

# Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2024 - 2027





# Executive summary

Our **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Strategy** is focused on achieving positive experience and outcomes for customers and colleagues, now and in the future. It sets out how we will focus and continue to evolve our approach to D&I, and the positive impact we can have for our customers and those who work with and alongside us.

This **D&I Strategy**, developed in collaboration with customers and colleagues, supports the delivery of our strategic mission set out in our 2030 plan:

**“Dedicated to the success of our people and places.”**

Our culture at whg is built upon our strong values, with diversity, inclusivity and support for customers at the heart of our work.

They are our core beliefs; they inform our decision-making and help shape our organisation.

We support and develop our colleagues to succeed, and our work is done in a way that actively encourages diversity of thought. We believe that this will have a positive impact upon the way we design and deliver our services to our customers, resulting in better outcomes for all. We collaborate with stakeholders and actively seek out partners who are aligned to the ambition of strategy.

We are committed to ensuring that we are reflective of the customers we serve, and we understand that the data we collect will help us achieve this. This data driven approach shapes our services for our customers and our colleagues.



## Trustworthy

You can rely on us.  
We are honest in everything we do.



## Respectful

Valuing people and treating everyone with empathy and fairness.



## Accountable

Taking responsibility for our actions and owning the delivery of our promises.



## Collaborative

Achieving great things by working together.



## Excellent

Striving to be the best and delivering the best outcomes for customers and the organisation.

## Executive summary (cont.)

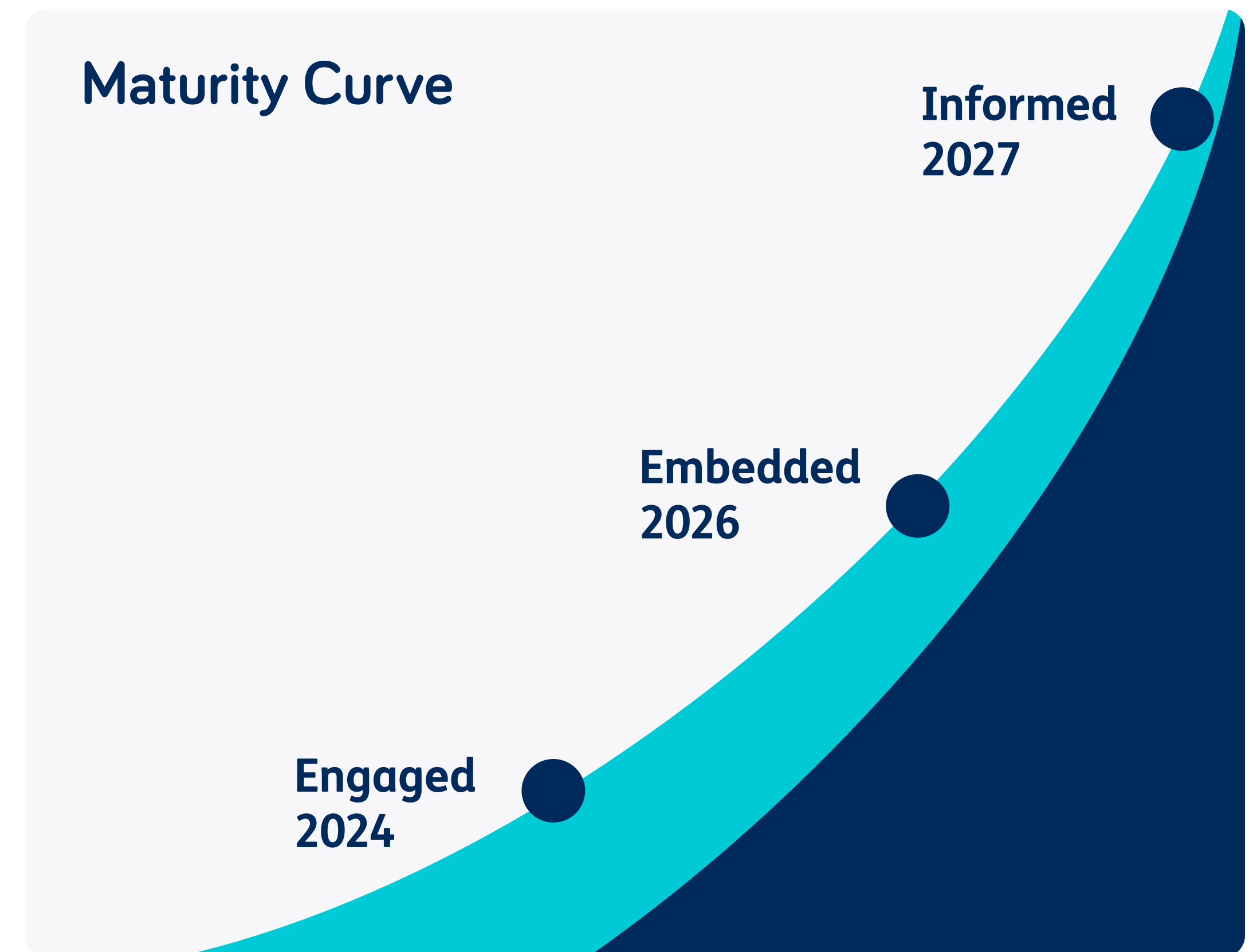
We are committed to seeking out opportunities to enable equity as a housing provider, and as an employer of choice.

Customers and colleagues feel this strategy is not a starting point for us, but a continuation of our D&I journey. The strategy therefore, builds upon the strengths of whg, not changing who we are, but the part that we all play together to strengthen our inclusive culture.

As we move through this three year strategy, we want to remain agile to emerging themes, exploring and understanding the Intersectionality of the lived experiences of our colleagues and customers. We will use our maturity curve to set our annual delivery plan and remain agile and responsive to global events and changes in legislation.

We fully recognise that the way people speak about their lived experiences of D&I can be complex, and our glossary explores some of the phrases we use here.

We will communicate our strategy in a range of ways to make sure it is accessible and shared in an inclusive way.



# Setting the approach

We will grow the information we have to **know our customer and colleagues** – an evidence-based approach that is grounded in who we are as individuals. This is not only the information we collect about us as individuals and how services are accessed, but how we share our stories, lived experience and the learning we all gain through experience, to build positive relationships and helps us learn from each other.

We will continue to **listen to our customers and colleagues** – by valuing the voice of our customers and colleagues we can collaborate and learn from our experience of being at work or living in our homes. By focusing on building equity that brings voices together from different backgrounds we can empower diversity of thinking and view solutions from a range of perspectives.

We will continue to improve how opportunities and services are accessed and are committed to **improving the customer and colleague experience**. We ensure that these are based on respect and fairness, create a sense of belonging and our services are accessible and tailored, where required, to meet specific needs and vulnerabilities

We will communicate how things are going by being transparent and sharing our progress so that we all have **a shared understanding of the impact**, even if we don't always get things right – as this is when we can review, learn together and take action to make changes.

## Setting the approach (cont.)

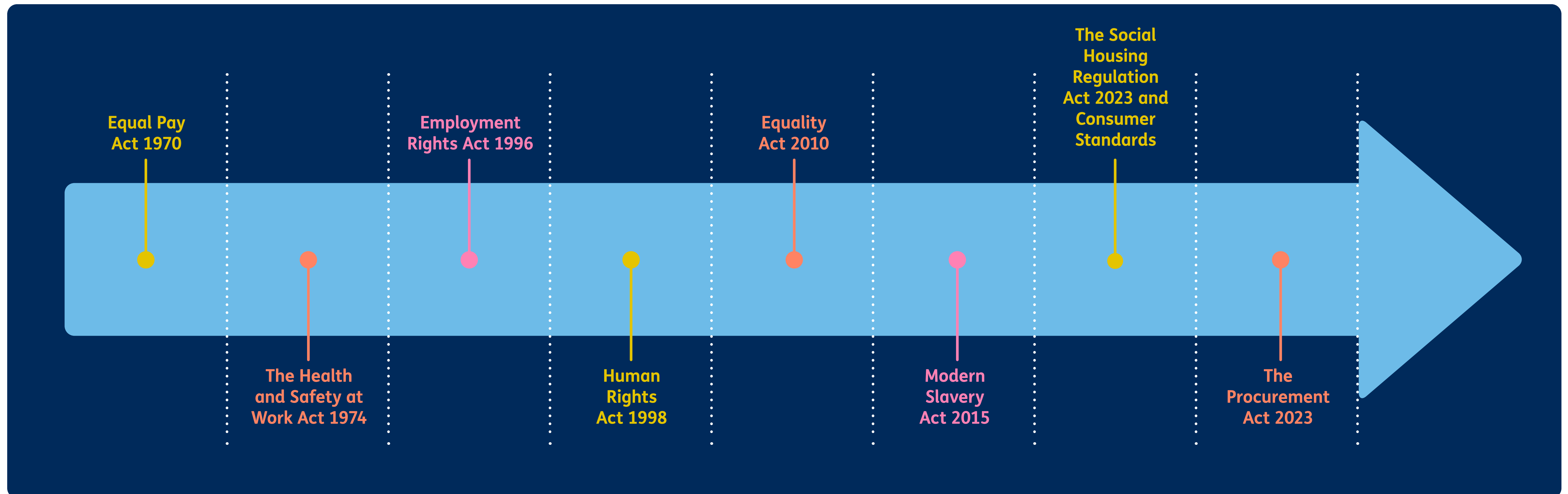
We will hold space in our D&I Strategy to **respond to change**. Our approach is to be agile and flexible to respond to global events and challenges that may impact our customers and colleagues. We will make sure we are tuned into the latest guidance or legislation that could change during the next three years. We have set out a two year plan and review this in 2026 to set out the final year to ensure agility in our approach.





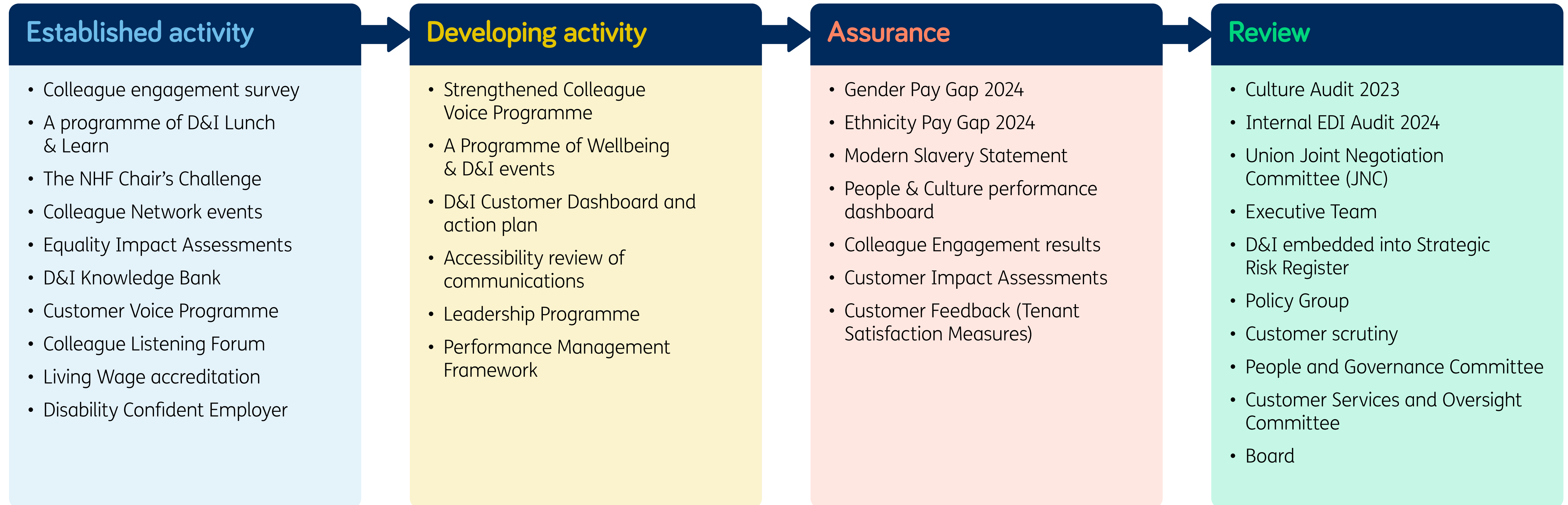
# Key legislation that informs our D&I Strategy

The UK legislation for equality and diversity comes predominantly in the form of the Equality Act 2010. The image below is not an exhaustive list of legislation but is intended to represent the considerations and evolving legislative landscape within which whg exists.



Additionally, we are aligned to the National Housing Federation ambitions of improving diversity, equality and inclusion in the housing sector.

# Key legislation that informs our D&I Strategy














## Our partners and stakeholders:



# Partner Stakeholder map of influence

In addition to our customers and colleagues, this table sets out how our partners are shaping and influencing D&I at whg.

	Benchmarking	National Policy	Knowledge & Learning	Best practice	Accreditation	Aligns to Community	Aligns to Workplace
	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗		⊗	⊗
	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗		⊗	
		⊗	⊗	⊗		⊗	
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			⊗				⊗
	⊗		⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
				⊗		⊗	⊗
				⊗			⊗





Colleagues

# What will this mean?

**We will be an employer of choice with a culture that sets high expectations whilst providing a stimulating, values-led and rewarding environment for our people to fulfil their ambitions. Colleagues will feel engaged with our mission and purpose, in an inclusive environment where their contribution matters.**

- We will prepare ourselves as an inclusive employer of choice in the future
- We will respond at pace, creating a culture that builds upon the strength of us as individuals and creates an environment that supports our social, physical, financial, and mental wellbeing

- We will increase the range of people related data we collect from our colleagues
- We will improve diversity in teams where there are underrepresented groups
- We will consider the challenges and embrace the opportunities that a diverse age profile presents and prepare ourselves for a future workforce
- We will have a diverse Board and leadership team that is reflective of our colleagues and customers.

## Measures of success

By 2027 we will increase the level of information relating to D&I from 55% to 85% for our colleagues.

By 2027 colleague satisfaction will increase to 85% relating to being treated with respect.

By 2027 our leadership teams will be 90% reflective of our colleague workforce.

By 2027 we will develop and deliver an action plan to further reduce our gender and ethnicity pay gaps.

**Our KPIs support the activity that underpins the improvement of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Colleague Engagement Scores through the lens of Diversity and Inclusion.**



# Why is this important?

## Colleagues have shared with us how they feel about diversity and inclusion.

They have shared that the role whg plays in developing an inclusive approach creates equity in the workplace, and celebrates the diversity of those who work here, now and in the future. Colleagues feel the best D&I experience was when they are valued as individuals, are respected and feel encouraged to collaborate.

Colleagues want to feel empowered to harness the strength and power of our diverse backgrounds and life experience, and to collaborate in shaping and influencing the workplace now and in the future to achieve a sense of belonging.

## Ambition

Inclusion is the golden thread that runs through all of whg activity. We will continue to grow a positive culture where colleagues will feel engaged with our mission and purpose, in an inclusive environment where their contribution matters.

- Fostering good relationships amongst all colleagues. Being consciously inclusive and respecting diverse experiences (among those who share protected characteristics, and those who do not)
- Creating equity in our approach by improving accessibility to opportunities and by addressing the imbalance of opportunities available to our colleagues
- Fostering a culture where bullying, discrimination and harassment are not tolerated.





# We will do this by:



## Improving the information we collect from our colleagues, committees and Board to:

- Benchmark how we reflect the communities we serve
- Improve diversity across all teams and levels within the organisation
- Support colleagues to share their story and life experience to inspire and educate our colleagues and customers, both now and in the future.

- Engaging colleagues in sharing feedback to understand D&I experiences
- Growing our Colleague Voice Programme, offering flexible ways to be involved
- Creating safe spaces for colleagues to share their feedback and lived experience
- Encouraging diversity of thinking and bringing colleagues together to shape the workplace of the future, and influence our decision making.

- Attracting and retaining a diverse colleague base
- Continuing to develop People and Culture policy and practice that reflects the needs of our colleagues
- Building respect and dignity in the workplace and take action to tackle and prevent discrimination
- Delivering accessible learning and education to influence colleague and customer relationships
- Delivering a collaborative offer which celebrates culture, supports wellbeing for all and builds an inclusive culture.

- Identifying and improving trends in colleague engagement surveys relating to equity and fairness
- Actively seeking opportunities for scrutiny and accreditation to give our colleagues assurance and be transparent in our approach
- Regularly publishing our people profile with colleagues and externally benchmark
- Measuring the impact of our decisions.

- Remaining agile and flexible to respond to global events and legislation that may impact our colleagues
- Continuing to develop workplace environments that responds to the needs of our people
- Developing a flexible and responsive Employee Value proposition that meets the individual needs of our colleagues and a diverse workforce
- Identify areas of risk relating to D&I
- Reviewing, improving and auditing our approach
- Sharing 'you said, we did'.





Customers

# What will this mean?

**We will provide safe and secure homes and deliver high-quality services. Our communities will be empowered to thrive and we will always do our best for our customers.**

- We will be seen as an inclusive landlord now and in the future
  - We will continue to develop our Customer Voice model and focus on engaging underrepresented voices to shape and influence our services
  - We will increase the range of customer related data we collect from our customers and increase the level of completion to inform our service delivery
- We will respond at pace, delivering services that promote equity and fairness based on the diversity of our customers
  - Provide accessible services and develop technology to support our customers in managing their relationship with us
  - We will understand the adjustments that our customers need to access our services.

## Measures of success

By 2027 we will increase the level of information relating to D&I from 79% to 85% of our customers.

By 2027 we will increase tenant satisfaction measures relating to fairness and respect to the median point in relation to our peers.

By 2027 we will increase Tenant Satisfaction Measures relating to how customer views have been taken into account to the median point in relation to our peers.



# Why is this important?

**Customers have shared with us how they feel about diversity and inclusion, and the role whg can play in developing an inclusive approach that creates equity in accessing our services.**

They understand that we may need to know more about them to shape our services, but in return they also want to know us. They would like to know who we are, and it is important to them to know we have shared experiences that connect us. Customers felt the best D&I experience was when they are respected, made to feel welcome, have a shared purpose and sense of belonging.

## Ambition

Developing a better understanding of our customers and what they need from us, will help to ensure we deliver services of real value and promote fairness and respect.

- Fostering good relationships with our customers. Being consciously inclusive and respecting diverse experiences (who share protected characteristics, and those who do not)
- Creating equity in our approach by developing our services by listening to and understanding their needs
- Delivering fairness for all customers and taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, discrimination, and harassment.





# We will do this by:



**Growing the range of personal data we collect from customers (aligned to the latest legislation) We will set out with clarity why and how this data will inform an evidence-based approach to:**

- Know our customers through a diversity lens
- Understand where there is underrepresentation in accessing our services
- Influence our decision making.

- Delivering the Customer Voice Strategy 2023-2026: An inclusive approach to customer involvement to ensure we are reaching underrepresented members of communities we serve
- Identifying and improve trends in Tenant Satisfaction Measures relating to equity and fairness
- Identifying improvements through our complaints process.

- Completing Equality Impact Assessments for all customer facing policies to review the impact through a D&I lens
- Providing services that build respect and dignity in the communities we serve. Taking action to tackle and prevent discrimination and create a sense of belonging
- Continuing to develop our colleagues to think and act inclusively and to continue to build fairness and respect in the relationship with our customers.

**Regularly sharing our colleague and customer profile, to:**

- Help connect with customers through our shared life experiences
- Demonstrate equity and fairness in access to our services
- Share 'you said, we did' where there is impact relating to D&I
- Give assurance that colleagues are reflective of the communities we serve.

- Remaining agile and flexible to respond to global events and legislation that may impact our customers
- Identifying areas of risk relating to diversity and inclusion
- Understanding the adjustments our customers need in relation to their protected characteristics
- Actively seeking out opportunity for scrutiny and accreditation.



# Appendix - Glossary

# Glossary

**This is a glossary of terms relating to diversity, inclusion and belonging. It is not exhaustive, but rather, is meant to be serve as a starting point for learning and conversation.**

- **Accessibility:** The “ability to access” the functionality of a system or entity and gain the related benefits.
- **Advocacy:** Taking actions to highlight, inspire and influence positive systemic changes.
- **Age:** One of the nine protected characteristics included within the Equality Act 2010. Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age or range of ages.
- **Ally:** A person, who is not a member of a marginalised or disadvantaged group, but who expresses or gives support to a group.
- **Belonging:** The feeling of being part of something and mattering to others. This is created through intentional acts of inclusion.
- **Bystander or an ‘active’ bystander:** A person who witnesses prejudice or discrimination against another person and who has the opportunity to take action by challenging the behaviour.
- **Carer or Caring responsibility:** A carer is a person who has total or substantial responsibility for providing help and support to another person. This could be a partner, a parent, a child, other relative, friend or neighbour.
- **Colleague Voice Network:** whg forum empowering colleagues to have their voices heard and have the opportunity to influence the workplace.
- **Civil Partnership:** A legal relationship which can be registered by two people who are not related to each other. Registering a civil partnership provides the relationship with legal recognition.
- **Customer Impact Assessment:** A review process that enables us to track and evidence how customers have shaped and influenced our policies.
- **Diversity:** Recognising that everyone is different in a variety of visible and nonvisible ways, and that those differences are to be recognised, respected and valued. Diversity typically means proportionate representation across all dimensions of human difference.
- **Equality:** Ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics. Equality recognises that certain groups of people with particular characteristics have and continue to experience, discrimination.

# Glossary (cont.)

- **Equality Act 2010:** Legislation came into effect in the UK on 1 October 2010. The act replaced previous anti-discrimination laws, amalgamating them within a single Act, and including detailing the 9 protected characteristics.
- **Equality Impact Assessment:** Abbreviated to EIA. This is where a detailed and systematic analysis is undertaken to determine how a policy, procedure or change to process etc., may disproportionately impact a particular group.
- **Equity:** Fair treatment for all while striving to identify and eliminate inequities and barriers.
- **Financial wellbeing:** Our sense of financial security and stability. It includes how informed we are of our choices related to our finances and the experiences we have related to this. This is inclusive of how we experience access to support, advice, financial planning and our freedom of choice in relation to our personal financial matters.
- **Gender reassignment:** Proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process to reassign your sex. To be protected from gender reassignment discrimination, an individual does not need to have undergone any medical treatment or surgery to change from birth sex to preferred gender.
- **Harassment:** Unwanted behaviour relating to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may occur where an individual or group is targeted on the grounds of:
  - An actual protected characteristic
  - A perceived protected characteristic
  - A person who is linked to one of the protected characteristics via association.
- **Human rights:** The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. They ensure people can live freely and that they are able to flourish, reach their potential and participate in society. They help to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- **Identity:** Relates to the characteristics and qualities of a person, considered collectively, and regarded as essential to that person's self-awareness.
- **Inclusion:** The active creation of a learning, working and social environment that is welcoming, which recognises and celebrates difference, and is reflected in structures, practices and attitudes. Inclusion means that everyone is included, visible, heard and considered.



# Glossary (cont.)

- **Intersectionality:** A term coined by Kimberlie Crenshaw in 1989 to highlight the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, and their multiple effects on the same individuals or groups.
- **Invisible/hidden disability:** A physical, mental, or neurological condition that is not obviously visible to another, yet can limit or challenge a person's movements, senses, or activities.
- **LGBTQ:** An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.
- **Liberation:** A term applied to forms of activism that oppose and fight against the oppression of marginalised groups. It refers to freedom from all forms of oppression in every aspect and every level of society. It is centred around dismantling structural and interlocking systems of oppression.
- **Lived experience:** The unique knowledge an individual gains through direct, firsthand experience of living their life while identifying with one or more protected characteristic, such as race, religion or sexual orientation etc.
- **Marginalised:** A term used to describe communities that may have societal disadvantages placed upon them, often based on their identity or social class. People may belong to more than one marginalised community due to their intersectional identity.
- **Marriage:** A union between a man and a woman or a same-sex couple.
- **Maternity:** Refers to the period after childbirth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context.
- **Mental health:** Can be described as a state of wellbeing. Mental health is a continuum, demonstrating fluidity and the possibility for change over time.
- **Mental wellbeing:** A combination of how we feel about, and how we engage with, all the many elements of our lives. How we feel includes our experiences of our emotions and sense of satisfaction, whilst our engagement centres upon such things as our relationships with others, our sense of personal control, and how we view and experience our purpose in life and our independence. This is inclusive of our psychological, emotional and cognitive wellbeing.

# Glossary (cont.)

- **Microaggression:** A comment or action that unconsciously or unintentionally expresses or reveals a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group. These small, common occurrences include insults, slights, stereotyping, undermining, devaluing, delegitimising, overlooking or excluding someone. Over time, microaggressions can isolate and alienate those on the receiving end and affect their health and wellbeing.
- **Neurodivergent:** A neurotype which is not neurotypical and diverges from the average neurotype.
- **Neurodiverse/Neurodiversity:** The wide range of neurotypes that exist in the world.
- **Oppression:** The systemic and pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression also signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups.
- **Pregnancy:** The condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby.
- **Prejudice:** A preconceived judgement or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment and can be rooted in stereotypes, that denies the right of individual members of certain groups to be recognized.
- **Pronouns:** Words to refer to a person after initially using their name. Gendered pronouns include she, he and they, their, her and him, hers, his and them, and herself, himself and themselves.
- **Protected characteristic:** A term used in the Equality Act 2010 to describe the characteristics that people have in relation to which they are protected against discrimination and harassment. Under the Act, there are nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- **Physical wellbeing:** Caring and advocating for our physical bodies. This includes how we sleep, eat, move and take care to prevent or manage physical health conditions. Ensuring our physical safety, taking all necessary precautions to prevent accidents and injuries, and the environment which are in, is also included here.
- **Race:** A person's skin colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.
- **Racism:** A belief that racial differences produce or are associated with inherent superiority or inferiority. Racially-based prejudice, discrimination, hostility or hatred. Institutionalised racism, also



# Glossary (cont.)

known as systemic racism, refers to forms of racism that are engrained in society or organizations.

- **Reasonable adjustment:** Changes an employer makes to remove or reduce a disadvantage related to someone's disability.
- **Religion:** A set of organised beliefs, practices and systems that most often relate to the belief and worship of a force, such as a personal god or another supernatural being.
- **Respect:** Taking into account the views and desires of others in how you treat people.
- **Sex:** Understood under the Equality Act 2010 as binary. It can mean a group of people like men or boys, or women or girls. Under the Act, a person's legal sex is the sex recorded on their birth certificate or their Gender Recognition Certificate.
- **Sexual orientation:** A protected characteristic relating to a person's sexual orientation towards people of:
  - The same sex
  - The opposite sex
  - Both sexes.
- **Social wellbeing:** Our sense of belonging, social inclusion and social

stability. It's about the way we communicate with each other, and how we connect and feel valued within our social networks.

- **Socio-economic:** Relating to, or involving, a combination of social and economic factors. A way of describing people based on their education, income and type of job.
- **Tokenism:** The practice of making only superficial or symbolic gestures to appear inclusive of members of underrepresented or minoritised groups.
- **Unconscious bias:** The unconscious associations and beliefs that are said to form outside of our own conscious awareness, which lead to positive or negative inclinations towards or against other people, groups or communities.
- **Underrepresented groups:** Groups of people who are insufficiently or inadequately represented, relative to their representation in broader society. People within these groups may be subject to barriers and forms of discrimination.
- **Victimisation:** Treating someone less favourably because they have taken or intend to take action under a particular policy or procedure, or because they are supporting someone else who is taking action.





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