access Construction Works and Work4Islington as well. Future proposals for the initiative include greater cross-borough working, and looking at placements within ongoing maintenance contracts. It is hoped that this investment will have an enduring impact on the local area by leaving a legacy of skilled local workers.

Recruitment



Bradford Community Housing Trust Group

Innovation in recruitment

Initiative

Bradford Community Housing Trust Group (BCHT) was formed in February 2003 from the transfer of stock from Bradford Metropolitan District Council. It owns and manages approximately 22,000 homes in Bradford. BCHT's innovative approach to recruitment lies in its inclusive and comprehensive strategy that invests in the local community and values diversity.

BCHT is committed to being an employer of first choice and providing the community with access to jobs, career development training and opportunities for promotion at all levels of the organisation. It does this through:

- Recruitment processes that emphasise individual skills, abilities and experience, not just formal qualifications. This enables a wider range of people to demonstrate their ability to do a job
- Positively taking steps to ensure that information on job vacancies reaches all sections of the community, including under-represented groups
- Encouraging existing staff from under-represented parts of the community to apply for training and personal development opportunities within BCHT.

'BCHT now receives well in excess of 300 applications for only seven apprenticeships'.

How it works

BCHT, through its Asset Management Department, has developed a robust and challenging recruitment strategy which includes:

- Construction taster days for secondary school students from 12 years and up, looking at the different career paths in construction. These taster days include:
 - workshops
 - personal insights from experienced trades people, apprentices and professional staff
 - practical experience of working on a housing construction site as well as the management and professional side of construction.
- Local school visits to talk to students, parents and teachers about careers in the sector, highlighting young role models such as female apprentices
- Working closely with the Construction Industry Training Board and other projects to encourage more diverse entrants into the industry.

At its events, BCHT records details of interested candidates and invites them to apply during local recruitment drives. To further encourage and support diversity in its workforce, BCHT offers flexible working patterns for employees with caring commitments and ensures that religious and cultural obligations are respected whenever possible.

By providing work experience placements, potential applicants can see for themselves whether the organisation or a career in construction is right for them. New recruits are given a training mentor to provide them with day-to-day support and advice. Each individual is encouraged to meet their goals and aspirations through empirical learning, which includes learning important life skills for both inside and outside work. Training mentors provide feedback to BCHT on the experiences of new recruits, and on how the organisation can adjust to further meet the needs of its employees.

Funding

No specific external funding was used for this initiative.

“Apprenticeships are at the heart of BCHT’s business and our long-term recruitment strategy. In addition, our Apprenticeship Programme allows us to address the issue of under-representation within the wider construction sector.”

Delroy Beverley, BCHT’s Director of Contract Services



The future

Like most other construction organisations, BCHT found it difficult to attract applicants from under-represented sections of the community. However, three years into launching its new recruitment strategy, BCHT now receives well in excess of 300 applications for only seven apprenticeships. BCHT credits much of its success in this area to the ‘buy-in’ and support its staff.

Looking ahead, through its vision of being employer of first choice, BCHT has set out to assist others in understanding the value of apprenticeships and encourage others to adopt apprenticeship programmes.

Long-term plans for social, economic and vibrant communities aim to promote the well being of learning through apprenticeships and interlink with district-wide objectives of:

- Creating vibrant, economy and prosperous communities
- Improving the district for children and young people
- Building safer and stronger communities.
- Co-creating the foundations for long-term prosperity through learning.

Recruitment



Sheffield Homes

Building futures in construction - Construction JobMatch

Initiative

Sheffield Homes, which has a programme to deliver Decent Homes and other infrastructure improvements throughout the city, wanted to ensure that the local population was able to benefit from more than just physical improvements.

By leading a cross-council and community collaboration called Construction JobMatch, Sheffield Homes has an initiative that enables non-traditional entrants to gain experience and qualifications in the industry. Construction JobMatch also seeks to:

- support Sheffield City Council's employment policies and strategy
- utilise the resources and training opportunities provided by construction partners, including Kier Sheffield and Lovell
- create significant and sustainable training and employment opportunities for the local population.



How it works

Funding was secured by the council's Employment Unit to pilot a series of different approaches to the task, so as to find the best ways of providing employment opportunities as well as meeting the needs of employers. On the basis of these pilots, it became clear that an innovative approach to recruitment was required.


A database of potential applicants was quickly established and this has now increased to over 1,000 individuals. Traditional application forms were rejected in favour of a simple three-step process:

- registration
- informal discussion
- supported interview.

Successful recruits are matched with a co-ordinator who assists them through the two-year scheme. At the end of the two-year period, the trainee will, if successful, receive a NVQ level two trade qualification and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card.

The scheme has proved enormously successful. By phase two of Construction JobMatch, of the 158 trainees 80% were in the targeted age group of 23-49, 33% were from a BME background and there had been a 43% increase in the intake of female trainees.

To date, 62 individuals have achieved NVQ level two trade qualifications and have also gained CSCS cards.



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Funding

Funding for Construction JobMatch came from a variety of sources, including Transform South Yorkshire (the housing market renewal pathfinder), Sheffield Homes and Kier Sheffield as well as from Objective 1 funding. This has been crucial to the sustainability of what has proved to be a very successful employment and training initiative.

The future

Construction JobMatch is constantly evolving to ensure it remains relevant and continues to meet the needs of employers, recruits and potential future applicants. Regular quality audits are undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the scheme and the development of trainees.

Through partnership with 2010 Rotherham and St Leger Homes Doncaster, Sheffield Homes plans to roll out this successful initiative across South Yorkshire.



Recruitment



Wales & West Housing Association

Overcoming complex barriers to employment

Initiative

Wales & West Housing Association (WWHA) manages 9,200 properties across Wales, providing homes and services to more than 25,000 people.

In line with WWHA's commitment to 'recruit the best staff based on their ability, and to provide an inclusive workplace,' the initiative has the following aims:

- to provide meaningful employment for people with physical, sensory or learning disabilities
- to help the candidates find permanent employment after a 12-month placement
- to enable other staff to learn from their disabled colleagues.



How it works

Remploy, the national agency to help disabled people into work, puts forward a number of candidates with varied disabilities for vacancies within WWHA. Like any other temporary employment agency, Remploy:

- liaises with the client about the job role
- finds the right candidates for the interview
- sends through CVs detailing candidates' skills and experience
- employs successful candidates as temporary staff placed with the client organisation.

WWHA is not informed of candidates' disabilities until the interview. Both sides are expected to be open about the abilities of candidates and accept and overcome any limitations there may be. Once employed, WWHA provides Remploy agency staff with induction and other training to the same level as for permanent staff.

In addition to facilitating the relationship between candidates and employer, Remploy provides further support by conducting monthly meetings with successful candidates, both with and without WWHA officers. Remploy is also able to offer advice on reasonable adjustments to the workplace to make it more accessible and suggests the kind of jobs which might be suitable for their current candidates.

In early 2006, WWHA employed two candidates through Remploy – Suzanne, who suffers from dyspraxia, was employed in the administration team, and Alan, disabled by an accident, worked in the property services team. After making adjustments to their work environment and job roles, Suzanne and Alan started their 12-month fixed-term contract with WWHA. Both proved so successful that Suzanne went on to become a permanent employee and Alan was able to find other work as a result of the experience gained at WWHA.

Funding

No specific external funding for this initiative was used.

The future

Following the positive experiences of the first set of contracts, WWHA had discussions with Remploy about future opportunities in the estate services and void departments.

WWHA states that the project was not only successful in equipping disabled staff with confidence and skills, but has also helped raise the profile of disability issues among all staff.

(some of the names have been changed)



Community Gateway Association

A local approach

The Community Gateway Association (CGA) in Preston has had similar success with Remploy candidates.

The CGA was the first housing association in England to be set up using the community gateway approach – seven of the fifteen board members are residents and community interests drive the housing association's decision-making process.

With this in mind, when looking for staff for the local community service team CGA requested that Remploy only put forward candidates from the Preston area.

New employees were taken on in January 2007. Although there was some initial hesitation from existing CGA staff, within two or three days, Remploy candidates impressed all with their hard work and enthusiasm. CGA is pleased with the way the team has developed and is looking forward to reviewing the impact of its agency staff later in the year.



New Charter Housing Trust Group and Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society

Women Construction Solutions

Initiative

New Charter Building Company (NCBC), the repairs and maintenance arm of the New Charter Housing Trust Group, has teamed up with Manchester-based Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society to provide on-the-job training in construction trades for local women from the Chinese, and wider community, through the Women Construction Solutions (WCS) project.

New Charter would like women to see construction as a career choice and to view NCBC as a potential employer. NCBC believes that certain residents, particularly the elderly and those from BME communities, would prefer a female operative to carry out repairs in their home. This initiative aims to:

- provide women with the experience they need to gain qualifications
- encourage women to set up their own businesses
- increase the (currently small) number of self-employed women in the construction industry.

How it works

In partnership with Wai Yin Women's Society, NCBC provides six-week work placements for the WCS initiative. Trainees choose how many days a week they wish to work during their placement, providing the flexibility required for childcare arrangements and other personal circumstances.

As with traditional apprenticeships, WCS trainees work with an experienced tradesperson. Work has primarily been on void properties, ensuring that kitchens meet New Charter's letting standards.

In parallel with the work placement scheme, the WCS project also provides ASET level one work experience through a volunteering scheme where trainees help renovate the Wai Yin Women's Society building. New Charter provides the majority of the materials required for this scheme.

Women graduating from the WCS project can access information, advice and guidance on employment, as well as business advice and training through the holistic services provided by Wai Yin Women's Society.

Funding

The WCS initiative has funding from the Learning Skills Council and the European Social Fund.

The future

The partnership between New Charter and Wai Yin Women's Society provides a model for a community-led approach to breaking down some of the barriers to entering the construction industry.

Finding consistent funding for projects such as these, however, is often a struggle – especially as Wai Yin Women's Society is a voluntary organisation. The future of this initiative relies on the partnership finding a strategic and sustainable funding arrangement.

"Women can achieve in this industry, whether in future employment with contractors like us or self-employed."

Andy Stafford, Managing Director, New Charter Building Company





Kier Building Maintenance

First start- a construction taster course for local youth

Initiative

Kier provides a repairs and maintenance service to local authorities and registered social landlords across the country. Its award-winning First Start training programme developed out of a resident suggestion that young people often fall into anti-social behaviour because they have little to do after school. The scheme operates in conjunction with Kier's local clients and partners, and is designed to give youngsters an introduction to the building industry. It is specifically aimed at disillusioned young people and at attracting groups such as young women and people from BME communities, who are under-represented in building maintenance trades.

How it works

First Start is an introductory training course for 14-19 year olds, building on Kier's existing skills and resources. In a 10-week course run after school, Kier trade specialists provide training in carpentry, plumbing, plastering, electrics, and

painting and decorating. Participants receive real on-the-job experience, refurbishing a void property or conducting improvement works to a local depot. Health and safety, first aid, asbestos awareness and IT training are also included.

Over the last four years, Kier has successfully put 109 young people through the programme, with nearly a quarter of the participants being female and over a quarter being from BME backgrounds. Kier trainers were specifically chosen to be reflective of the participants' ethnic backgrounds and gender and to be positive role models.

Successful graduates leave with real experience and a professional reference. Particularly enthusiastic and committed participants are often offered apprenticeships with Kier or one of their subcontractors. In the words of a recent graduate, of Kier's Greenwich Council First Start programme:

"I did First Start to gain different experiences in the industry. I am glad I came here as I have learnt a lot. I met new people and enjoyed the work experience."

Joe Boothe, Greenwich Council, First Start scheme.

The funding

First Start is run across most of Kier's contracts. It is mainly funded by the company. Helpful additional support and funding has come from clients and partners as well as from the Learning and Skills Council, Islington Strategic Partnership Board and the Construction Youth Trust.





The future

First Start, an integral part of Kier's corporate social responsibility agenda, continues to successfully introduce young people to the industry, receiving positive feedback from trainers and trainees alike. The scheme is constantly reviewed and improvements have included the use of training log-books and video diaries. First Start has been so well received in local communities that Kier is in the process of establishing a similar scheme, New Start, a community training initiative aimed at the long-term unemployed.

EASE

Keeping the momentum up



Kier recently teamed up with the Empowering Action and Social Esteem (EASE) project in Ealing, West London, to provide a 10-week DIY course for local residents of different ages and ethnic backgrounds.

Similar to the First Start programme, the course covered health and safety in the work place and home, introductions to plumbing, electric work, carpentry, painting and decorating and wall tiling and was facilitated by experienced Kier operatives.

The course was a great success and well-attended each week. Moreover, the majority of participants in the course were female, with some in the group expressing an interest in pursuing apprenticeships. Given this enthusiasm and the under-representation of women in the industry, Kier is looking at ways of offering further support to those who want to pursue their interest.



Calico Housing

Keep it relevant - in-house diversity training

Initiative

Calico Housing is a social housing landlord managing approximately 5,000 homes in the Burnley area of East Lancashire. Calico Housing's human resources team conducts training for all staff, and for partnering contractors, on the importance of valuing diversity. In particular, the course stresses the importance of meeting three of Calico's key principles in everyday practice:

- to value the diversity of the community
- to ensure that all services, resources and facilities are accessible to all
- to achieve equality and diversity in all our activities.

How it works

Calico's training course was originally developed to introduce staff to equality and diversity legislation and its application. However, since then, the course has evolved to focus on why equality and diversity is important to staff and their work, and the role Calico plays in the wider community.

The training programme uses a number of imaginative methods to make equality and diversity issues relevant to attendees. These include:

Videos – where staff are asked to identify and discuss inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff. Analogies, such as likening society to the

ecosystem of the jungle, are also used to prompt discussion on the role diversity plays in modern society.

Role-play – allows staff to take on the role of a resident and explore service delivery from another point of view, with particular emphasis on the vulnerability residents feel.

Group discussion – aided by slides and flipcharts, staff are challenged to think about how different faiths and cultures affect both their own perceptions and those of their customers. The discussion also focuses on identifying discrimination if it occurs.

Games and a consolidation quiz – active learning ensures that staff remember and utilise this training in day-to-day activities.

To further embed the message of diversity, the training room is themed accordingly. For example, Calico uses liquorice allsorts to convey the message that diversity should be celebrated and that our differences make us special. Similarly, attendees are welcomed to the training room with music from around the world.

At the end of the session, Calico conducts a group course evaluation. Attendees also take away a handbook outlining relevant legislation, and all customer-facing employees are equipped with a ready reckoner containing a multi-faith calendar of important dates.



Funding

No specific funding was used for this initiative.

The future

As each course is evaluated individually, Calico is able to constantly review the training programme to ensure it remains up to date, relevant and effective. For instance, the course was updated to include new legislation on age discrimination.

"I think it's important for staff in a company like ours to understand that there are lots of ways we inadvertently discriminate against certain people, and that, with a little forethought and consideration, we can make sure that everyone receives the best service we can give - it's about taking the time to recognise the needs of the individual."

Training course attendee

Nashayman

Go for it - encouraging BME entry in to construction through training

Initiative

Nashayman, a part of the Home Group, is a small housing provider operating mainly in the Bradford, Calderdale and Kirklees areas and specialises in providing housing and services to BME communities. Nashayman is closely involved with Go for it, a project enabling young people from the local BME community to develop construction skills.

Encouraging BME entry into construction and using BME contractors both fit in with a number of Nashayman's diversity aims, which are to:

- always have bilingual staff available
- ensure consultants, contractors, suppliers and partner agencies with ten or more employees have an adequate equal opportunities policy broadly consistent with Nashayman's aims



- request organisations or individuals without their own equal opportunities policy to sign a written undertaking to comply with the association's standards on equal opportunities
- have fair and non-discriminatory selection procedures for inclusion on approved lists.

How it works

By teaming up with Go for it, Nashayman is able to give local residents the chance they need to develop new skills and gain work experience. The initiative involves:

- a residential outdoor pursuits course designed to boost personal confidence and develop basic skills such as time management and working in teams
- a short college taster course that provides a chance to try a range of construction trades and to obtain certificates in first aid and health and safety
- training and support in completing CVs, application forms, and in interview skills
- help with childcare and transport costs during the training programme.
- After this initial training is complete, Go for it provides further support by:
 - helping trainees find apprenticeship placements
 - providing close mentoring support for up to three years after training
 - further training, if required, to become self-employed.

Funding

This initiative is funded from a range of sources, such as the Construction Industry Training Board, Single Regeneration Budget, Kirklees Council, Learning and Skills Council, URBAN (part of the European Regional Development Fund), and Halifax Works.

Nashayman employs a project manager who, in addition to running this initiative, seeks out funding opportunities and puts together bids.

The future

Go for it has so far been highly successful and the approach of employing local BME people who understand the culture of residents for whom they provide a service has helped contribute to a 90% satisfaction level.

Nashayman has also successfully expanded its use of small-scale, localised BME-led contractors, and its subcontractor selection matrix places the same emphasis on diversity issues as it does on price and quality. The association hopes to continue its work with Go for it, refining the process and its service to residents.



A success story

Nashayman feels that people from BME communities are often 'passed over' for jobs because of their background and/or lack of experience.

Through 'Go for it', Nashayman enabled a local resident to become a Corgi-registered gas fitter and set up his own business. Once set up, Nashayman took him on as a sole trader contractor to undertake some of its gas servicing. Having proved himself, Nashayman has enabled the worker to expand his business and take on staff (also from BME community).

With this experience and a reference from Nashayman, the worker has secured a contract from another social housing provider and hopes to become a multi-trade contractor.

"Through Go for it, Nashayman enabled a local resident to become a Corgi-registered gas fitter and set up his own business."

Metropolitan Housing Partnership

Diversity training as a means of quality assurance

Initiative

Metropolitan Housing Partnership (MHP) is a family of housing providers operating across the south east of England and in the Midlands (under the name Spirita). To ensure its contractor partners were all 'diversity fit for purpose' MHP developed a training programme for all contractor operatives, owners, directors and managers working in the Midlands area.

MHP's training programme demonstrates its commitment to equalities legislation and fulfils its obligations under the Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code (section 2.7) and the Audit Commission's key line of enquiry. Training is based around six strands of diversity:

- ethnicity
- age
- gender
- religion or belief
- disability
- sexual orientation.



How it works

In 2006, one of the Spirita Group members, Walbrook, started liaising with repairs and maintenance teams working in tenants' homes to produce a Diversity and Respect Handbook and Diversity Flash Cards. In addition to receiving the handbook, contractors undergo equalities and diversity training, which began in September 2006.

This is tailored to the role staff play within the contractor company (i.e. directors are given slightly different training to operatives). All personnel working for the contractor and delivering services in MHP properties take part in the training.

As part of the course, operatives are issued with diversity flash cards based on the six key strands of diversity, as well as the diversity profiles of the area they work in. Operatives are trained to expect the unexpected, while owners and directors are encouraged to produce their own equality and diversity policy which matches MHP's service standards.

All contractors are trained to the same standard, set by MHP. At the end of the course, attendees complete a test to show what they have learned from the day about delivering a diversity-aware service. The minimum pass mark is set at 60%; to date, no one has failed.

Upon completion of the course, attendees are issued with a diversity awareness certificate valid for one year.

The future

This training initiative forms an essential part of MHP's overall approach to providing quality assurance to a diverse range of residents. As demonstrated by the 100% pass rate, the training has proved successful and has now been provided to all Midlands contractors and is being rolled out to contractors in London.

To further ensure a quality service, MHP is launching a staged requirement for all operatives to be CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked by April 2008. MHP is also introducing stringent requirements that contractors demonstrate an inclusive and diverse approach to their employees, contractors and subcontractors.



Southern Housing Group

An integrated approach to understanding diversity

With over 48,000 residents across more than 70 local authorities, diversity is a key element in service delivery for Southern Housing Group (SHG).

Based on the fact that residents were more likely to come into contact with contractors than staff, SHG invited all their contractors onto diversity training courses. Staff from across the organisation also attended, providing the ideal opportunity to develop a consistent and sensitive approach to meeting residents' diversity needs.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, particularly as they were able to raise issues and questions that they faced in service delivery. The course has now been integrated into SHG's customer services training programme.





Kier Building Maintenance and the Garnett Foundation

Exploring diversity through theatre

Initiative

Kier provides a repairs and maintenance service to local authorities and registered social landlords across the country. Teaming up with the Garnett Foundation, award-winning specialists in change management through theatre, Kier piloted a challenging training programme aimed at exploring the complex issue of diversity.

How it works

The Garnett Foundation specialises in using theatre as a mechanism to deliver high impact and inspiring training that challenges mindsets and delivers service improvements. Working with Kier, the Garnett Foundation lent this expertise to developing a bespoke training programme to meet Kier's agenda.

As a part of Kier's 'Embracing Diversity' event, a production of 'The Leap' was held for both staff

members and industry leaders. This play was originally researched and written following collaboration with a partnership of organisations led by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Tailored to the needs of the housing and building maintenance industry, the play tackles sensitive issues surrounding diversity such as bullying, race, sexual orientation, mental health and age.

'The Leap' revolves around a group of disparate characters undertaking training for their first parachute jump. Although the setting is unique, the conflicts and resolutions portrayed parallel those employees might encounter in the workplace. At the end of the performance, the audience is given the opportunity to ask the characters questions about the decisions they made, provoking thought about how they would act in a similar situation and providing insight into other perspectives.

Feedback from the training was positive, with a Kier senior manager saying:

"It's an evocative and powerful method of addressing issues that people might not be given the chance to explore in other forms of training".



Funding

External funding was not used for this initiative but the company considers it money well spent.

The future

Unlike typical diversity training that discusses legislation, policies and conduct in the workplace, the Garnett Foundation's innovative approach explored the more human side of diversity. This initial training programme proved so successful that Kier is planning to roll it out to more staff.

“It's an evocative and powerful method of addressing issues that people might not be given the chance to explore in other forms of training.”

Kier senior manager

Richmond Housing Partnership



Diversity training for subcontractors

Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) believes that training subcontractors who represent the organisation is as important as investing in its own staff. RHP has found diversity training for subcontractors to be an important way to increase customer satisfaction and provide a high quality housing service.

In partnership with Marlborough Training and Consultancy, RHP developed a scenario-based training programme where subcontractor operatives share their experiences. The programme includes discussing the equality and diversity policies of RHP and its maintenance contractor, what respecting the customer means and the importance of language - specifically, how names, labels and stereotypes affect attitudes.

RHP has found this training to be effective in tackling disability, sexuality and ethnicity issues. For managers and supervisors, the course also covers employee/employer responsibilities. By keeping the training to half a day, RHP encourages subcontractors to release their employees and keeps the cost of training down.





Ridge - Property and Construction Consultants

Approaching diversity through partnership

Ridge is a property and construction consultancy providing a wide range of services to the housing sector including asset management, procurement and partnering advice. As an external consultant, Ridge is well-placed to provide a valuable, 'all angles' perspective that fosters innovation.

Ridge prides itself on providing an inclusive and partnership-driven service that meets the needs of its clients, residents and the wider community. Understanding the needs of these stakeholders is the first step in delivering a solution to clients. Ridge has found process-mapping workshops to be a particularly effective way of achieving this and, by incorporating discussions of diversity at an early stage, ensuring respect for diversity is naturally embedded in the client's business.

These workshops are only effective when all stakeholders are involved and the participants accurately reflect the wider community. For example, recently working for Luton Borough Council as part of a consultant framework, Ridge took care to ensure that Luton's large Asian population was appropriately represented in strategic planning. This allowed for discussion on how language, religious and cultural issues affect service delivery. Similarly, working with Magna Housing Association, workshops enabled Ridge to drill down into the specific issues associated with having a high proportion of older residents.

Such workshops have led to significant service improvements for residents and are a great example of tackling the complex issue of diversity through partnership.





Glendon Property Services Limited

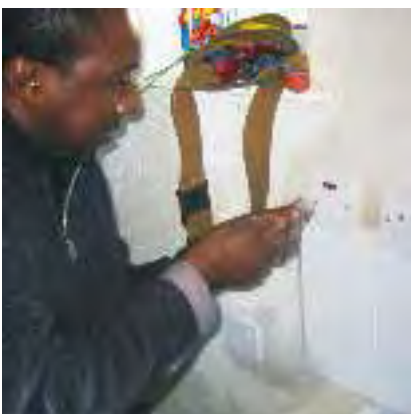
Delivering opportunities for BME contractors

Glendon Property Services works with major contractors and social landlords, assisting them in implementing their equality and diversity strategies by enabling the building and maintenance workforce to better reflect the communities they serve.

Operating on the premise that large social housing projects should leave behind a legacy of skills and experience, Glendon aims to bridge the gap between local communities and social housing landlords. It also aims to facilitate economic regeneration through providing work and ensuring local businesses become profitable and sustainable.

Glendon's approach helps BME contractors access larger contracts and assist social landlords in achieving their equality and diversity aims. To do this Glendon forms partnerships with the client and then either employs BME operatives directly or uses BME firms as subcontractors.

Glendon assists the BME operatives or firms to do preparatory work; for instance, they fill in necessary paperwork such as method statements and risk assessments. The intention is to help BME contractors obtain contracts and access preferred supplier lists, and to improve their skills so that after a period they can go on and win work in their own right without Glendon's further help.



Useful Contacts

Disability

Department for Education website for all disability publications

www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/index.htm

Disability Information Service Huntingdonshire

www.dish.org.uk

Disability Rights Commission

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/yourrights/equalityanddiscrimination/disability/pages/introduction.aspx

Royal National Institute for the Blind

www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/code/InternetHome.hcsp

Royal National Institute for the Deaf www.rnid.org.uk

Job Centre Plus www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

for GIS and access to work information

Ethnicity

Commission For Racial Equality

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/yourrights/equalityanddiscrimination/race/pages/racediscriminationrights.aspx

(Equality and Human rights)

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/

Institute of Race Relations www.irr.org.uk

Gender

Equal Opportunities Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx

Opportunity Now www.business-impact.org

Women's National Commission www.thewnc.org.uk

Age

Age Concern www.ageconcern.org.uk

Information on Pensions www.pensions-pmi.org.uk and <http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk>

Age Positive www.agepositive.gov.uk

(DWP site preparing for 2006)

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

Amnesty LGBT Network www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=876

GALOP: confidential L&G help-line 0207 704 6767 www.galop.org.uk/home.html

Lesbian & Gay Employment Rights

www.berr.gov.uk/employment/discrimination/capacity-building/page22324.html

Stonewall www.stonewall.org.uk

Case Study Contacts

Family Housing Association(Birmingham) www.family-housing.co.uk

Community Gateway Association www.communitygateway.co.uk

Remploy www.remploy.co.uk

Ealing Homes www.ealinghomes.net

Work4Islington www.homesforislington.org.uk/jobs/Work4Islington.asp

Construction Works www.islington.gov.uk/Careers/careers_help/constructionworks.asp

Metropolitan Housing Partnership www.mhp-online.co.uk

Nashayman Housing Association www.nashayman.org.uk

New Charter Housing Trust Group www.newcharter.co.uk

Wai Yin Chinese Women Society www.waiyin.org.uk

One Vision Housing www.ovh.org.uk

Bradford Community Housing Trust Group www.bchtgroup.org

Consortium of Black Contractors www.cbcontractors.co.uk

Richmond Housing Partnership www.rhp.org.uk

Calico Housing www.calicohousing.co.uk

Southern Housing Group www.shgroup.org.uk/start_page

Wales and West Housing Association www.wwha.net/jigsaw.htm?lang=en-GB

Broadacres Housing Association www.broadacres.org.uk

Tai Pawb www.taipawb.org.uk

Milecastle Housing Limited www.milecastlehousing.co.uk

Kier Building Maintenance www.kier.co.uk

General

Audit Commission housing KLOEs www.audit-commission.gov.uk/kloe/housingkloe.asp

Housing Corporation Regulatory Code

www.housingcorp.gov.uk/server/show/conWebDoc.3832

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