



## **CIOB response to the LGBTQ+ Action Plan**

### **Background**

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is the world's largest and most influential professional body for construction management and leadership. We have a Royal Charter to promote the science and practice of building and construction for the benefit of society, and we have been doing this since 1834.

Our members work worldwide in the development, conservation and improvement of the built environment. We accredit university degrees, educational courses and training. Our professional and vocational qualifications are a mark of the highest levels of competence and professionalism, providing assurance to clients and authorities who procure built assets.

The construction sector remains a male dominated industry across the globe with roughly half of the industry employing females, 13 per cent BAME and an estimated 2.7 per cent who are LGBTQ+.<sup>1</sup> It is unclear on the exact figure for those working in construction who identify as LGBTQ+ as Stonewall found that more than a third of LGBTQ+ staff in Britain have hidden or disguised their identity at work because they are afraid of discrimination.<sup>2</sup> In fact, 60 per cent of LGBTQ+ employees in construction have experienced homophobic and derogative terms at work.<sup>3</sup>

The construction industry is male dominated which creates a significant risk of unconscious bias in decision making for construction firms, and a tendency for cultures to be shaped around the majority view. This often results in acceptance of inappropriate behaviour and language as "normal" practice, leaving those on the receiving end of discriminatory or offensive comments or behaviour to decide that a career in construction is not for them, meaning our industry misses out on the innovation, ingenuity and different viewpoints which a diverse workforce brings.

CIOB will shortly be launching a Charter for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to encourage businesses first steps in the journey of changing the makeup and inclusivity of the industry. We therefore welcome the work that Welsh Government are undertaking to address these issues and are happy to be involved in the Action Plan as it develops.

### **Question 1 - Do you think the Action Plan will increase equality for LGBTQ+ people and what do you think the priorities should be?**

Overall, we believe this is a comprehensive action plan and it is positive to see transgender inclusion being visible in the actions, and the focus on both young and older LGBTQ+ people.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics, [Sexual orientation, UK: 2019](#), 27 May 2021

<sup>2</sup> Stonewall, [LGBT in Britain](#), April 2018

<sup>3</sup> Construction News, [LGBT+ survey: Construction's slow progress laid bare](#), 25 January 2018



The Action Plan does cover the workplace; however, we would encourage the Welsh Government to look at their procurement process requirements to include businesses who are taking action to become inclusive, this will encourage larger employers to adopt a positive approach to equality and help to eliminate discrimination.

**Question 2 - Do you agree with the overarching aims? What would you add or take away in relation the overarching aims?**

We believe that ethics and ethical behaviour are central to professionalism. It does not matter how skilled an experienced a person becomes in their field, if they behave without regard for the rights of others, they are not a professional person.

We therefore welcome the overarching aims of the Action Plan and we are pleased to see the inclusion of improving data collection to identify the discrimination and wellbeing disparities experienced by those in the LGTBQ+ community. Better data collection is something we have been calling for businesses to adopt in order to understand their workforce better and ways in which they can improve inclusion in the workplace.

CIOB will shortly be launching an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Charter for businesses to commit to within the built environment. In addition to better data collection, the Charter also asks for a commitment to embedding an inclusive culture through tailored initiatives that are suitable to their workplace environment. We would like to see this included in the LGBTQ+ Action Plan as a way forward to working with businesses and gaining commitment for improving an inclusive workplace for all.

**Question 3 - Do you agree with the proposed actions? What would you add or take away in relation the actions?**

The built environment plays a large role in people's physical and mental wellbeing. Not only do buildings impact the person living there, but it can also impact how communities interact with one another.

Isolation and loneliness can often be prominent for those in the LGBTQ+ community who are unable to access inclusive caring and housing support services. It would be positive to see more concrete action taken in respect to providing safe housing for LGBTQ+ people regardless of age. In addition to looking at implementing initiatives to address loneliness in elderly LGBTQ+ people.

Other countries such as Australia, Germany, Sweden and America have LGBTQ+ specific housing projects for older people<sup>4</sup> and recent UK organisations such as Tonic Housing are looking to create vibrant and inclusive urban LGBT+ affirming retirement communities.<sup>5</sup> We would encourage Welsh Government to explore the inclusion of specialist housing to reduce loneliness and improve the inclusiveness for LGBTQ+ people.

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<sup>4</sup> LGBT Foundation, [Housing, Ageing and Care](#), October 2020

<sup>5</sup> Diva Mag, [Tonic Housing launches the UK's first LGBTQIA+ retirement community Tonic@Bankhouse](#), September 2021



**Question 6 - Do you feel the LGBTQ+ Action Plan adequately covers the intersection of LGBTQ+ with other protected characteristics, such as race, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, and marriage and civil partnership? If not, how can we improve this?**

By creating separate action plans this clearly demonstrates that the Welsh Government is committed to improving equality and inclusion in the country. As the first action plan for LGBTQ+ we believe this does adequately cover intersectional issues. However, there may be difficulties in ensuring consistency between the other protected characteristic documents down the line as decisions made in one action plan has the potential to influence and impact the other protected characteristics and their actions.

For future iterations, we would encourage Welsh Government to look towards moving all protected characteristics into one action plan document that focuses around functions rather than separate strands. This will help improve consistency of documentation in addition to ensuring intersectional issues are fully addressed when future concerns arise.

**Question 10 - We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them**

Ensuring workforces are engaged in this work and are made aware of events and activities at local, regional and national level will help implement culture change. For industries who lack engagement in this type of activity, or are unsure of where to start, Welsh Government should look to provide easily digestible guidance for businesses to embed in their practice and funding for small businesses who need additional support.

We believe there should be consideration on how to provide greater focus on fair access and workplace culture as part of educational and continual professional development. In addition to addressing this at a leadership level so that the culture of inclusion is fully embedded into a workplace from people starting out in their career to those established and leading a business.