

# Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report 2022-2023

## Table of Contents

<b>Welcome .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Our approach to EDI in 2022-2023 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our role as an employer .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Major EDI outcomes and achievements in 2022-2023 ....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>EDI: Strategic objectives 2022-2026 .....</b>	<b>23</b>

## Welcome

Welcome to South Tyneside Homes' annual report on what we have done and are continuing to do to advance our commitment to practice fairness, value diversity and promote inclusion.

The report focusses on key data and provides examples that demonstrate how we deliver our commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity in our day-to-day work. The report is intended to fulfil our annual reporting obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

***“Residents are at the heart of everything that we do and are encouraged to become actively involved to help improve services and challenge performance. Our aim is to put the needs and aspirations of residents at the centre of how we design and deliver our services.”***

**Paul Mains, Managing Director – South Tyneside Homes**

If you want a copy of this report in large print, alternative format or have it explained in another language please let us know. We also welcome your views about this report. To do any of this please ring us on 0300 123 6633 or email us at [connect2@southtynesidehomes.org.uk](mailto:connect2@southtynesidehomes.org.uk) . Please click here to get in touch via our website <https://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk/article/60896/Contact-us>

## About South Tyneside Homes

Established in 2006, South Tyneside Homes (STH) operates as an Arm's Length Management Organisation. We manage and maintain approximately 16,000 properties on behalf of South Tyneside Council. STH is also a significant employer across the region, with 570 staff split across our directorates.

STH has its own Board of Directors that oversees housing services provided to Council tenants. The Board of 12 includes Council nominees, tenants, and independent members.

The Managing Director, supported by an Executive Director, is responsible for all operations and is accountable to the Board.

In March 2022, our Board agreed a new [Corporate Plan](#) with a new vision of **‘Providing excellent services and quality homes where customers feel safe and supported’**.

The vision and Corporate Plan will help us to deliver our strategic objectives. The Board also approved a revised [Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategy](#) in March 2022 to help ensure that the principles of fairness and inclusion sit at the heart of everything we do and builds on our achievements.

Our work provides a vital foundation for delivering safer neighbourhoods, achieving vibrant localities, and ensuring sustainable communities in South Tyneside.

If you would like to know more about STH or to see the full [Corporate Plan](#), please visit [our website](#).

## **Our approach to EDI in 2022-2023**

EDI is fundamental to the way ‘we do things’ at STH. We positively embrace and celebrate diversity and promote an inclusive culture in our role as an employer and a provider of homes and services. We acknowledge that everyone is different, and that people have different needs and perspectives. Everyone brings their own contribution, experience, skills, and knowledge to make STH a successful organisation.

For our full approach to EDI, including our governance, what we do as a service provider, what we do as an employer and our approach to partnership working, please see our [EDI Policy 2022](#).

Below, we provide some examples of how we practice and promote equality, diversity and inclusion:

## **Our role as a provider of housing and support**

### **Accessible services**

0.4% of our tenants have visual impairments, 0.9% have learning disabilities and 0.2% have literacy issues. Our website is WCAG 2.0 accessible, user-friendly and can be used via PCs, tablets and mobile devices. The website offers users the facility to choose text fonts and sizes and information can be translated into different languages.

We use the ‘ReciteMe’ facility on our website which enables users to have webpages read to them. During 2022, a total of 6,173 pages were viewed using the software from 1,334 unique users. The most used features were the screen reader (48%), translation (40%), styling tools (10%) and reading aids (2%).

In terms of translation services, the most translated languages were Polish (1%), Arabic (1%) and Dutch/Flemish (1%).

Our website is digitally inclusive! 🗨️

We provide ReciteMe accessibility and language support on the South Tyneside Homes site, which means you can use a customisable toolbar to read and understand content in a way that suits your needs.

Try out the toolbar on our website here 📄

[www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk](http://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk)



*A screenshot of some of our promotion around our website accessibility.*

We use plain language in all published literature. Customers can request letters and other written information in large print, alternative formats and different languages and face-to-face translation and interpreting facilities are available. Our staff are encouraged to produce information in easy read formats and can access 'easy read' best practice guidance in our Inclusive Services Policy. Improved information is currently being added to our intranet for staff. This year we improved our Easy Read Tenants Handbook which is heavily illustrated throughout, this is awaiting final sign off and will be published and promoted soon.

When arranging meetings with customers, we use buildings with modern and fully accessible facilities for people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and prams. Home visits are offered to people where appropriate.

STH carries out Equality Impact Assessments as required. Case law demonstrates that this is not only good practice but also helps us to ensure that fairness and inclusion are given due regard when formulating strategies and policies and making fundamental decisions.

In 2022-2023 we carried out 10 Equality Impact Assessments. In 2023 we intend to review all Equality Impact Assessments for services deemed as 'high impact'.

### **Housing people in greatest housing need**

Our Housing Solutions Service offers advice and support to people who are or may be threatened with homelessness. We work with a range of partners, including other housing associations and private sector landlords.

People wishing to apply for a home with STH apply and bid for housing. Properties are allocated in accordance with South Tyneside Council's Allocations Policy, which gives priority to house those in greatest housing need.

The profile of people who are on the Housing Register is collected for monitoring purposes. Homes are let to people who are in greatest housing needs, regardless of their background. You can see a breakdown of those on the Housing Register in the appendix.

STH has worked with the Council's Adult and Social Services team to increase the range of supported accommodation available in South Tyneside through redevelopment projects to maximise independent supported living opportunities and address pressures on adult social services.

### **Enabling tenants to maintain tenancies**

Our Welfare Support Team offers a comprehensive welfare benefit and debt advice service. This financial year the Team has received over 4,825 applications for financial support from South Tyneside residents via the Local Welfare Provision Scheme. The final financial gains figure for year-end was £6,029,895.37. This is a record high for Welfare Support and South Tyneside.

The Cost-of-Living Crisis which has followed the Covid-19 pandemic has seen applications for financial support more than double and the team are dealing with an increasing demand for their service as the effects of the crisis start to hit people. That said the Team continue to do an excellent job despite the challenges they are facing.

***"The Welfare Support Team helped me claim Attendance Allowance and consequently Pension Credit, the Cost of Living Payment and Winter Fuel Allowance. The support given has made a huge difference. The Welfare Support Team is full of warm, compassionate and sincere people, who care and are on the side of those they are supporting" Mr Kenneth Barker.***

## **Housing Plus tenants**

52.3% of our tenants are aged 55 and over. Sheltered housing schemes managed under 'Housing Plus' service are warm and welcoming and provide modern facilities such as access to the internet, provision of computers and charging and storage facilities for wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Post covid restrictions lifting, in 2022/23 we've greatly increased the number of resident engagement events again from 184 events from April 2021-March 2022 to 1487 in April 2022 to February 2023.

We have also resumed a number of partnership activities and events, working closely this year with Age Concern, Equal Arts, Cultural Spring and The Future You project. We have been encouraging tenants to take up our Welfare Check offer provided by our colleagues and have had some great successes in increasing incomes for tenants. For example, 5 residents at one of our housing plus schemes were identified as not receiving all that they could claim and went from claiming no Housing Benefit to full Housing Benefit, as well as other benefits

Some examples of recent events at our Housing Plus schemes include:

- High number of events for the Queen's 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee
- Gardening event where residents planted tomato seeds as well as broad beans and peas. One gent (81 years young) had an allotment for years but hadn't planted anything for 20 years, he clearly hadn't lost his touch and loved it.
- Coffee morning with bacon buns, cake and bingo...
- Performances from ballet dancers
- Line dancing
- Ukulele concerts
- At Christmas some older residents had fun with 'Elf on the Shelf' and wreath and decoration making workshops

STH offers automated daily phone calls to all vulnerable and isolated residents to ensure that residents within the Housing Plus schemes are safe and well. The automated approach has resulted in customers receiving calls much earlier, freeing up staff time to focus on residents who need more support.

We do also continue to have an option for an officer to conduct the calls for those that require additional support or prefer not to use automation.

### **Care experienced young people**

During 2022/23 our Housing Solutions Team has worked with our colleagues in Children Services to improve the life chances of care experienced individuals as they transition out of a care or foster setting by developing a joint housing protocol, which was commended in a recent Ofsted Inspection. We developed a mutually beneficial protocol, which is underpinned by the principles of the Stay Put-Stay Close Programme for young people reaching the age of 18, where they have a choice to remain in foster care or live independently.

4 properties, designed to be 'Trainer Properties' have initially been set up under license, with support provided to furnish and decorate the property. Fortnightly meetings assess progress and once the young person can sustain and thrive in the property it will transfer to an Introductory Tenancy. So far 4 young people have been supported through the programme. All are managing well in their homes and have been prevented from crisis through the outreach support provided.

***I wanted to take this opportunity to again share my gratitude, specifically to yourself, and acknowledge the contributions of STH. We have created a genuine working relationship with a shared agenda, shared ethos and shared commitment to improve the offer. There is obviously more to do but I have genuine hope and faith that there is that continued commitment to explore the best ways of achieving this. Hayley you have gone above and beyond for some of our young people at real crisis points in their lives, sometimes stepping up when other services haven't been able to. I really respect that, and I know how hard you work. So, thank you Hayley and John in supporting a culture and way of working that ultimately enhances the corporate parenting approach that leads to tangible and meaningful improvements to our young people's lives. It really does mean a lot.***

**Quote from Lynn Kell, Practice Manager in Leaving Care**

### **Mobility disabilities**

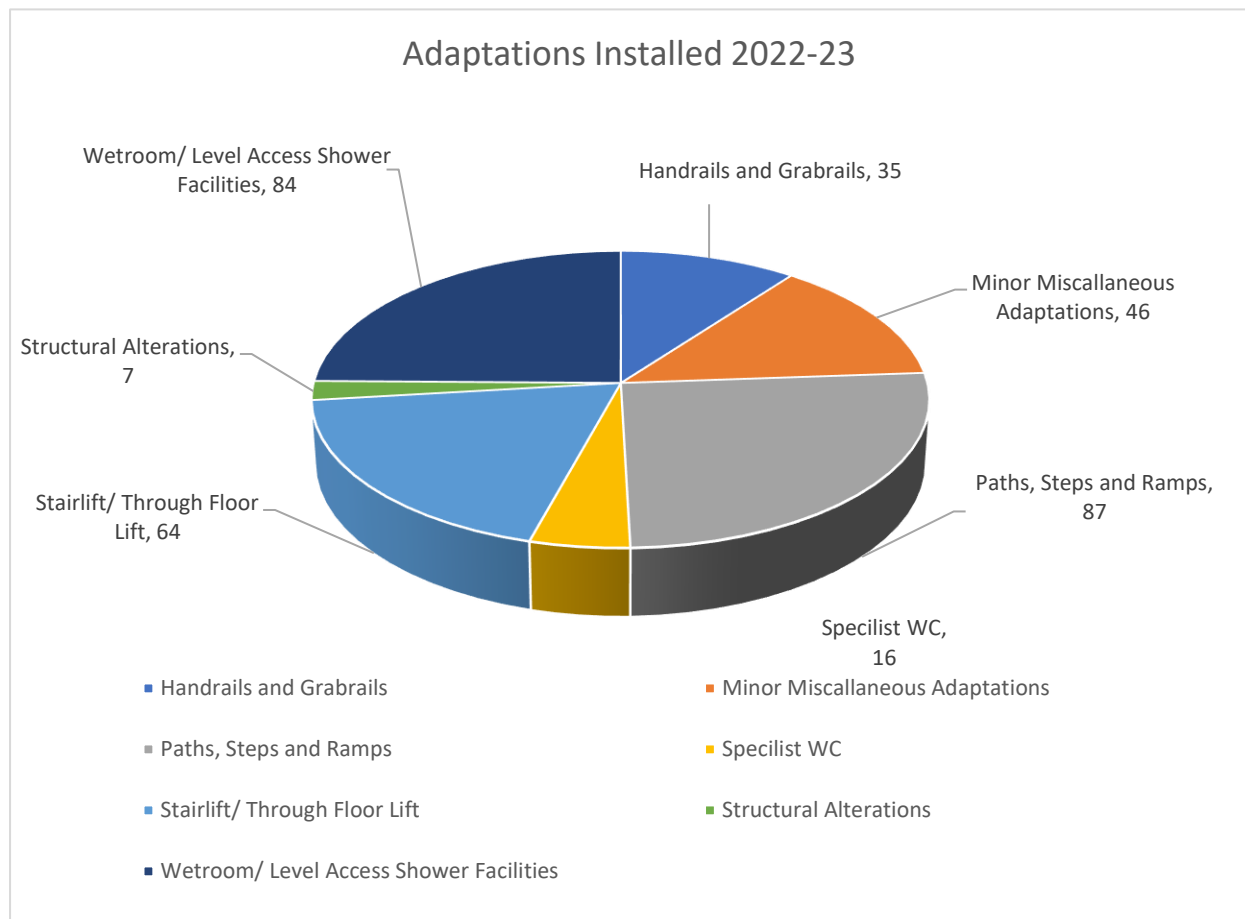
9.7% of our tenants have mobility disabilities. Services for older, frailer and disabled residents include a twice-yearly grass-cutting service.

Our website provides good quality information about changes that can be made to properties to support tenants to live independently in their current homes.

An annual budget is available for property adaptations. Minor adaptations are completed by STH without the need for formal assessments by Occupational Therapists. From April 2022 to end of February 2023 we completed 339 minor adaptations to properties (an increase of 74 on last year).

There is a partnership approach with the Council to deliver major adaptations and lending disability-related equipment to tenants. This year we have started and/or completed six property extensions this year and 12 major adaptations to allow residents with disabilities to be able to stay in their homes.

Adaptations needed to improve access to communal areas are identified through stock condition surveys.



### Community safety

Our Community Safety and Tenancy Enforcement Team had a rate of 97.81% of anti-social behaviour cases having been successfully resolved by end of February 2023, an increase of 8.52% on the figures in last year’s annual report.



The Team have been trained in providing trauma responsive services, which has been applied to their practice and they have seen real success working with repeat perpetrators to address underlying cause of behaviours, link them in with our partner services as appropriate and create supportive action plans that have resulted in successes not seen before with these people.

Outcomes have included:

- Getting support packages in place to help someone manage their tenancy and maintain property condition.
- Advocating for people with a history of addiction who have previously not been assessed as meeting homeless duty. Then being able to support them into their own tenancy for the first time which provided them with stability and safe space.
- Also taking the time to build trust and rapport with a long-term, high risk victim of domestic abuse to an adult child, which other professionals had not achieved. Then using this new relationship to support the customer with reporting abuse and violence to police, preparing her for the criminal justice process and accompanying her through the court hearing.

## **Hate crime**

We recently ran a communications campaign to raise awareness of hate crime reporting procedures amongst our staff. We classify hate crime as urgent and it is acknowledged within 1 working day by our Anti-Social Behaviour Team with information shared with the police/other agencies as necessary. In the last quarter we dealt with four such cases relating to race hate crime where initial contact was made within the one-day timescale.

We work in partnership with the police and other agencies through the Community Safety Partnership Tasking Group. The Group discuss operational community safety issues including hot spots of anti-social behaviour, specific cases which take up a lot of multi-agency resources and arrange actions for early intervention, prevention and reaction to anti-social behaviour and disorder. We will also be attending a Hate Crime Conference being planned for later this year. The aim is to further raise awareness and recruit anti hate crime champions.

Our Community Safety and Tenancy Enforcement Team works with multi-disciplinary partnership working (that includes representatives from the police, Probation Service and other local and statutory agencies) to support, and where necessary, re-house victims of domestic violence in line with our Domestic Abuse Policy.

Nominated staff within South Tyneside Council are trained and supported to become Domestic Violence Champions.

### **High Rise and Housing Plus building safety**

We have an excellent working relationship with the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS). We collaborate on carrying out home safety checks for residents who live in High Rise and Housing Plus buildings and by exception where there has been a safeguarding concern or condition matters referral.

In addition, we carry out personal emergency evacuation assessments to residents in High Rise and Housing Plus buildings. If someone is deemed to have an impairment or disability that may prevent them evacuating the building safely during an emergency situation, they are referred to the TWFRS who will record this so that they can address it efficiently if a situation occurs.

In response to the Building Safety Act 2022, we have begun to develop Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategies for our High-Rise buildings. These focus on how we will communicate and involve our tenants in all aspects of Building Safety, ensuring services are tailored to customers' needs.

### **Fast tracking repairs**

We have a Repairs and Maintenance Policy and fast track or upgrade repairs where customers have known medical issues or vulnerabilities or where families have young children.

### **Reducing poverty**

We provide extra budgeting advice and visits to make sure customers are settling in well in their homes. We have an ongoing stock condition and Energy Performance Certificate Programme. We are updating all the information we hold on our properties to help us direct resources to those homes that require it most.

In 2022/23 In 2022-23 we have installed 388 boilers, replaced 556 window and 94 roofs. 461 Green Homes Grant measures were completed, including solar panels, cavity wall insulation, triple glazing.

It is estimated that we saved customers over £77,000 a year which equates to over £300 per property. 240 properties have moved from an EPC rating of D,E or F to C or higher. Over £1.7m of works were carried out, BEIS funding met £1m and the Council met the remaining £700k.

## **South Tyneside Homes Energy Roadshows**

In March 2023, South Tyneside Homes hosted a suite of Energy Roadshows to provide free impartial energy advice and benefit checks.

4 roadshows took place with over 100 people attending to meet the team for help and advice. Customers were advised how to easily read their gas and electricity bills, given some top tips to save energy and money around the home, educated on the dangers of carbon monoxide and also how to understand what an Energy Performance Certificate is and why they are needed. Blankets and wall thermometers were provided to customers who attended.

Customers were also met by an organisation known as LEAP. LEAP is a free service that is helping people keep warm and reduce their energy bills without costing them any money. In addition to this customers could speak to the Citizens Advice Bureau for any free help and advice in relation to the current 'cost of living' crisis.

Further roadshows and events are also planned.

## **Involving customers**

From April 2022 up to the end of February 2023, 232 customers participated in formal local involvement activities and 631 tenants had actively engaged in consultation.

Customer led scrutiny projects cover issues from diversity perspectives, in particular impact on customers with disabilities, minority communities and poverty. Here are some examples of how we involved customers in 2022-23:

### **Damp and Mould – Scrutiny Review**

The Scrutiny Panel have requested that procedures must be developed so that household vulnerabilities, such as relevant health conditions are taken into account when damp or mould is being reported so that appropriate advice and assistance can be provided:

As part of their work they held 'in-depth' conversations with four customers who had made complaints relating to damp and mould, inviting them to share their experiences of reporting damp and mould and seeking to get problems resolved.



*Image: Scrutiny Panel members meet with a customer to understand their experience of reporting damp and mould (Customer Journey Mapping).*

A dedicated team is being set up at South Tyneside Homes to deal with reports of damp and mould and provide a more customer-focused resolution of problems. We have developed a new Damp and Mould Policy to support this work.

### **Engaging with communities across our diverse Borough**

A series of resident engagement events were held with community and third sector organisations across the Borough about access to South Tyneside Homes services, to ensure engagement with communities reflected the diversity of communities in the Borough. This included the Apna Ghar Women's Centre, STARCH - an asylum seekers and refugee support group and CREST a user-led charity working to promote race equality in the Borough.

*Below are images from some events held with our 'Involved Customers':*

Members of our Involvement team had a great time at **Apna Ghar** yesterday, chatting with residents about how they can help shape our services.

Did you know we have a wide variety of ways to get involved? Visit our website to find out more by following this link 🙌  
<https://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk/.../Getting-involved>

Or, join our TenantTalk Facebook Group to have your voice heard from the comfort of home! 🙌 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sthtenanttalk>



As it's almost the New Year, it's a great time to reflect on the past 12 months. Hear from some of our brilliant Check and Challenge and Scrutiny Panel members about their favourite projects they've worked on in 2022 🎉

Becoming an Involved customer is a great New Year's Resolution! Find out more on our website - <https://www.southtynesidehomes.org.uk/.../Getting-involved>



### Empty Property Checks

A group of five young people who are care leavers were invited to visit empty properties to give us their feedback. The review was to help manage young customer expectations about what properties they would be able to rent and to discuss the costs and implications of renting your own home. We discussed their views on the empty homes and what would help them sustain a property. Their suggestions focused on helping young people sustain their tenancies, but they also commented on how the appeal of the properties could be improved.

### Armed Forces Outreach Service

Our Armed Forces Outreach Service provides a range of outreach support to ex-service men and women. This includes supporting individuals in dispersed accommodation with assistance in the community. The number of properties used for this adapts to the needs of the service, but we are currently supporting 4 individuals into longer term sustainable accommodation.

This year an Armed Forces Outreach Worker worked to develop a cycling scheme for veterans facing homelessness. Whilst supporting a veteran facing homelessness, Lee found that this individual could repair and rebuild cycles.

Lee put him in touch with a charity based in Newcastle. This has led to this organisation providing the Veteran with parts free of charge, which this individual is now using to repair cycles for other veterans to use. As a consequence, a number of veterans supported by Lee now have a means of transport and exercise and the Veteran repairing the cycles has a sense of pride in his own achievements.

The veteran has been able to repair 4 cycles so far, which have all been donated. He has made them safe to ride and is happy to do this for free as he uses cycle maintenance as a positive coping mechanism to support his own wellbeing. Through Lee's foresight and connections, this veteran has gained a lot of joy from what they are doing, has a sense of purpose, are supporting the Veterans Community and will continue to do so for as long as they can.

## **Our role as an employer**

STH has 570 employees. 90.88% of employees are full time and 9.12% are part time.

We have reviewed our Flexible Working Policy to make flexible working a right from day one of working with us, in advance of legislation changing. Staff feedback on 'Flexi Time' has been reviewed and discussed with our Senior Management Team and new principles regarding flexibility for staff have been agreed. This will be used to update our Flexi Time Policy and launch it to staff early in 2023/24. We have also developed a new Hybrid Working Policy to support employees by setting out options over where they can work from, based on the needs of the business and their personal circumstances and needs.

Our Modern Workplace Project considers equality implications and makes it easier for staff to work remotely and dynamically in ways that suit them and that supports flexible and hybrid working.

5.26% of our staff have stated that they have a disability. Reasonable adjustments are made for prospective and current employees. STH is accredited as a 'Disabled Confident Employer'. This is publicised via the website to help potential job applicants. We make reasonable adjustments for those needing job packs in alternative formats and people who need support during the interview process. In line with good practice, the shortlisting panel does not have job applicant's personal information at the shortlisting stage of the recruitment process to avoid potential bias.

Reasonable adjustments are made for prospective and current employees. Examples of reasonable adjustments for staff include providing adjustable desks and chairs and arranging alternative working patterns.

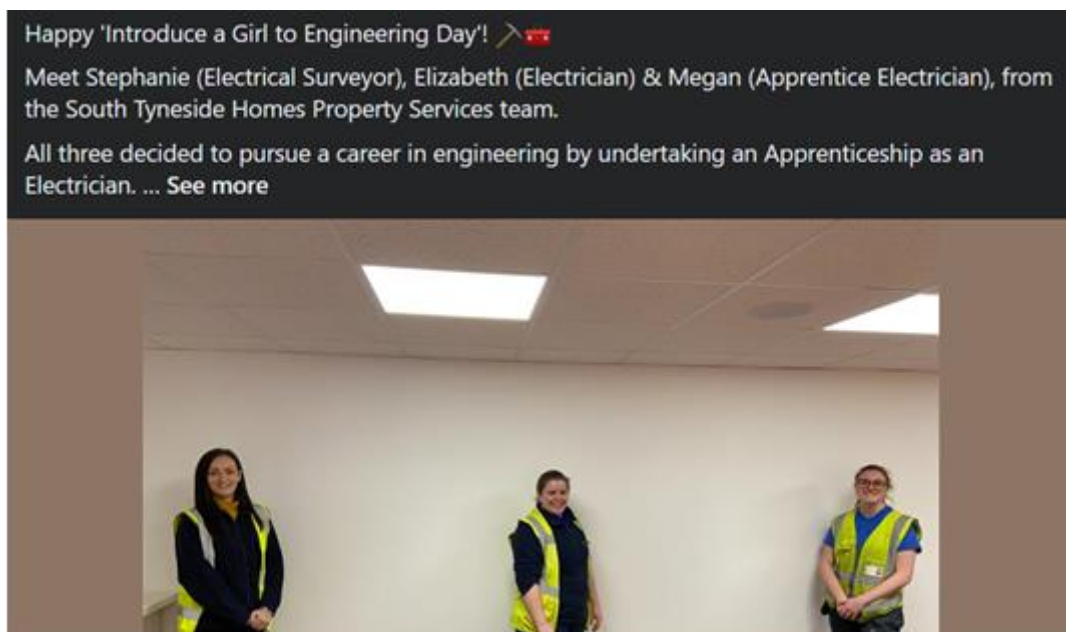
8% of STH staff said they have responsibility for caring for an adult (April 2022 Staff Survey). As such, we do a lot of work and promotion to support our staff with caring responsibilities. We have a Carers Staff Network and a 'supporting carers at work' community on Viva Engage. We have recently updated our Carers Policy which gives staff the right to one week of caring leave a year.

We are members of Employers for Carers which gives managers, staff and residents access to digital resources. We are applying for level one of the Carer Confident Scheme.

65.44% of our staff are male and 34.56% are female. 40% of our staff have responsibility for caring for a child. STH publishes its [Gender Pay Gap Report](#) each year on the website.

Our March 2022 mean Gender Pay Gap was 4.4% and our median Gender Pay Gap was 0%.

92.15% of our Property Services and Asset Management Directorate is male. There is an underrepresentation of female amongst our trades teams. We pro-actively encourage women to consider this area of work as a career option. An example of how we do this is through social media. See our '[Introduce a girl to engineering day](#)' video.



*A screenshot of one of our posts from Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day.*

5% of respondents of the staff satisfaction survey in April 2022 had been pregnant or on maternity leave within the last 12 months. Risk assessments are undertaken for pregnant women and adjustments made accordingly. Breastfeeding women are provided with appropriate rooms to express breastmilk if required and there are fridges/freezers for storing expressed milk.



Some policies that support staff with protected characteristics include Flexi time, Stuck not Sick, Compassionate Leave, Flexible Working, Hybrid Working, Career Break and Job Share, Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave, Parental Leave, Home Working, Carers, Health and Safety, Domestic Abuse, Childcare Salary Sacrifice, Menopause Guidance, and the Volunteer Policy.

Employees can access a free eyesight tests, free flu jabs, a free gym, a car allowance and car lease scheme.

Several staff have been trained as Mental Health First Aiders. They are a point of contact for an employee who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. Staff receive regular communications with mental health advice. We have in place a counselling service for staff which offers quick, free and confidential access. The service has many positive outcomes, including supporting staff to remain at work or to support a faster return to work for staff who are absent. We are currently pursuing the bronze level of the prestigious Better Health at Work Award corporate accreditation.

#TimetoTalkDay is a great opportunity to shine the spotlight on mental health 🗣️

At South Tyneside Homes, mental health matters. Colleagues can access ...see more



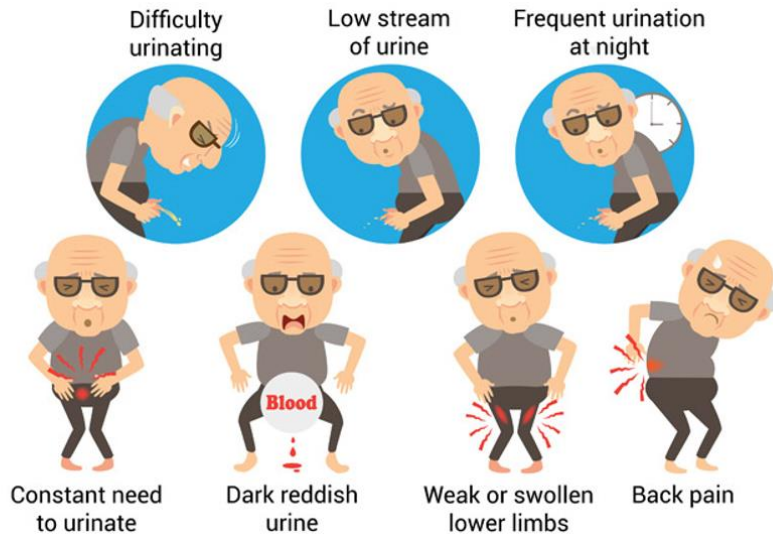
👤👤👤 Lyndey Matherill and 13 others

*A screenshot of our Time to Talk day mental health support promotion.*



## PROSTATE CANCER UK

Most commonly, cases are found in people over the age of 50



Providing excellent services and quality homes where customers feel safe and supported

South  
Tyneside  
Homes  
South Tyneside Council's  
Housing Company

*A slide from our recent Cancer Awareness Group session.*

We have established a Social Enterprise that offers traineeships to local people using our unique housing environment to create training and employment opportunities outside of our core business. Our programme delivers external contracts, supports internal teams and offers a chargeable garden tidy service to South Tyneside Homes Tenants allowing the Enterprise to be self-funded and contribute towards the organisation's strategic goals.

This year 8 people were trained, upskilled and employed through our Social Enterprise and they have been carrying out more landscaping work on our empty properties and carrying out additional work in gardens, such as taking down structures and returning areas back to grass.

Also, in 2022/23 we have had more involvement with local schools and colleges via events, activities, and work experience. During National Apprenticeship Week we had several schools come to our headquarters and take part in free activities, like learning to fit a skirting board, how to connect pipes together and connect doorbells.

We also have a very successful apprenticeship programme, offering a range of opportunities to support young people into training and employment. We offer a guaranteed interview for any children who are looked after by South Tyneside Council who apply for either a trainee or apprentice opportunity. At the end of March 2023, we had 31 apprentices and 5 trainee employees. Further details of our approach to apprentice recruitment is included in [this video](#).

## Major EDI outcomes and achievements in 2022-2023



*A photo from our International Women's Day event 2023.*

- 9.85% fewer staff responded with 'prefer not to say' when asked about their sexuality which may indicate that LGBTQ+ staff feel more comfortable with STH as an organisation in doing so.
- 1.61% increase in LGBTQ staff putting us closer to the community comparison of 2.64%.
- 6.74% fewer staff responded with 'prefer not to say' when asked about their disabilities which may indicate that disabled staff feel more comfortable with STH as an organisation in doing so.
- There has been a 1.59% increase in "other ethnic group" staff compared to the last exercise – this group is now more represented amongst our staff than the local community comparison.
- Developed a [Hybrid Working Policy](#), which supports staff to be more productive and also balance home and work commitments.
- Agreed a [Menopause Policy](#), to support staff and managers
- Agreed a [Domestic Abuse Policy](#), to provide additional advice and guidance on support that can be offered.

- Developed and launched a new Inclusive Services Policy aimed at helping our staff provide our most inclusive services ever.
- Disability Confident certificate was renewed until 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025.
- In partnership with the council, we have launched a range of staff groups including a Women's Group Network and a Carer's Network.
- Published an annual Gender Pay Gap report, setting out the actions we will take to reduce our gender pay gap. The 2022 report is available [here](#) and we will shortly begin work on our report for 2023. We also have plans to analyse whether we have any other pay gaps by diversity strands by April 2024.
- Celebrated diversity, such as holding an event for International Women's Day, attended by 27 people. At the International Women's Day event there was a question-and-answer session with the Mayor and Mayoress, a presentation from the CEO of Women's Health in South Tyneside (WHiST) about the services that they offer to residents in the Borough. Hannah Pickering, one of our tenant Board members, talked inspirationally about her journey to balance being a board director with studying for a social work degree as well as being a single parent to three young children. We had a 'Walk the Wall' session where we encouraged staff to share their views on what equity means to them, and how their female colleagues inspire them. We also played a game of 'Gender Guess Who', where we challenged all of our unconscious biases and discussed the work still required in some areas for all opportunities to be fully inclusive for women and men. This was followed up with an email to all staff to tell them what happened at the event and what work we are currently doing to progress gender equity at STH.
- We also held an event for International Men's Day, attended by c.50 people. This event had two external speakers and was centred around the theme of supporting one another and mental health. Lee Moore, an Armed Forces Support Officer spoke about men's mental health in the Armed Forces and support for veterans. Ian Farrah, the Founder of Far North Business Direction spoke about his own personal experiences of where he started and how he got to where he is now. The group discussed mental health, the value of positive thinking, support from others (both colleagues and friends) and support from professional bodies where required.
- There has been extensive promotion of the support that is available for staff with caring responsibilities to all managers and staff. We are revising our Carers Policy and we are developing our intranet to signpost staff to the support that is available.
- From April 2022 to March 2023 189 employees completed the anti-racism and unconscious bias training and 190 employees completed received training on disability awareness.



- Launched new customer engagement Facebook group 'Tenant Talk' in March 2022, which has 225 customer members with a 46% engagement rate from October 2022 to March 2023.
- Ran cancer, gambling and stress awareness training, and safeguarding children and adults training sessions for staff.
- Promoted Cervical Cancer Prevention Week, National Obesity Awareness Week, White Ribbon day (against gender based violence), Men's Health, Movember (men's health and prostate cancer), menopause guidance, #AskAboutAsthma, Stoptober, Dementia Action Week, recruited Cancer Awareness Champions, Change4Life sessions and more.
- Alongside South Tyneside Council, STH was awarded the White Ribbon Accreditation by White Ribbon UK, the leading charity working to end male violence against women. Accredited organisations commit to developing and implementing a three-year white-ribbon action plan. Our accreditation will encourage a proactive approach, together with our partners, to end the cultures that lead to abuse and violence in South Tyneside. A plaque was unveiled at South Shields Town Hall to formally mark the accreditation.
- We carried out extensive mental health awareness promotion, including World Mental Health Day and holding a 'time to talk' day on mental health awareness.



*Photo from International Women's Day 2023.*



♥ Happy International Women's Day! ♥

Colleagues from across South Tyneside Homes celebrated #IWD23 with a morning of inspirational speakers and activities. We heard from Cllr Pat Hay [Mayor of South Tyneside](#) and Mayoress Jean Copp, Corinne Devise - CEO of WHIST (Women's Health in South Tyneside), and Hannah Pickering - one of our Tenant Board Members.

This year's theme is #EmbraceEquity, so our activities involved discussing equity in the workplace and at home. We also took part in 'Gender Guess Who' - which led to some interesting discussions about gender bias!



*Photos from International Women's Day 2023*





*Photos taken at International Men's Day 2022*

## **EDI: Strategic objectives 2022-2026**

In 2022 we developed an EDI Policy and Strategy for STH.

The vision for our EDI Strategy is:

***“Achieve and embed equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion in everything South Tyneside Homes does.”***

**Our EDI objectives for 2022-2026 are:**

- Deliver inclusive and accessible services to customers.
- Provide inclusive opportunities for resident involvement, with diverse views shaping decision making.
- Be an inclusive employer that can recruit and retain a diverse workforce.
- Have a diverse Board that demonstrates a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

These are the objectives outlined in our EDI Strategy. To see the full strategy, complete with the actions that we will deliver to enable us to meet these objectives [see here](#).

We will report progress towards these objectives in detail in each EDI Annual Report and will develop new objectives in 2026 (unless there is a material need to amend them prior to this).

### **Progress against objective ‘deliver inclusive and accessible services to customers’ in 2022-23:**

- Developed an Inclusive Services Policy to provide guidance to staff on identifying and supporting vulnerable customers.
- Raised awareness of hate crime reporting procedures.
- Promoted accessibility tools on the website and other arrangements for reducing communications barriers to staff with promotions for customers planned imminently.
- Embedded the delivery of communications campaigns around key diversity dates and events on social media.
- Increased the use of imagery that is representative of our diverse customers in communications materials.
- Developed a programme for ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are up to date.
- Set up a working group to help ensure customer profiling is up to date, can be broken down by protected characteristics and this data is analysed and acted upon.

- Developed practical guidance to support staff as part of the Inclusive Services Policy which is currently being developed into a staff intranet 'inclusion hub'.

**Progress against objective 'provide inclusive opportunities for resident involvement, with diverse views shaping decision making in 2022-23:**

- Improved involvement recruitment processes to attract both a greater number and diversity of customers to get involved which is more closely aligned to customer demographics (including targeted campaigns where required). There is now a programme for regular recruitment campaigns to promote the company's menu of involvement opportunities. This will include social media content, email campaigns and letter campaigns and will incorporate "you said, we did" messages to illustrate how the organisation listens and acts upon customer views/feedback.
- Improved communications to give effective, timely and appropriate feedback to customers to demonstrate that we actively listen to their views. Promotion of involvement activity is ongoing via the website and with social media campaigns, including feedback on project activity undertaken and its impact.

**Progress against objective 'be an inclusive employer that can recruit and retain a diverse workforce' in 2022-23:**

- Developed a Hybrid Working Policy.
- Actively promoted the government childcare scheme to support staff to meet the costs of childcare.
- Reviewed current workspaces to include areas for collaborative work and to provide appropriate rest areas.
- Developed procedures for collecting, updating and using workforce profiles. The senior management team have agreed areas of positive action to try and achieve a more diverse workforce that is representative of our local community.
- Reviewed our flexible working policy to give the right to make a flexible working application from day one. This will support staff with achieving a better work life balance and to support caring responsibilities.
- Established that more jobs could be advertised as open to flexible/part time/job share.
- Promoted the current policies available to support staff, including the Carers Policy, Menopause Policy and Domestic Abuse Policy.
- Reviewed the recruitment and selection policy to ensure our approach can attract the best candidates to vacancies and is inclusive.
- Established Corporate Inclusion Group chaired by executive level EDI champion. The group also includes all Heads of Service and the Board member sponsor for EDI.



**Progress against objective ‘have a diverse Board that demonstrates a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion’ in 2022-23:**

We successfully achieved all of our objectives under this action this year.

- Developed a succession plan that supports the Board in becoming representative of the local community.
- Appointed both an executive and Board sponsor for EDI.
- Established an EDI reporting framework.
- Developed a training plan for the Board on EDI.

For our EDI data in full please see the data appendix.