



MEARS®

Mears Group PLC
Approach to Fairness & Inclusion
2022-2025



Foreword

We are pleased to introduce our latest Fairness & Inclusion Strategy 2022 – 2025

Mears has a true social heart, and we are proud of what we have achieved so far; however, we cannot become complacent in our work.

Today we want to leverage our commitment to Fairness & Inclusion to drive innovation. We have set out these commitments in our Fairness & Inclusion policy and the introduction of our strategy outlines our priorities going forward.

Our focus on fairness & inclusion recognises and values the differences in each of our employees. We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. We want to create an inclusive culture that nurtures talent and allows every individual regardless of their social economic background, disability, gender reassignment, ethnicity or nationality, age, sex, marriage and civil partnership status, religious belief and sexual orientation, the opportunity to flourish and reach their potential.

Fairness & inclusion is at the heart of all aspects relating to our workforce, whether this is how we attract recruit, onboard, train, develop, retain and offboard our people. We live in and support a very diverse society and therefore we want Mears to truly represent the people that we provide our services for within the communities we serve. Our aim is to improve equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation and lead the way and influence change across the Housing sector, by ensuring we are truly socially responsible in all aspects of our employment

We all have a role to play in this strategy and as the CEO of Mears I am personally committed to supporting the implementation and ensuring it is embedded across the Group.

David Miles

Chief Executive Officer



Defining Fairness and Inclusion (F&I)

Fairness

Fairness is about ensuring a just society where individuals or groups of people are recognised for their current capability and provided every opportunity to achieve their potential, by taking steps to create a level playing field. It goes beyond ensuring no less favourable treatment based on stereotypical assumptions, on social economic background or a protected characteristic.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed and valued for who they are as an individual or group.

It is also about recognising the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but not limited to, nationality, language, race, disability, ethnicity, gender reassignment, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex, socioeconomic status, and family structure. It also encompasses diversity of thought and life experiences.

Our Approach

We've made much progress already and our journey so far, has been guided by our strategic approach to being socially responsible and also by our ESG Board. Both have laid a foundation for us to effectively build on.

The achievement of this plan does require ongoing commitment and focus so that we continue to build a diverse and inclusive organisation which is reflective of the people we support and the communities we serve.

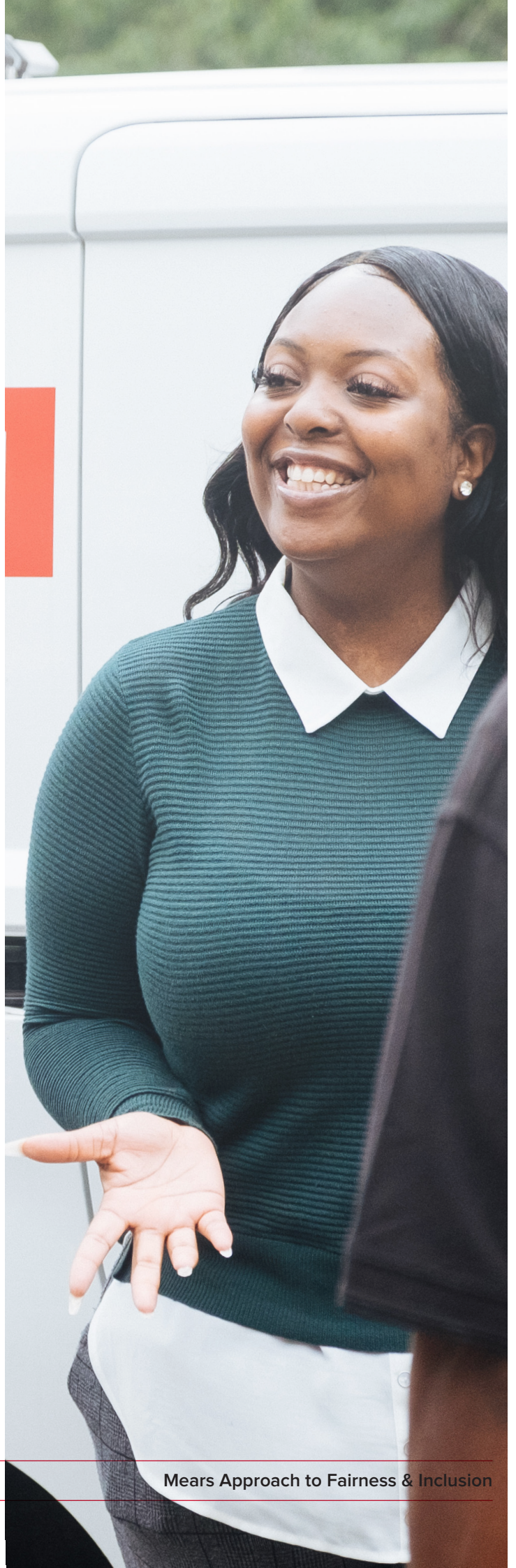
This year our ESG Board, (which brings together representation from our executive board team, chair of our employee forum and external expertise in relation to fairness & inclusion), have supported us in developing and implementing our strategy. However, to make a greater impact, we must broaden our efforts by focusing upon multiple diversity characteristics. There is more work to be done in shaping a fully inclusive environment and we want to renew our commitment to all elements of fairness & inclusion.

Fairness

Recognising and valuing everyone is individual and different and ensuring equal access to opportunities for all regardless of social economic background or individual make up.

Inclusion

A sense of belonging, feeling accepted and valued for who you are; feeling supported as you bring your authentic self to work.



The Work we Have Done so Far

People and groups

- ▶ We established our ESG Board
- ▶ We have appointed an Employee Director, supported by a Deputy Employee Director, who has a focus on Disability Awareness within the Group
- ▶ We established our Employee Forum, chaired by the Employee Director
- ▶ We have a bespoke Mental Health & Wellbeing Steering Group

Statements of intent / policy

- ▶ We have an established Fairness and Inclusion (F&I) policy and procedure.
- ▶ We have a F&I Pledge which is articulated to all new staff during induction training
- ▶ We have developed a Fairness and Inclusion Strategy and Plan
- ▶ We annually review and update our Human Slavery Statement
- ▶ Created employment policies, across the employee life cycle, that enable the consistent delivery of fairness & inclusion across the Group

Management Information and monitoring

- ▶ We collect baseline F&I data from colleagues, that enables us to look at trends and report progress
- ▶ We collate data relating to social mobility for our new hires, soon to be extended to the remainder of our workforce
- ▶ We have an annual competency check for all staff to assess understanding and application of Equality, Diversity and Human Rights in their role
- ▶ We have an understanding at local level of workforce diversity is measured through the People Plans

Learning

- ▶ Fairness and Inclusion is covered during induction and e-learning modules - we measure and report on completion against a KPI
- ▶ We provide training for all frontline colleagues, which better equips them to deliver a great service to the communities we serve
- ▶ We have incorporated religious and cultural events into the calendar and social media
- ▶ We successfully rolled out our leadership programme to support Managers in relation to better awareness, understanding and application



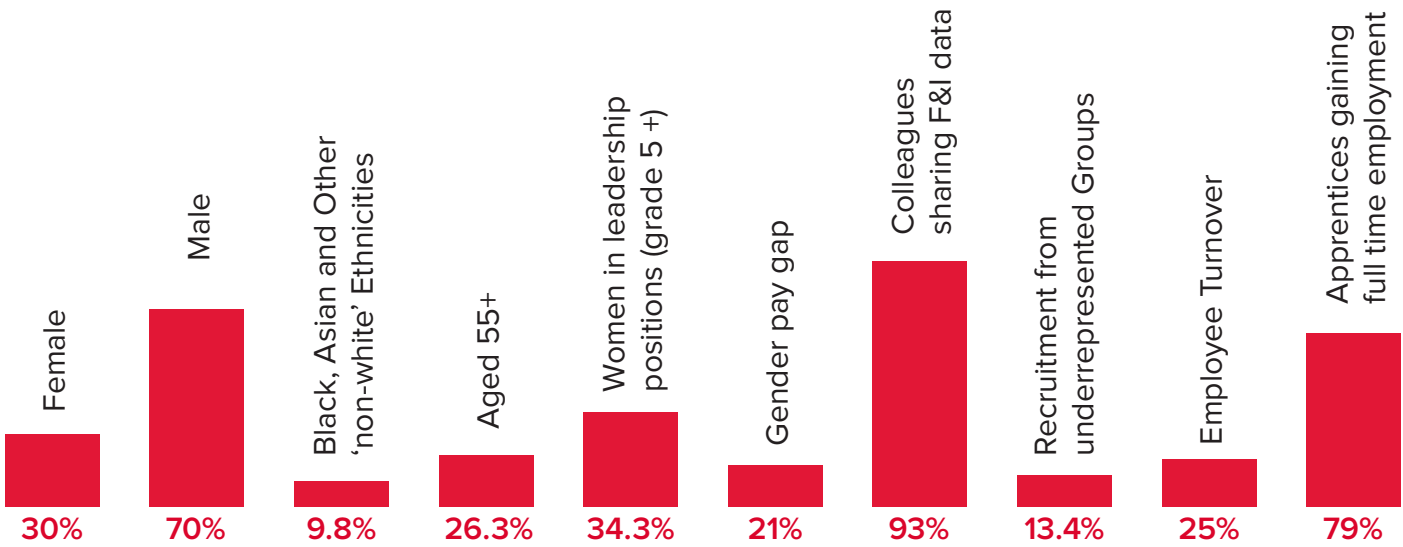
Data - where are we now

Why does our demographic data matter?

As we strive to create a fairer and more inclusive workplace, it is important to understand the impact our plans, decisions and activities will have or have had on different groups of people.

Analysing our data gives us the opportunity to understand local workforce composition and address issues of underrepresentation in certain areas or roles. It gives an indication to potential or actual bias and barriers facing our employees.

The use of data will also give us an understanding of current positioning, an opportunity to reflect and identify gaps to plan for a future workforce that demonstrates inclusivity. We will present our data on an annual basis.



Whilst we aspire to report more meaningful data in terms of sexual orientation, disability and social mobility, we recognise we have more work to do before we can confidently achieve this. In the meantime, we will track progress against the following measure



Our Fairness & Inclusion Vision

To be regarded as the most socially responsible business working within the housing sector. An organisation that exemplifies excellence in fairness and inclusion in all that we do, and influencing others through our thought leadership, best practices and tools, based on Fairness & Inclusion principles.

Our Strategic Priorities 2022 – 2025

We have three overarching strategic priorities, which we aim to deliver through the strategy

- ▶ Maximise opportunities to attract, develop, support, and retain diverse representation across all job levels within our workforce
- ▶ Develop and embed an inclusive culture
- ▶ Recognition as a thought leader on fairness and inclusion in the housing sector

A structured 5-step process for successful fairness & inclusion implementation.

▶ Step 1 – Basic

Fairness & inclusion exists at the level required by the Equality Act 2010.

▶ Step 2 – Awareness

Fairness & Inclusion are recognised as important elements to our overall success and initiatives are implemented to ensure we go beyond legislative requirements and embrace an approach that takes in to account individual needs, make up and social economic background.

▶ Step 3 – Understanding & Application

Throughout the workplace Leaders are implementing Fairness & Inclusion strategies in the workflow, to create an inclusive work environment. Our Leadership and management recognise and communicate the benefits of diversity, embracing the principles of social mobility.

▶ Step 4 – Integrated

Fairness & Inclusion is completely integrated fully into the organisation, with leadership and management committed to promoting an environment that supports F&I, encourages positive, inclusive behaviours and has an awareness of measures

▶ Step 5 – Sustained

Fairness & Inclusion is central to how we operate at Mears and happens as a matter of course. It is the norm of our day-to-day activities and an essential element of our culture. Fairness & Inclusion now forms part of our business strategy and impacts on our business success, with role models being visible and recognised at all levels of the organisation. Year on year improvement is organic and happens as BAU

How will we achieve our strategic priorities?

Our vision and strategic priorities will be used as a framework to shape the development of fairness & inclusion work across the Group

Priority 1 - Maximise opportunities to attract, develop support and retain diverse representation across all job levels within our workforce

As a business that delivers services to many diverse communities across the UK, it is vital we have a diverse and engaged workforce. We want those applying for roles to be provided equality of opportunity in all aspects of our recruitment and selection process. We want our employees to reflect the communities we serve and the people that we support.

To ensure this our attraction and recruitment strategy must proactively seek to reach candidates with characteristics that are currently under-represented.

We recognise fairness and inclusion is an important part of our Employer Brand and will support us in attracting more diverse candidates.

Continue to build inclusive attraction and recruitment practices. Ensure that the Recruitment and Fairness & Inclusion strategies co- exist to achieve this objective

- ▶ Continually evolve current recruitment processes to ensure they are bias free and encourage job opportunities for all
- ▶ Better attract more diverse candidates for our vacancies by implementing equality, diversity and inclusion principles in the planning of our recruitment campaigns and all advertising channels and collateral - job adverts written in bias free language
- ▶ Use apprenticeships to introduce more diversity at entry levels – nurture and build our future talent pipeline
- ▶ Conduct outreach and recruitment at job fairs and other events hosted by various organisations supportive of diverse communities, including disability advocacy groups
- ▶ Implement a formal mentoring programme, including reverse mentoring, focusing on our areas of under representation to understand the challenges and nurture talent
- ▶ Ensure that succession planning and talent management identifies and improves our talent pipeline by focusing/targeting development and having robust processes that demonstrate fairness across the board
- ▶ Effective process in place to anonymously shortlist candidates
- ▶ Effectively measure and monitor our attraction & recruitment metrics and the latest trends and strive to improve upon these
- ▶ Increase awareness of candidate needs, to ensure we create the environment for them to perform at their best
- ▶ Insight led approach to ensuring our workforce reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the local communities we serve



- ▶ For senior roles, ensure interview panels become more diverse and we adopt reverse mentoring
- ▶ Disability inclusion – respond to and implement requests for reasonable adjustments promptly
- ▶ Promote and continually develop Mears flexible working offer
- ▶ Promote development and a learning culture, accessible to all, to maximise internal talent mobility

Diversity Partnerships

- ▶ Establish and maintain partnerships with professional organisations to help develop and maintain a pipeline of diverse internal and external candidates
- ▶ Implementation of a workforce and skills project with educational and charitable partners

Priority 2 - Develop and embed an inclusive culture

We want to get the best out of our people, so we must ensure they feel included, supported, and treated fairly. We recognise and comply with the relevant legislation: however, we want to strive beyond this to ensure that our practice in F&I is embedded in everything we do. We also aim to foster a culture that promotes wellbeing and mental health and provides support to enable all our colleagues to thrive, deliver a fair and inclusive service to our customers and achieve their potential.

The Equality Act (2010) is the guiding legislation that protects individuals from discrimination in the workplace and the law defines nine protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

Support managers to create engaged and inclusive teams

- ▶ Increase staff engagement from the under-represented groups in the workforce
- ▶ Continue to challenge and change mindsets internally
- ▶ Encourage discussions and dialogue about F&I as part of team meetings and briefings.
- ▶ Build fairness, inclusion and wellbeing into the performance reviews and reward schemes of managers.

Engage with colleagues to understand requirements around establishing employee network groups. Implement and support as required:

- ▶ Establish and support participation in Employee Network Groups
 - ▶ LGBTQIA+
 - ▶ Disability
 - ▶ Black Asian and other ethnicities.
- ▶ Continued recognition of diversity, through storytelling, increasing awareness of LGBTQIA+, disability and Black, Asian and other ethnicity issues
- ▶ Providing peer support for colleagues.

Deliver internal communications that support fairness and inclusion

- ▶ Increased visibility of diversity issues and campaigns and reinforces leadership commitment with colleagues, clients and customers
- ▶ Effective story telling is utilised more to share personal experiences and to demonstrate example of success through F&I initiatives
- ▶ F&I Champions are identified across the workforce who communicate and promote fairness and inclusion initiatives in their area
- ▶ Improve quality and clarity of F&I resources on Connect - our employee intranet.
- ▶ Actively utilise our cultural calendar to commemorate special observances and heritage months; and promote engagement with the entire workforce.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training

- ▶ Provide mandatory training and education to all staff on fairness and inclusion matters (including social economic background awareness). Provide refresher training every 3 years
- ▶ Strengthen the training offer on F&I by introducing an increased F&I training suite – e-learning modules
- ▶ Ensure that all line managers complete F&I training to deepen understanding, create awareness and ensure no unconscious bias, especially in the recruitment process. Provide refresher training every 3 years
- ▶ Manage and measure completion rate of all mandatory training, ensuring always over 90%
- ▶ Development of internal Leadership Program to give personal and professional growth to employees
- ▶ Offer opportunities and targeted discussions for all-employee (e.g., Employee Open meetings, roundtable, and small group discussions) on issues related to fairness and inclusion, such as unconscious bias, disability inclusion and other critical topics.

Performance Reporting

- ▶ Measuring and monitoring of fairness and inclusion progress and impact
- ▶ Produce and publish an annual gender pay gap report, internally and externally, with any additional actions identified and implemented as necessary
- ▶ Expand our gap reporting to include ethnicity
- ▶ Improved monitoring of F&I indicators in our employee survey and other workforce data
- ▶ Maintain approach to ensuring all employees are paid the real Living Wage or above
- ▶ Work to eradicate pay disparity in all job roles.

Integrate and embed fairness and inclusion into our key employee and customer policies and practices

- ▶ Review employee end to end lifecycle process and practice and supplement policies where gaps are identified
- ▶ Use the data to address inequality by amending any discriminatory processes or practices
- ▶ Review customer service practice and revise where gaps are identified
- ▶ Use customer satisfaction feedback to ensure fairness and inclusion is delivered consistently
- ▶ Continued review and updating of all our policies with a F&I lens.

Achieve a leading gold standard fairness & inclusion accreditation

Ensure our systems are enhanced to support our ambitions and ensure effective monitoring and reporting

- ▶ Make F&I fields compulsory in Workday at application stage
- ▶ Include F&I as part of our Compliance monitoring.

Priority 3 – Recognition as a thought leader on fairness and inclusion in the housing sector

We want to leverage our position in the housing sector. By upholding our mission, our values and through informing and influence, we can work towards better change in the F&I space. By engaging externally with other organisations, understanding challenges or barriers different people may have and sharing best practices, we are influencing other organisations to do the same so that impactful change can occur. We want our leaders and partners to be aware that F&I is implicit in all that we do and fundamental to our long-term success.

Maintain participation in external F&I groups who are at the forefront of F&I developments.

- ▶ Mears contributes to the sector's dialogue on, and development of F&I
- ▶ Engage in knowledge shares with other organisations, e.g., EW Group EDI Pledge
- ▶ Mears share its F&I experience and expertise with others whilst also mutually benefitting from their insights
- ▶ Mears brings various stakeholder groups together on F&I related topics. In doing so we support progress beyond our own organisation.
- ▶ Use Mears Online Resident Network to engage and understand the needs of our customer and communities we serve

Our leadership team continue to raise awareness of the importance of F&I both across our industry sectors and internally within the organisation.

- ▶ Employees believe that F&I genuinely matters to our leadership team, which is demonstrated through their words and actions
- ▶ Our leadership team act as a positive influence on our industry sectors
- ▶ Contractual requirement for suppliers to provide evidence of how they are addressing F&I.



How will we measure success?

Data

We will use our employee data to measure our progress on increased attraction, recruitment, retention, performance management, pay and staff development of those from underrepresented/hard to reach groups.

We will work together to agree a set of KPIs to measure our progress.

► The use of People Plans is pivotal to securing this at a local contract level

We will compare our data to external sources (inc. sensor 2021 data on community insight) to evidence how reflective we are of the communities we serve.

Colleague Feedback

Our employee surveys will include F&I indicators, which will give a baseline measurement and better understanding of employee experiences; therefore, allowing us to find out if people feel that we are making progress.

Use Colleague forum, chaired by Employee Director, to ensure we are doing the right things and making progress

Customer Feedback

Our customer satisfaction surveys will include F&I indicators, which will give a baseline measurement and better understanding of customer experiences; therefore, allowing us to understand if we are well represented and making progress.

External Standards

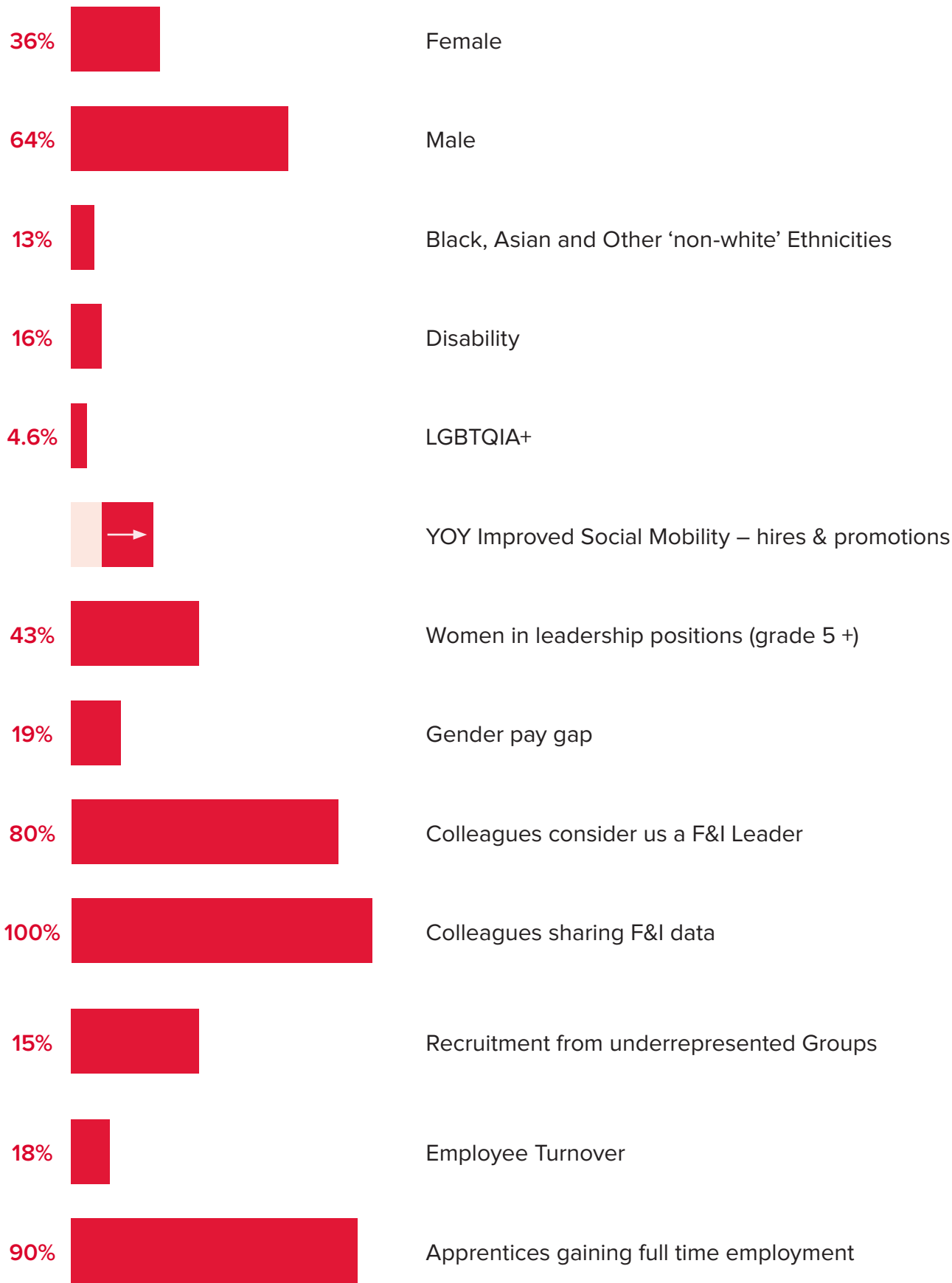
We will gain and maintain accreditations in EDI recognised industry standards and report on progress.

We will build on our Disability Confident Employer status by achieving Disability Confident Leader standard.

We will build on our Social Mobility Index Status

What success will look like?

By 2025 we will aim to achieve:



Our Fairness and Inclusion Strategy 2022–2025

The documents below are all supporting and overlapping our F&I Strategy and are intended to help us achieve our overall F&I objectives

- ▶ Mears ESG Approach
- ▶ Mears People Plan Strategy
- ▶ Mears Attraction & Retention Strategy
- ▶ Mears Wellbeing Strategy

Our Fairness and Inclusion (F&I) Strategy 2022 to 2025 is a working document that will be reviewed annually to ensure that Mears F&I objectives remain relevant and achievable.

This F&I strategy is aligned with our recently refreshed Core Group Strategy 2025.

On an annual basis we will provide updates that include related data as well as providing a summary of our progress in meeting our statutory duty and the actions outlined in the strategy (reviewed by Exec team and ESG Board).

Terminology Note:

Across the organisation there is use of several different terms to reference our work in this area.

To give clear understanding and better alignment with our objectives and strategy we will move forward with the use of one single term – Fairness and Inclusion (F&I).

As a result, the following name changes will come into effect immediately:

- ▶ Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy to Fairness & Inclusion (F&I) Strategy
- ▶ Social & Diversity Impact Board (S&DI) to ESG Advisory Board

If you have questions or comments on this strategy or fairness and inclusion matters within Mears, please contact your HR Business Partner or contact the HR team in Gloucester.





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