



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2023–2025

Board Champion and EDI Lead Opening Statement

A true commitment to EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) is borne of actions much more than words. Everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs, should feel truly welcome to be part of or be associated with our wonderful Football Club and Community Programme. We draw on the Club's history for putting people first so that we can commit to be at the forefront for greater equality within our sport, holding ourselves accountable for our progress at all times. Our 'Owls Together' initiative has allowed us to build on existing positive relationships and forge new relationships with local groups representative of a wide range of beliefs, faiths and purposes. 'Owls together' seeks to better represent our local community's demography among our Club and Community Programmes workforce and supporter base.

Introduction

We work in an increasingly diverse community, where our areas reflect a broad range of people from different backgrounds. We are not only committed to but have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

Our legal responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, contains measures which have a direct impact on our functions. Our approach to EDI is underpinned by these legal duties in all our work as a regulator and employer. This includes thoroughly considering how best we can eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups in everything that we do.

Awareness and education are vital tools for positive change, and we use those as part of our 'Owls Together' campaign which encourages the calling out of all forms of discrimination – wherever they may occur in relation to the Club and Community Programmes activities within the local community. We will continue to ensure that the Club and Community Programme remain aligned to achieve all goals.

We have committed to an ongoing journey of inclusive development, and we have set ambitious milestones. It is important for the Community Programme to continue to embed preventive and educational tools to promote Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in everything we do to improve the quality of life, create an opportunity for all and eliminate discrimination.



Our Equality Action plan will accompany this document to provide focus and enable us to measure our progress. This document and the action plan will also underpin our long-term strategy and will be reviewed and updated for each season. The Club and the Community Programme's collective action plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure they accurately mirror key outcomes and objectives wherever possible. We will closely work with the FLDC and the EFL to support Sheffield Wednesday on advancing their Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Standards

Key Strategies

The Club and Community's key strategies demonstrate that equality, diversity and inclusion are business-wide priorities. Supported by the EDI Board, the 'Owls Together' strategic aims focus on:

- Visible and better informed - We will ensure we're evidence led, using internal and external EDI insight so that we are in a strong position to make effective decisions, improve our own processes and advocate for people, promoting a common understanding of the purpose, vision and direction supported by the values and behaviours of Sheffield Wednesday FC and Sheffield Wednesday Community Programme.
- Engaging and empowering - We will monitor and increase the diversity of the people we engage with who help shape our regulatory work, and we will strengthen people's understanding of our role, as well as how equality underpins our Code and professional Standards. To lead with accountability and commitment
- Fit for the future workplace - We will improve our recruitment and people management processes so that everyone we employ can thrive without barriers, developing a strong culture where people are respected, rewarded and empowered to reach their full potential regardless of the 9 Protected Characteristics.
- Insight and influence - We will improve our approach to collecting, analysing and reporting on our diversity data for colleagues, and we will work with partners to influence fairer and more inclusive ways of working collaboratively across club and community functions.
- We must never reject others for being different, and we must make constant effort to deeply empathise with the life experiences and perspectives of others. This will often mean challenging our own beliefs and our own perceptions, and it is via this behaviour that true inclusion manifests, where everyone is welcome, everyone feels free to be their true selves

The OCSI Report dated 14/12/22 Sheffield City Council notes that over the last 10 years, there has been a continued increase in hate crime related to individuals' protected characteristics. 2020 to 2021 showed the highest amount of hate crime in communities we operate within for; race at 73%, sexual orientation at 12%, religion at 7%, disability at 6%, and transgender identity at 2% within the population of 589,207 people living in Sheffield currently. The overall crime rate is higher than the average across England.



25% of children aged 0-19 are in relative low-income families in Sheffield compared with 19% across England. 19% of people have a limiting long-term illness in Sheffield compared with 18% across England. 33% of households have no car in Sheffield compared with 26% across England 31% people aged 16-74 are in full-time employment in Sheffield compared with 34% across England.

Workforce Targets

We have long-term targets in relation to our workforce centred around the Census data for the city of Sheffield and are linked to our key equality priorities, reviewed on an annual basis. We are keen to have a workforce which represents the community in which we operate and engage in. Our chosen areas for these targets are Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage Disability and LGBTQ. The Action Plan will continue to grow and change over the years, in line with the growth of the town and as we continue to develop our workforce.

We have also submitted our diversity figures towards inclusion in the Football Leadership Diversity Code which focuses on increasing equality of opportunity with hiring targets, based on merit, to find the best person for the job from diverse talent pipelines moving away from recruitment practices focused on personal networks, which is a longstanding challenge across football and has limited the diversity in leadership across the game.

We recognise the success of the EDI strategy relies upon attracting, developing, and valuing people from the widest possible backgrounds with the most diverse range of attitudes, insight, opinions, and beliefs. We believe increasing our diversity can drive innovation, a culture of fairness and respect and equality of opportunity for all to deliver a better service to the community. Our Internal Working Group will include representatives from every area of the Club and Community Programme and will meet regularly to review progress against our Equality Action Plan, which has detailed actions for each department.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is a powerful enabler for organisation performance. Organisations whose leaders' welcome diverse talents and include multiple perspectives are more than likely to outperform non-diverse organisation on profit, staff innovation and reduced staff turnover. (Diversity Wins, How Inclusion Matters, May 2020).

Supporter Engagement

The 'Owls Together' initiative launched at the start of the 2023/2024 season brings our historic family club ethos together with our ongoing work in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In addition to our key strategies and workforce targets, our work under the 'Owls Together' initiative is driven by fan data, collated on an annual basis. This allows us to spot trends and make evidence-based decisions. We continue to focus on Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage, Disability, LGBTQ and Female engagement.



Our External Equality Advisory group will play a key role, especially with our focus on people from Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage backgrounds. The links we have built place the club at the very centre of our local community. The groups we've worked with have the confidence to recommend further ties with new groups and charities, Groups such as the Rainbow Owls, Her Game Too, SODA Owls and Women' Supporters Group are all in regular in contact with our lead equality officer.

We are committed to meeting the accessible stadia guidelines in our provision for supporters, workers and visitors with disabilities. The Access Audit planned for 2023 will identify further opportunities to enhance our provision and work closely with our external group and SODA Owls to manage our existing facilities and ensure they are involved in all discussions relating to accessibility. We will also work closely with Level Playing Field to support their activities.

Challenging Discrimination.

The Club's 'Owls Together' campaign was launched for our 2023 season as a result of racist abuse aimed at our First Team during an away play off semi-final in 2023. The campaign provided a clearer route for supporters to report incidents, which led to an increase in reports received when compared to the previous season, from 2 to 14.

Out of those 14 incidents, 2 were reported to and dealt with by the South Derbyshire Police Hate Crime Unit, who have partnered with us to support the campaign. Three supporters have received a lengthy ban with the requirement that they undertake an equality rehabilitation course delivered by the Club with support from external agencies who specialise in discriminatory prevention and education. Through the help of our supporters, we strongly believe these outcomes are a positive reflection of the processes we have put in place.

We continue to encourage incidents to be reported to us on matchdays and on our social media accounts. All incidents are recorded to track progress and review areas of concern which may need more focus as part of our Action Plan. Our staff from across all departments of Sheffield Wednesday will continue to be strongly encouraged to use the 'Owls Together' campaign to highlight incidents of discrimination in the workplace.

We will also continue to support the 'Show Racism the Red Card campaign', as well as the work of Kick It Out and Stonewall. We will also continue to find ways to help our players, staff and people associated with the Club and Community Programme in vocalising and representing their views and beliefs.

Working with the SWFCCP and Education.

Sheffield Wednesday FC Community Programme (SWFCCP) is the Football Clubs charitable arm, established to support the development of cohesive community provision in the wider Sheffield area, working across 4 key themes, Health, Inclusion, Participation and Education.



Staff members of Community Programme are included and participate fully in our internal equality working group, as well as managing their own sub-groups. We will work closely with the Community Programme to develop EDI knowledge and awareness for all staff.

An EDI awareness and training calendar documents the areas we identify and help further embed learning and development into our processes. The well-being of our staff is of paramount importance. Our mental health and wellbeing Policy will continue to evolve and effect real change in how we assess, support, and promote positive mental health and collectively wellbeing.

‘Together’ we will ensure that the Club and Community Programme remain aligned in order to achieve our goals and vision.