



Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Annual Report

August 2023

Sheffield Wednesday Football Club

Hillsborough, Sheffield, S6 1SW

Telephone: 03700 20 1867

Website: www.swfc.co.uk

Registered in England No. 02509978



REPORT AIM

Welcome to our annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) report. The aim of this report is to share our progress on the EDI agenda over the last season as we look forward to driving our EDI agenda into the next season in the Championship League.

At Sheffield Wednesday, our values are togetherness, respectful and progressive and we want to ensure we live our values wholeheartedly. EDI is a big part of this, and we strive to place inclusivity and safety at the heart of everything we do.

We understand that there is much more for us to do, especially with the continued presence of discrimination within football and society. However, we are committed to do more to support our staff, players, fans, community and partners, and we hope that next season, we can make further progress to ensure football is for everyone.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Appointment of EDI Lead.

The Club appointment of an “EDI Lead” was a crucial and positive step forward in driving our EDI vision. Tracey Fidler, Joined the Club and the EDI Working Group on a permanent contract at the end of August 2023. This role added great value around our EDI agenda, working together with the EDI Board representative, Internal and external working groups in leading, promoting and addressing Equality, diversity, and Inclusion within Sheffield Wednesday Football Club and Community Programme. Tracey brought a wealth of experience, Knowledge and skills with her from her previous and current roles, having worked in Adult Social Care and Health Strategic, Operational countywide Service Manager for Derbyshire County adults and young people, and being the Service Manager for Mental Health and Disability Services, Out of hours Tracey is an approved Mental Health Practitioner, Attaining a master’s qualification in 2021 in Science and Mental Health.

2. “Owls Together”

The ‘Owls Together’ theme was a logo we put together which identifies our EDI agenda in driving our focus of wanting everyone to come together. The “Owls” being the nickname of our Club, SWFC badge and supporters and “Together” meaning as one.

‘Football is for everyone, it belongs to and should be enjoyed by anyone who wants to participate in it, whether a player, official, staff member or spectator. We aim, therefore, to bring people together in a way that supports positive change, makes people feel valued and improves the lives and inclusive experience of our fans and wider community.

We aim to promote equity, diversity and inclusion across all aspects from our buildings to our policies, our recruitment to our communications, all under the club’s campaign, Owl Together. We are committed to confronting and eradicating any form of discrimination, whether it is of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race,



(including colour, ethnic origin, nationality and national origin), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. At Sheffield Wednesday we treat everyone fairly and with respect. The “Owls Together” logo gives us a recognised branding around everything we are trying to do.

3. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion at Sheffield Wednesday Working Groups

We want to ensure Equality Diversity & Inclusion is embedded throughout Sheffield Wednesday. We believe this is everyone’s responsibility, and our structure aims to reflect this. This agenda is supported by our EDI Working Group both internally and externally, which has grown over the last 6 months and includes a diverse representation of members who are supporting the oversight of the club’s delivery outcomes in this area. Our newest members include the Rainbow Owls, SWFC Ladies and the Women’s Supporters Group. We will work together by sharing ideas, providing constructive feedback and challenge and provide strategic support in the clubs’ aims in this area.

4. Football Leadership Diversity Code

This year, Sheffield Wednesday FC has worked towards the Football Leadership Diversity Code in our commitment to ensure we are inclusive and accessible to all. FLDC provides a framework to help Football Clubs progress EDI across all areas of their business, including in the work of the Community Trust. The code has ambitious hiring targets, ensuring Club’s hire the best person for any job by welcoming, reaching out and encouraging applications from much broader, diverse communities.

5. Staff Engagement – Workforce Diversity Census

In April 2022, we launched our first staff census survey to understand the makeup of our organisation better. The data was used to inform our Equity & Inclusion Strategy and action plan. It is also essential for us to report to the PLDC Football Leadership Diversity Code Standard.

One of our main objectives from the plan was to improve was our engagement levels in uplifting those completing the survey to over 80% in getting a better understanding of our workforce.

When we revisited the staff census survey across our workforce in April 2023 it was pleasing to see that we had doubled the response rate.

Our completion rates were a huge uplift from last year with a total of **594** individuals completing the survey in comparison to **232** last year. With each department increasing their numbers and some departments achieving above the 80% completion target.

Despite the significant increase in participation, the Club’s journey to fully maximise diversity and inclusion each and every day continues in the activities we do.



Workforce Census Survey Results

DEPARTMENT	COMPLETION 2022	COMPLETION 2023
Club	41	97
Academy	22	48
First Team	9	22
Community	26	56
Match day	108	317
Prefer not to say	2	8
Prefer to use own term	21	40

6. Staff Recruitment.

The Club and Community use a diverse range of advertising methods for all vacancies, including the advertisement of roles through our vacancy page, the Government Jobs vacancy site and a variety of social media platforms.

We are proud to be the first football Club to use the EFL iRecruit recruitment platform through our Academy. This allows us to interview candidates based on skills, experience and qualifications suitable to the role alone. Allowing us to use a fair, diverse non-discriminative interview selection process.

Over the previous 12 months, we have made positive increases in our targets to hire females into senior leadership positions and in team operational roles. We recognise there are significant areas for improvement to ensure we are more representative of our local population, especially in our targets to hire senior leaders and coaches from Black, Asian or Mixed-Heritage. This is an area we continue to focus on to enable next year's results to paint a different picture where we can.

7. Autism Centre

The Autism Centre are a small, Sheffield based Charity who support adults with ASD and learning disabilities into work. Celebrating 20 years this year, their role is to support and empower individuals to help them through their employment journey. Who rely on the support and encouragement of local employers to help break down barriers faced by autistic adults in the workplace.

Autism is a lifelong, hidden disability, and may affect the way a person communicates and relates to others and the world around them. Autism affects each person in a different way, but most will share similar characteristics to a greater or lesser degree. Autism is a 'spectrum' so some people



may struggle more with their learning/day to day life etc, whereas others may be very high functioning.

People with Autism may find social situations difficult, may struggle to interpret boundaries, find friendships hard to form, and can often like 'routine' due to a lack of imagination. New situations can be challenging, and many autistic people find it hard to deal with lots of noise, bright lights, touch. This can lead to 'sensory overload'. Often, only small adjustments are needed to enable services and workplaces to be more accessible, open and diverse.

Sheffield Wednesday have worked closely with the Autism Centre over the past year to ensure our staff are trained in recognising ways of working with or assisting individuals with autism.

We have grown and developed a strong working relationship as we guide clients from the Autism Centre through some work placements and paid work opportunities within the Club and Community Programme. Employing a diverse workforce and making employment accessible for people with autism.

8. Employee Networks

We have introduced the SWFC Matchday staff app, which enables employees who may share a common identity or interest to come together to support each other and promote their shared goals via a safe online space. The App provides a forum to educate on EDI and Mental Health matters, awareness dates, and how the Club recognise and celebrate those periods both on matchday and non-matchdays. The Club also engages employee's and fans via a newsletter which highlights EDI events and important progress.

Our Youth and Integration projects offer activities and sessions that engage/empower young people and promote diversity/social inclusion. We work to break down barriers and create opportunities for all, helping to build a stronger and more connected community. With funding from the Premier League Charitable Fund and Sport England's This Girl Can Scheme, we have boosted participation and ambition for girls by providing inclusive sessions for underprivileged communities. Sessions include age 3 to 5 Girls introduction to Football, girl's development sessions 6 to 16 years, and Women's walking football. We are delighted to be members of both Women in Football and Inclusive Sport. Women in Football are a network of professionals working in and around the football industry who support and champion their peers. They support organisations with their vast experience and expertise in becoming truly 'gender-friendly' employers.

9. Training Events

This year, we have increased EDI learning for staff and players across the course of the season. In October 2022, in parallel to the EFL backed Rainbow Laces Campaign, we ran a series of workshops looking at LGBTQ+ Inclusion in football. These were interactive sessions, which explored language, terminology and allyship. September 2023 sees the roll out of several EDI workshops with Stonewall and Kick it Out for children U9's to u21's.

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In March 2023, Riz Rehman PFA Muslim Inclusion Executive delivered a Muslim Player consideration workshop which supported the development of the Ramadan Policy which supports an understanding of religious observance, as well as create a supportive culture towards employees whose religious beliefs require them to observe certain practices, which have a positive impact on all employees and the organisation.

10. Gender Pay Gap

This year, Sheffield Wednesday published the annual Gender Pay Gap report, which covers data over the previous 12 months. The report which can be accessed on our Club website shares the Club's figures, its approach to recruitment and its inclusion policies. The gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women across a workforce. It does not show differences in pay for comparable jobs. It is different from an equal pay gap, which refers to men and women being paid differently for the same or similar work.

11. Fans Reporting Discrimination

In August 2023, we launched our new method of reporting discrimination and abuse on matchdays, via a QR code located at various locations within the stadium. These can be easily scanned via a smartphone directing fans to a quick form via the club website. The form allows fans to report a safety concern or incidents, and fan behaviour issues. Fans can add videos or images to evidence their report and add further details. The QR codes give fans a faster method of informing the Club of any negative experiences at the stadium.

Incidents in the stadium, such as discrimination or anti-social behaviour, can be dealt with more effectively when reported in real time. Reports at the stadium provide staff with the best opportunity to resolve incidents, whether through steward intervention or escalation to the police. Real-time reports also help staff to gather more evidence, compared to when reports are made after matches. Fans can also text us, report via the app, email post-match, and can, of course, continue to raise issues within the stadium with the nearest matchday steward or member of Sheffield Wednesday FC staff.

12. Diversifying our Fan Groups

This year, alongside our Ambassador for Her Game Too, we have welcomed the introduction of the Women's Supporters Group (WSG)

We also welcomed Rainbow Owls. Chris, the Founder of the organisation has a clear mission which is one of celebration, empowerment and support for LGBTQ+ fans of Sheffield Wednesday, so that they feel welcome and can be their true authentic selves in a more inclusive footballing environment, in addition to having a safe space to enjoy our beautiful game and meet other LGBTQ+ fans.



"The fundamental objective of Rainbow Owls should be to promote the very clear belief that everyone - irrespective of their age, sex, sexuality, race or religion - has a right to support and enjoy watching their football team.

Chris respectfully acts as a campaigning body by interacting with LGBTQ+ charities and sporting fan groups across the UK, so that we can fully challenge discrimination of all forms - including homophobia, biphobia and transphobia - and build a progressive game for all fans across the wide intersections of sport, especially with regards to LGBTQ+ visibility, championing the annual Stonewall's Rainbow Laces and Football v Homophobia's Month Of Action initiatives, so that both Rainbow Owls and LGBTQ+ issues in football can reach a broader audience and educate the crossover base of football fans.

The organisation engages with the wider LGBTQ+ community across Sheffield and South Yorkshire, to ensure that no LGBTQ+ person in our region feels excluded or isolated from like-minded people, and that there is always a friendly safe space for new and prospective LGBTQ+ fans to take up support of Sheffield Wednesday. The organisation provides a non-judgmental environment and network where straight allies from our fanbase can also learn more about LGBTQ+ issues and be in a position to more effectively support our LGBTQ+ supporters.

13. Disabled Supporters' Association

Sheffield Wednesday FC fosters a strong relationship with our Sheffield Owls Disabled Association (SODA) pledging to work closely with members to enhance the opportunities and facilities offered to disabled supporters. The group provide meaningful network support towards greater inclusivity and accessibility within the Sheffield Wednesday fan base, with the hope that it will create a more inclusive and accessible community.

Our access guide recently created, provides football fans home and away key information regarding the stadia facilities. Next season, we will continue to encourage more disabled supporters to be involved. It is hoped that the recently formed external Inclusion Group will provide a forum for wider collaboration with those fans within our communities to challenge barriers that can exist when attending football stadiums.

As a disability confident employer, we continue to promote work experience opportunities to those with a disability who may not feel confident to enter into customer facing roles within football initially. Dan, who is neurodiverse, gained valuable work experience with the support of his coach over a 3-month period on Monday afternoons demonstrating the club's desire to promote inclusivity and diversity. Dan loved the placement. Such experiences enrich us as a club going forward.

The Club and Community came together in October 2023 for National Hate Crime Awareness Week and Show Racism the Red Card to deliver an anti-hate crime workshop to children from Wharnccliffe Side, Greengate Lane and Windmill Hill primary schools in Sheffield.

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Workshops educate primary school pupils across our local community on a range of issues, while also promoting unity against all forms of racism, as well as championing equality, diversity and inclusion.

14. Tackling Discrimination Through the Power of Football

In April the Club celebrated our community work with refugee and asylum seekers. 'Simon aged 17 like many young people has a huge passion and love for the game of football, one that welcomes all and he first attended the Sheffield Wednesday Football Club Community Programme's refugee session'. Having recently moved to the Country, he was keen to find and pursue activities and opportunities he could get involved with to integrate into the local community.

The refugee programme started in partnership with the Refugee Council and Yorkshire Sport delivering free football sessions to 120 refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the city, housed in a local hotel with very small quantities of the basic necessities. Having been involved in the refugee football sessions, Simon soon took up the opportunity to partake in the Premier League Kicks sessions. These sessions allowed him to build further rapport and relationships with staff and other young people. Not only did this benefit Simon's football ability but also allowed him to develop his English skills and consequently his confidence. So much so, he was able to apply and be accepted on the SWFCCP Education programme, studying for a BTEC Sport qualification.

Mental Health Mental health is a priority area. 2023 sees an extension of targeted mental health support groups such as Andy's Club, Talk Club is a mental health initiative that aims to combat the stigma surrounding mental health through open, honest conversation. It's a safe and supportive space where people can come together to share their experiences and support each other on their mental health journeys. Along with our walk and talk weekly sessions, we also celebrate the fantastic work done by our hospitality colleagues through our Active Owl programme, in partnership with NHS, supporting individuals struggling with early signs of psychosis. The 12-week programme aims to improve physical and mental well-being through exercise, nutritional advice and cook & eat workshops.

SUMMARY

We hope that with this report we were able to provide a comprehensive overview of our activity this year. We recognise that with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), the work is never 'done'.

We acknowledge the existence of gaps and challenges, and we want to emphasise the importance of confronting them head-on. We are committed to raising the bar for ourselves. This involves more investment, better data and an acceleration in progress.

We will increase our activity in the anti-racism space. We will look to create meaningful inclusion with elders, in particular, those with advancing cognitive impairment. We will do more to promote representation and inclusion for people with disabilities. We are committed to funding to developing our disability programmes, trying new programmes and approaches.



Our Club will build support networks to support care leavers who it is envisaged will become intrinsically embedded within the current equality framework whose challenges can frequently encompass mental ill health and socio-economic deprivation.

We will work closely with our fan groups, engaging in key policy development and Equality Impact reflection and continue to employ employee networks to ensure our approach is iterative and inventive.

Most importantly, we will ensure Sheffield Wednesday Football Club is for everyone, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. Thank you for reading our EDI Annual Report. We look forward to sharing more information with you throughout the new season.

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