

**Inclusion and
Belonging
Annual Report
2021/22**

This report has been approved for publication and we've made a digital version available on our website.

We've created a plain text version to support those using accessibility tools such as translation, audio, changes to the size of text, ruler and screen mask.

We also aim to make our information and services more accessible by using plain English in our communication and offering sign language and language interpreters where required.

If you would like this document in an alternative format or have any questions relating to the report, please contact

inclusion@karbonhomes.co.uk.

About Karbon Homes

At Karbon Homes, we build, manage and look after homes for people across the North. And then we go further, we give them the strong foundations they need to get on with life.

Since our formation in 2017, we've focused on delivering our three strategic aims – to provide as many good quality homes as we can, to deliver excellent service to our customers, and to shape strong, sustainable places for our communities.

Our footprint covers the North East of England and Yorkshire, with almost 30,000 homes across diverse communities, with customers all facing different opportunities and challenges.

Some customers just need an affordable home, or a way on to the property ladder. Others might need more – financial advice, community services, sheltered accommodation or even training that can lead to a new job. Whatever people need to feel more secure, confident and happy with where they're at, we work our heart out to provide it.

By focusing on our three strategic aims, combining a sound business head with a strong social heart and staying true to our values, we'll build strong foundations for even more people.

Welcome

Welcome to our Inclusion and Belonging Annual Report. It provides an update on our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) during 2021/22 along with an overview of some of our plans for the year ahead.

Our approach to inclusion and belonging was developed with our colleagues and customers and is the way we talk about ED&I at Karbon Homes.

We've also developed Our Karbon Way, to explain who we are and what we stand for. It outlines how we support our colleagues, how we work with our customers and explains our brand narrative and tone of voice. We want to move away from a transactional and legislative approach and towards being more people centric. If we get that right, then we'll not only meet but exceed our legislative requirements.

What is the legislation?

The Equality Duty was created under the Equality Act 2010, replacing the race, disability and gender equality duties and was extended across all of the protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex and sexual orientation. The new legislation was implemented to prevent, rather than just respond to cases of discrimination and harassment. It places responsibility on organisations to positively promote equality, not merely to avoid discrimination.

In summary, those subject to the Equality Duty must:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

And to help advance equality they must:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Why it's important for us

For us, this means considering how our products and services can affect different groups in different ways and positively contribute to greater equality and better outcomes for our colleagues and customers. It also makes good business sense. Going forward, the activity outlined in our Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan will form the basis for this report.

This report compliments the information provided in our portfolio of corporate reports, including our Annual Review and Financial Statements, Customer Annual Report, Gender Pay Gap Report and Environmental, Social and Governance Report.

Board sponsors

The Karbon Board is committed to ensuring there's equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in all of Karbon's activities. The board sponsors for ED&I are Hanif Malik and Sarah Salter and have played an active part in shaping our inclusion and belonging approach and action plan, ensuring ED&I is a golden thread throughout everything we do.

This is supported by our five commitments.

1. At the heart of what we do:

We know our strength is in our diversity and this provides a strong foundation for our success. We're not a faceless landlord and will care and act to ensure we can influence and advocate for positive change, both in our sector and beyond.

2. Credible and meaningful:

We'll always make the effort to understand our colleagues and customers.

We'll collect relevant data and insights to inform our decisions and priorities. Through strong governance, we'll be clear and transparent with our data and progress internally and externally.

3. Creating inclusive communities:

We'll develop networks of support with those who share our commitment to reducing inequalities. We have a sound business head and a strong social heart and through our values and behaviours, we'll create an inclusive culture.

4. Developing diversity, creating fairness:

We want to be reflective of the communities we work with and ensure representation is always balanced. We'll develop approaches to address and remove barriers.

5. Thriving and belonging:

We'll create an environment and opportunities that help us to learn, feel supported, thrive and belong. We'll focus on wellbeing, vulnerability and personal development. Whatever people need to feel more secure, confident and happy with where they're at, we'll work our heart out to provide it.

Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group

It's been great to see the country opening back up again following the pandemic but we're aware of the long term impact this has had on some of our customers and colleagues. Ensuring we remain focused on inclusion and belonging will support the delivery of the strategic aims of our Stronger Foundations Strategy and ultimately, help our customers and create a great place to work for our colleagues.

This year we have introduced our Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group which I'm proud to sponsor. I'm working alongside this group's chair, our Strategic ED&I Lead, and a number of key leaders across the business. The aim of the group is to ensure inclusion and belonging is driven from the top of the organisation and down through every level.

The group will make recommendations on the key projects, data and insights that supports our programme of work and ensure progress against our annual commitments for this year.

How this supports our Stronger Foundations Strategy:

Homes

We want to provide the right type of homes for our customer base and make our homes accessible for all.

Customer

We want to know more about our customers, so they feel valued, understood and listened to.

Place

We want to create communities that are inclusive, where people feel they belong, providing opportunities for them to reach their potential.

Enablers

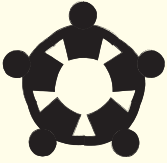
We want to create a great culture where our colleagues are comfortable to bring their best and are valued for their skills, differences and uniqueness.

"The work to develop our inclusion and belonging approach and action plan has been time well spent. We've collaborated with colleagues across all teams and levels of the business and listened to what they have told us is important to them. We've also engaged with our customers and, as a result, we will focus on five key themes for our action plan."

Di Keller Strategic Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead and Chair of the Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group.

Inclusion and belonging

To us, inclusion and belonging is about providing the strong foundations for our colleagues, our customers and communities to reach their full potential and for our organisation to enable amazing to happen every day.



Our colleagues

We will value you for your skills, difference, and uniqueness. You will have an opportunity to share your knowledge and experiences and learn from others. You will be rewarded for the part you play in making Karbon Homes a great place to work.



Our customers

We will value your diversity and experiences and through understanding and knowledge, we will aim to provide a personalised customer experience so that all customers feel that they belong in a Karbon home and within their community. We will provide opportunities for our customers and communities to reach their potential.



Our organisation

We are ambitious and will develop our offer and services using insights and collaboration. We will find bold, innovative solutions to complex challenges through our diverse multi-agency partnership portfolio. We will support growth and diversity within our geographical area.

Our action plan

Key themes and objectives for year one.

Leadership and development

We will invest in our colleagues as leaders to support their development. We will create an understanding of inclusive leadership and provide opportunities to be involved at all levels of the organisation. We will:

- Develop an inclusive leadership module for all levels of the organisation.
- Ensure our board continues to demonstrate a clear and active responsibility to achieve against our commitments in all the organisation's activity.
- Develop our senior leaders to be confident in their understanding and to champion inclusion and belonging.
- Report and scrutinise the activity, delivery and outcomes from the Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan.

Our action plan

Key themes and objectives for year one.

Data and insights

We will focus on improving our data and continue to be open and transparent in our approach. We will aim to understand our colleagues and our customers and shape our activity based on evidence. We will:

- Better understand the diverse make up of our colleagues and customers by improving the data we collect.
- Continue to conduct regular surveys with our colleagues and customers and complete demographic analysis of the results to get a better understanding of how different groups are feeling.
- Adopt the National Housing Federation's (NHF) data tool and publish our findings.
- Introduce diversity data into our performance reporting.

Policies and decision making

We will continue to improve our policies to make them accessible and inclusive. We will develop our approach to equality impact assessments and decision making and implement good practice to support the embedding of inclusion and belonging across Karbon. We will:

- Replace the ED&I statement with a dedicated policy that highlights inclusion and belonging as the way we talk about ED&I.
- Review our internal approach to bullying, harassment and hate crime.
- Further develop our approach to reasonable adjustments.
- Review and embed an equality impact assessment process into our decision making to ensure that outcomes are proportionate.
- Implement all relevant law and good practice to address unlawful discrimination and to promote equal opportunity, fairness, trust and respect.

Our action plan

Key themes and objectives for year one.

Recruitment and attraction

We will take action to provide opportunities to attract and retain a diverse workforce. We want our workforce to reflect the economically active population of the areas in which we work, to ensure our teams don't just have the right skills and professional experience, but also a breadth of viewpoints. We will:

- Improve the recruitment area of our website.
- Monitor diversity data at each recruitment touchpoint, through our digital transformation project.
- Create a supportive environment from the first potential colleague contact.
- Achieve the next level of our Disability Confident status.

Inclusion forums

We will work together to understand and eliminate barriers that colleagues and customers experience during their lifecycle with Karbon Homes. To support us in creating an inclusive environment, where people have a sense of belonging, we will:

- Listen to our colleague voice through our annual engagement and regular spotlight surveys.
- Continue to work with our Colleague Forum and Health Advocates Forum to support the delivery of the Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan.
- Develop inclusion hubs, starting with gender, disability, LGBT+. We will develop more groups, such as culture and ethnicity, as we broaden our approach.
- Launch our Mental Health Allies programme.
- Work externally to ensure we share and learn from best practice externally.
- Aim to replicate this approach through continued work with our customer engagement programme.

We will be regularly measuring progress against our action plan and reporting to the Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group and our board. We will publish our progress annually through this report.

During the development of our Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan, we've continued to work on the areas already committed to in our ED&I Statement and built on the work that we've detailed in our previous reports. Our ED&I Statement committed to actions focused on leadership, domestic abuse, mental health, disability, customer engagement, customer experience, data, training and decision making.

Delivering through our inclusion and belonging action plan.

Leadership, disability and decision making are included in our action plan and we have shared our actions for year one in the previous section.

Delivering through our inclusion and belonging commitments

Actions focused on customer engagement and experience and mental health have returned to the key teams that are responsible for their development and delivery. Our five inclusion and belonging commitments will ensure that activity is aligned to the delivery of our inclusion and belonging action plan.

Customer engagement and customer experience are fundamental elements to our Stronger Foundations Strategy and will be considered in each of the key themes of the action plan. We said that we would reach out to all groups of customers and would deliver an excellent customer experience to all our customers.

We have:

- Made good progress with our customer experience training programme for our colleagues, highlighting new topics on a regular basis.
- Worked with external specialists to gather detailed customer knowledge and insight to understand our customers better.
- Worked with customers to develop and pilot plain text versions of some of our key customer leaflets and reports to improve accessibility.

We will:

- Continue to develop our customer experience training programme for our colleagues.
- Improve our approach and the accessibility of our customer complaint handling, in line with the latest guidance from the Housing Ombudsman.
- Work closely with our resident groups and ensure their valuable feedback shapes our plans.

Mental health

We said we'd

“Champion the importance of mental health and provide support to both colleagues and customers”. These areas have and will continue to be delivered through existing strategic plans and specialist teams, supporting both our colleagues and customers.

We have:

- Surveyed our colleagues to gain further insights on our health and wellbeing approach. Of those who responded, 93% said they were aware of the signs of ill mental health following the year long awareness campaign.
- Held an all colleague conference and shared a 'Little Book of Wellbeing' with all colleagues, to raise awareness of mental health and signpost to internal and external support. This booklet has been shared externally within the Better Health at Work network as best practice.
- Delivered menopause workshops to colleagues and managers and set up dedicated communications channels to support the conversation.

We will:

- Introduce Mental Health Allies as one of our Inclusion Forums.
- Strengthen the Health Advocates Forum.
- Continue to deliver a year-long colleague health campaign.
- Work in collaboration with our customer facing wellbeing teams.
- Work to achieve the Continuing Excellence accreditation for the Better Health at Work Awards.

EDI statement continued

Delivering through our specialist teams and multi agency partnerships.

Aligned to our inclusion and belonging commitments, this action will return to the key teams that are responsible for its development and delivery.

We said we'd "Make sure we respond to new legislation for the Domestic Abuse Bill". This programme of work will be developed and managed by the Community Safety Team who are specialists in this area. We have seen increased levels of domestic abuse reported within the communities that we operate in and continue to support and develop our work to prevent domestic abuse and support victims. Tackling domestic abuse is supported by multi-agency partnerships which include social housing providers and local authorities.

We have:

Within the geographical area of Karbon Homes, there are 13 local authorities. This year we have started to work with some of these local authorities on their domestic abuse strategies and how these are implemented within Karbon Homes and other providers within the multi-agency approach.

We will:

We will continue to develop these partnerships and plan to work with more of the local authority areas across the Karbon Homes Group. This will provide a more streamlined approach, leading to better outcomes for victims.

Working across the Karbon Homes Group

In 2022 we celebrated our fifth birthday. From the initial merger of Cestria Community Housing, Isos Housing and Derwentside Homes, we have since added York Housing Association (YHA) as a subsidiary of the group. YHA leads activities in the Yorkshire area and adds a different dimension and new region to our portfolio.

With any activity like this it's important that new colleagues feel included and that their terms and conditions, where changes have to be made, are equitable.

Working with different organisations, naturally brings more diversity into the group and this is something we welcome. We have especially seen this when Byker Community Trust (BCT) officially become part of the Karbon Homes family at the beginning of this financial year. The ownership and management of its 1,800 homes was formally transferred to Karbon and this has brought a broader level of diversity and a well-established community hub that we can engage with and learn from.

The Byker estate was awarded Grade II* Listed status in 2007 by Historic England and includes the iconic Byker Wall. BCT has made and continues to make significant investment into the area which includes district heating improvements and external and communal improvements to two sheltered schemes, plus much more.

BCT has brought diversity of approach to Karbon and we have learned from the way they have developed their customer engagement groups, built their thriving community and how they successfully work in multi-agency partnerships.

Byker is home to a diverse range of people. There are 29 recognised languages spoken amongst customers on the Byker estate and it's a community with a rich ethnic and cultural mix, which makes it a truly special place to be. They have built strong and inclusive community programmes to support their customers and we are taking the time to learn more about how these have been implemented, how our approaches can be more inclusive and how we can engage harder to reach communities and ensure their voices are heard.

Working across the Karbon Homes Group

BCT is focused on creating a thriving community and aims to deliver a range of projects and activities for residents living on the Byker estate. These include:

- Pride and ownership in the area
- Health, wealth and mindfulness
- Income maximisation
- A cleaner and greener Byker
- A safe place to live
- Children and young people
- Hard to reach groups
- Community training and employment
- Digital connectivity

Their projects strongly align with our Inclusion and Belonging Action Plan and we have members from both BCT and YHA on our steering group and colleagues from both areas involved in the delivery of our projects. This means we can build on best practice from across the group and add the most value to all of our activity, helping us to achieve our goals.

“Our customers are the heart of our community, and we are committed to listening to them to ensure the voice of the wider community is heard and understood, as we maximise opportunities to engage and support our communities living in Byker.”

Michelle Bell Assistant Director of Byker Community and a member of the Inclusion and Belonging Steering Group.

Bringing inclusion and belonging to life

Thanks to funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund (CRF), we created New Start – an innovative employability programme which aimed to get 68 fully funded placements within local businesses for social housing customers aged over 25 in career starting roles. The project was delivered in partnership with Karbon, Your Homes Newcastle, Bernicia Homes, Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside Council and Changing Lives.

23 local employers took part in New Start offering a huge selection of career starting roles across the Durham, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland area, from administration to horticultural roles, jam making to delivery drivers and more.

The project began on 1 December 2021 and thanks to the hard work of the project partners, 66 placements were confirmed with 63 of them in post by April 2022. This was achieved despite the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions and the project running over two key holiday periods (Christmas and Easter). We continued with this hard work and managed to get a phenomenal total of 73 placements offered.

The project has delivered the following outcomes:

- 73 New Start placements created.
- We negotiated an extension of the overall project delivery timescale. This meant that all of the candidates we placed in employment could benefit from the full opportunity of a five month placement, regardless of when they joined the scheme.
- A project underspend has been re-invested to provide time extensions on the placements to six months – giving additional invaluable work experience to those who need it most.

66 placements confirmed with 63 in post by April 2022

35 were registered 'Working Homes' customers, a collaborative social housing and local authority employment project funded by European Social Fund

£250 'start-up' payments have been awarded to each individual to remove any potential barriers to starting employment.

This project is a perfect example of how we work to meet and exceed our equality duty to break down barriers. Focus groups helped us understand the challenges residents faced when trying to enter employment. This feedback enabled us to develop an inclusive approach to the recruitment process, using a more informal style to enable everyone to demonstrate their potential. We let everyone know what questions we would be chatting to them about in advance and from the information provided we matched them with suitable employment.

Our inclusive approach to finding New Start candidates has seen a diverse range of people securing placements:

51 placements were for the full 30 hours available

15 were part time to fit around the participants and to help remove barriers to employment

65% male and 35% female

33% had a physical health condition or disability

18% had a learning difficulty

17% were from an ethnic minority group

51% had dependent children

10% were ex-offenders

24% had no formal qualifications

20% had lower secondary as their highest level of qualification

8% have a masters or above

79% claimed Universal Credit before New Start

33% had never previously worked

Other elements of the CRF project

- A shared feasibility study was completed, and this has provided a framework to help us understand what support and funding would be needed to continue to create these opportunities.
- A foundational economy research study was completed in three target areas of Blyth, Byker and North Shields. This helped us to understand more about what barriers to employment there are for people who are in receipt of benefits or long term economically inactive.

“This has been an amazing project to be involved in. We have met our KPI’s and targets, but it has been about so much more than that. It’s all about the people and providing them with the opportunity to find the right job for them. I will always carry their personal success stories with me.”

Michelle Fortune CRF Project Lead for Karbon Homes.

Putting inclusion and belonging at the heart of what we do will support our mission of providing Strong foundations for life.

The programme is funded by the UK Government’s Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) through the UK Community Renewal Fund with the North of Tyne Combined Authority as the lead authority.

Equalities monitoring data

For the purpose of this report we've used the Census 2011 data, however the internal data monitoring uses more current data tables, where they are available, as an additional comparator. Data for Byker Community Trust (BCT) is included in Karbon Homes' figures as they form part of that entity.

Sex and gender identity

	Karbon Homes			York Housing Association			Census		
	Customers	Colleagues	Board	Customers	Colleagues	Board	England	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber
Female	56.7%	43.47%	33.33%	62.70%	71.43%	42.86%	50.8%	51.1%	50.8%
Male	43.2%	56.53%	66.67%	37.3%	28.57%	57.14%	49.2%	48.9%	49.2%
All other categories	0.12%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%		n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: Gender identity data wasn't collected in the 2011 census. This changed for the 2021 census and once this data is available our records will be updated. We appreciate that sex and gender identity are different categories, and the sex assigned to a person isn't always the same as the gender identity. As our data collection improves, this will be reflected in the way we present our data.

Age

	Karbon Homes			York Housing Association			Census		
	Customers	Colleagues	Board	Customers	Colleagues	Board	England	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber
16-24	3.10%	2.27%		5.72%	0.00%		14.9%	15.4%	15.5%
25-34	12.28%	20.17%		25.32%	7.14%		17.0%	15.0%	15.6%
35-44	14.79%	28.69%		19.89%	25.00%	14.29%	17.6%	16.2%	16.8%
45-54	15.35%	25.89%	8.33%	14.45%	32.14%	28.57%	17.3%	18.0%	16.9%
55-64	17.69%	20.28%	66.67%	12.09%	35.71%	28.57%	14.6%	15.7%	14.7%
65+	32.75%	2.70%	25.00%	18.17%	0.00%	28.57%	18.6%	19.7%	20.4%
Unknown	4.04%	0.00%		4.36%	0.00%				

Equalities monitoring data

Disability

	Karbon Homes			York Housing Association			Census		
	Customers	Colleagues	Board	Customers	Colleagues	Board	England	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber
Current or work limiting disability	18.72%	4.21%		12.16%	0.00%		17.6%	21.6%	18.8%
No core or work limiting disability	0.00%	82.74%	100.00%	0.00%	85.71%	100.00%	82.4%	78.4%	81.2%
Prefer not to say	0.00%	1.08%		0.00%	0.00%				
Unknown	81.28%	11.97%		87.84%	14.29%				

Ethnicity

	Karbon Homes			York Housing Association			Census		
	Customers	Colleagues	Board	Customers	Colleagues	Board	England	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber
White	87.09%	88.46%	91.67%	66.52%	92.86%	71.43%	85.4%	95.3%	88.8%
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	0.57%	0.32%		0.79%	0.00%	14.29%	2.3%	0.9%	1.6%
Asian/Asian British	0.46%	0.76%	8.33%	0.36%	0.00%	14.29%	7.8%	2.9%	7.3%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	0.48%	0.43%		0.36%	0.00%		3.5%	0.5%	1.5%
Other ethnic group	0.27%	0.00%		5.44%	0.00%		1.0%	0.4%	0.8%
Prefer not to say	0.85%	0.54%		0.14%	7.14%				
Unknown	10.27%	9.49%		26.39%	0.00%				

Note: We collect our ethnicity data for the sub-categories, however, in terms of our reporting, these statistics have been grouped into the leading categories.

Equalities monitoring data

Faith/religion

	Karbon Homes			York Housing Association			Census		
	Customers	Colleagues	Board	Customers	Colleagues	Board	England	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber
Has religion (Christian)	20.76%	41.21%	50%	19.67%	67.86%	57.14%	59.4%	67.5%	59.5%
Has religion (other)	0.76%	4.75%	8.33%	5.22%	17.86%	14.29%	8.7%	3.0%	7.8%
Not religious	19.12%	37.97%	33.33%	34.05%	0.00%	28.57%	24.7%	23.4%	25.9%
Prefer not to say	3.63%	3.45%		1.57%	3.57%		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Unknown	55.73%	12.62%	8.33%	39.48%	0.71%		7.2%	6.1%	6.8%

Note: We collect faith and religion data in sub-categories, however, in terms of our reporting, these statistics have been grouped into the leading categories.

Sexual orientation

	Karbon Homes			York Housing Association			Census		
	Customers	Colleagues	Board	Customers	Colleagues	Board	England	North East	Yorkshire and the Humber
Heterosexual or straight	38.35%	84.47%	100.00%	51.00%	85.71%	100.00%	94.8%	97.0%	94.4%
Gay or lesbian	0.55%	1.29%		1.00%	0.00%		1.4%	1.1%	1.1%
Bisexual	0.32%	0.43%		0.57%	0.00%		0.8%	0.5%	0.9%
Other	0.17%	0.22%		0.00%	0.00%		0.5%	0.3%	0.5%
Prefer not to say	9.80%	3.34%		3.58%	0.00%		2.5%	1.2%	3.1%
Unknown	50.82%	10.25%		43.85%	14.29%				

Note: The data collected for the Census 2011 did not include questions about sexual orientation. The data used is taken from the Annual Population Survey data, provided through the ONS relating to the period 2016-2018. This hasn't been through a formal assessment process and is therefore published as estimates.