

Equality Commission

FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Authority 2023 - 2024 Annual Progress Report

Section 75 of the NI Act 1998

Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended)



woven

Insert Name of Public Authority and add Logo in Picture Box

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Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties

Annual Progress Report

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Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:	https://www.woven.org.uk/housing/equality-matters Click or tap here to enter text.
Signature:	

This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2023 and March 2024

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

Section 1: Equality and good relations outcomes, impacts and good practice

- 1** In 2023-24, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

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Woven Housing Association, previously Habinteg Housing Association (Ulster) Ltd, founded in 1976, is a registered housing association in Northern Ireland. Woven plans, develops and manages 'integrated' housing schemes in both urban and rural areas throughout the region and works with several partner organisations in providing supported housing projects. The Association currently has over 2500 properties at more than 100 locations and 18 partnership schemes.

Woven's Vision – Homes, Lives and Communities; Woven as one, encapsulates the Association's central aim of providing housing which combines a range of dwelling types - family houses, apartments and bungalows - in order to appropriately meet the needs of the widest range of users, including older persons and persons with a disability. Quality, sustainable developments include large and medium sized suburban housing developments, inner city apartments, individual rural cottages, and specialised housing schemes. Partnership projects include sensitively designed housing with care schemes, temporary accommodation for people who are homeless, and housing initiatives for people with additional support needs.

Throughout 2023-24, Woven maintained a commitment to implementing its statutory equality, good relation, and disability duties in adherence to the Association's Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan.

Woven's core work continues to embody our duties and much of what is undertaken on a daily basis fulfils our duties - from consultation on new developments, promotion of services aimed at reaching the widest range of audiences, unbiased allocation of housing and service delivery, choice, partnership work to support additional needs, community involvement, good relations, fair treatment, equality and diversity awareness training for staff and equality screening of all new or revised policies.

For the purpose of this report, in order to annually demonstrate 'progress,' the information provided focusses predominantly on new initiatives and/or significant developments in this reporting period which demonstrate a renewed or enhanced endeavour to ensure equality and promote good relations.

Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

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KEY POLICY AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PERIOD IN RELATION TO TENANT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND GOOD RELATIONS

The Homes and Communities Team have worked tirelessly to continue to promote, encourage, support, and sustain a culture of tenant engagement, community services and good relations opportunities. The Communities Involvement team consists of one Senior Officer who is responsible for overseeing the team which includes three Community Involvement Officers and two Admin Assistants who provide administration support to the team.

We are now in Year 3 of our five-year Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy which sets out a genuine commitment to deliver on our vision of improving Homes, Lives and Communities. Woven (formerly known as Habinteg) are committed to providing tenants with practical opportunities to influence the decisions that affect them and provide mechanisms to help support, develop and enable effective engagement. We continue to maintain a culture of building on existing and new relationships with our tenants, between our tenants and others, and in doing so, improve our tenants' experience of our services. This work is overseen by the Head of Housing.

Woven Community News

The Editorial Panel continue to meet with the primary aim to provide a quarterly publication with relevant and up to date information for all tenants who live in Woven homes across Northern Ireland. During the reporting period tenants, with the technical support of Woven Community Involvement Officer, provided up to date information on the following –

Community Involvement activities,
Tenant Engagement Opportunities,
Health & Wellbeing articles,
Kids' corner,

Meet the tenant feature,

Organisational feedback, showcasing Woven developments across Northern Ireland with "Things to do" in the relevant area

The newsletter is available online on our website with the ReachDeck facility, that enables everyone to listen to the newsletter or have it interpreted into different languages for those who have English as their second language.

Environmental & Sustainability

The Homes and Communities team recognise the positive impact of the great outdoors on our tenants, the wider community, and the environment that we live in. We are passionate about creating a friendly environment for our tenants and to ensure this we support tenants with assistance to purchase plants for raised beds on schemes where tenants have identified the need either because of mental health problems, physical health problems or cost of living crisis to grow their own produce. Tenants are flourishing and growing incredible edible resources and are now in year four in growing and cultivating their own produce. Woven continues to provide tenants with the resources and training to grow their own baskets and window boxes creating pride and a welcoming ambience on schemes.

Rebranding Tenant Consultation

On Wednesday, 25th October 2023 14 tenants attended a consultation, where tenants had the opportunity to express their opinions regarding the rebranding information which will be distributed to tenants ahead of the rebranding. Tenants made several recommendations which were implemented to direct the information and the flyer that was distributed to all tenants. Tenants felt that we should emphasise that our services will remain the same and that it should be pitched as a makeover rather than a buy over.

Tenant Policy Review

Abandonment Policy Review

Tenants (5) and staff met on Tuesday 10th, October 2023 to discuss and make recommendations on the Policy to ensure information was relevant and useful. Tenants recommended that the policy review panel be promoted in the Tenant Newsletter encouraging others to get involved.

Rechargeable Repairs Policy Review

On Thursday, 16th November 2023, tenants, and staff met to discuss the rechargeable repairs policy. The meeting informs tenants of the context for the policy and sets out details of when tenants will be expected to pay for repairs. Tenants recommended that the policy clarifies the responsibilities of tenants and that these should be promoted to tenants regularly.

Tenant Conference

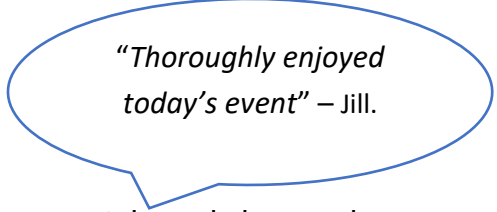
We co-ordinated our very first Woven Tenant Conference on Thursday, 21st March 2024 in St Comgall's Conference Centre, Belfast.

Tenants involved in the Tenant Scrutiny group were involved in putting the conference plan in place as they had previously been involved in a study visit to the Supporting Communities All Ireland Tenant Conference. This involvement

resulted in a fantastic event with 37 tenants hearing from a range of speakers and then attending facilitated workshops on relevant topics which were chosen by tenants to improve their “Homes, Lives & Communities”.

The workshops focused on a variety of themes, with participants rotating around each workshop for 20 minutes each. The themes were -

Environmental planting,
Health & wellbeing,
Tenant Engagement.



*“Thoroughly enjoyed
today’s event” – Jill.*

All participants received woven merchandise, an environmental goody bag and an energy saving bulb.

The event finished with entertainment and an opportunity for participants to take part in African drumming and Mexican dancing provided by ArtsEkta.

Tenant Participation Standards Accreditation

Supporting communities undertook an independent assessment of the structures and arrangements Woven have in place to support and resource tenant participation. The assessment looks at the ten participation standards which the landlord must demonstrate. The assessment process included the following key stages –

- Self-assessment involved Woven staff providing documentary evidence to support the standards of participation.
- Initial Assessment by Supporting Communities of the evidence provided identified areas for the assessor to focus questions for staff and tenants,
- Staff focus group, involved the assessor discussing directly with staff members regarding tenant participation, and how the strategy is implemented.
- Tenant focus group, giving our customers/tenants the opportunity to highlight how they got involved in tenant participation and the benefits to them getting involved,
- Director interview offered additional support to the assessment highlighting good practice.
- Independent Panel validation, convened to provide the final accreditation rating.

In April 2023, the Independent Panel awarded a level 2 Bronze award for basic provision. The report provides practical feedback and recommendations for improvement, which the team will be taking forward in the months ahead. The guidelines say that we repeat the accreditation process every three years.

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Tenants involved in scrutiny examined response maintenance questionnaires for new Contractors. Participants proposed a questionnaire to ensure service quality was monitored by contractors following each completed job.

Regional Panels

Regional panels involve tenants who meet in their local area to discuss their issues specific to the needs on the ground. The members are committed to enhancing service delivery by providing feedback to Woven and Woven will keep tenants informed at these meetings by providing feedback from the various departments and an update on Community Involvement and Tenant Participation. There are four Regional Panels who meet regularly in Derry, Coleraine, Belfast and Dungannon, attended by approximately 50-60 tenants.

Promotion of Tenant and Community Engagement, Good Relations opportunities/ activities, and events

We actively promoted every community event and interaction using a variety of methods including Community Newsletter, website, social media, flyers, calls and text messages. We have continued to utilise our Community Assistants and their local knowledge to ensure that we are listening to the different voices that make up the fabric of Woven communities. No scheme is the same, and our attempts to ensure that tenants are communicated to effectively and in a way that is most appropriate to them, have reflected this diversity.

Facebook has also given tenants the opportunity to get involved and comment on activities available across the region, offering them a greater sense of inclusion and involvement in all Woven activities. This has had a positive impact by contributing towards the reduction of social isolation amongst those participants.

Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2026

Woven's Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy 2021-2026 sets out Woven's commitment to engage, listen and respond to the voice of tenants and those living in the communities within which we work. The tenant Strategy includes a menu of participation activities, offering opportunities for tenants to be involved in strategic, operational and community levels. The activities include Regional Panels, mystery shopping, scheme walkabouts, tenant surveys, editorial panel, and community activities.

As an organisation, we ensure that tenants take a lead role in assessing and examining our housing services in a clear and open manner. Tenant scrutiny is tenant led giving them an opportunity to monitor our performance and to work with us to make recommendations to enhance service performance. This ensures that we provide a quality service and create a culture of continuous improvement.

Woven want our tenants to know that their trust is important but also to foster a mutual respect and honesty between all parts of the Woven Community. As part of our commitment to creating inclusive, diverse, and involved communities, Woven are increasing our engagement with the wider community across all age ranges. We include 'seldom heard groups' or those who find it harder to engage. We work in partnership with our tenants to embed our schemes into the local community making use of local community resources.

Together Building United Communities (TBUC) / Housing For All

Woven have three 'Housing for All' schemes in Holywood, Portrush and Sion Mills. The Holywood and Portrush schemes are now in year four of delivering the five-year good relations plans and Sion Mills is in the pre-allocation stage with allocation, projected for April 2025.

Woven works in collaboration with Northern Ireland Housing Executive, other Housing Associations and local councils thereby reducing duplication of services within the target audience and area of output.

Our five-year Good Relations plans were agreed by the NIHE. The plans will allow us to continue to look at developing programmes that will encourage support for communities and cultures within the schemes and their five-mile radius. This programme is reported to DfC/NIHE every six months, and all participants are asked to complete good relations feedback forms provided by The Executive Office.

Bonding activities

Bonding events are delivered to encourage mixing, build positive relationships and capacity building with other tenants living on schemes.

Horticultural Therapy

The main aim was to improve health outcomes for residents by reducing isolation, increasing skills, and building relationships between the residents. Residents in Portrush and Holywood wanted to improve their garden space, thereby making positive steps to improve both their physical and mental health. Residents asked for bright colourful flowers, because they wanted their outdoor space to be a place of peace, reducing stress, anger and sadness and improving their moods. This event created a greater sense of community among the tenants, building bonds, helping to develop the ability to mix socially, make friends and learn practical skills.

Bridging Programmes

The funding from the Department for Communities through Housing for All helps promote the building of relationships with tenants on schemes and the wider community. To ensure this we have engaged with local elected representatives, statutory and voluntary sector who have an interest in delivering Good Relations in the area.

Bridging events within the local areas have included:

Health & Wellbeing

In June 2024, Woven in partnership with Holywood Men's Shed we co-ordinated a multiagency Health and wellbeing fair. The partnership approach to improving access to health checks and support information was extremely positive. The event provided 50 health checks for participants as well as signposting to support services as required. Complimentary therapies were provided and a varied range of information stalls including – mental health awareness, welfare advice, healthy eating, Health & Social Care trust.

Kids Relax & Resilient Programme

This programme was designed and delivered as a health and wellbeing intervention in collaboration with local schools in Portrush on a cross-community basis. The six-week programme for 94 P6 children taught children tools for self-understanding, self-calming and self-regulation. The workshops' themes included-

Neuroscience of emotions,
Friendships and relationships,
Social media,
Our place in this world,
Worry & anxiety.

The topics all focused on building the confidence of skills of participants to enable them to build positive relationships with their peers, family, and friends

Sports Changes Lives

Woven frequently engage with local schools to co-ordinate programmes to increase good relations and health & wellbeing within the local community. The Sports Changes Life – Honour Roll Programme with P7 children engages children in a 10-week programme P7 with the aim of preparing them for the transition from primary to secondary school. All sessions commence with an emphasis on sport and physical activity and are followed by an educational workshop, to help raise aspirations and build confidence. Each session focuses on creating a positive and fun environment, enhancing social connections within the class through sport. Activities are inclusive and have an educational message. The educational workshops cover a range of issues we feel relevant to

support the well-being of young people as they transition to secondary school. These include hopes and fears, Anti-bullying/ online safety, Healthy lifestyles, Goal setting, Team-building and good relations through sport.

Hollywood Primary Schools Project

In Hollywood we were able to fund English for children of asylum seekers and refugees who had recently moved to Hollywood. The weekly programme included

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Familiarising the children with basic communication / instruction

Development and reinforcement of elements of Literacy in each child's respective class. e.g.

P1-P4 reading and key vocabulary / word building

P5-P7 reading and extended vocabulary/ comprehension

These elements were done through practical, child-friendly activities to promote conversation and creative purpose.

The programme also offered wellbeing support, as children could share their experiences, feelings or worries in an unobtrusive, calm setting as and when they wish to do so. This is in addition to the pastoral support provided by the class teachers and other adults daily in Hollywood PS

Easter Family Fun Day

The event provided an opportunity for tenants of Abbey Place to welcome others from Hollywood to celebrate the Easter holidays. The family fun day held in Abbey Place, supporting tenants to engage with their neighbours in a positive way. This event created an opportunity for Community Involvement Staff to interact with tenants and encourage them to get involved with the tenant steering group.

Cross Community Bus Tour

This tour provided opportunities for our tenants (both Northwest and North Coast) and for local community in the Portrush area to learn about other cultures through a bus tour and walking tour delivered by Dr Nic Wright (Museum Services Community Engagement Officer for Causeway Coast and Glens).

We visited Mountsandle Wood to promote a sense of pride, identity, and deeper understanding of heritage by bringing together the many stories, histories, identities, and languages which are present in the area.

This increased understanding and respect for other cultures within Northern Ireland. We then finished with a drive to The Royal Court Hotel for lunch with the aim to encourage mixing between Woven tenants and the local surrounding community from different backgrounds, reducing isolation and building connections.

Spanish Celebration Event – ‘Seville April Fair’

Children from Portrush Primary Schools came together May 2023 to celebrate with the ‘Seville April Fair’. All participants enjoyed a fun filled day of arts & crafts, music, dancing, and food tasting from traditional Spanish dishes. The children had the opportunity to mix with children from other schools and learn about the traditional Spanish festival, whilst still in the comfort of their local area.

The National Lottery Awards for all projects

Woven secured more than £9,000 in National Lottery Funding to support community projects which have benefitted tenants and their families across Northern Ireland.

The programmes increased access for vulnerable and isolated tenants, by implementing initiatives to help improve health and wellbeing, increase skills and reduce living costs.

The funding allowed us to coordinate six-week cookery programmes teaching participants how to cook healthy meals on a budget. Each participant received help with ingredients costs and a utensils pack, including a slow cooker to ensure that they can continue to cook hearty, healthy meals for themselves and their families.

The project also funded six-weekly wellness courses promoting the five steps to wellbeing with the aim of improving mental wellbeing & physical health.

The events were held in community hubs which are warm, dedicated spaces for tenants, across schemes in Dungannon, Limavady, Strabane, Derry-Londonderry, Coleraine, and Belfast.

1. KEY POLICY AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PERIOD (01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024) IN THE AREA OF OUR HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

Communication & Engagement

People and Engagement, working together through teamwork, collaboration and partnership are two of our Corporate Values. In 2023-2024 Employee engagement has continued to be a key priority.

We proactively engaged with staff through our intranet Workplace and through a variety of events, face to face and digital meetings. We began to strengthen the work and employee voice through the development of the Staff Consultative and the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Forum.

In 2023-2024 we continued to work with NI Chest Heart and Stroke Charity, the findings of the Work Well, Live Well survey inspired our Health and Wellbeing activities for 2023-2024 a summary of which can be found below.

- New team of Mental Health First Aiders were appointed, trained, and promoted across the organisation as a support team
- National Walking Month was promoted through a walking challenge with prizes for teams and individuals designed to ensure that those with limited mobility were still able to participate.
- Healthy Eating Week was promoted by bringing in a nutritionist to talk about developing good eating habits
- A blood donation drive where employees were given time off to donate blood with NIBTS
- A Cycle to Work scheme was relaunched along with personal statements from staff who have already participated in the scheme.
- Approximately 40 employees opted for a staff health check which included checks on blood pressure, atrial fibrillation (AF), cholesterol, body composition, blood sugar and lung function.
- The Association relaunched its Volunteering policy which had been introduced the year before, the scheme affords employees time off work to participate in various events and activities organised for our communities
- Scheduled awareness sessions on Menopause both for our male and female employees to help raise awareness, offer support, and create a safe environment for those who may be struggling with symptoms. These sessions resulted in the formation of our 'Hot & Bothered' café which runs several times a year.
- Flu vaccination programme employees were offered a free flu vaccination voucher. In 2023-2024 16 employees requested a voucher.
- An Autumn Amblers challenge took place to encourage employees to get some fresh air the nights grew colder and darker, those who took part managed to walk the equivalent of Belfast to Budapest.
- In 2023-2024 we published wellbeing bulletins throughout the year to raise awareness on topics such as mental health, alcohol awareness, cervical cancer prevention, men's health week etc.

In 2023-2024 through our HR Managers Briefing, we have provided awareness and advice to line managers on topics such as:

- Going green
- Dealing positively with change

- Annual Performance Reviews
- Absence Management
- Inductions
- Flexitime
- Good Line Management Skills
- Return on Investment re Learning and Development

We continued to run a monthly Woven fun initiative which encourages employee engagement on our digital intranet, and we continued with the Christmas Crackers initiative, which offers an informal opportunity to nominate those who they appreciate at work. In its second year, we received 72 nominations compared to 37 nomination the previous year.

The Board and Management continued to convey their thanks and gratitude to staff through emails and personal letters of thanks.

Employee Consultation

We continue to consult with employees on the review and development of employment policies and procedures through the Staff Consultative Forum. Policies and Procedures all have an Equality Screening carried out. In 2023-2024 the Staff Consultative Forum reviewed, shaped, and approved the following employee policies and procedures.

- Absence Management
- Flexi Time and Time off in Lieu (TOIL)
- Display Screen Equipment and Eye and Eyesight Test Policy
- Learning and Development Policy
- Hybrid Working Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Secure Handling, Use, Storage and Retention of Access NI Disclosure Information
- Recruitment of Ex-offenders
- Redundancy Policy
- Work Life Balance (inc career break, part-time working, and job share)
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Effective employee consultation and engagement remains a priority for Woven. Employee satisfaction is high measured through surveys and HR metrics. Woven has a very high employee stability rate (very low turnover of staff).

Recruitment and Selection

Woven aims to ensure a transparent, unbiased, and consistent approach to the recruitment and selection process, underpinned by a commitment to equality of opportunity, as outlined in the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy. We will do this by

- ensuring that all panel members have received appropriate training about fair, non-discriminatory recruitment methods
- ensuring, where possible, any requests for reasonable adjustments are made for applicants with disabilities.
- monitoring our applicant pool and success rates on an annual basis and reviewing our advertising process to ensure the widest applicant pool is reached.

Our candidate attraction seeks to encourage a diverse range of applicants and experience, and the recruitment processes are designed to test the skills required and to enable candidates to be their best.

This year we continued to review of our recruitment advertising process and benchmark our practices against other organisations and what they are doing to attract candidates. As part of our rebrand we reviewed our candidate information booklet to highlight our employee offer, culture and values. We continue to review and track the effectiveness of our recruitment campaigns including investing in our recruitment technology.

During the year 20 new employees' commenced employment with the Association.

As part of our aim to increase our workforce demographic for under 25-year-olds we continued to support the NI Housing apprenticeship scheme along with a number of other Housing Associations and successfully appointed a Housing Apprentice and worked with schools.

Induction Programme for employees

All new starts to the Association are required to complete a 3-month induction programme, including mandatory training on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Unconscious Bias and JAM Card (Just A Minute) e-learning.

We have also introduced mandatory face to face Bullying and Harassment (including sexual harassment) training and widened our EDI mandatory training focus to include face to face training on Neurodiversity and online courses on Managing Anxiety and Mental Health Awareness.

A key aspect of the induction process of all new employees involves a more in-depth awareness session to cover the Association's commitments to equality and

good relations: Equality Scheme, Equality Screening, Charter, and Customer Standards. This is delivered in arranged one to one induction meetings with the Corporate Assurance Manager.

We have introduced an additional face to face corporate induction day where recent new starters can meet up and be taken through in more detail key induction information. This new face to face induction includes time spent on the Association's commitments to equality and good relations: Equality Scheme, Equality Screening, Charter and Customer Standards, as well as key Company and Sector information and Compliance such as GDPR and Health and Safety.

Annual Performance Reviews

During the Annual Performance Review employees are assessed not only on how they have performed against objectives for the year, but also how they have performed against the Association's Employee Expected Behaviours.

One of the five expected behaviours staff are required to demonstrate is Embracing Equality and Diversity where we require all our staff to treat everyone with professional and personal respect, promoting fairness and recognising the value of diversity.

In 2023-2024 98% of staff who were eligible for an appraisal rated good or above in relation to their performance against the expected behaviours, this is an increase by 1% on the previous year.

Following the 2023-2024 Annual Performance Review cycle a survey was carried out with all staff on their perception of the process and how this could be improved.

- 94% of employees felt confident in their preparation
- 98% of employees felt they had an opportunity to discuss their training and development needs, career aspirations and shape their objectives
- 100% of employees felt they had an opportunity to give feedback
- 97.8% felt that overall, the Annual Performance Review was beneficial

The Annual Performance Reviews are supported by regular employee 121's with their line manager and objective setting that aligns to departmental plans which cascade from the Corporate Strategy's Strategic Aims and Values.

Learning and Development

As part of Woven's commitment to equality of opportunity and good relations, all employees are required to complete mandatory Equality and Diversity training. Compliance is monitored monthly and reported to the Senior and Operational Management Team. This is also reported through to the appropriate

Committee and Board. As at the 31 March 2024 completion compliance for this training was 98.1%.

In addition to the above training, completion compliance for the mandatory online Unconscious Bias training was 97.1%.

During the year we ran a number of mini masterclasses for line managers, two of which were focussed on Bullying and Harassment and another on Neurodiversity. With the introduction of the Tailored Reasonable Adjustment Plan, line managers have also received one to one coaching from HR as they complete and review these with individual team members.

This year a number of staff received LGBTQI+ training which was facilitated by the Rainbow Project. This has increased the awareness and knowledge of our employees to manage and better understand and support our customers.

Recruitment & Selection training was delivered to all relevant employees. For many, this was refresher training which is conducted every three years to ensure they understand their responsibilities and obligations as panel members.

To ensure diversity across our team of in-house Mental Health First Aiders, training was delivered to new volunteers to ensure they are adequately equipped to effectively support those in crisis.

During 2023-2024 we invested over £60,000 in training and development, this included training such as (list not exhaustive) Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Absence Management, Hoarding, Illegal lending in NI, Emergency First Aid, Adult Safeguarding, Recruitment and Selection, Mental Health First Aid as well as conferences. 6 Line Managers completed their ILM level 5 in Leadership and Management.

Line Managers encourage employees to prioritise their Continuous Professional Development, this is a key focus of our Annual Performance Reviews and 121's and there is an organisational commitment from the Board and Senior Management in ensuring employees have the technical and softer skills required to effectively deliver their roles.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Forum

In February 2023, the Equality Diversity & Inclusion forum was formed. The purpose of this forum is to support, promote and encourage equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, being mindful of the commitments outlined in all our Equality Scheme, Disability Action Plan, Mental Health Charter, and other relevant policy documents. And to assist in developing an action plan which goes beyond legal compliance and will be seen as a key component to the core business strategy, because it is the right thing to do.

The Association's values are central to this forum as we strive to make them visible in all we do and create an inclusive culture that nurtures talent and allows all present and potential employees, regardless of differences, the opportunity to flourish and reach their potential within the Association.

In 2023 -2024 we strengthened the work and membership of this new forum and developed a 2024-2025 activity plan of EDI Forum led promotions, with the aim of celebrating and increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding of a wide range of inclusion topics, across the organisation.

To date these have included activities related to; Autism Acceptance Month which included the roll out of neurodiversity training and an increased focus on making reasonable adjustments for hidden disabilities; Deaf Awareness Week promoting 'learning the basics of sign language'; promoting the Belfast Pride parade; promotion of World Youth Skills Day through a focus on our generation Z colleagues; promotion of Colour Blindness Awareness day led by an employee sharing their experience and practical tips on coloured spreadsheets; promotion of interactive technologies such as Reachdeck to support individuals to access our information online; World Menopause Day promotion which included the meeting of Woven's Hot and Bothered Café led by a nutritionist who focussed on Women's Health – this was followed up by a Men's Health session too; World Braille Day promotion, where we used the occasion to remind employees to complete their DSE and to look after their eye health and encouraged them to use their employee benefits to claim back the costs of eye care.

Absence Management and Reasonable Adjustments

The Association actively promotes equality of opportunity for people with a disability, making reasonable adjustments to assist them whilst in work and for new employees who join the Association. The Association works in partnership with Disability Action to provide and sustain employment for those who have a disability and require support to continue to work. It also provides an Employee Assistance Programme and Occupational Health service to help employees who may be experiencing physical and mental health issues.

HR continue to support managers where there are difficult and complex absence cases such as stress or disability related absence. This has included more proactive discussions with employees and where necessary the assistance of Occupational Health and external agencies to enable employees to continue within their role or to be supported through ill health retirement.

Reasonable adjustments have included phased return to work, changes to working hours, adjustment to absence management triggers and provision of specialist office equipment, etc.

All staff complete a display screen equipment assessment to ensure, whilst working both in the office and at home, they have a safe working environment and adopted good working practices.

Annual leave check-ins were carried out with staff to ensure they were managing a work life balance and utilising their leave entitlement.

As part of the Association's commitment to support the health and wellbeing of its staff the provision of Private Medical Insurance and Health Cash Back Plan is offered to all staff.

In 2023-2024 we have rolled out specific training on neurodiversity and supported employees with neurodivergent conditions through the development of tailored reasonable adjustments plans. This training has been beneficial in increasing the organisation's knowledge of a range of conditions such as Autism, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, ADHD. Reasonable adjustments have been employee led, and we continue to raise awareness with our line managers and staff about the importance of tailoring adjustments to support individual employees to remain at work and thrive.

Equal Opportunities Monitoring

During the period, the Association carried out its annual Equality Commission equal opportunities monitoring to ensure fairness and equal opportunity requirements are being met. This was further extended to include monitoring of applicants and employees by all nine Section 75 protected categories.

To ensure information held on staff is accurate and up to date the Associations Employee Self Service Module allows staff to view the equality information held on them. The Annual Employee Equality Declaration continues to be carried out electronically.

1.3 IN RELATION TO CUSTOMER SERVICES AND OTHER EXTERNAL QUALITY STANDARDS

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Standard 2023

During the reporting period the Association underwent its annual CSE reassessment in terms of its values and service delivery, with a bearing on performance in relation to equality and good relations. This is through an annual assessment against the National Customer Service Excellence Standard.

Assessment against the CSE Standard was conducted in March 2024 with the Association successfully retaining the Standard and improving on overall performance.

Out of 57 criteria, the Association achieved [last year's figures appear in brackets]:

22 [21] Compliance Plus/Best Practices

34 [35] Full Compliances

1 [1] Partial Compliances

0 Non-compliances

In his Report the CSE Assessor commented; *'You have been elevated to compliance plus on the basis of evidence seen and the staff who were spoken to that showed that your staff are valued.'* The Reachdeck toolbar on your website allows users who have difficulties from whatever issue to access the information that they need. You have been upgraded to compliance plus mainly due to the professionalism of this tool.'

The assessor's recommendation was that Woven Housing Association was well deserving of re-accreditation to the Standard.

Inclusive Housing Provision

The core business of Woven, was to continue to fulfil its Vision of providing Homes, Lives and Communities throughout 2023-24.

78 new homes commenced during the period including 6 W/C and 3 affordable units.

There were 113 approved applications on the list of disability adaptations at the start of the reporting year plus any new approved applications made during the reporting year. individual adaptations were completed (5 Major and 108 minor) to existing housing stock in the period to respond to specific needs, typically ranging from fitting of grab rails and 2nd stair rails, lever taps, level access showers and safe play areas. As well as this we have fitted stair lifts, food prep benches for wheelchair users, automatic door openers and automatic WC installations and provided additional lighting for partially sighted tenants. 1 major adaption was completed in the period.

1.4 IN RELATION TO OUR ONLINE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND ACCESSIBILITY

Online Access and Promotion

Woven continues to promote its work online through its website and social media platforms - Twitter feed, Facebook, and LinkedIn - ensuring digital access and promotion and reporting of all community involvement in the period.

Online access to main services is provided mainly through the website with the ReachDeck accessibility toolbar helping to ensure digital inclusion. ReachDeck supports people with visual impairments and hidden disabilities, as well as those who lack basic digital skills and non-native speakers. The toolbar has a range of features for reducing barriers between content and audience - adding speech, reading, and translation, facilitating access and participation for people with Dyslexia, Low Literacy, English as a Second Language, and those with mild visual impairments. Online content can be translated onscreen into multiple languages or 'listened to' with the multiple language voice feature.

Woven's ReachDeck accessibility toolbar is used, on average, it continues to be accessed more than 35 times each week with more than 90% of customers accessing the website and using the accessibility tool via mobile phone. Approximately two thirds of those using the toolbar use the audio/visual accessibility features and one third for speech/translation. A range of languages are utilised via the translation tool, including Polish, Portuguese, Slovak, German, Spanish, Azerbaijani and Czech.

Customers in Belfast and Dungannon remain the two most active centres of translation usage with the remainder spread across the region.

1.5 EQUALITY SCREENING OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

During the period, all 25 revised and new policies and procedures were screened for equality purposes using the Equality Commission's equality screening form. This is required of all public authorities to ensure adherence to our equality, good relation and disabilities duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and our own Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan.

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2023-24 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Potential Inequalities	Proposed Actions	Annual Progress 2022/23
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1. AGE		
1.1 Few play spaces for young people / children	Liaise with the appropriate local authority to encourage the inclusion of play areas in new developments.	During the period progress continued our new residential mixed-use development in Strabane. The £20 million development will comprise 158 homes as well as community facilities, small business units, a children's Play Park and high-quality open space, and we are looking forward to commencing handovers later this year. Our homes will include a mix of general needs, Cat 1, wheelchair accessible, complex needs, and affordable properties, ensuring inclusive housing options for all.
1.2 Electronic communications can cause problems for older people	Continue to undertake a review of preferred methods of communication for tenants/other customers. Explore the introduction of a	During the period we continued to undertake a review of preferred methods of communication for tenants and customers. Online access to main services continues to be provided mainly through the website with the ReachDeck accessibility toolbar helping to ensure digital inclusion. ReachDeck supports people with visual impairments and hidden disabilities, as well as those who lack basic digital skills and non-native speakers. The toolbar has several features for reducing barriers between content and audience - adding speech, reading, and translation, facilitating access and participation for people with Dyslexia, Low Literacy, English as a Second Language, and those with mild visual impairments. Online content can be translated onscreen into multiple languages or 'listened to' with the multiple language voice feature.

<p>1.3 Digital divide as older people may not be able to use / access services which are available electronically for example through internet</p>	<p>text phone to enable persons with hearing or speech difficulties the same access as those without.</p> <p>Explore and support opportunities for older people to learn to access services and/or information online.</p> <p>Review digital forms of communication used by association to ensure maximum inclusivity.</p>	<p>Written and verbal communication is also maintained where the customer/tenant prefers this method.</p> <p>A hearing loop system was installed in our new Laganwood Headquarter Offices.</p> <p>During the period, our Community Involvement Team continued to support tenants to meet via Microsoft Teams following the success of meeting via Zoom during lockdown. Several new tenants are now engaging with us because we have continued to help set them up to meet with us digitally from the comfort of their homes</p> <p>We continued to maintain contact with some tenants since the lockdown via 'Courtesy calls. Community Assistants, Community Involvement Officers and Housing Officers maintain regular contact with tenants providing support as required and a listening ear for those who continued to isolated or lonely in their home.</p> <p>Understanding that peoples' needs would be diverse, our database of support and service-based organisations was maintained and added to as the weeks went on. Having the database distributed</p>
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		<p>allowed our team to efficiently sign-post tenants. This effort complimented our 'Courtesy Call' project, where calls were made to every Woven home, checking in offering support & signposting</p>
<p>1.4 Growing older population but accommodation to meet need not increasing therefore there is potentially less choice for older people</p>	<p>Monitor demand for housing for older people at association level – overall need determined by NIHE.</p> <p>Continue to highlight need to the Department for Communities, Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Planning departments.</p>	<p>115 new homes commenced during the period including house types No4v2 CAT1 (Active Elderly).</p> <p>113 individual adaptations were completed (5 Major and 108 minor) to existing housing stock in the period to respond to specific needs, typically ranging from fitting of grab rails and 2nd stair rails, lever taps, level access showers and safe play areas. As well as this we have fitted stair lifts, food prep benches for wheelchair users, automatic door openers and automatic WC installations and provided additional lighting for partially sighted tenants. We have received 3 major adaptations during the period. 6 Major adaptations from the previous financial year have reached advanced approval stage. 1 major adaption was completed in the period.</p> <p>During the period we continued to liaise with the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to discuss meeting identifying and meeting the needs of an ageing population. Outcomes of this collaborative working is identified above.</p>

1.5 Social isolation of older people	<p>Gather information to inform the development of suitable activities.</p> <p>Liaise with relevant authorities, as necessary.</p>	See 1.3 above
1.6 Welfare Reform	<p>Continue to lobby government on the impact of Welfare Reform.</p> <p>Monitor situation as Welfare Reform changes are introduced to determine impacts on tenants, particularly those between 25 and 35 who may be affected by the</p>	<p>During the period we continued to advocate that removing Welfare Supplementary Payments Schemes would significantly harm the most vulnerable populations, particularly women, disabled individuals, and social housing tenants. Therefore, there is a strong argument against withdrawing or tapering support. This will increase rent arrears and homelessness, especially since housing stock has not kept pace with demand and it will not 'save money' as the likely outcome is the spiralling of Discretionary Housing Payments and Temporary Housing budgets.</p> <p>During the period, our Housing staff continued to be involved in Forum meeting to discuss pertinent housing items, including welfare reform and the general cost of living crisis, with colleagues from other Housing Associations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.</p>

	Shared Room Rate.	
2. DEPENDENTS		
2.1 Welfare Reform – single room rate will have adverse impact on single parents under 35: especially males	<p>Continue to lobby government on the impact of Welfare Reform.</p> <p>Monitor situation as Welfare Reform changes are introduced to determine impacts on tenants, particularly those between 25 and 35 who may be affected by the Shared Room Rate.</p>	<p>During the period we continued to advocate that removing Welfare Supplementary Payments Schemes would significantly harm the most vulnerable populations, particularly women, disabled individuals, and social housing tenants. Therefore, there is a strong argument against withdrawing or tapering support. This will increase rent arrears and homelessness, especially since housing stock has not kept pace with demand and it will not ‘save money’ as the likely outcome is the spiralling of Discretionary Housing Payments and Temporary Housing budgets.</p> <p>During the period, our Housing staff continued to be involved in Forum meeting to discuss pertinent housing items, including welfare reform and the general cost of living crisis, with colleagues from other Housing Associations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.</p>
2.2 Lack of play space for children	Liaise with appropriate local authority to encourage the inclusion of play	See 1.1

	areas in new developments.	
2.3 Lack of 2 bed accommodation for Single parents Elderly and/or disabled people needing carers	Monitor demand – highlight issue to Department for Communities and Housing Executive as appropriate.	See 1.4
3. DISABILITY		
3.1 Communications which do not meet differing needs of services users	Undertake review of forms of communication used by association to ensure maximum inclusivity. Gather more comprehensive tenant profile to improve identification of preferred methods of communication.	See 1.2. A review is carried out annually or when changes in needs necessitate this
3.2 Lack of suitable (Lifetime homes) accommodation highlighted in ECNI statement of Key Inequalities	All new social housing is built to Lifetime Homes standard. Continue work with NIHE in development of comprehensive property database to enable better	All new Woven new build is built to Lifetime Homes standard. Ongoing

	<p>matching of stock to individual need.</p> <p>Agree implementation programme based on Stock Condition Survey findings and recommendations.</p>	Ongoing
3.3 Electronic communications / digital divide	Undertake review of digital forms of communication used by association to ensure maximum inclusivity.	See 1.2
3.4 People with mental ill-health may experience difficulty in accessing services and in relation to employment	<p>Continue to ensure compliance with legislation and keep abreast of best practice.</p> <p>Engage with representative groups identify / mitigate potential barriers.</p>	<p>During the period Woven demonstrated its continued commitment to the Mental Health Charter. This included the training of employee Mental First Aiders.</p> <p>our Community Involvement Team continued to engage with our various representative groups and individuals, particularly those tenants who were hard to reach and/or isolated</p>
3.5 Funding for adaptations is only available once, which may cause difficulties if needs change	<p>Gather baseline information to clarify the number of times where it is outside the Association control to assist.</p> <p>Lobby DfC on this issue.</p>	<p>As required</p> <p>Annually</p>

	<p>Explore options for alternative funding.</p> <p>Continue to liaise with relevant authorities, as necessary.</p>	As required
3.6 People with a learning disability may have to remain in long stay hospitals due to lack of suitable services	<p>Continue to liaise with relevant authorities, as necessary.</p> <p>Gather baseline information to clarify the number of instances where association is not in position to assist.</p>	We have a well-established joint management partnership with all-island charity and social enterprise INSPIRE. Their aim is wellbeing for all. They work together with people living with mental ill health, intellectual disability, autism, and addictions to ensure they live with dignity and realise their full potential. We have the landlord function of providing independent living housing and partnership with INSPIRE who provide the specialist services to those who reside in our properties.
4. GENDER		
4.1 Activities at (sheltered) schemes can be geared towards one gender only	<p>Gather more comprehensive tenant profile information to improve development of customer services.</p> <p>Gather baseline information on uptake of</p>	<p>We continue to have a dedicated Scheme Co-ordinator Service at our one Sheltered Scheme. Our Community Involvement Team work closely with the Scheme Co-Ordinator and the tenants of who live there to gather more comprehensive tenants' profiles on services required and to provide inclusive activities for all.</p> <p>See above</p>

	<p>activities, if relevant.</p> <p>Use tenant feedback to inform the development of activities in sheltered housing schemes.</p> <p>Cross-sectoral sharing of case studies / good practice.</p>	<p>Prior to and after activities have taken place tenants are surveyed on what activities they would like to get involved in and then feedback on the activities that have taken place for evaluation purposes.</p> <p>Woven continues to work closely with the relevant voluntary and community sectors in delivering of services and/or activities. This well-established relationship allows us to share good practice and benefit from the good practice of others</p>
4.2 Gender imbalances in staff at all levels across the sector	<p>Gather more comprehensive cross-sectoral data to clarify actual situation.</p> <p>Consider options for mitigation of impacts identified.</p> <p>Consider developing a strategy where necessary based on research.</p>	<p>Completed annually</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>As required</p>
5. MARITAL STATUS		
5.1 Couples in residential homes not	Record all instances in our	Where applicable

always housed together	<p>sheltered scheme to inform action.</p> <p>Highlight problem to relevant authorities</p> <p>Identify options for mitigating impact which are available to housing associations</p>	<p>Where applicable</p> <p>Where applicable</p>
6. POLITICAL OPINION		
6.1 Possible inequalities due to perceptions of potential employees who have 'political convictions.'	Explore adoption of guidelines from OFM/DFM on employment of individuals with conflict related convictions.	<p>The Association continues to have a Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy in place. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders legislation and AccessNI Code of Practice it is a requirement that the organisation have this policy. The policy outlines the Association's commitment to equality of opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions and outlines the process should an applicant with a conviction apply for a post. This policy is reviewed every 3 years or earlier of legislation and/or best practice necessitates this.</p>

7. RACE		
7.1 Communications and accessibility may be difficult for those whose first language is not English or who are unfamiliar with system	Gather more comprehensive tenant profile information to help tailor services to customer needs.	See 1.2 above
7.2 Electronic communications / digital divide	Review digital forms of communication used by association to ensure maximum inclusivity.	Annually
7.3 Lack of adequate housing and accommodation for Travellers	Through the Social Housing Development Programme work with NIHE to deliver housing schemes which meet the needs of Travellers.	Annually
7.4 Literacy of Travellers	Explore alternative options for engaging with Travellers.	As required
7.5 People from Black and Minority Ethnic communities are vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination	Develop improved cross-sectoral liaison with representatives of relevant stakeholder groups.	As required

- 3** Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures, and/or service delivery areas during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No (go to Q.4)

☐ Not applicable (go to Q.4)

Please provide any details and examples:

- 3a** With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 3b** What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? *(tick all that apply)*

☐ As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact *(please give details):*

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ As a result of changes to access to information and services (*please specify and give details*):

Click or tap here to enter text.

☐ Other (*please specify and give details*):

Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 2: Progress on Equality Scheme commitments and action plans/measures

Arrangements for assessing compliance (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☒ Yes, organisation wide

☐ Yes, some departments/jobs

☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment

☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Yes, Section 75 statutory duties continued to be integrated in all job descriptions. During the year 20 new employees' commenced employment with the Association.

As part of our aim to increase our workforce demographic for under 25-year-olds we continued to support the NI Housing apprenticeship scheme along with a number of other Housing Associations and successfully appointed a Housing Apprentice and worked with schools.

PART A

- 5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☒ Yes, organisation wide
- ☐ Yes, some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- ☐ No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

As detailed above during the period Annual Performance Reviews assessed not only on how employees have performed against objectives for the year, but also how they have performed against the Association's Employee Expected Behaviours.

One of the five expected behaviours staff are required to demonstrate is Embracing equality and diversity where we require all our staff to treat everyone with professional and personal respect, promoting fairness and recognising the value of diversity.

In 2023-2024 98% of staff who were eligible for an appraisal rated good or above in relation to their performance against the expected behaviours, this is an increase by 1% on the previous year.

- 6 In the 2023-24 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning, and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- ☒ Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- ☒ Yes, through organisation wide annual business planning
- ☐ Yes, in some departments/jobs
- ☐ No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's corporate plan

☐ No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2023-24 report

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

The Annual Performance Reviews are supported by regular employee 121's with their line manager and objective setting that aligns to departmental plans which cascade from the Corporate Strategy's Strategic Aims and Values.

One year on the Equality Diversity & Inclusion forum continues to play a key role in driving our EDI work. The purpose of this forum continues to be to support, promote and encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, being mindful of the commitments outlined in all our Equality Scheme, Disability Action Plan, Mental Health Charter and other relevant policy documents, and to assist in developing an action plan which goes beyond legal compliance and will be seen as a key component to the core business strategy, because it's the right thing to do.

The Association's values are central to this forum as we strive to make them visible in all we do and create an inclusive culture that nurtures talent and allows all present and potential employees, regardless of differences, the opportunity to flourish and reach their potential within the Association.

Equality action plans/measures

7 Within the 2023-24 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed:

12

Actions ongoing:

1

Actions to commence:

3

Please provide any details and examples (*in addition to question 2*):

Twelve rolling actions for the period were successfully met during the period and one was ongoing and with three yet to commence.

- 8** Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2023-24 reporting period (*points not identified in an appended plan*):

Due to our rebrand, a change in key personnel and under resourcing a full review of our Equality Scheme, including our Easy Read versions, have been postponed until 2025/26. This is now a key priority for the EDIF to drive forward, including the development of an overarching EDI Strategy, a review of our Disability Action Plan and Easy Read and Mental Health Charter Commitments. As a result of this planned significant piece of work taking place in 2025/26 there were no significant changes or amendments made to our Equality Action Plan in 2023/24.

- 9** In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2023-24 reporting period, the following have been identified: (*tick all that apply*)

- ☐ Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- ☐ Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- ☐ Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities
- ☐ Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

Arrangements for consulting (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 3)

- 10** Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: (*tick one box only*)

- ☒ All the time
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

- 11** Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2023-24 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

As outlined above in 2023 -2024 we strengthened the work and membership of this new forum and developed a 2024-2025 activity plan of EDI Forum led promotions, with the aim of celebrating and increasing awareness, knowledge and understanding of a wide range of inclusion topics, across the organisation.

To date these have included activities related to; Autism Acceptance Month which included the roll out of neurodiversity training and an increased focus on making reasonable adjustments for hidden disabilities; Deaf Awareness Week promoting 'learning the basics of sign language'; promoting the Belfast Pride parade; promotion of World Youth Skills Day through a focus on our generation Z colleagues; promotion of Colour Blindness Awareness day led by an employee sharing their experience and practical tips on coloured spreadsheets; promotion of interactive technologies such as Reachdeck to support individuals to access our information online; World Menopause Day promotion which included the meeting of Woven's Hot and Bothered Café led by a nutritionist who focussed on Women's Health – this was followed up by a Men's Health session too; World Braille Day promotion, where we used the occasion to remind employees to complete their DSE and to look after their eye health and encouraged them to use their employee benefits to claim back the costs of eye care.

Also outline above was that we continued to consult with employees on the review and development of employment policies and procedures through the Staff Consultative Forum. Policies and Procedures all have an Equality Screening carried out. In 2023-2024 the Staff Consultative Forum reviewed, shaped, and approved the following employee policies and procedures.

- Absence Management
- Flexi Time and Time off in Lieu (TOIL)
- Display Screen Equipment and Eye and Eyesight Test Policy
- Learning and Development Policy
- Hybrid Working Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Secure Handling, Use, Storage and Retention of Access NI Disclosure Information
- Recruitment of Ex-offenders
- Redundancy Policy
- Work Life Balance (inc career break, part-time working, and job share)
- Domestic violence and abuse
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

- 12** In the 2023-24 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: (*tick all that apply*)

- ☐ Face to face meetings
- ☒ Focus groups
- ☐ Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- ☒ Questionnaires
- ☐ Information by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- ☒ Internet discussions
- ☒ Telephone consultations
- ☐ Other (*please specify*): Click or tap here to enter text.

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

We use several consultation methods, as outlined above on a variety of customers and employees who are representative of at least one or more of the Section 75 categories. Uptake depends on the consultation and can vary.

- 13** Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

New staff members continued to undertake the mandatory equality and diversity awareness e-learning as part of their induction, in addition to equality and diversity

sessions with the Association's Corporate Assurance Manager on the Association's equality obligations and their responsibilities as employees.

- 14** Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2023-24 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable – no commitment to review

Arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

[Equality | Woven]

- 15** Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year (*as recorded in screening reports*):

As outlined above, 25 revised and new policies and procedures were screened for equality purposes using the Equality Commission's equality screening form in the period. This is required of all public authorities to ensure adherence to our equality, good relation and disabilities duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and our own Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan.

- 16** Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2023-24:

25 Policy consultations conducted with **screening** assessment presented.

0 Policy consultations conducted **with an equality impact assessment** (EQIA) presented.

0 Consultations for an **EQIA** alone.

- 17** Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

N/A

- 18** Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No concerns were raised
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Arrangements for publishing the results of assessments (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Arrangements for monitoring and publishing the results of monitoring (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 4)

- 20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2023-24 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, already taken place

PART A

☐ No, scheduled to take place at a later date

☒ Not applicable

Please provide any details:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? *(tick one box only)*

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Click or tap here to enter text.

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2023-24 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

N/A

- 23** Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

The Association continues to gather, for NICORE monitoring purposes, details of the categories of tenants we are housing, through the Common Selection Scheme.

During the period, the Association carried out equal opportunities monitoring to ensure fairness and equal opportunity requirements are being met.

Staff Training (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 5)

- 24** Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2023-24, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

As outlined above as part of Woven's commitment to equality of opportunity and good relations, all employees are required to complete mandatory Equality and Diversity training. Compliance is monitored monthly and reported to the Senior and Operational Management Team. This is also reported through to the appropriate Committee and Board. As at the 31 March 2024 completion compliance for this training was 98.1%.

In addition to the above training, completion compliance for the mandatory online Unconscious Bias training was 97.1%.

During the year we ran a number of mini masterclasses for line managers, two of which were focussed on Bullying and Harassment and another on Neurodiversity. With the introduction of the Tailored Reasonable Adjustment Plan, line managers have also received one to one coaching from HR as they complete and review these with individual team members.

This year a number of staff received LGBTQI+ training which was facilitated by the Rainbow Project. This has increased the awareness and knowledge of our employees to manage and better understand and support our customers.

Recruitment & Selection training was delivered to all relevant employees. For many, this was refresher training which is conducted every three years to ensure they understand their responsibilities and obligations as panel members.

To ensure diversity across our team of in-house Mental Health First Aiders, training was delivered to new volunteers to ensure they are adequately equipped to effectively support those in crisis.

- 25** Please provide **any examples** of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

See point 24 above

Public Access to Information and Services (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 6)

- 26** Please list **any examples** of where monitoring during 2023-24, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation **to access to information and services**:

N/A

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

- 27** How many complaints **in relation to the Equality Scheme** have been received during 2023-24?

Insert number here: 0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

N/A

Section 3: Looking Forward

- 28** Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

Our Equality Scheme is due for review in 2025/26

- 29** Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

We wish to remain committed to our Action Plan and report on our progress against our proposed actions annually. We will, however, amend our Equality Scheme arrangements where legislation and/or best practice necessitates this.

- 30** In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what **equality and good relations priorities** are anticipated over the next reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

☒ Employment

PART A

- ☒ Goods, facilities, and services
- ☒ Legislative changes
- ☒ Organisational changes/ new functions
- ☐ Nothing specific, more of the same
- ☐ Other (please state):

Click or tap here to enter text.

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

12	1	3
Fully achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs ⁱ	Outcomes / Impact ⁱⁱ
National ⁱⁱⁱ	NIFHA / Members	Participation in relevant consultation exercises.	Inform policies / strategies and promote equality.
Regional ^{iv}	None in the period	N/A	N/A
Local ^v	NIFHA / Members	Participation in relevant consultation exercises.	Inform policies / strategies and promote equality.

PART B

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Equality and Diversity eLearning training module mandatory for all new staff to complete. Mandatory online Unconscious Bias training module for all new staff to complete. Mandatory online Unconscious Bias training module for all new staff to complete.	All staff receive the training which includes an assessment at the end to ensure the training was understood. These eLearning modules continue to be part of induction of new staff to the organisation.	Awareness of equality and diversity best practice and legislation; understand the impact of exclusion; and help staff in relation to building an inclusive working environment. Employees are equipped to identify their own unconscious biases and are trained on how to reduce the likelihood of these biases negatively affecting their decision making in their professional and personal lives.
2	Liaising between the Association and the Equality Commission NI through the Association's Corporate Assurance Manager particularly through equality updates and training facilitated by the Equality Commission	Updates filtered through to Board and all staff members	Awareness and equality agenda continuing to be embedded in the corporate strategy and actively promoted in the organisation.
	Corporate Assurance Manager continuing to spearhead the equality agenda and ensure the Association is up to date with the latest initiatives and obligations expected of it.	Corporate Assurance Manager to relay this information through continued training of staff members and liaising with the appropriate bodies to provide external support and awareness	Awareness and equality agenda continuing to be embedded in the corporate strategy and actively promoted in the organisation.

PART B

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	The Association continues to have an arrangement with Language Line Services to provide translation and interpretation services in over 170 various languages. The Association also continues to utilise the services of local firm STEP for translating documents in different languages. The Association continues to provide information on its website that can be translated into various preferred languages there and then.	Interpretation and translation services remain an important facility to encourage equal accessibility of information to all who wish to use our services. An easy read version of the Association's Equality Scheme is available.	Customers who have used the facility have been able to access information in their preferred language/format.
2	The Association continues to promote a statement that information can be provided in Alternative Formats including Braille and other different languages as mentioned above. Continued use of accessibility software, Reachdeck. ReachDeck is an all-in-one digital inclusion solution. It helps	Equal accessibility of information to all who wish to use our services Reachdeck adds speech, reading, and translation to websites facilitating access and participation for people with Dyslexia, Low Literacy, English as a Second Language, and those with mild visual impairments.	Removal of barriers and enables users to access information and services. In the reporting period there was an average of 99 toolbar launches and 86 speech requests per month.

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	organisations make their online content accessible and usable to everyone.		
	Efforts to promote and communicate the commitment to section 75 and its importance to the Association	Section on our Website called 'Equality Matters' dedicated to equality and diversity related items with updates on activity and highlighting of equality duties.	Highlights importance and centrality of Equality and Diversity to Woven. Promotes our commitment to Equality and Diversity across all its business

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to '**encourage others**' to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Continue to embed the disability duties into our consultation with customers processes through our tenant and community survey structures	Creating an awareness of our obligations of the disability duties internally to our staff and Board and externally to our customers, whilst promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities and encouraging participation by people with disabilities in public life.	Ongoing commitment to promote the two duties and encourage others to see that this is good practice
2	Provide news updates on disability on our internal staff communication platform	Create a culture of awareness and embracing of equality, diversity, and inclusion	Ongoing commitment to promote duties and encourage others to see that this is good practice

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	Positive images of people with disabilities in our literature, staff and Board structure, correspondence, and other promotional materials	Our Corporate Strategy features positive imagery of people with disabilities, both staff and residents. Similar positive imagery continues to feature in our Community Involvement Strategy.	Promoted on our website, where these publications mentioned are available, we also featured throughout the period on social media which, additionally, regularly features images relevant to this theme from community events across NI.
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2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones/ Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

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4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.
2	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

(a) Qualitative

The Association continues to be committed to the effective implementation of all aspects of the Disability Action Plan throughout our organisation. Whenever a full review of our Equality Scheme, Disability Action Plan and Easy Read versions is required every 5 years, we will adhere to our Equality Scheme and carry out a 12-month consultation period for all our stakeholders/consultees to participate in. Overall responsibility for effective implementation of the Equality Scheme and the Disability Action Plan will be overseen by our Board, led by the Chairperson. The Chief Executive will continue to provide direction and guidance to both the Board and staff team with the assistance of the Corporate Assurance Manager who will continue to have day-to-day operational responsibility for implementation of the equality and disabilities duties for the Association. The Corporate Assurance Manager will report to Senior Managers on a regular basis.

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(b) Quantitative

Integral to our business planning process is the three yearly reviews of our Vision, Mission Statement Objectives and Values by Senior Managers and the Board. Continuing to adopt the Operational Plan approach, the Association continues to set 'SMART' objectives and KPIs, including target setting and monitoring using the Business Operational Plan also forms a key element of our business planning process. This is reflected at all levels of the strategic planning process. How targets are met, and objectives are delivered is monitored and reported at the most senior level in the organisation.

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

Please select

If yes, please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1	N/A	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

As mentioned above when the Association is due to complete a full review of our Equality Scheme and Disability Action Plan (DAP), every 5 years, including incorporating any revisions in Disability legislation and best practice earlier where this required, we will go out to consultation for 12 weeks with our consultees.

ⁱ **Outputs** – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

ⁱⁱ **Outcome / Impact** – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

ⁱⁱⁱ **National** : Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

^{iv} **Regional**: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

^v **Local** : Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one-off consultations, local fora.