ANNUAL UPDATE ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION 2024

1.   **Background**

In March 2022, Board approved the [EDI Policy](#) of North Star. Our ambitions to be a fair and inclusive landlord and employer go beyond complying with regulation and legislation. Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace can enhance productivity, innovation, collaboration, and success. The greater the variety of thinking, and the more supported people feel, the better the outcomes.

The Leading and Growing Strategy to 2026 was approved in March 2023 and sets out North Star's ambition to be equitable, diverse, and inclusive. To listen and learn from the lived experience of people from diverse backgrounds. To proactively tackle and prevent any form of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. North Star aims to have a workforce and Board that broadly reflects the diversity of the communities it serves and takes positive action to address under-representation.

Addressing issues of under representation is evolutionary. To tackle inequality, actions need to be well planned, strategic, sustainable, and taken seriously. For North Star this is a strategic priority.

2.   **Context**

As an employer and provider of services, we must comply with legislative and regulatory requirements.

There has been significant change to Regulatory Duties during the year, with the introduction of new Consumer Regulation. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard explicitly states that from April 1st, 2024, it is regulatory requirement that Registered Providers (RPs) must:

- Take action to deliver fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services for all tenants, and where relevant prospective tenants.
- Use relevant information and data to
    - Understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs;
    - Assess whether their housing and landlord services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants.
    - Ensure that landlord services are accessible, and that the accessibility is publicised to tenants.

This report is structured to provide Board with assurance on the above

3.   **Data Collection**

In 2021 the National Housing Federation (NHF) launched a sector wide EDI initiative to support its members to better understand the diversity of - its staff, its Boards, and customers in England. In April 2023, it released an updated version of its data tool, and

supporting questionnaire, which is fully aligned to the questions asked in the 2021 census of England and Wales.

<u>Staff and Board</u>

We have adopted the questionnaire promoted by the NHF so that staff and Board demographics can be more easily compared to the populations of England and Wales and the North-East of England.

Board and staff data was collected in April 2024. Demographic surveys were completed by 100% of Board and 91% of Staff. The arising data is shown as a percentage of those responding.

Data Held on Staff and Board	Staff	Board	Reported in annual EDI report to Board
Disability	√	√	Y
Age	√	√	Y
Sex	√	√	Y
Race	√	√	Y
Sexual orientation	√	√	N
Gender Identity	√	√	N
Caring Responsibilities – Either for children under the age of 18 or adults over the age of 18	√	√	N
Marital Status and Living Arrangements	√	√	N
Socio-economic	√	√	N
Religion /Faith	√	√	N

Whilst we have followed NHF advice on the data that we should collect for Board and Staff, we have not routinely reported on six data sets. We were waiting for NHF advice on how we could meaningfully use and compare the data. This has not emerged. However, the NHF has recently published advice on the data Landlords should be collecting about its customers. The main characteristics being Disability, Age, Sex and Race.

During the 2024/25 year we will review the purpose of collecting the above data and stop collecting what is not being actively used or reported.

<u>Customers</u>

The NHF has now identified the information that it believes it would be helpful for all RPs to collect. This is set out in the table below:

| NHF proposal - Customers data collection on customers	Data held by North Star	% data held on tenant population
Disability	Y	97.8%
Age	Y	99.7%
Sex	Y	100%
Race	Y	97.8%
Contact details	Y	98.3%
Support needs	Partial	As applicable
Language	Partial	62.4%

At the start of each tenancy, a government statistical return, CORE, is completed to record the characteristics of new social housing tenants. The information is also entered onto our housing system to record the tenants Age, Sex, Ethnicity, Language spoken and any vulnerabilities including disabilities.

Changes to this information is updated when we are made aware. During 2024/25 we will implement a system to enable our customers to update their own data, so that they can advise us of any changes
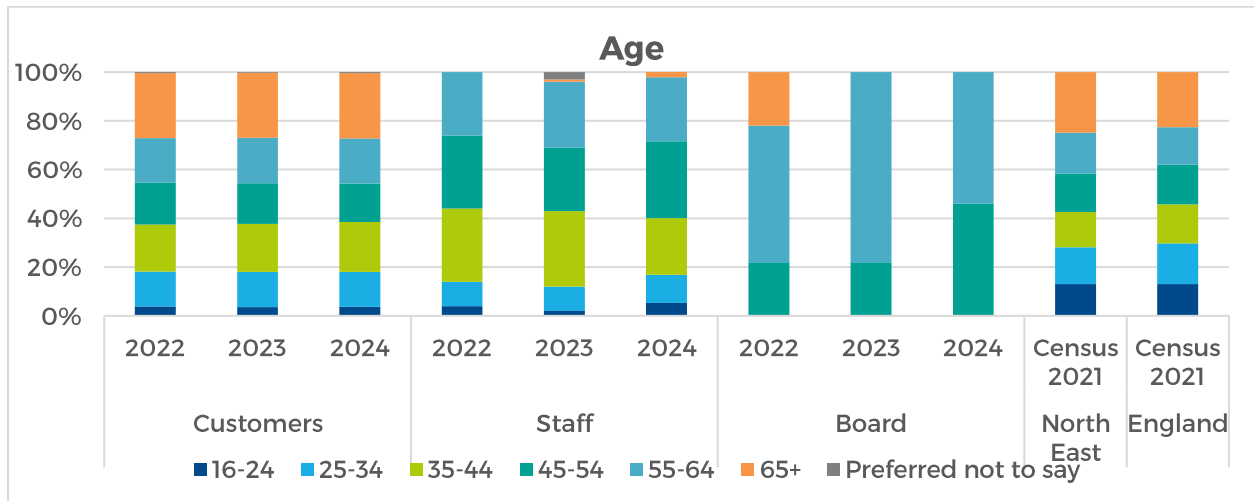
4. **Data - Are Board, Staff and the Customer base representative of regional and national demographics?**

Issues of significant under representation are highlighted throughout this section, as are any specific points to note
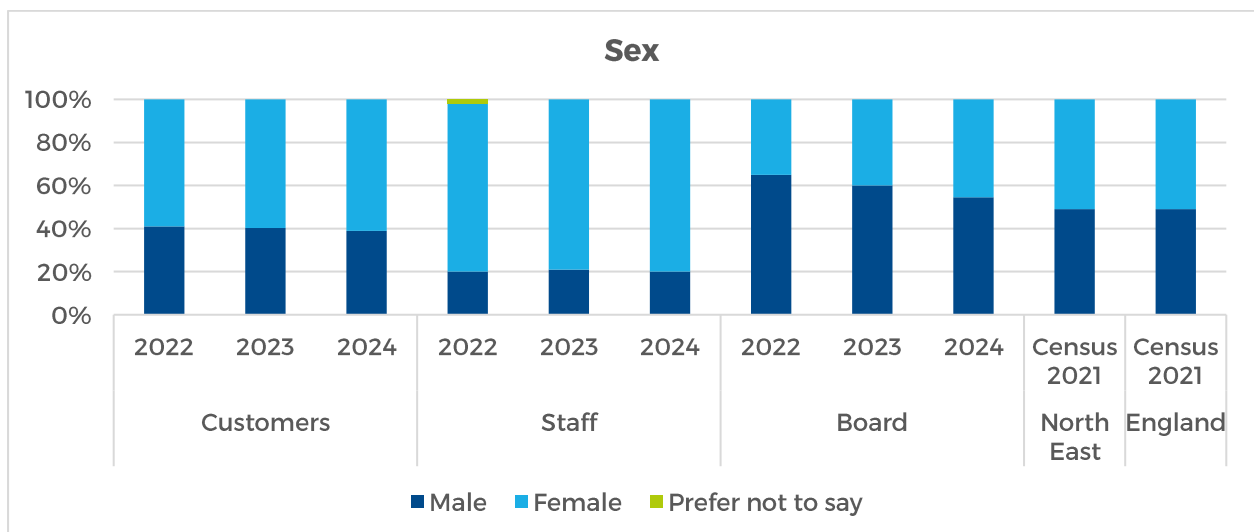
Disability
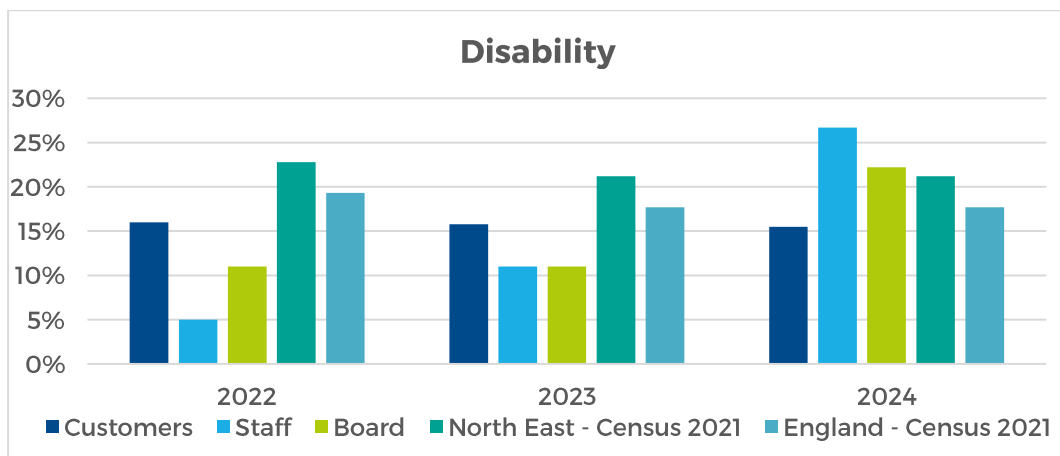
Age

- It is good to see that the age profile of the Staff team has changed. It was a strategic priority to increase the numbers of younger people joining North Star. During the year there was a 7% increase in the under 35's.
- Most Board members are aged 55-64. Board may wish to consider the age demographic when recruiting new members.

Sex

Staff - Data at March 2024	Male	Female
Overall workforce	23%	77%
Leadership - SMT	25%	75%
Business Leadership – Heads of Service	50%	50%
Functional Leadership– Service Managers	57%	43%
Team Manager/ Maintenance /Housing Officers	20%	80%
Service Assistants, Support Worker	18%	82%

- The Staff team continues to be under representative of the male population.
- The differential is more obvious at the Team Leader level and below. Benchmarking highlights that organisations that deliver its repairs service using an in-house team, employ more men, and therefore as a whole tend to have more male staff.

<u>Race</u>
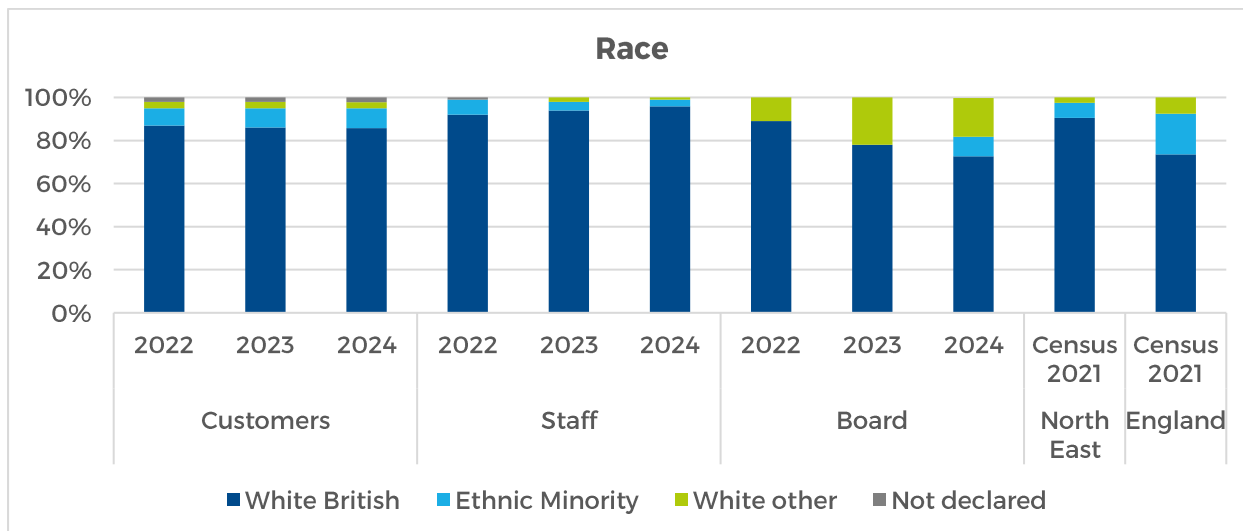
- The North-East data is probably the most appropriate to use as a comparator.
- We are still underrepresented at a staff level. We will continue with our approach to set and publicise targets, target recruitment, guarantee interviews to those who meet the essential criteria, and review our approaches.

5. **Access to homes – Is this equitable?**

Issues of significant under representation are highlighted throughout this section, as are any specific points to note.

<u>Race</u>
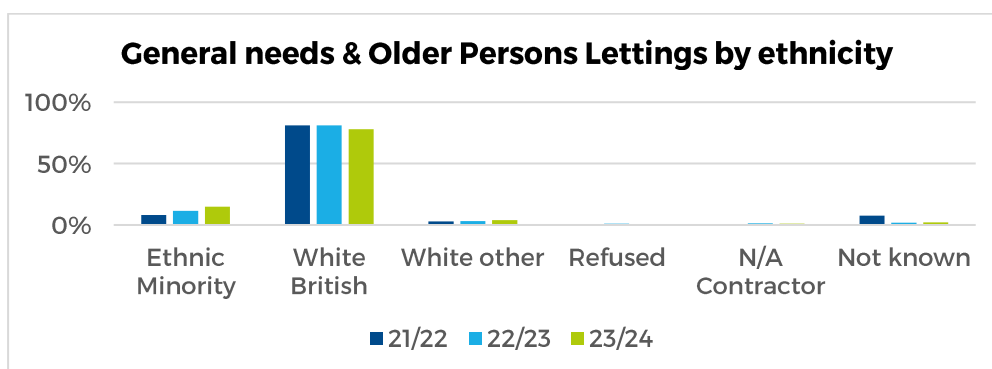
- There has been an increase in the percentage of homes let to people from an ethnic minority background from 11% to 15%. This is representative of our existing customer base and the demography of the North-East

**% of lettings to people who state they are minority ethnic by area**
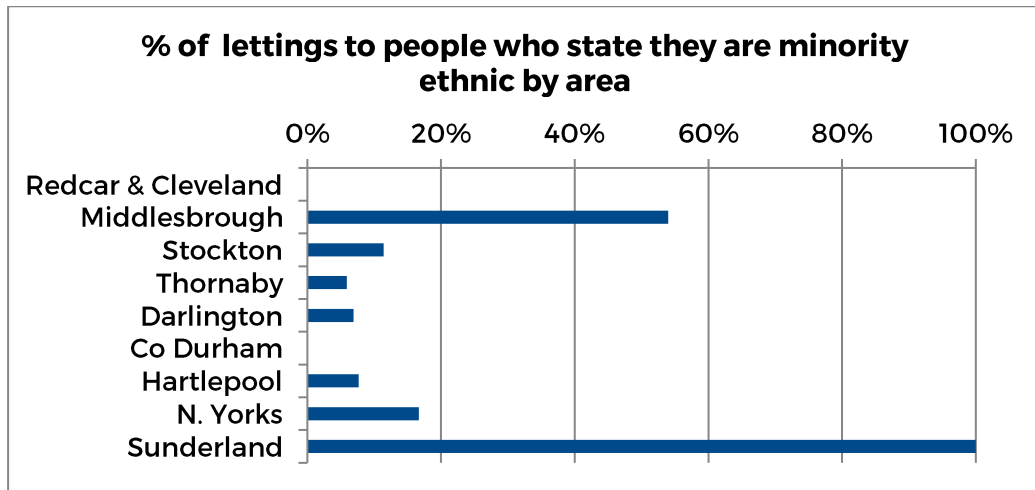
- Middlesbrough remains the area with the highest proportion of properties let to people who are minority ethnic. This follows the same pattern as previous years, and is to be expected given the location of multi-ethnic communities within the town
- There was only one property let in Sunderland during the year

Disability

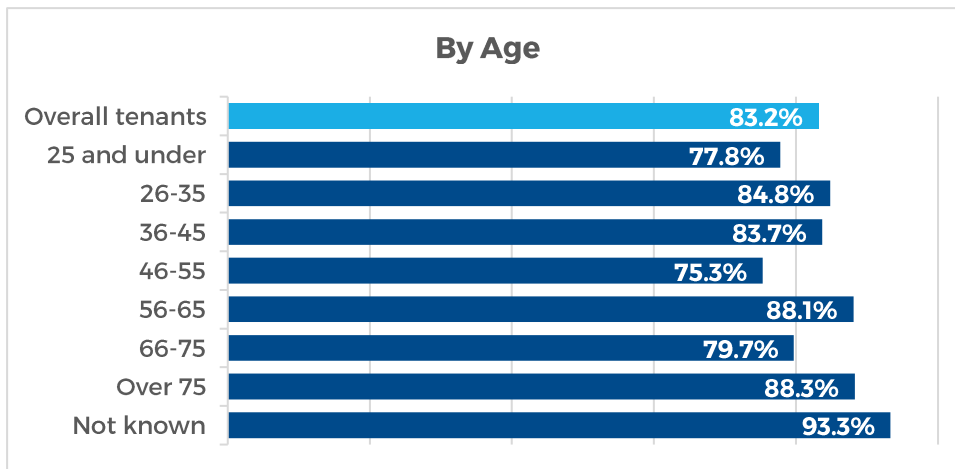**% of lettings to people who stated that they have a Disability**
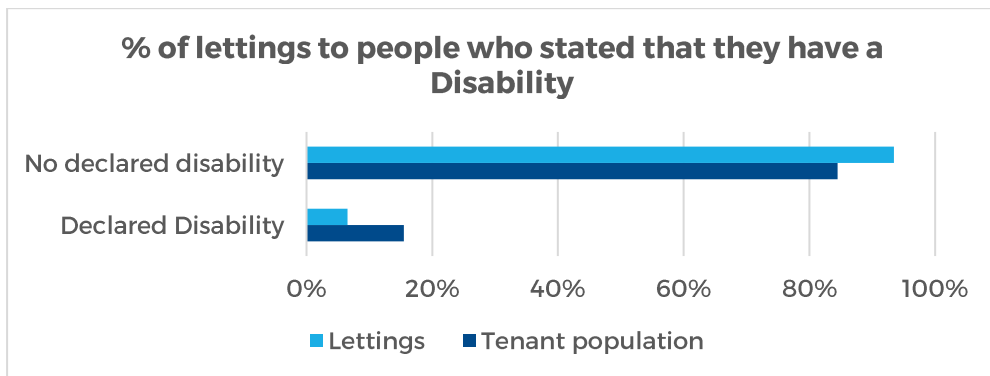
- Only 6.5% of people rehoused during 2023/24 declared that they had a disability compared to 16% of the tenant population.
- This is under representative of the tenant base, the local and national demography
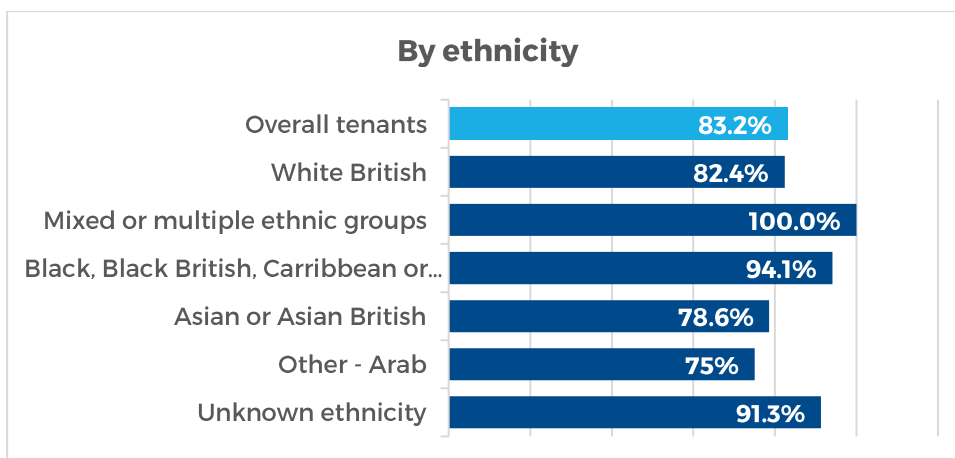- This is an area that we will explore in more detail.

Age

% of lettings by age
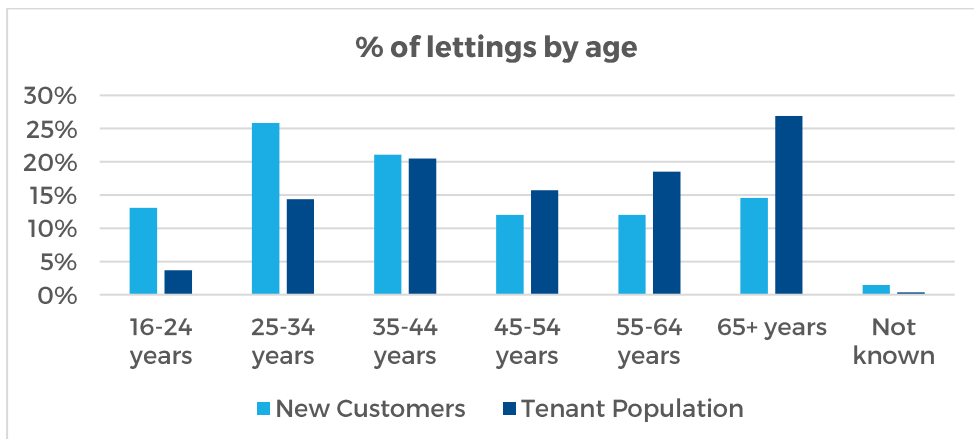
6. Satisfaction levels – Is satisfaction consistent amongst different customer groups?

Tenant Satisfaction Measures - TP01 Overall satisfaction

By Age

Group	Satisfaction
Overall tenants	83.2%
25 and under	77.8%
26-35	84.8%
36-45	83.7%
46-55	75.3%
56-65	88.1%
66-75	79.7%
Over 75	88.3%
Not known	93.3%

The 46–55-year-old group was the least satisfied. There are no discernible reasons why.

By ethnicity

| Group	Satisfaction
Overall tenants	83.2%
White British	82.4%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	100.0%
Black, Black British, Carribbean or…	94.1%
Asian or Asian British	78.6%
Other - Arab	75%
Unknown ethnicity	91.3%

The "Other Ethnicity – Arab" tenants were the least satisfied at 75%. One out of four tenants interviewed were dissatisfied. They were from Middlesbrough and the feedback was due to repairs taking too long to get completed and had waited up to six months. TLF, the organisation that conducts the surveys and analyses the results advise that there is no material difference in satisfaction levels.

By disability

Group	Satisfaction
No disability	82.8%
Disability	85.7%
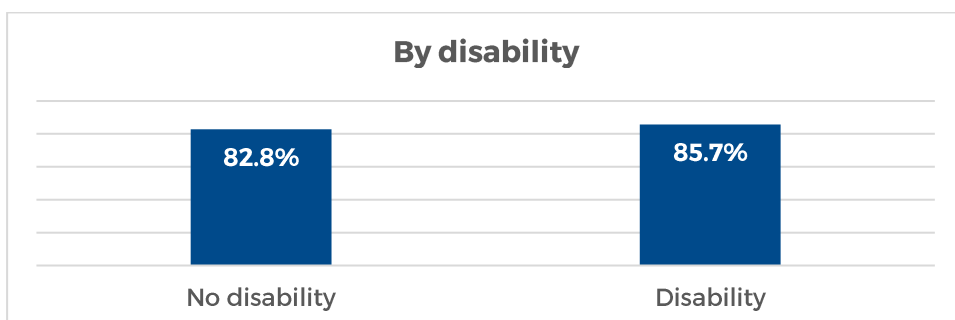
7.   Complaints

We have analysed complaints to establish if the levels received are reflective of the customer base

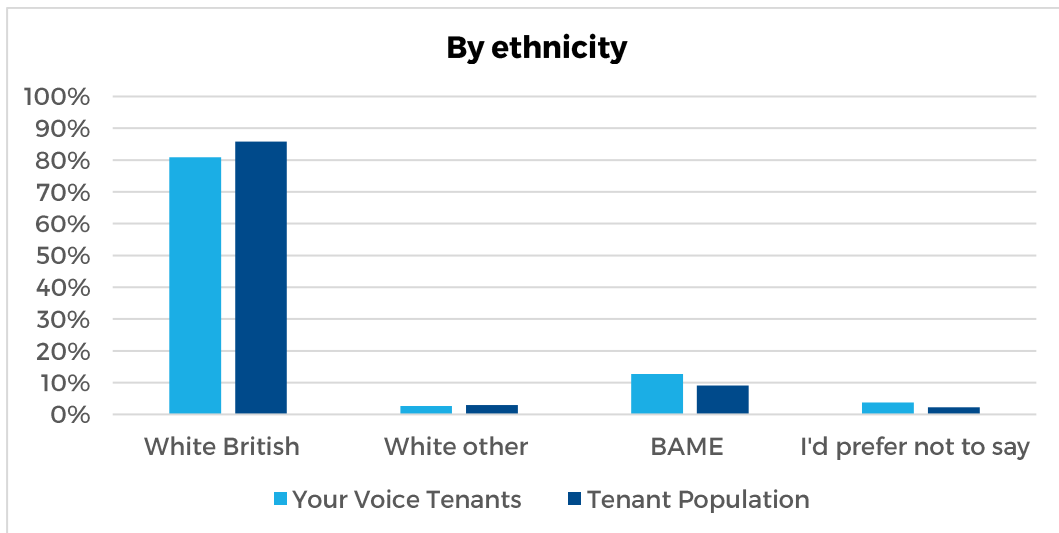**By age group**

By ethnicity

By Disability
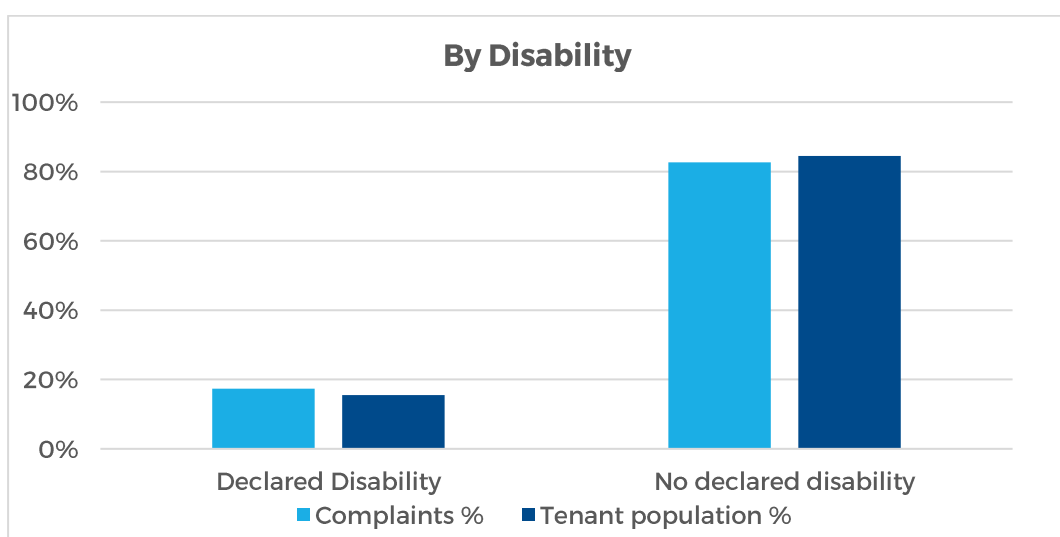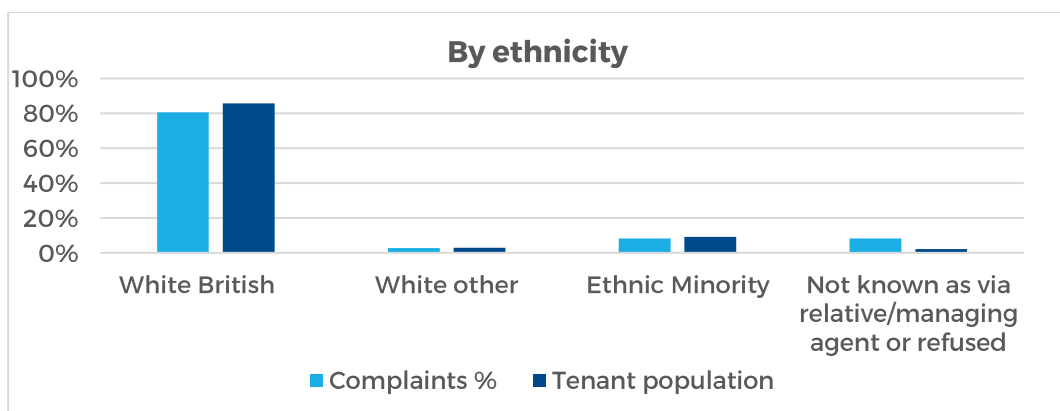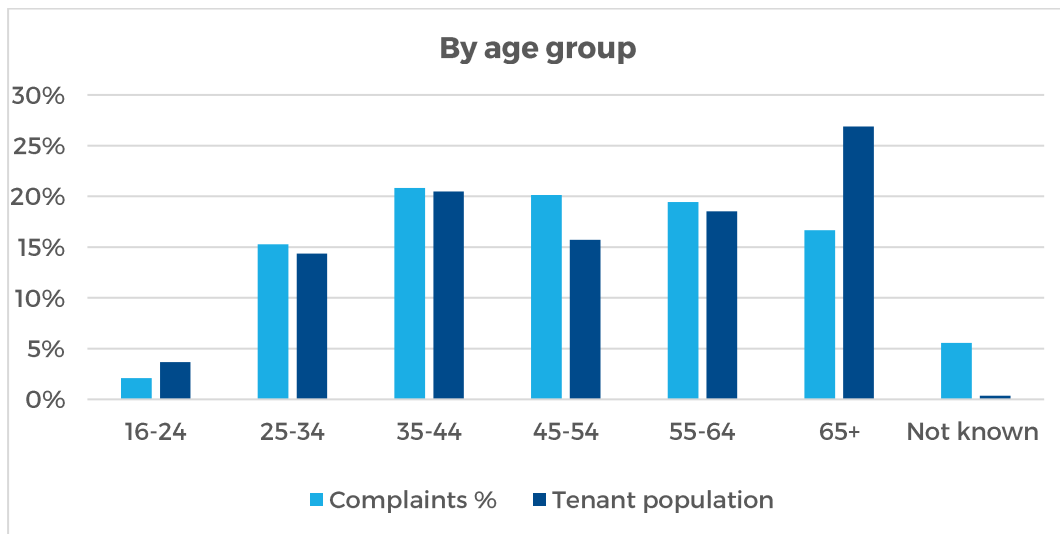
Overall, the levels of complaints received by each group are representative of the overall tenant population.
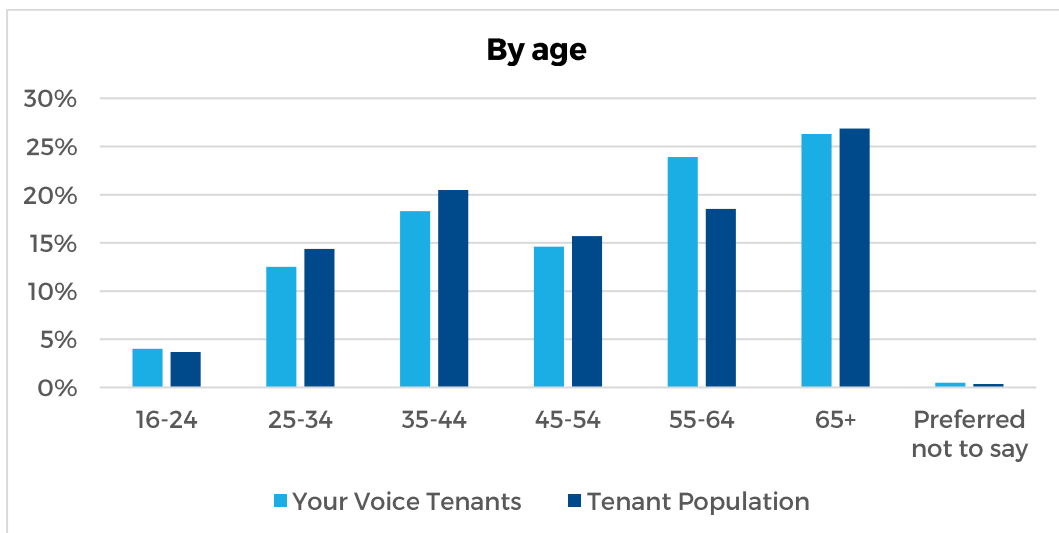
8.   Involved Tenants

The "Your Voice" group includes almost 400 people who have advised that they want to be involved with us and expressed an interest in various opportunities. For example, people who are interested in policy development, people who want to engage by e mail, text, virtually or people who want to meet.
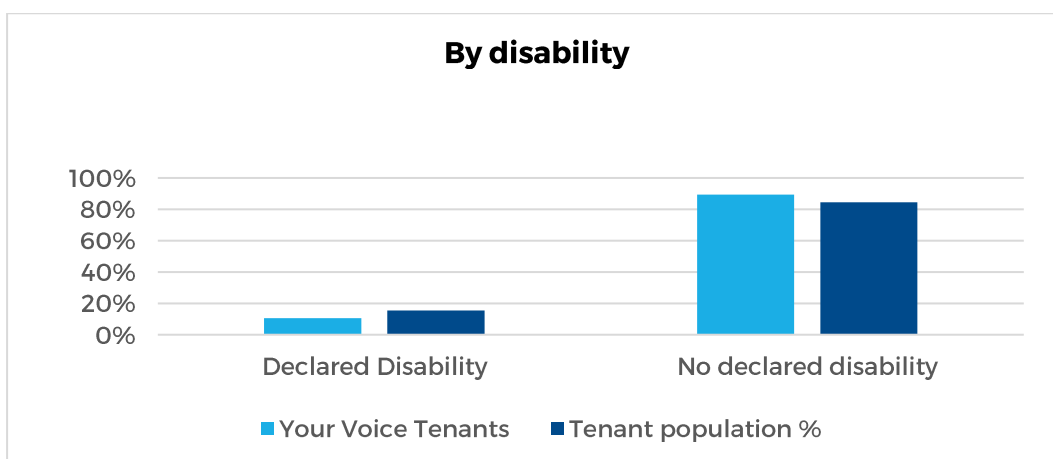
We have analysed how representative the membership of the Your Voice Group is when compared to the wider tenant base.

By ethnicity

There is good representation of people who classify themselves as minority ethnic.

By age

There is good involvement from tenants across all age groups with those in younger age groups improved in recent years.

By disability

There is a small under representation of people with a declared disability. Improvements have been made over the last few years with the use of technology to enable those that may find it difficult to attend meetings able to do so remotely via Teams. We also provide help and support with transport. This may be an area where we promote that we are underrepresented and encourage participation.

9.   **Job Applicants**

During the year we implemented our strategic approach to workforce and succession planning (as set out in L&G to 2026). Part of the approach is to advertise all vacancies internally before we go out to the market.

Total vacancies	15	Demographic
Appointed through internal recruitment	8	Breakdown below
Agency appointment	3	Female, White British, over 45 Female, Ethnically Diverse, under 35. Male, White British, over 45
Apprentice recruited	1	Female, White British, under 25, disabled
Appointed through external recruitment	3	Female x 2, White British, Aged 35-44 Male, White British, Aged 45-54

Internal Recruitment									
Age					Sex		Disability	Ethnicity	
18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	M	F	No	White British	British Pakistani
25%	12.5%	25%	25%	12.5%	25%	75%	100%	87.5%	12.5%

Our approach to workforce planning needs to be carefully balanced with the ability to employ people who contribute to the diversity of the staff team.

We can do this by continuing our approach of positive action to target recruitment, guarantee interviews to those who meet the essential criteria, and continue to review what we do and how we do it. our approaches. That said, it is good to note that 37% of internal appointments were to people under the age of 34. We will also target

apprenticeship opportunities at underrepresented groups. We have a good track record of developing apprentices to the extent that they secure permanent employment with us.
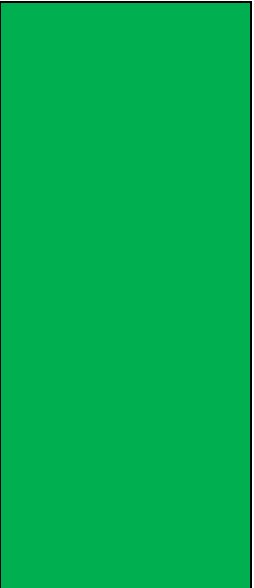
10. Recent riots and civil unrest

Considering the recent racist violence in the UK, we believe that we continue to have a crucial role in fostering safe and inclusive communities. Our work in this area is not new. However, we have reviewed our approach against good practice issued by the Housing Diversity Network. In the immediate days following the violence we fast tracked any repairs in areas impacted and reached out to Tenants, Staff, Communities, Organisations and Community Leaders offering practical, financial and emotional support. We also put out public statements condemning the actions.

In the medium to longer term there is more to do. We are well placed to help communities recover and build upon their strengths. This is at the heart of what we do, and this work has begun. However, there is more that we can do to challenge the narrative through anti racism practices. This relies on more than staff training. It requires myth-busting, fact-checking, and challenging misleading statements which can be made either in person or online. This is especially in important in terms of allocations where there is potential for wildly misleading claims about priorities in the rehousing of refugees and asylum seekers.

11. Progress against 2023/24 Objectives

Addressing issues of under representation is evolutionary. To tackle inequality, actions need to be well planned, strategic, sustainable, and taken seriously. For North Star this is a strategic priority.

Objective	Outcome	RAG
Increase levels of Staff that have a disability to 13.5%	Latest staff census highlights that 27% of staff state that they have a disability / long term condition	
Deliver training on Unconscious bias, Anti racism, and Neuro diversity	Delivered to all staff and Board Members that chose to attend	
Increase levels of ethnic minority Staff to 8%	Latest staff census highlights that 4% of staff state they are ethnically diverse	
Conduct further analysis of minority ethnic job applications to understand attrition rates.	Conducted and no conclusions were able to be drawn. It was agreed that we continue with unconscious bias training, and positive action statements to encourage application	
Let 12% of homes to minority ethnic households	15% of homes were let to households that classified themselves as ethnically diverse	
Review the data collected on Customers to ensure it is meaningful and helps to identify	Completed. Customer data has helped us to assess equality of access, equity in satisfaction	

areas of under representation or inequality.	levels and under representation. The results are contained in this report	
Identify the barriers that may be encountered in accessing quality affordable housing.		
Assess the equality of access to our properties		
Identify whether Customers with protected characteristics are disadvantaged, or less satisfied when compared to the overall customer base		

12. Objectives for 2024/2025

We will
- Review the purpose of collecting the data outlined and stop collecting what is not being actively used or reported.
- Explore the opportunities to run another further Board Apprenticeship scheme
- Implement a system to enable our customers to update their own data, so that they can advise us of any changes
- Target apprenticeship opportunities to underrepresented groups
- Continue with our approach of positive action to set and publicise targets, target recruitment, guarantee interviews to those who meet the essential criteria, and review our approaches.
- Promote and support anti-racism practise