

HOW TO IMPROVE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION – LESSONS FROM ENGLAND



HDN

YOUR NETWORK
TO DIVERSITY

Housing Ireland Conference
Thursday 4th March 2026

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About us

Board Diversity & Excellence Programmes

Draws on leading practice to make a real and lasting impact at board level – diversifying candidate pools and helping new/potential board members to develop their expertise & strategic thinking.

Sector-specific EDI assessment

With option for joint quality mark with the RACE Equality Code – combining robust governance framework guidance with holistic review of wider EDI and customer / community impact.

Training & Consultancy

Offers highly skilled and specialist Associates who can provide customised and comprehensive support for your organisation and its workforce.

Staff Mentoring Programme

Award-winning initiative that can contribute to a wide range of organisational strategies and objectives around learning & development, inclusion, and talent management.

Coaching

Unique coaching experiences that recognise there are differences in the lived experience of the people we work with and that they may have experienced inequalities or continue to face them.



Drivers for Change

Growing ethnic and faith diversity

- ✓ **Housing affordability and supply pressures**
- ✓ **Public debate on migration and integration**
- ✓ **Need for proactive cohesion, not reactive crisis response**



26 January 2025
Wealth inequality risks triggering 'societal collapse' within next decade, report finds

The warning comes from an expert roundtable led by researchers from King's and the Fairness Foundation



Can the tide turn on the Channel migrant boat crossings?



Dominic Casciani >
Home and Legal Correspondent
@BBCDomC

1 March 2025

On France's northern coast, they call the people smuggling and dangerous dinghies phenomenon, *La Crise Migratoire*.

But do the UK and France now have a chance of consigning the small boats to history?

Diversity backlash: Is 'masculine energy' coming to the UK?



Shanaz Musaffer and Lucy Acheson
Business reporters

3 March 2025

"Dangerous, demeaning, and immoral." That's how Donald Trump has described diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programmes which aim to boost workers from diverse backgrounds.

Upon returning to the White House, he ordered the shutdown of all federal DEI initiatives, urging the private sector to follow suit.

And many have, with the likes of Walmart, McDonald's, **Meta** and **Amazon** ditching or scaling back their diversity policies.

Corporations, according to Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg, have been "neutered" and need more "masculine energy".

Some UK employees fear Trump's rhetoric could normalise intolerant attitudes in the workplace, even if DEI policies remain intact.

"Someone that is at the top saying things like that sets a precedent that it's okay to do so," says Chloe, who works at a London-based finance company.

Cuts, universal credit and PIP: Everything you need to know about Labour's benefits overhaul

... explains what is in the government's plans for welfare reform, and what exactly the changes to disability benefits mean for claimants

CRAE | 18 Mar 2025



Liz Kendall, work and pensions secretary. Image: Flickr/ House of Commons

Labour has announced its plans to slash the welfare bill and push more people claiming disability benefits into work.

The **Department for Work and Pensions** (DWP) green paper on welfare sets out reforms which have been criticised as the "biggest cuts to disability benefits on record". They include £5bn of cuts which will see the eligibility criteria for personal independence payment (PIP) tightened, and the health element of **universal credit** reduced for new claimants.

Liz Kendall, the work and pensions secretary, said in parliament "millions who could work are trapped on benefits - denied the income, hope, dignity and respect that we know good work brings".

'Disabled people can't afford to be disabled,' Labour's welfare reform slammed

The welfare reforms could do more harm and rack up more costs in the long run than many may realise



Comments

NEWS By **Samantha Leathers**
15:00, 20 Mar 2025





Dr Shani Dhanda is noted as one of the UK's most influential disabled people (Image: Courtesy)

Labour's welfare reform plan announced this week will be changing the eligibility criteria with the aim of encouraging people back into the workforce and saving money. Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Liz Kendall, explained this change will help disability benefits "focus support on those in greatest need and to ensure the social security system lasts for the long-term, into the future."

Far right activity and housing

- **Rising tensions: Increased anti-migrant rhetoric, protests, and hate incidents impacting tenants and staff.**
- **Allocations and new-build mistrust.**
- **Fear among diverse communities; risks to tenant confidence in providers.**
- **Political pressure – far right councillors influencing housing debates and priorities.**
- **Safety concerns: Higher risk of hate crime, harassment, and intimidation in neighbourhoods**



**Shared
Values**

What do we mean by cohesive communities?



Trust in institutions



Strong sense of belonging and shared identity



Hate crime and anti-social behaviour

Lesson 1 – Regulation Drives Behaviour

- Equality embedded in governance standards
- Board competency and conduct expectations
- Tenant voice requirements
- Clear accountability mechanisms

Lesson 2 – Use data to drive equity

- Collect and analyse demographic data on residents and staff, within data protection law.
- Monitor outcomes for different groups to identify inequities.
- Set measurable targets and be transparent about progress.

Lesson 3 – Embed EDI principles in governance culture

- **Make EDI a regular item on board and committee agendas – even if not every meeting. Keeping it front of mind throughout other agenda items is most important.**
- **Consider adopting into performance management or appraisal structures.**
- **Proactively succession plan at board and executive level with representation and diversity of experience in mind.**

What can Ireland avoid?

- Tokenistic EDI statements
- Collecting data but not analysing it
- Short-term funding approaches
- Treating EDI as an HR issue only



Practical Steps for Ireland's housing providers?

- Appoint a board-level EDI lead
- Develop an equality data strategy
- Adopt an anti-racism action plan
- Create tenant-to-board pathways
- Report transparently on progress



What housing providers can do

- **Know your communities: Strengthen engagement and understand tenant concerns.**
- **Zero tolerance on hate: Clear policies and consistent action against discrimination.**
- **Support staff and tenants: Training, wellbeing support, and safeguarding.**
- **Partnership working: Collaborate with councils, police, and community groups especially around youth work and inclusion.**
- **Positive narrative: Promote diversity, inclusion, and housing's role in cohesion.**
- **Board leadership: Be confident about EDI as a strategic priority even in charged climates.**

Final Reflections

Inclusion should be designed

Embed equality into governance from the outset

Move from aspiration to institutional change

Question: What will we institutionalise now that shapes the next decade?



Keep in touch

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