

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Report 2024

Headline results



Introduction



At Hightown, we are committed to equal opportunities and strive to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion across our workforce and operations



We report on EDI data annually to see what's working well and identify opportunities to create a more equal, diverse and inclusive organisation. This information informs our EDI action plan.



We used a snapshot of data on 31 March 2024 for workforce, customer and Board data and data collected between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 for complaint, eviction, staff management and recruitment information.



Hightown monitors four of the ten diversity characteristics recommended by the National Housing Federation for its workforce and Board and nine of the ten recommended characteristics for its customers. Neurodiversity is included as an additional characteristic, as we plan to monitor this in future.

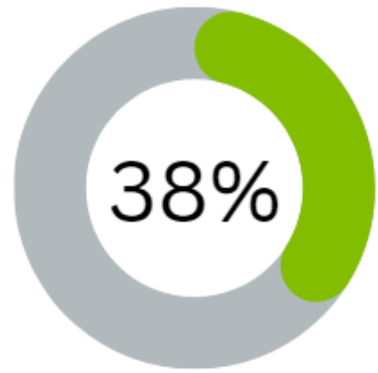


Comparisons are made to local population data from the 2021 census and regional housing sector data from the National Housing Federation (NHF).

Part A – Hightown's workforce and Board



How much diversity information do we hold about our workforce and Board members?

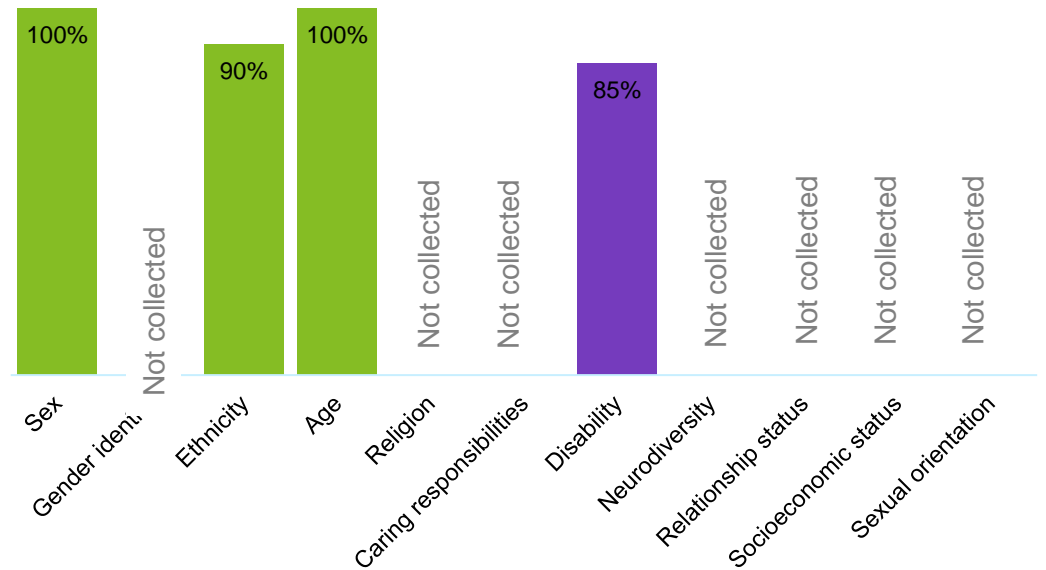


Proportion of complete diversity data



Increase since 2022-23

How much information can we report on by diversity categories*



We can report on 38% of the diversity information recommended by the NHF. Completeness varies by needs category and diversity characteristic.

* Neurodiversity is not included in the 10 diversity categories recommended by the NHF but we have included it above, as we plan to collect information on this characteristic in the future.

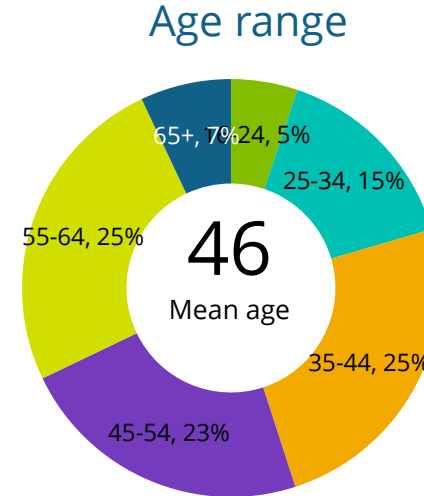
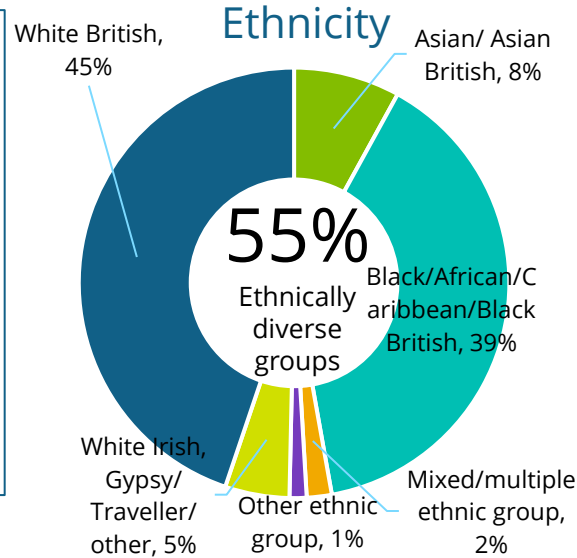
Detailed workforce diversity profile

When reporting on workforce diversity we include employees with contracts and bank workers.

55% of Hightown staff and bank workers are from ethnically diverse groups, compared to 51% in 2022-23.

There has been a 6 percentage point increase in staff and bank workers from other black groups since 2022-23.

10% of our workforce do not have ethnicity data recorded. There has been no change since 2022-23.



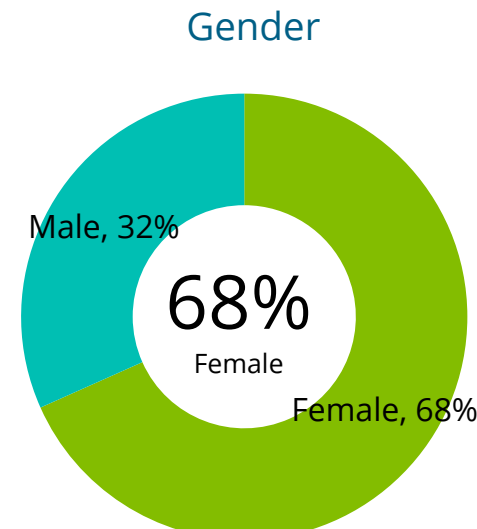
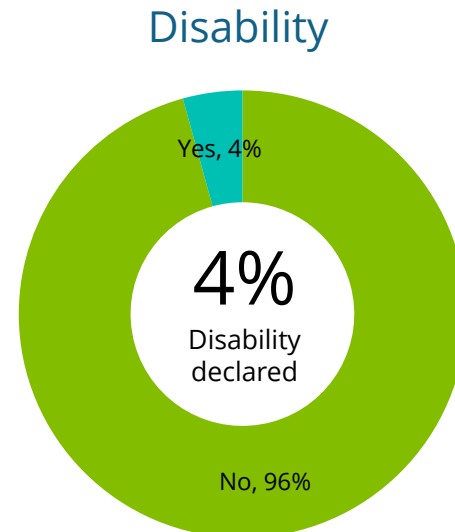
47% of Hightown staff and bank workers are between 35-54, compared to 46% in 2022-23.

This equates to a mean age of 46 in 2023-24 compared to 47 in 2022-23.

All of our workforce's age information is recorded.

4% of Hightown staff and bank workers have declared a disability. There has been no change since 2022-23.

15% of our workforce do not have disability data recorded, compared to 18% in 2022-23.



68% of Hightown's workforce is female.

The proportion of females in the workforce has decreased by 1 percentage point since 2022-23, when 70% of the workforce was female.

All of our workforce's gender information is recorded. However, we only provide binary male/female options, no change since 2022-23.



Population: Hightown's workforce differs across all characteristics we report on compared to our customers and the local population. It is more ethnically diverse and has a higher proportion of females. Customers are also more likely to be younger and have a disability than Hightown staff and workers.

Board: Our Board's ethnicity profile more closely represents our customers than our workforce, with 27% of members from ethnically diverse groups. Our board is more diverse than average for the sector in the East of England, where 14% of members are from ethnically diverse groups.

Worker roles: The diversity profile of the workforce varies across worker categories and by service, with a higher proportion of ethnically diverse workers in staff and bank worker roles (61%) compared to leadership roles (25%) and more females (70%) in Care & Supported Housing services, compared to our central office (61%).

Grievances: Hightown has a very low number of grievance cases (6); no significant trends were identified by diversity characteristics.

Disciplinary: 67% of disciplinarys are related to workers from ethnically diverse groups.

Flexible working: A lower proportion of staff from ethnically diverse groups have requested flexible working, with 41% of requests coming from this group despite representing 55% of the workforce, possibly because of the high representation of this group with bank contracts, who are therefore not eligible. A higher proportion of men (35%) have submitted requests this year compared to last year (15%).

Part B – Hightown customers: residents and people who use our services



Hightown's customers



Population: Hightown's customer diversity profile broadly aligns with that of the local population for most characteristics; however, more complete data for some characteristics would provide a more accurate picture.



Services: The diversity profile of customers varies considerably across our services, with more ethnic diversity and a higher proportion of females in our general housing services. There is a higher proportion of older and younger, disabled and single customers in our C&SH services, in line with the nature of these services.



Complaints: The diversity profile of customers who have made official complaints in 2023-24 broadly aligns with the profile of all customers.

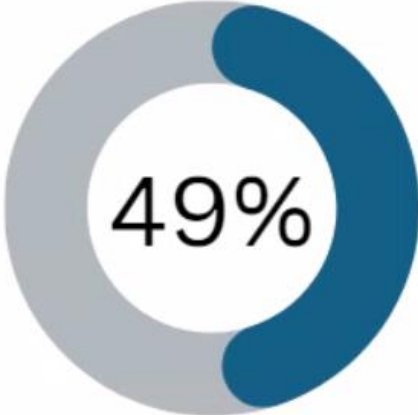


Evictions: The diversity profile across the 24 evictions in 2023-24 broadly aligns with the diversity profile of customers overall, however male residents and 16-34 year-olds make up a higher proportion of evictions.



New lettings: The gender and ethnicity profile of new lettings broadly aligns with that of all lettings. However, we are housing a higher percentage of younger tenants when compared to all tenants.

How much diversity information do we hold about our customers?

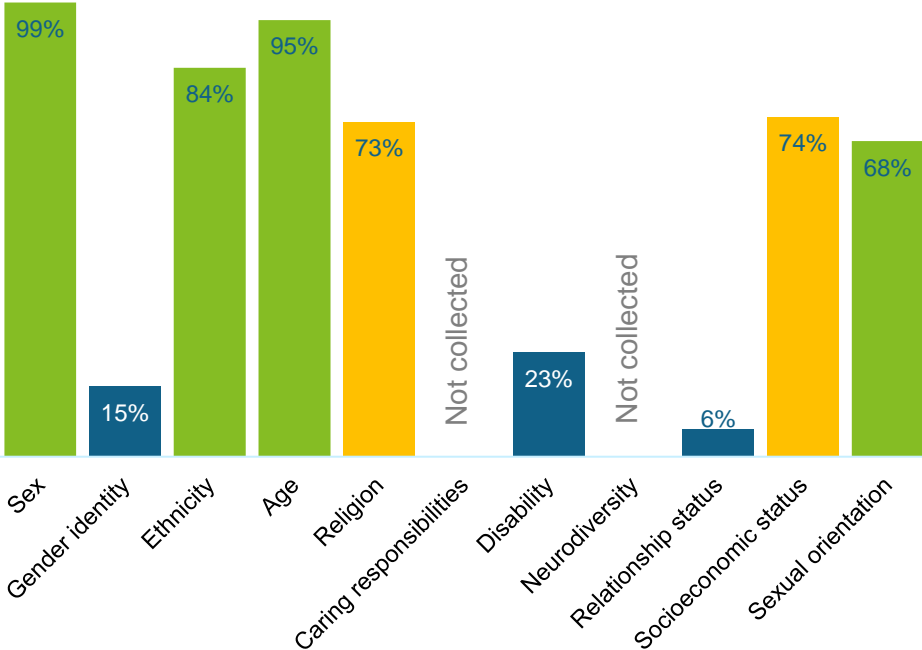


Proportion of complete diversity data



Increase since 2022-23

How much information can we report on by diversity category?*



We can report on 49% of the diversity information recommended by NHF. Completeness varies by needs category and diversity characteristic.

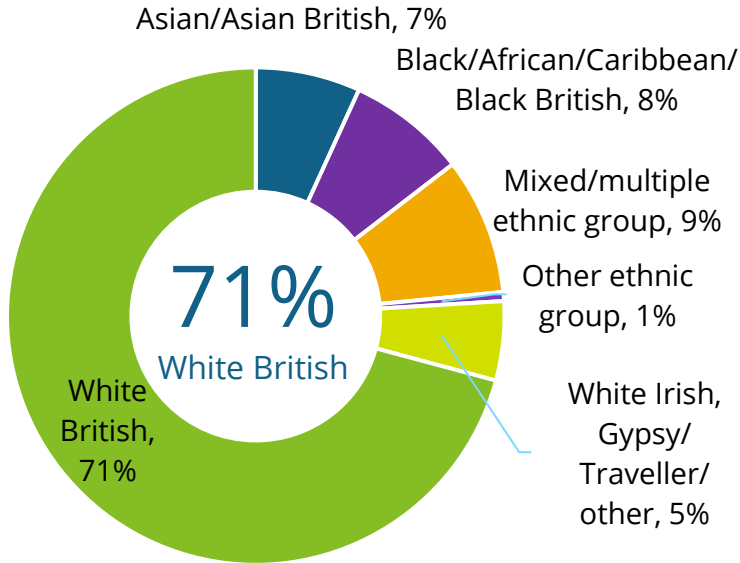
* Neurodiversity is not included in the 10 diversity categories recommended by the NHF but we have included it above, as we plan to collect information on this characteristic in the future.

Detailed customer diversity profile

When reporting on customer diversity we use lead tenant data. In most cases this accurately represents the profile of our customers who are over 16.

Ethnicity

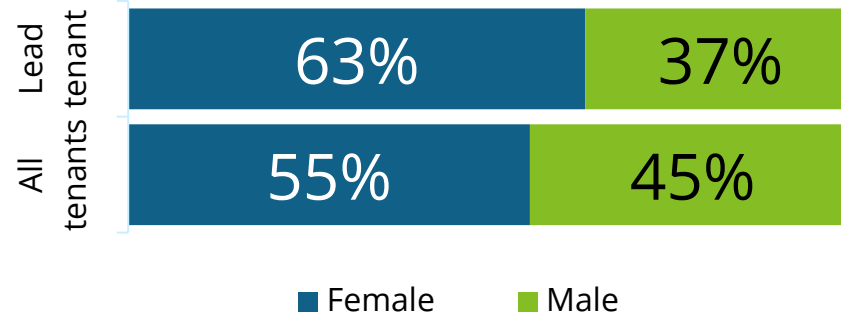
(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)



71% of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services are White British, compared to 73% in 2022-23.
26% of our customers' ethnicity data is not recorded, no change since 2022-23.

Gender

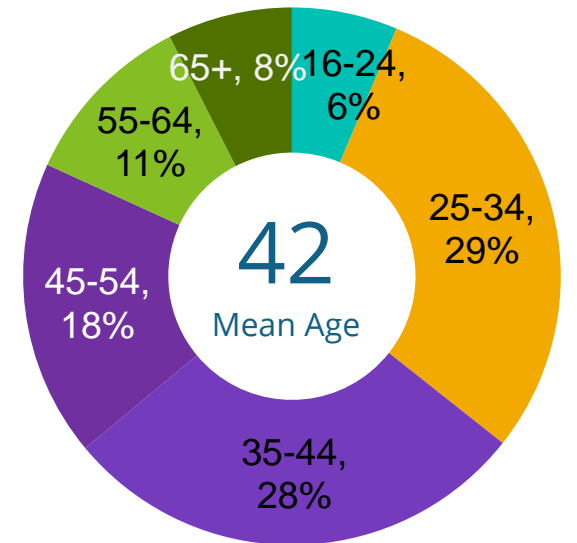
(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)



63% of **lead** tenants are female, compared to 55% of **all** customers, suggesting females are more likely to be lead tenants.
Therefore, when looking at gender, lead tenant data does not accurately represent the tenant population.
The gender profile has not changed significantly since 2022-23 when 63% of lead tenants were female.
2% of customers' gender information is not recorded, no change since 2022-23.

Age

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)

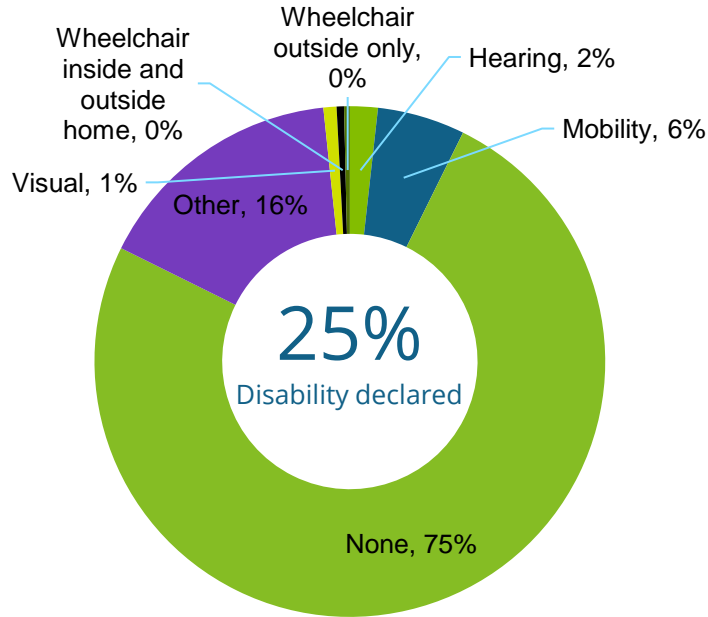


The mean age of **lead** residents and people who use our services in 2023-24 was 42, compared to 43 in 2022-23.
5% of customers' age information remains unrecorded, no change since 2022-23.

Detailed customer diversity profile

Disability

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)



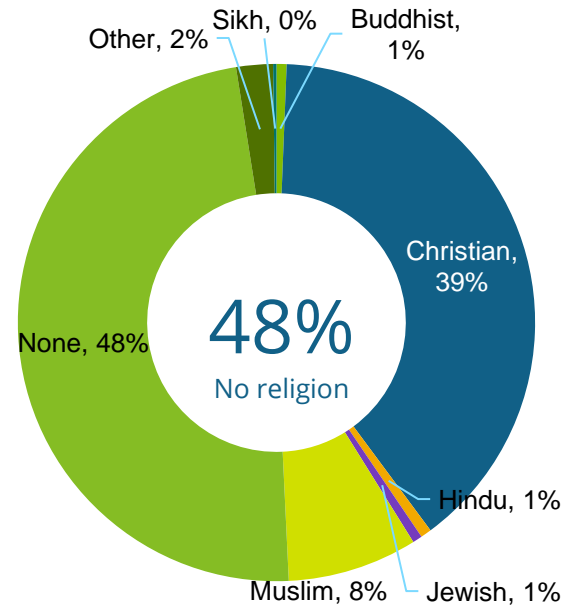
25% of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services have a disability, no change since 2022-23.

There is relatively high proportion of customers (16%) in the "other" category.

77% of customers do not have their disability status recorded, an increase of 3% since 2022-23.

Religion

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)

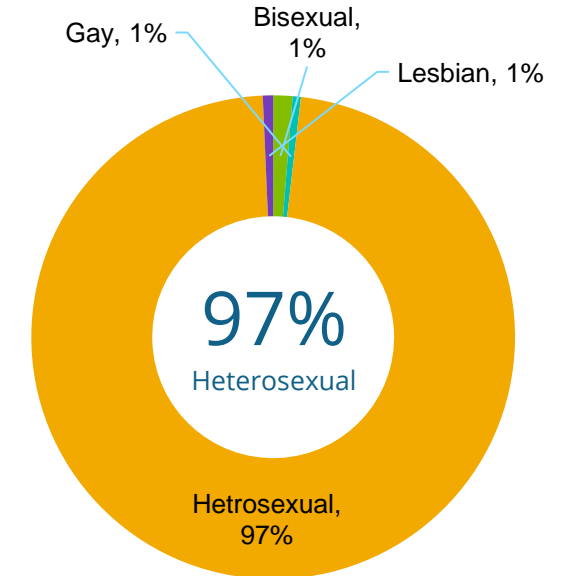


48% of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services do not have a religion, compared to 48% in 2022-23.

28% of customers do not have their religion recorded, an increase of 1% since 2022-23.

Sexual orientation

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)



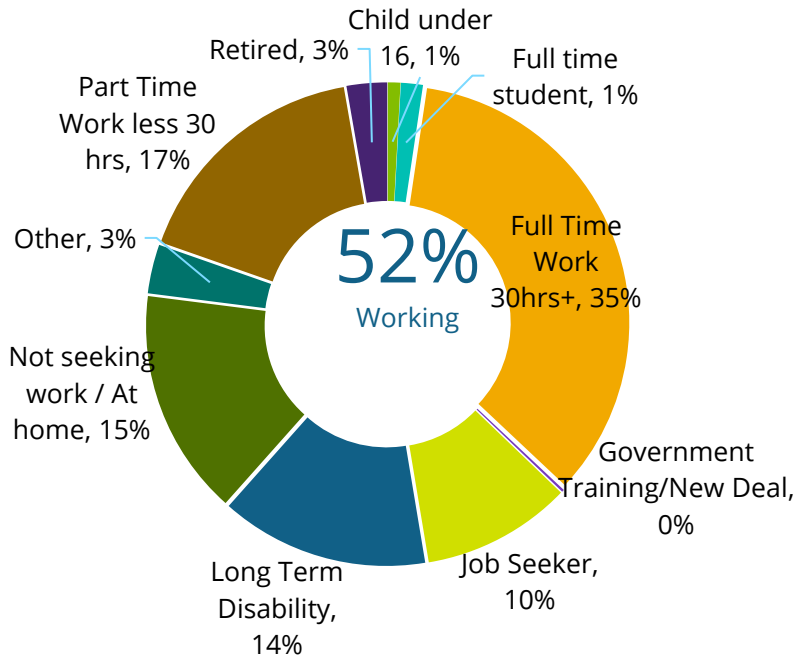
97% of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services are Heterosexual, compared to 98% in 2022-23.

32% of customers do not have their sexual orientation recorded, a decrease of 1% since 2022-23.

Detailed customer diversity profile

Socioeconomic status

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)

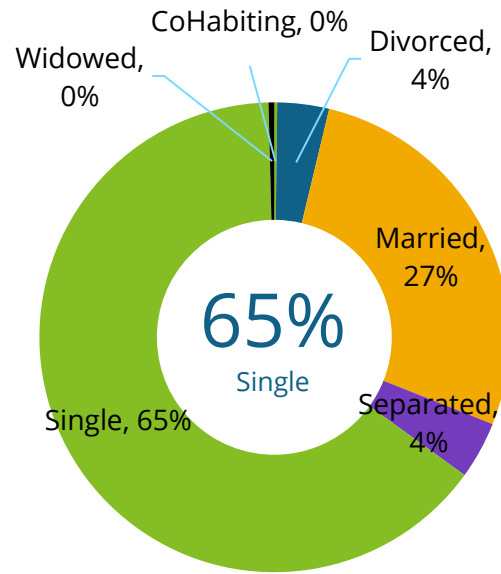


52% of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services are working full or part-time. We did not report on this last year.

24% of customers do not have their socioeconomic status recorded. We did not report on this last year.

Relationship status

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)

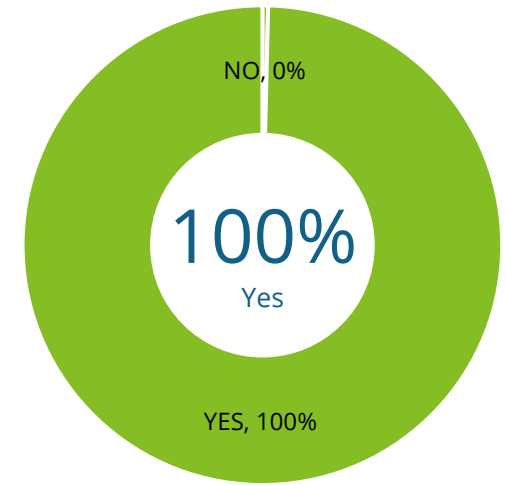


65% of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services are single. We did not report on this last year.

94% of customers do not have their relationship status recorded. We did not report on this last year.

Gender identity same as sex at birth?

(excluding unknown and declined to disclose)



Almost all (99.62%) of Hightown **lead** residents and people who use our services identify as the same gender they were registered with at birth.

We did not report on this last year.

85% of customers do not have their gender identity recorded. We did not report on this last year.

Conclusion

Customers:

- By improving processes, we have increased the data we can report on for customers' religion, sexual orientation, disability, relationship status, and socioeconomic status; however, the completeness of this data is not consistent across all service areas.
- A clear and consistent message across the organisation about the language and terminology we use about diversity characteristics will support consistent reporting and allow us to make more accurate comparisons nationally and internally over time.

Leadership:

- Our board is more diverse than average for the sector in the East of England.
- Leadership roles are not as ethnically diverse as staff and bank workers, but are more diverse than the sector in the East of England.

Workforce:

- Hightown has an ethnically diverse workforce, particularly in our Care & Supported Housing services.
- Continuing to improve the levels of data we have for our workforce in all categories recommended by NHF will give us a more accurate picture of the diversity profile of our workforce.
- The diversity of the C&SH workforce is reflected in the resource management diversity profile as, due to the nature of the work, workers from C&SH services are more likely to be subject to disciplinarys and less likely to be eligible for flexible working requests.

What we are doing

Residents and people who use our services

- We have reviewed our resident involvement strategy to ensure we promote engagement opportunities and resident voice from underrepresented communities and are currently reviewing the involvement strategy for people who use our services.
- We have increased Hightown's EDI presence on our webpages to ensure we are actively promoting a positive EDI culture, including dedicated EDI pages featuring our EDI statement, culture and three-year EDI plan.

Leadership

- The Board has consciously sought to strengthen the diversity of its composition over the last three years and is now more diverse than the sector average.
- Over the year, the Board has led a task-and-finish group to drive improvements to Hightown's approach to EDI.
- Hightown is represented on the National Housing Federation EDI steering group.
- Hightown has carried out an EDI self-assessment against five key areas set out in the Social Housing Equality Framework
- Policy writers have completed Equality Impact Training on the forum's recommendation, which has informed policy development and signoff for key policies affecting staff, residents, and people who use our services.
- EDI training has been delivered to all senior managers, executive team and board members.

What we are doing

Workforce

Recruitment

Hightown is committed to promoting diversity through our recruitment practices. We ensure our adverts are neutral; we advertise in a wide range of places and use skills-based assessments in our recruitment practices. We have implemented a new application system that allows for more diversity information to be collected.

Staff surveys

Staff are asked to complete a leavers survey if they decide to leave Hightown and an annual staff survey was sent to all staff in Spring 2022. Open comment questions in these surveys allow staff to feed back about suggested areas of improvement, including areas around EDI.

Learning and Development

As well as our continued offer of EDI training as part of our induction of all new starters we have provided menopause training to a member of the Employee Relations team and developed online training about - periods and menopause, pregnancy, adoption and working parents, and infertility at work, which are available to all staff.

C&SH workers have accessed training about autism and learning disabilities and video resources about working with LGBTQ customers.

Accreditations

We remain a Disability Confident Employer and a Mindful Employer.

Reporting

Developed a process to collect and update staff's EDI data.

Carried out an annual review of Ethnicity and Gender pay gap using external providers.

EDI forum

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Forum drives further change in relation to equality and diversity within the organisation. In the last year, the EDI Forum have been able to achieve the following:

- Continued to highlight the nine protected characteristics as set out by the Equality Act 2010. This has been done using videos and articles on MyTown to raise awareness.
- Continued to raise awareness of events that celebrate and highlight the diversity of Hightown staff by launching a dedicated EDI area on MyTown and designing an EDI calendar.
- The forum planned a networking lunch on April 24 to launch the EDI calendar and share its work. Staff from across the organisation and residents attended.
- Initiated an update of the Faith and Culture resource guide.



Next steps

Workforce

- Continue to invest in the training and support for line managers and the wider workforce regarding inclusive practices.
- Increase the completeness of workforce diversity data for characteristics we do not currently report on.
- Map out needs to progress through the Disability Confident Scheme to become a disability confident leader and continue Mindful Employer accreditation.
- When considering grievance, flexible working requests and disciplinarys, trends by ethnicity should continue to be monitored.
- Continue to explore ways we can promote and support opportunities for career progression into management amongst ethnically diverse staff.
- Continue to produce annual gender and pay gap reports, as well as annual EDI data analysis.
- Communicate EDI actions and achievements to staff through an annual dedicated publication and continue the awareness-raising activities of the EDI forum to build engagement and trust in EDI work.
- Continue to support the work of the EDI forum.
- Continue to drive improvements through the Board's task and finish group so that our EDI approach is embedded in the work we do across directorates and teams and leads to tangible improvements.
- Utilise our new recruitment application system to track diversity characteristics across the recruitment process.

Customers

- Continue to improve reporting processes for customer data by mapping the current data collection process across our services, including language and terminology used and method of data collection with the aim of increasing the amount of completed data we can report on.
- Develop a plan to collect additional data from customers, considering resources required, data quality, data protection and logistical challenges.
- Continue to communicate EDI actions and achievements to customers through our website to build engagement and trust in our EDI practices and produce an annual dedicated publication of our EDI commitments.
- Complete strategy review for involving the people who use our services, to ensure we promote engagement opportunities and the voices of underrepresented groups.
- Explore eviction data to better understand why we are seeing more evictions from males and younger people across general housing services.

