



CASTLE
PEAK
GROUP



Progress *under pressure*

Insights on diversity from the housing sector

February 2025

Foreword

The best partnerships come when both sides are completely bought-in to a set of shared goals.

That's why it's always a pleasure to work with organisations in the housing sector.

Castle Peak is a little over a year old, and in that time we've had the pleasure of working with a set of clients from the housing sector and with each of them I've felt that they just instinctively 'got it'.

As an executive search firm focused on how organisations can embed diversity and inclusion, we sometimes find we have to guide clients to show why they should go beyond the standard recruitment approach for board and exec team roles, but with housing they are often already well on their way.

The sector is naturally rooted in the communities it serves, and recognises the need to reflect them in its leadership.

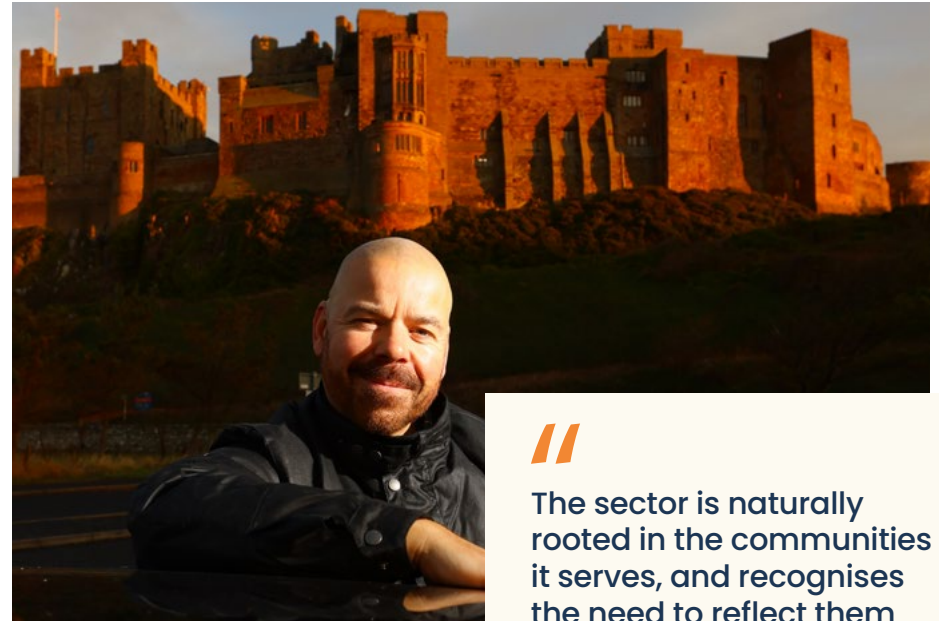
What's especially heartening is that it remains true, even as the sector faces some significant challenges – that's why we've titled this paper 'progress under pressure', because that's what's happening.

As we get to know our clients, it's fascinating to see how they approach diversity in their organisations – how efforts are led, what specific programmes look like, what benefits they see as a result.

Conversations with the sector across the last year left me with a feeling that – although there was a long way still to go – housing was ahead of the curve on diversity and inclusion, and there were things that were going on which were worth understanding better.

This research looks to gather some of that information and share some insights on how housing sector organisations are going about creating more inclusive environments.

Through speaking to a set of industry leaders, including a number of our clients, we've taken the temperature of the sector, looking to understand the current situation, plans for the future and efforts across elements like the use of data, fostering a positive culture, and creating a pipeline of board talent.



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I'm hugely grateful to those who contributed to this research, and I hope everyone enjoys reading through the findings and maybe manages to pick out some things to try in your own organisations.

James Carss

Chief Executive Officer

Summary

- Most participant organisations are being proactive, and their organisations are making progress whilst acknowledging the distance still to go
- Board diversity is seen as significantly easier than exec team diversity, due to the pipeline of talent required (and a fairly risk averse approach to recruitment i.e. often within sector or 'grow your own')
- Board readiness was key, and several were involved in programmes to develop talent
- Many felt they were doing well on gender and ethnicity, but less well on disability or socio-economic background
- Operational benefits outweigh regulatory pressures as a driver for change, as organisations are looking for ways to improve outcomes for customers
- A balance of centralised accountability and broader action saw the best results



Introduction



The housing sector is under a huge amount of pressure, from the purely financial to the need to improve housing stock or invest to reach net zero.

The housing sector is under a huge amount of pressure, from the purely financial to the need to improve housing stock or invest to reach net zero.

It's also a sector in the public eye, given high profile failings which have resulted in a changed regulatory regime.

Central to the sector's ethos is a need to understand and reflect the communities it serves, and a core component of that is having a diverse and inclusive leadership.

Diversity in board and exec level appointments can support better decision making, and make organisations more efficient and effective - something which is vital in difficult times.

This research starts from the premise that the housing sector is taking diversity seriously, and making significant progress on the issue.

While there is a substantial distance still to go, and some organisations are more mature in their delivery than others, there is lots to understand about the enablers and barriers to change and lessons to be learned both by those in the sector and those outside it.

About the *research*



This paper is based on a series of qualitative interviews with housing sector leaders, plus contributions from representative bodies and industry specialists.

The interviews gathered insights to see how senior people felt about the sector's progress, which programmes and initiatives were working well in increasing diversity at executive team and board level, and where barriers still exist.

The topics covered below were drawn from those interviews, and the quotes included throughout are taken directly from the words of the contributors. In each case they have been anonymised, unless specifically attributed to an individual.

This work focuses specifically on board and executive team diversity and inclusion, but the insights often consider the impact of broader efforts on diversity and inclusion, and the diversity of customers and the wider community.

Context

The housing sector is facing some significant challenges.

There are huge structural issues being faced by housing providers themselves. The constant challenge of long-term financial sustainability is balanced with short term rent settlements and the requirement to invest in housing stock to improve quality and energy efficiency.

The sector has also come under increased scrutiny, due to some high profile and tragic failings. These failings, including the Grenfell fire and the death of Awaab Ishak from exposure to mould in Rochdale, resulted in the Social Housing Regulation Act.

A key component of that is a requirement for housing sector leadership to reflect the communities it serves.

Reform and modernisation of sector leadership has been ongoing for a number of years, and at board level a notable impact has been had by the **National Housing Federation's guidelines**. These set out a six-year board tenure in their code of conduct, down from nine years previously. The intention here is to create more churn in these roles, and therefore more opportunity for fresh faces and fresh points of view. However, it can also make providers risk averse when making their appointments, knowing they need people who are ready to serve.

Statistics from the National Housing Federation show that, as a whole, the sector's leadership is not as diverse as it needs to be, nor is it as diverse as the wider workforce.

Female leaders make up 47% of executive teams, and 44% of board members, compared to 54% of the workforce overall.

On ethnic diversity, a similar issue exists. For example, just 3% of executives come from a Black, African, Caribbean or Black British background, compared to 10% of the workforce.

Female leaders
make up

47%

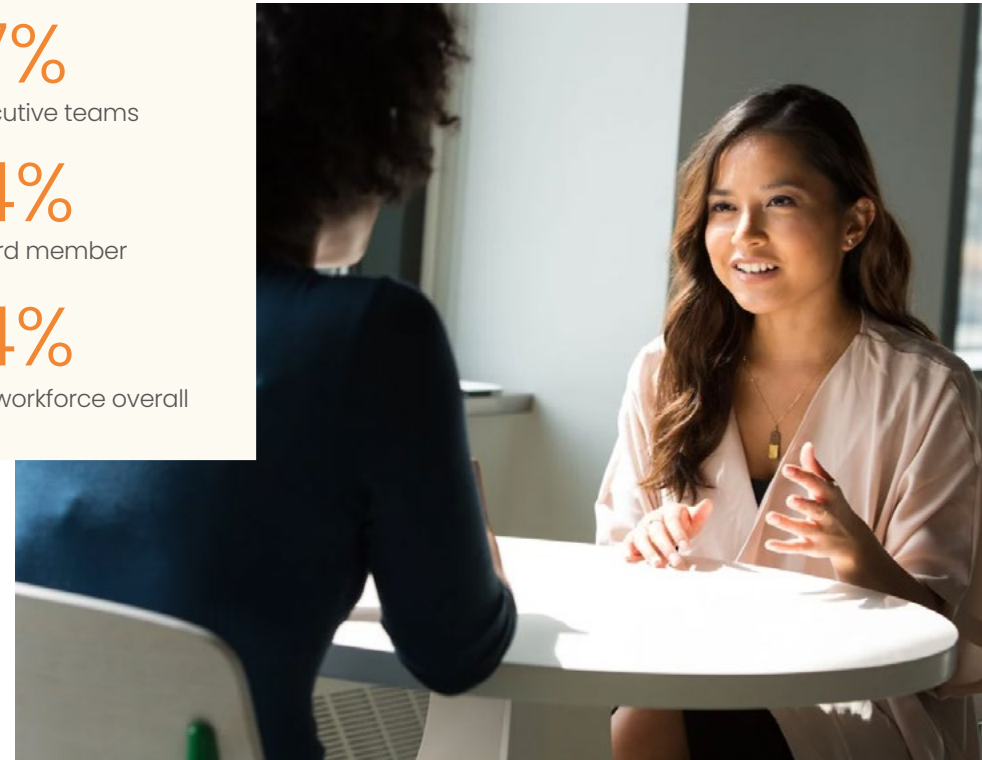
of executive teams

44%

of board member

54%

of the workforce overall





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I heard a phrase of the day that the opposite of poverty is community. There is power in bringing a community together. It's a smaller world than it ever has been and the diversity is greater than it's been.

Context continued

Strikingly, disability is significantly under-represented, with just 9% of the sector's workforce having a disability, compared to 24% of the UK population and 29% of housing sector residents.

"The regulator has teeth now that it definitely didn't have before. And the housing ombudsman has been very, very vocal about who hasn't been performing and who's been messing around."

What's changed is significantly more pressure from the regulator, from policymakers, and from communities.

Given the challenges the sector faces, including the need to reach Net Zero, the need to build more homes to bring down social housing waiting lists, and the need to reduce local authority reliance on temporary accommodation, diverse voices are needed.

The sector has an awareness of this need, and a recognition that while lots of progress has been made there is still more to do.

As part of this research, several participants were able to point to really positive programmes making a difference in the wider workforce, but which were yet to see a substantial impact at leadership levels.

Others were able to point to great representation of certain characteristics, but other areas of weakness.

The role of class is an under-appreciated one, and different socio-economic backgrounds can provide the diversity of thought which improves performance for customers.

"I heard a phrase of the day that the opposite of poverty is community. There is power in bringing a community together. It's a smaller world than it ever has been and the diversity is greater than it's been."

On performance, diversity is seen as vital to helping the sector, and individual housing providers, to achieve their goals. Without it, they simply cannot make the progress they need to make.

However, for smaller providers in particular, there is a balancing act between representing their communities, increasing diversity and affordably competing for the best people to fill roles.

The *value* of good data

“We had to understand our baseline. We do a lot of work on making sure that we capture the information that we need and that we are transparent with that information, so we understand our base point.”

The foundation for change is data, and understanding the situation as it stands.

All participants in the research mentioned the importance of getting this right before attempting to do anything else, and in lots of cases this was a significant task.

Taking a holistic view of data was crucial – this wasn't just about measuring diversity splits within the organisation, but looking at performance more generally and outwards at their customer base and the wider community.

“We've got a lot of work to do on data to understand our customers and know our customers more and then understand how we really are tailoring our services.”

The importance of clear data lies in tracking and motivating change. In practice that can look like leadership or behavioural scorecards, which can drive both action and leadership accountability.

This kind of approach, which often marries internal data with external context, can allow organisations to assess how well their targets are serving them, and whether they need to add stretch goals to achieve more.

Several contributors mentioned the importance of external accreditation and validation of their work, and again, data lies at the heart of this. Often, external validation around people development and diversity and inclusion will include clear metrics for organisations to measure, which helps shape their thinking.

Benchmarking is seen as an absolutely vital tool in ensuring progress and impact, allowing house providers to assess where they stand against the wider industry.

Diversity of thinking has allowed organisations to spot operational issues and think about intersectionality of customers



“Some of the data stuff, understanding our customer data, getting our own data sorted out; that was an interesting experience to go through and understand that and then comparing ourselves to the benchmarks that are out there.”

In some cases, the process of collecting data allowed contributors to realise where they were lacking in information. One area where this was often mentioned was disability, given not all disabilities are visible, and not all people with disabilities are comfortable disclosing their status.

The sector as a whole is underrepresentative of disability as a characteristic, and yet housing association customers tend to be overrepresentative of disability in comparison to the population as a whole. This has the potential to present operational and customer experience issues.

“We might get X amount of complaints per year. You could just say ‘okay, respond to the complaints, try to deal with them, try to keep people happy.’ But who takes the time to say, ‘can we just look at those complaints through inequalities lens?’”



Key Takeaways

- Good data is the foundation for change, allowing organisations to understand the current situation and measure progress
- Data should be collected on both internal metrics (e.g. diversity splits in workforce), and external circumstances (e.g. customers and the wider community)

Taking a holistic view of data also means applying it in broad ways.

One contributor talked in detail about the value of knowing customers better, cross-referencing that with internal situational data, and using that to trigger discussions around inclusion at leadership levels.

In this way the data allowed more effective decision-making, for example through applying a diversity and inclusion view when looking at complaints data, in an effort to spot and understand intersectionality of experience and where that might be reflected in outcomes.

Contributors also preached the importance of expectation management when it came to metrics, especially when talking about senior teams, or within smaller organisations where a few individuals changing role might make a significant difference to the numbers.

“It’s not going to be a smooth steady increase up to the percentage targets we’re setting.”

Additionally, progress was unlikely to be linear, with step changes some years and difficulties (not always of their own making, or within their control) in other years.

Overall, data was seen as vital, but it should always be viewed alongside a qualitative context.

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We've got a lot of work to do on data to understand our customers and know our customers more and then understand how we really are tailoring our services.

A *culture* of change driven from the top

“Our values and culture programme is all based around having a place where everyone can feel like that they belong”

It was common for contributors to talk about diversity and inclusion as embedded across their organisation, and as forming an integral part of their organisational culture.

However, there was also a recognition that - while that was true - it needed executive and board level accountability to maintain a pace of change.

Even when viewing board and exec level diversity, there remains a tendency for it to sit with either the HR or People function of the organisation, or for it to be one of many things which falls at the Chief Executive's door.

While there is a risk of efforts becoming lost within competing priorities if they sit with the CEO, it also gives an opportunity for culture and change to be led from the top.

“We genuinely haven't found that kind of resistance in any way, shape or form from colleagues. And I do think that some of that comes down to our CEO, and the way it's positioned by them. It's very much part of our being.”

Building a culture which is inclusive, and where psychological safety is considered, allows for individuals to speak up, point out failings where they see them, and effectively manage upwards. Several contributors have made formal efforts to consider psychological safety, including through direct training on the issue.

“What may be relevant to one individual can soon become a corporate challenge.”

This was seen as particularly important when tying strategic aims and corporate goals to frontline delivery, and therefore seeing the genuine benefits of greater diversity as an organisation.



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What may be relevant to one individual can soon become a corporate challenge.



Key Takeaways

- Diversity and inclusion needs to be embedded across the organisation, but this shouldn't come at the expense of accountability meaning there must be a senior level individual responsible for managing efforts
- A focus on psychological safety and living the organisation's culture and ethos is important to ensure change can be delivered, including through 'managing up' and raising concerns

A culture of change driven from the top continued

"That next layer down, operational managers, they're fundamental to delivering EDI within the organisation purely because they're the ones who are the bridgehead between the strategic and the corporate, and the very operational frontline stuff."

The importance of culture and ethos extends beyond the organisation, into the supply chain, and also to external consultants.

In the case of recruitment and executive search, contributors were always keen to understand how roles were being articulated, where they were shared and to make sure that was done in an authentic way which resonated with their corporate culture.

There was a desire to work with partners who were able to embody that culture just as effectively as the organisation itself.

"We've got that real conscious piece of work going on for our executive teams or senior management teams on our board teams to make sure that we've got that positive action in recruitment where we can make a difference."

Change is not always easy, it can take time and can take a proactive approach.

Several contributors spoke about a sense of the housing sector as community-minded, and populated by public-spirited professionals.

This meant there was a genuine desire to see change, but also a desire to do so in a safe and structured manner. This was about evolution, rather than revolution, which can be expected in a sector where risk is taken seriously, and where investment horizons can be ten, 20 or 30 years into the future.

"I think there's hesitancy to really throw up your governance structures and try something different because there have been failings in the social housing sector where there have been different governance structures."

Trusted Partner

Positive About Inclusion

- Many contributors spoke of the value of working with trusted partners to ensure diversity and inclusion efforts were strong and kept on track for the long term.
- There was particular praise from several contributors for the work of Positive About Inclusion, as not only knowledgeable about the ways in which organisations could shift their culture, but also having experience and understanding of the housing sector.
- Positive About Inclusion's work includes training for board and exec teams, culture diagnostics which can help organisations understand topics like authenticity and equality impact in their work, and work with stakeholders to help them be actively involved in diversity and inclusion efforts.



Operation *Benefits* and Caring for Customers

“Having a diverse range of perspectives on your board and in your committees means a reduced risk of a stone being left unturned.”

While not every contributor initially tied diversity and inclusion efforts to operational improvements and the customer outcomes, every conversation ultimately uncovered how important a diverse leadership was to improving performance.

Far from being a ‘nice to have’, diversity and inclusion at board and exec team level meant a variety of voices, backgrounds and expertise in decision making, which was vital to driving positive outcomes.

“It’s not a case of we need to do this so we can mark it up on an ESG report or something like that. We absolutely need to do it to make sure the most senior and steering people in our organisation are representative.”

One way housing providers are ensuring a focus on customers is through having them on their boards. By making sure they can play an active part, through training and the structures around them, they provide a very different perspective to the typical board members.

Similarly, several contributors have used residents on recruitment panels, providing an extra level of scrutiny to appointments which is particularly valuable at senior levels.

“The cognitive diversity, the cultural diversity, everything just makes your organisation a rich picture.”

The operational and customer outcome agenda links closely to culture and data for contributors, including understanding how customer perceptions of quality and outcomes change.

The internal drive for greater diversity and inclusion in decision making comes from an acknowledgement that it is performance led. Improving performance, creating more efficient processes where every possible option is uncovered by diversity of thought, can help housing sector organisations deliver on their strategic outcomes.

“It sounds pretty basic, but clearly if we have got diversity of thought, diversity of experience within say, our board and within our organisation more generally, including senior leaders, we believe that then we can better understand the challenges that our customers are facing, and the challenges that our colleagues are facing and responding to.”



Key Takeaways

- Diversity and inclusion in senior roles should be tied to operational outcomes as much as to ESG efforts
- Use customer data to keep track of improving outcomes, and reinforce motivations for change

Board *readiness*

“You can’t magic up a diverse board overnight.”

Mushtaq Khan, CEO of the Housing Diversity Network

A common refrain from housing sector leaders was the difficulty in finding diverse board members. There is a perception that there is a fairly small pool of potential candidates, especially if drawing from those in your local area.

Although geography is less of an issue in the age of virtual meetings, and when board members are only required to meet in person a handful of times a year for committees and full board meetings, local knowledge and understanding is still valued.

Many contributors were becoming increasingly proactive in addressing the issue of finding the right, diverse candidates.

A couple of organisations mentioned instituting the Rooney Rule, which requires them to interview candidates from underrepresented backgrounds when recruiting to senior roles. This enforces a diversity and inclusion lens over recruitment processes, ensuring it is embedded in the processes.

However, it does not serve to expand the range of candidates available.

“The six year rule’s causing a bit of a headache around your willingness to take on board a novice. Knowing that they’re going to take two or three years to get up to speed, potentially then you only got three years of them.”

The National Housing Federation’s code of conduct reduced the term limit for housing sector board members from nine years to six years, with the intention that this would increase the number of opportunities available on boards, and reduce the likelihood of groupthink or boards ‘going stale’.

Board Trainee Programme

Housing Diversity Network

The Housing Diversity Network is seen by many in the sector as a trusted partner, in particular when putting together training programmes for those with board potential.

The Housing Diversity Network’s programme allows several housing providers to send trainees as part of a wider cohort.

The programme offers a robust and challenging course which helps individuals with board potential grow their skills and their confidence, and be ready to take the next step in their careers.

“We are working with the Housing Diversity Network on being able to bring through trainees and get them to learn those wider skills and those types of things we value at that level.”

The intention is to broaden the pool of talent available to draw on for board roles, with a particular focus on growing diversity in the mid to long term.

The programme includes online and in-person workshops, as well as mock board meetings, mentorship and work with an adviser from the Housing Diversity Network.

The participants tend to be young – with the majority on the most recent North East cohort aged under 30, for example – and from a minority background.

Organisations often view the programme as succession planning, in that it helps them to grow their own internal talent to senior leadership standard.

This is particularly important given the six year tenure requirement, as it means individuals arrive with a better understanding of boards and committees.

As well as encouraging broader diversity, organisations report that the dynamic changes as soon as trainees are involved in board level work – whether they are formally appointed, or shadowing – thanks to the change of perspective younger, more diverse attendees bring.

Board readiness continued

However, some contributors felt it had an opposite effect, by discouraging organisations to take risks on board members who might take a couple of years to get fully up to speed, eating into their tenure.

Instead, they might seek out those with previous board experience who could make an immediate impact.

“At board level in the sector the same people have sort of moved, jumping from job to job because there’s a small pool of skilled people who understand the sector, the regulation, all those sort of things. The chance of you taking a punt on someone who has got zero board experience, zero knowledge of the sector is that bit harder.”

To counter this, contributors have started a number of initiatives to grow the pipeline of board ready talent. This includes shadow boards and board trainee programmes.

One such initiative is the Housing Diversity Network’s board trainee programme, which runs with cohorts in different parts of the country where organisations can band together to send trainees on a single programme.

“At the end of that programme we chose to increase the size of our board to allow one of those trainees to join our board. That was successful, and one of the others has gone off to become a member of a committee in the housing association sector.”

As well as creating their own pipeline of board ready talent, contributors acknowledged the importance of putting skills into the community as well. This was beneficial for those individuals’ development, but also for housing in general, as housing sector professionals were able to take on board positions within organisations in other sectors.

Even with programmes for board trainees, there is a need to continue to support new board members, something which contributors often acknowledged they had not always done well.

This emphasises the importance of maintaining a focus on inclusion, even once you’ve added diversity to your boards.

Key Takeaways

- Consider the pipeline of board-level talent in the sector, not just individual recruitment efforts
- Work with trusted partners to help establish training programmes, and to reach the broadest possible pool of candidates

“They’ve got two years to learn in a safe environment, but they get to the end of that process and they’re not oven ready board members even at that stage. They’ve just got more exposure to what it looks and feels like, and the idea is they have the confidence to become a board member or a committee member somewhere else.”

That requires existing board members, as well as exec teams, to dedicate time to supporting new board members, answering questions and helping to build confidence.

One contributor pointing specifically to an experience with a neurodiverse board member, where they accept in hindsight the institutional support and flexibility in processes wasn’t there.

“We had somebody leave the board rather suddenly. I feel that was largely down to that person having not maybe the right level of understanding of what’s required from a board member. I think that falls on me and our team here for not providing the necessary support to help them.”

In that case, the board member’s neurodiversity was a strength until it wasn’t, and the organisation admits they didn’t understand it well enough to make the appointment viable in the long term.

In some organisations, it was possible to allocate resources to help board members adjust, but in smaller housing providers that wasn’t always possible to do in a dedicated way. In those cases, where support was more informal, there was a recognition that it still needed to be structured.

“We can provide the scaffolding to allow somebody to transition into being a board member over a period of time and not expecting them to be, once they’ve sat through my corporate induction, a fully-fledged board member.”

Grow your own

“We have found that once we have a diverse executive team and a diverse board that that automatically has a massively powerful cascading approach, both in inviting applications for future people, but also in that pipeline which has kind of paid dividends.”

It was common for contributors to talk about the housing sector as being fairly insular one when it comes to recruitment into senior roles.

This was often the result of a conscious effort to ‘grow your own’ when it comes to talent.

There were significant perceived benefits in aiding the development of people through the organisation, meaning they arrive at the top of the organisation with substantial institutional and industry knowledge.

Contributors mentioned the natural transition from finance director to chief executive, and several had made that transition themselves.

There were also long average tenures at the top of the housing sector organisations, which resulted in very low levels of churn in executive teams in particular.

“It’s a lot of steps before we get or grow our own talent into our senior roles.”

Efforts to improve diversity and inclusion in junior roles were therefore seen as crucial, combined with efforts to ensure succession planning meant people were ready to take on senior roles should they become available.

Board level diversity was seen as easy to achieve in the shorter term – theoretically at least – because while appropriately skilled candidates for either role were difficult to come by, those who could take on exec leadership roles were harder to find.

“It’s easier to do it to your board than your executive because you can more easily co-opt people into your board from you’re just fishing in a much bigger pool.”

It’s naturally a smaller pool when you’re looking for housing sector specific candidates, especially given these individuals will need to be based near to the housing provider and able



Key Takeaways

- The sector can tend towards a ‘grow your own’ philosophy, which has both positives and negatives
- A lack of churn in senior roles means it can take a long time to see progress and change

Grow your own continued



to be present in the organisation on a daily basis, rather than join for board and committee meetings.

That meant in some parts of the country, geography makes a big difference, particularly in areas like the North East where recruiting outside of your own organisation means either recruiting from your neighbours and competitors, or convincing a candidate to relocate in-region.

Given this context, discussion of senior-level diversity often slipped into discussion of programme aimed at growing diversity in junior roles, and the importance of opening up pathways from those entry level roles.

“You don’t often get many people leaving your exec, it’s not a high turnover. You may have more opportunity to target recruitment elsewhere within your organisation, within your main body of staff.”

There was an acknowledgment from most contributors that there was work still to be done, but also that it was natural for this process to take time. The age, experience and tenure of those in top roles means efforts to improve diversity now may not be reflected in senior teams for ten or fifteen years.

In the meantime, some organisations look externally for support in improving their recruitment processes, despite maintaining an approach generally favouring growing their own.

In these cases, consultants and recruitment partners were seen as valuable support, as they helped fine-tune processes, remove bias from the recruitment processes, and reach a broader pool of potential candidates.

“To help us create a more diverse applicant base at those senior levels and board levels, we definitely work with recruitment partners on that...they’re the professionals, they’ve got a wider reach than us.”

Keeping the *focus*

“I think the organisation had other priorities in the last couple of years and I think D&I had probably slipped off that agenda. I’ve come in and asked ‘where are we with this?’ and started to really give energy back to that whole agenda across the organisation.”

The housing sector is under pressure, and that makes focusing on any one issue extremely difficult.

There were two camps when it came to contributor response to this, they either saw that industry pressure as a reason to double-down on efforts with the logic that diversity improved performance, or the agenda got lost in the mix.

Occasionally, contributors mentioned the diversity - or lack of it - in their operating areas as justification for the focus on diversity and inclusion having slipped.

Typically, where this was mentioned, lots of progress had already been made and the organisation felt they were ahead of the curve overall, or with specific areas to work on often linked to socio-economic or class background or disability.

“We’ve got a relatively diverse board. We’re not struggling in that regard. If I was coming to you and all of my 12 board members looked like me, then I might be saying something different.”

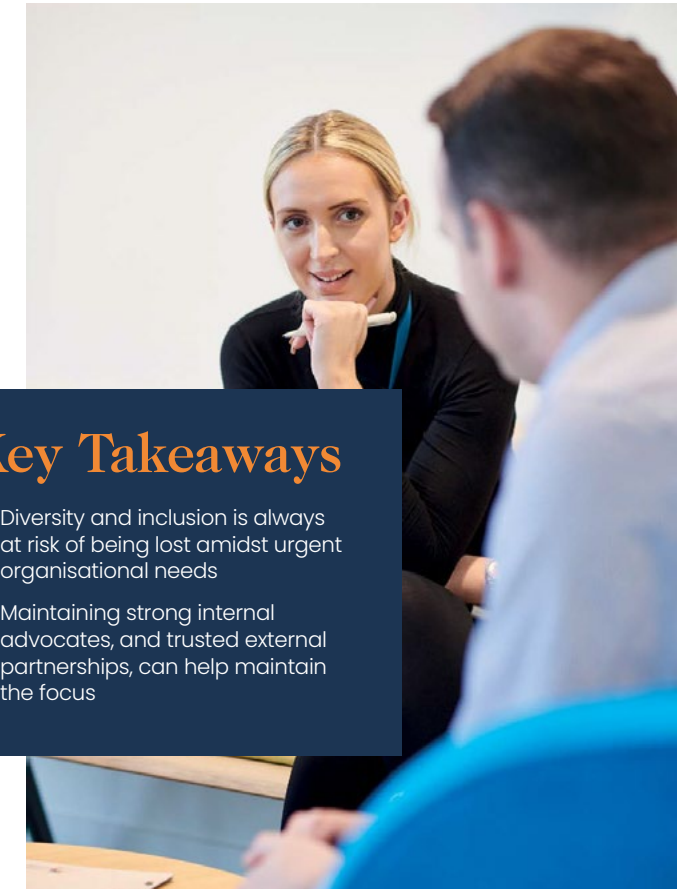
Strong internal advocates, and well-chosen external advisers, was seen as important to keeping diversity and inclusion central to organisational aims, even when under pressure from elsewhere.

Having touchpoints outside of the organisation, and trusted partners who help you benchmark and take action, strengthens internal programme leaders and supports effective prioritisation of activity.

“As far as the board, the senior leadership team’s concerned, I think it’s really representative of the environment within which we work. The background of the executive, the background of the board, the age profile, the gender profile, the ethnicity of the board.”

Maintaining this focus is vital, because communities and demographics are constantly changing. The UK now is not the UK as it was even ten years ago, and given the tenure of senior leaders within the sector, change can take many years.

The housing sector is proactive and does understand the need for diversity in leadership more effectively than many other sectors, but even so, it cannot rest on its laurels.



Key Takeaways

- Diversity and inclusion is always at risk of being lost amidst urgent organisational needs
- Maintaining strong internal advocates, and trusted external partnerships, can help maintain the focus



Castle Peak's *reflections* and recommendations

The specific insights in this research will come as no surprise to many, particularly those with responsibility for promoting diversity and inclusion in their workplaces.

However, by setting different aspects of diversity and inclusion efforts together and including organisations of different sizes in our research, we can see some interesting patterns.

There appears to be a frustration across the sector when it comes to finding high quality board-level appointments – something which is difficult in all sectors, but is particularly a struggle given guidelines on tenure in housing.

Geography has an impact, and for those working in the UK regions it can sometimes be difficult to recruit into senior roles, especially when trying to increase diversity. This is one of the reasons why organisations focus on growing their own.

Partnership is crucial, both with consultants like Castle Peak and specialists like the Housing Diversity Network or Positive About Inclusion, as well as across housing providers. Through working together, greater impact can be had, especially when working to grow the pool of talent in an area. This is especially true for smaller organisations with limited internal resource.

Based on the insights, plus our experience working both in the housing sector and outside it, we recommend the following:

1. Collect data on your organisation, your customers and your community to provide you a well-rounded baseline position
2. Focus on all elements of diversity – including those like disability or socio-economic background which can be more hidden

3. Hone your recruitment processes across all levels of your organisation, to ensure your practices reflect your culture, values and your aims for diversity
4. Tackle unconscious bias across your recruitment practices, and make use of techniques like structured interviews and diverse panels
5. But when it comes to senior level appointments, don't assume that getting your approach to recruitment right will be enough, make sure you are also working cross-sector to reach new audiences and grow new talent ready to take on senior roles
6. Work with trusted external partners to help you benchmark, identify best practice, and put in place programmes which can help provide pathways for talent development
7. Always aim for improvement, diversity and inclusion is a journey that's never over, there is always more you can be doing to be an accessible employer and to benefit from more diversity of thought
8. Don't wait for problems to occur, act now and reap the benefits
9. Don't lose focus on inclusion, even once you've added diversity to your leadership, to make sure your workforce can be their full selves and play an active role in your organisation

You can find out more detail on some of these recommendations – including challenging bias and using structured interviews – in the **knowledge section of the Castle Peak website.**

To discuss the recommendations, or any of the findings from this paper, in more details, please feel free to get in touch with us at info@castlepeak-group.com.

About Castle Peak

Castle Peak is a national executive search firm, based in North East England.

Led by its founder and chief executive James Carss, Castle Peak specialises in helping organisations embed diversity and inclusion within their senior teams.

With more than twenty years of international experience, James was motivated to start Castle Peak having seen the tangible benefits of diverse boards while working with global clients in Hong Kong and North America.

Castle Peak's founding ethos is a belief that we all have a part to play in changing society and our economy for the better, and helping people overcome the barriers they face in their careers.

We know from experience that when a workplace practises inclusive leadership and inclusive recruitment, they'll naturally build inclusive, high-performing workplaces where people feel content, valued, and like they belong.

Our approach is to ask clients to focus on goals not quotas. When diverse people are represented, both visibly and less visibly across every level of an organisation, the message is clear – every person, irrespective of their beliefs, orientation, ethnicity, ability, and approach is welcome.

Together with our clients, we're working towards a world where every executive and board search has diversity and inclusion at its heart.



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Tom Kennedy, Policy and Public Affairs Manager, Northern Housing Consortium

Iain Herdman, Assistant Director of People and Organisational Development, Karbon Homes

Tom Conniffe, Head of Corporate Planning and Performance, A2Dominion

James Walder, Chief Executive, North Star Housing Group

Michelle Meldrum, Chief Executive, Berwickshire Housing

Mushtaq Khan, Chief Executive, Housing Diversity Network

Karen Faulkner, Positive About Inclusion

Lucy Malarkey, Positive About Inclusion



James Carss | CEO

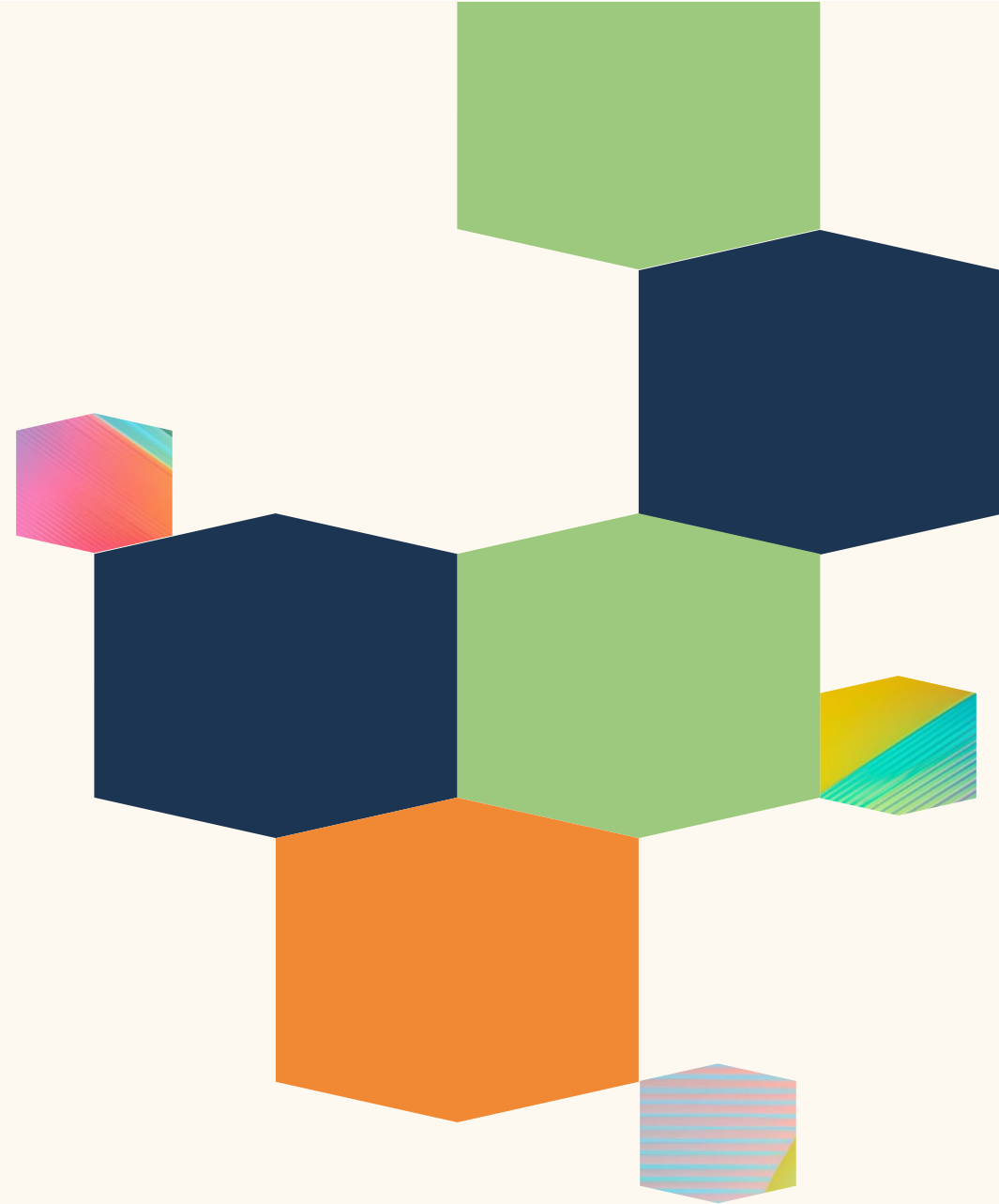
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