

**Ongo Partnership Ltd.
Equality Diversity & Inclusion Steering Group
Meeting Minutes**

Date: Wednesday 27th April 2022

Time: 9:30am-12:00pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting, MS Teams

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 KC welcomed all to the meeting

1.2 Present: Karen Cowan (Chair) (KC), Colin Boyce (CB), Leah Gillott (LG), Wendy Wolfe (WW), Erica Sanderson (ES), Emma Kershaw (EK), Aaron Simpson-King (ASK), Richard Morfitt (RM) Stacey Hammond (SH), Michaela Paxton (MP), Kerry Copson (KCo), Helen Pearce (HP), Nicola Hunt (NH), Barrie Billingham (BB), Eddie Stringer (ES)

1.3 Apologies: Lisa Smith (LS), Julie Collins (JC), Jo Sugden (JS), Dawn Warwick (DW), Rodger Dawley (RD), Christine Fowler (CF), Michael Taurone (MT), Lauren Robinson (LR), Matt Kelly (MK), Laura Dodsworth (LD), Jess White (JW)

1.4 Christine Fowler now works part time so is unable to attend EDI meetings going forward, Michaela Paxton is leaving Ongo so will no longer attend.

2. Notes and actions from the previous meeting (Chair KC)

2.1 The minutes were agreed as accurate and a true reflection of meeting.

2.2 Actions from last meeting

Action	Who	By when?	Progress
Update Pentana actions as per section 5 of these minutes	EK	ASAP	Complete
Contact 'One for the Lads' to come and speak to the group at April's meeting (27/04/2022)	RM / LR	ASAP	Complete Arranged for July 22 EDI group Action: RM to confirm attendance
Contact the Endeavour Project to attend and speak to the group at the June 2022 meeting (30/06/2022)	KCo (Kerry Copson)	End April 2022	Complete Arranged for July EDI group 22 Action: EK to send invite to Katie Williams for July's meeting

3. EDI Action Plan update and the year ahead (break out session to discuss the year ahead (Karen))

- 3.1 We have an overarching EDI action plan to make sure we are always moving forward; it's the end of the financial year now and we are at 85% complete which is great.
- 3.2 EDI1.2 and EDI1.3 – KC confirmed that we will be publishing the Race pay gap information and Disability pay gap information the same as we do the Gender pay gap reporting. This is not a statutory requirement, unlike the Gender pay gap, but is good practice.
- 3.3 EDI1.4 - the salary benchmarking exercise for colleagues in Ongo Homes, Ongo Partnership and Ongo Communities has been completed and added to all employees' payments starting April 2022.
- 3.4 EDI2.1 – the Menopause Guidance has been approved and is available to all colleagues internally. This action can now be completed. We will tailor our document to be able to share externally as it is only aimed at colleagues currently **ACTION – adapt current guidance to be uploaded to the external website – HP.**
- 3.5 EDI2.3 – ensure mental health first aiders are representative of the workforce. Jo Sugden, Louise Usher, Marie Riggall and Helen Pearce met to discuss next steps around mental health first aiders. Marie is going to take this piece of work forward and is putting together a role description and framework of support. Then we'll be asking for people to register interest in 5 roles initially, although this may be extended over time and dependent on demand. This will roll over to the New Year action plan.
- 3.6 EDI4.1 – increasing the diversity of our Boards is something we are still working on. We currently have a board member vacancy and we are doing everything we can to encourage people from minority groups to apply, including tenants / those with lived experience of social housing. We specifically welcome representation from underrepresented profiles – e.g. ethnically diverse, disabled people and younger people.
- 3.7 The annual diversity profile data has been completed, we have just received the data back from this and it will show the representation of colleagues, Board members and tenants. This will be complete and going to the Governance & Remuneration Committee in June. Details will be shared at our next meeting.
- 3.8 EDI5.1 - Accessibility to our website, this action is now complete. Ongo's website has been placed 5th best Housing organisation for website accessibility by SilkTide, a website accessibility champion. Action complete.
- 3.9 Our current action plan sits at just above 85% complete. We have some areas that need updating so this could take us to above 90%. Once this is updated, the current action plan will be closed down and a brand-new action plan set up for 2022/2023. We will carry some things over to continue but we want to add more

actions. Karen invited all to speak up and share any thoughts or ideas. **ACTION - Please email KC, ES or EK if you think of anything further than what was discussed today – ALL.**

ACTION – draft the new 2022 / 2023 action plan and circulate – ES.

- 3.10 WW gave an update on the Disability awareness group. There was a really good response from colleagues who may have themselves, or work with someone that has a disability / hidden illness. There will be 3 further meetings, the next of which is focussing on physical disabilities. There will be an action plan from this which will tie in with the overall EDI action plan. This will not be an ongoing group, instead being a task and finish group. Colleagues did state they wanted to keep this group for internal staff at the moment but there is potential to set up task and finish focus groups for tenants going forward. The customer engagement and communities' teams could have a positive input to these as they are experienced in facilitating focus groups.
- 3.11 MP raised that in Communities they have a number of disabled clients who want to work but there are no opportunities being offered.
- 3.12 The group had a discussion around recruitment and making sure that recruitment panels are balanced – not just with gender but in respect of age, disability status and race. HR has started a piece of work with Recruitment and PR to look at the whole recruitment strategy to make sure all panels have the right mix.

ACTION – EK to circulate the EDI Bubble (staff EDI magazine) with the group minutes.

4. Draft EDI Policy – consultation (Erica)

- 4.1 The EDI policy was included within the group pack. It has been revised and changed to a new template and format recommended by the HDN (Housing Diversity Network). The policy incorporates the NHF (National Housing Federation) Code of Governance and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and ensures compliance with these documents and the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.2 ES opened up discussion for any comments, no feedback was given. From this point, it will be shared internally and externally with our tenants for consultation, readability and understanding. It will be put forward for approval at GCB (Group common board) at its September's meeting.

5. Leaders in Diversity Accreditation (Erica)

- 5.1 Quick update from ES, the accreditation is in its initial stages, we currently hold the LID (Leaders in Diversity) accreditation but its renewal comes up in August. The initial assessment meeting with Heena (our assessor from the HDN - Housing Diversity Network) has been completed, and the assessment process has started. There will be some surveys coming up and individual interviews with colleagues

and focus groups with tenants. We hope to be re accredited by the end of August. The pre-assessment meeting is booked for the second week in May.

Ten minute break

6. HDN Board Trainee Programme update (Karen)

- 6.1 Interviews will take place on Friday 29th April 2022 and one additional day the following week. At the end of this process we will have at least 2 board trainees that Ongo will pay for and mentor to try to help them achieve a board level position either at Ongo or with another organisation. Steve Hepworth and Shazad (from HDN) will be interviewing with Karen. This is a brand-new initiative for Ongo to gain new diverse critical friends and ultimately provide good succession planning for our boards, as part of our ambition to create a more diverse board.

7. Updates from other groups

-NLEDI Forum (Karen)

-HDN Northern Diversity Forum (Erica)

-NCfD Patrons meeting- (Karen)

- 7.1.1 KC attended the North Lincs EDI forum. There was attendance from RDASH, NLC, the Clinical Commissioning Group, local colleges, Voluntary Action and other sectors. They had a presentation from RDASH around their People Focussed Group, a peer support organisation of 12 years with 2500 members, of which 80 are active. They have a wellness centre, a food bank, a peer led crisis centre, along with other projects - the latest one being on the hospital wards to gather feedback and offer peer support. They are mainly based in Doncaster currently but are moving into North Lincolnshire too.
- 7.1.2 North Lincolnshire Council held internal discussions around going back to the normal post Covid-19, just because “we can”. A staff member who is a wheelchair user said her work life balance has vastly improved since agile working but everyone has now been encouraged to go back to the “excluded norm” and go back to the office. She was saying don’t do it if it doesn’t work for you as there are many platforms to effectively perform in jobs such as remote working and other locations etc.
- 7.1.3 North Lindsey College is hosting a large EDI event and ES & KC are attending as guests. The event includes Ongo guest speakers on two separate topics - cuckooing (Jo Sylvester) and the refugee resettlement programme (Kim Brundell); both remits being recognised as best practice.
- #### **7.2 NHF Yorks & Humberside Chief Execs & Chairs Forum 14/09/21 (Erica)**
- 7.2.1 A BME Board member network has been set up with quite a good take up and the first meeting will take place sometime in April 2022.
- 7.2.2 A staff member from Tower Hamlets Homes in London shared details of the Housing Diversity Day 2022, which will take place on 3rd October this year. This is

an online event taking place on social media platforms. The purpose is to demonstrate how reflective workforces, exec teams and boards are essential in the housing sector and to share good practice in relation to EDI.

7.2.3 There will be short webinars throughout the day covering the protected characteristics from housing and EDI professionals and real-life content from our tenants. We are in touch with our colleagues at Tower Hamlets and will be taking part to ensure Housing Diversity Day is celebrated in the North as well as London this year.

7.2.4 A speaker from Sheffield University presented the Transforming and Activating Places student placement programme. The programme facilitates paid work placements (paid by the university, not host organisations) for undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds studying social sciences / arts and humanities for 100 hours over the summer starting in June. The theme of the programme is 'Place making', and a key aspect is knowledge exchange; what students can bring as well as what they learn from the organisation. The HDN are utilising a student placement to create a diversity data toolkit, this is an example where interns can aid with specific projects like this. Students are paid a bursary by the University commensurate with minimum wage, and the 100 hours can be full or part time. Attendees of the Network were asked to share this with networks and within the organisations they work for and are specifically looking at neighbourhood and resident teams for the placements. If anyone has any opportunities for a placement, please contact Zelda Hannay at Sheffield University directly – zelda.hannay@sheffield.ac.uk

7.3 **NCFD Patrons meeting- (Karen)**

7.3.1 NCFD (National Centre for Diversity) patrons meeting, KC attended in Steve Hepworth's absence. This is where executive leaders meet together to share best practice and agree strategy to take the EDI remit forward. Discussions were held around the National Women's Day on the 8th March, and on how Covid-19 had completely changed how the NCFD worked, and now works, with its membership; even the FREDIE awards were facilitated digitally during lock down.

7.3.2 This year our CEO Steve Hepworth has been nominated and shortlisted for CEO of the year at the NCFD FREDIE awards. Steve cannot attend this year but EK, NH & ASK are all attending. They will also find out what position Ongo will be in, in the top 100 best companies.

8. **AOB –**

8.1 MP shared some good practice from the Communities' team – as part of Building Better Opportunities, we were tasked by our funding providers to put together a training course to build confidence and empower the women on our project. For this, we ran a week-long course for women from varying backgrounds. This included someone who has a Masters in engineering, a nurse wishing to return to the profession, females recovering from drug and alcohol addiction and women

who are stay at home mums. The course (titled – Moving Forward: Your Journey to Empowerment) covered subjects such as ‘What Makes a Woman?’, individual values, boundaries, mind-set/confidence, Afternoon Tea, group coaching, goal setting, Box Fit session at Vital Fit Ladies’ Gym, interview and CV skills, welfare and debt advice, as well as a healthy, budget meal session. The ladies thoroughly enjoyed the week and have made friendships moving forward, as well as some of the ladies realising they needed additional mental health support to help improve their lives from this point on. This was an incredibly successful week and we look forward to doing something similar in the future.

9. Reflection of today’s meeting (all)

- 9.1 It was agreed that future meetings will be blended - accessible in person in the board room at Ongo House or digitally via Microsoft Teams. This encourages choice and caters for the diverse needs of the membership.
- 9.2 We are happy to keep looking at external invites including one for the lads and also internal invites such as the endeavour project who are attending our next EDI group.
- 9.3 Feedback from the membership indicated that all attendees were happy with today’s meeting including the content and flow. Positive feedback all round.
- 9.4 MP is moving jobs and organisation so all wished her the best in her new role. She explained she has worked for national companies before and never had such a positive experience re the commitment to EDI as she has had at Ongo.

10. Date and time of next meeting

Thursday, 28th July 2022, 9:30am to 12:00pm. A blended meeting accessible either in person at the Ongo House board room or digitally via Microsoft Teams.

11. Actions

	Action	Who	By when?	Progress
1	Confirm attendance at July’s meeting of One for the Lads and share meeting details with them	RM / EK	30/06/2022	
2	Share invite for July’s meeting with Katie Williams	EK	ASAP	Complete
3	Create summary document regarding	HP / LG	30/06/2022	

	Action	Who	By when?	Progress
	Menopause to put on external website			
4	Update / complete all actions on 2021 / 2022 EDI action plan and close down	EK	ASAP	
5	Share any suggestions for the 2022 / 2023 action plan with ES	ALL	20/05/2022	
6	Create draft action plan for 2022 / 2023 and circulate	ES	27/05/2022	
7	EDI bubble to be circulated with the minutes of this meeting	EK		Complete