

# **Ethnic Minority Voices in Tenant Engagement Case Study**

Embedding Inclusive Culture and Fair Participation  
Through Awareness, Empathy and Shared  
Responsibility  
Black Country Housing Group

## Overview

Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) have over 2,200 homes across the Black Country and Birmingham.

In partnership with residents, community groups and local organisations, BCHG set out to improve inclusivity and fairness in resident participation.

The work initiated in 2024 and is now embedded as ongoing practice.

Customer insight, complaints and service data highlighted that inclusion is shaped not only by policy but by everyday behaviours, access to engagement and how services respond to individual circumstances.

BCHG recognised that to be genuinely inclusive, responsibility must sit across the organisation and participation must reflect the communities served.

The focus therefore shifted from compliance to culture, fairness and shared accountability.

## Objectives

**BCHG set out to:**

- Improve colleague understanding of lived experience and individual barriers
- Embed empathy and inclusive behaviours across all roles, including technical teams
- Support fair, accessible and representative resident participation
- Strengthen leadership ownership of inclusive and responsive services

BCHG adopted a joined-up approach combining colleague learning, resident participation and service insight.



## Activities

### Building Awareness, Empathy and Shared Responsibility

BCHG strengthened colleague understanding of communication barriers by delivering Deaf Awareness training, which helped staff appreciate what reasonable adjustments look like in everyday interactions. Residents attended these sessions alongside colleagues, grounding the learning in lived experience rather than theory.

In addition, First Impression training was delivered to both frontline and technical teams to reinforce that every member of staff has a role in shaping the resident experience. This training focused on empathy, tone of voice and practical communication approaches, recognising that early interactions often determine whether residents feel heard, respected and able to trust the organisation.

### Deepening Cultural Understanding

To build a more culturally aware workforce, colleagues engaged directly with local communities, including visiting a local Gurdwara to learn about Sikhism and the significance of community-based traditions.

BCHG also increased visibility and understanding of key cultural and inclusion events, such as Eid, Diwali and Pride Month, ensuring that leadership played an active role.

This visible commitment reinforced the message that inclusion is a core organisational value rather than an optional or peripheral activity.

### Ensuring Fair and Accessible Participation

BCHG strengthened its approach to fair resident participation by actively monitoring whether engagement activities reflect the diversity of its communities. This includes analysing representation through Tenant Satisfaction Measures and attendance at the annual customer conference.

Where particular groups are underrepresented, BCHG proactively targets outreach rather than relying on open invitations alone. To remove practical barriers to involvement, the organisation provides transport support such as taxis, offers translation services, BSL interpretation and support workers, and ensures all events take place in accessible venues. Hybrid meeting options enable residents who are homebound or unable to travel to still participate meaningfully.



## Delivering Responsive and Fair Services

Housing officers (CRM teams) operate a structured visitation programme to ensure residents are regularly seen in person. These conversations enable staff to identify needs, aspirations or support requirements that may not be captured through formal reporting.

BCHG also analyses repairs and service data to assess fairness in delivery, including identifying properties or households where repairs are not being reported. These “silences” trigger proactive follow-up, helping the organisation identify hidden issues or unmet need.

## Strengthening Capability Through Partnerships

To build confidence and capability in complex or sensitive areas, BCHG draws on external expertise. Accreditation through the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) provides colleagues with a recognised framework for supporting residents experiencing domestic abuse, while safeguarding training strengthens responses to a wide range of vulnerabilities.

These partnerships help ensure that colleagues have the right tools, structures and guidance to act consistently and safely.



## Embedding Change

An internal network of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Champions plays a central role in maintaining momentum and supporting cultural change. EDI Champions challenge practice, promote learning and help embed inclusive behaviours across teams.

BCHG is also reviewing recruitment and governance arrangements to ensure they better reflect the communities served, aligning with sector expectations and guidance from the National Housing Federation.

## Outcomes & Impact

- Improved colleague confidence in supporting individual needs and vulnerabilities.
- More consistent use of reasonable adjustments and inclusive communication.
- Fairer, more representative resident participation—supported through targeted outreach and more accessible engagement opportunities.
- Stronger empathy and engagement from technical and operational teams.
- Clearer, safer responses to domestic abuse and safeguarding concerns.

## Lessons Learned

- Inclusion is driven by behaviour, access and follow-through, not policy alone.
- Removing practical barriers significantly boosts participation.
- Technical teams are critical to shaping resident experience.
- Fairness must be actively monitored, not assumed.

## Next Steps and Sustainability

BCHG will continue embedding inclusive practice as business-as-usual through:

- Ongoing colleague training.
- EDI Champion activities.
- Continued community engagement.
- Regular monitoring of participation, service fairness and representation.
- Continued use of customer insight, complaints and service data to test fairness.

## Evidence and Data Sources

- Training attendance and participation records.
- Demographic analysis of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and conference participation.
- Qualitative feedback from residents and colleagues.
- Repairs and service fairness analysis (DMC).
- Accreditation and safeguarding assurance outcomes.
- Supporting materials: training packs, conference programmes, engagement plans, evaluation summaries, internal guidance.

## Lead Author

**Ramesh Malhan**

**Head of Customer Voice**

