



# Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

Statement 2023/24

# Introduction

Welcome to Linc's third Environmental Social Governance Statement (ESG) for the year ended 31 March 2024 ("2023/24"). Next year, reporting will be as part of the newly-merged Pobl Group, but this statement focuses on our activities prior to the point of the merger on 1 April 2024.

We are adopted members of Sustainability for Housing and report against its Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing (SRS). This is a voluntary reporting framework created to enable reporting ESG in a consistent and comparable way across the social housing sector.

The SRS identifies a set of 12 themes, split into 46 criteria. We have reported against each of the 46 criteria within the themes.



## Environment

**Theme 1:** Climate Change

**Theme 2:** Ecology

**Theme 3:** Resource Management

## Social

**Theme 4:** Affordability & Security

**Theme 5:** Building Safety and Quality

**Theme 6:** Resident Voice

**Theme 7:** Resident Support

**Theme 8:** Placemaking

## Governance

**Theme 9:** Structure and Governance

**Theme 10:** Board and Trustees

**Theme 11:** Staff Wellbeing

**Theme 12:** Supply Chain


# About Linc

Linc-Cymru Housing Association Ltd (Linc) was established in 1977 and is a Registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and a Registered Social Landlord regulated by the Welsh Government. All profits are re-invested for the benefit of our customers rather than being distributed to shareholders.

We are a Housing Association and Care provider, working with local authorities, third sector partners and the NHS to provide environments that support the improvement of people's lives, and our purpose is to create the right environment for people to flourish. The homes we build and the natural environments that support them contribute to improving people's quality of life, and as a care provider we work with our partners to address the needs of our ageing population.

We are a socially responsible business focused on building a prosperous and healthier Wales, working together with our customers, customers and stakeholders to create environments where people can flourish.

We recognise our responsibility in meeting the ambitions of Welsh Government and keep the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act and its seven goals at the forefront of our minds as we shape our future ambitions and priorities. We have made pledges within the Welsh Government's All Wales Plan 2021-2025 'Working Together to Reach Net Zero'.




A merger on 1 April 2024, saw Linc merging with the Pobl Group to become Wales' largest provider of housing, care and support. The newly expanded group will manage more than 23,000 homes in Wales, with plans to deliver more than 4,500 new homes over the next five years. The Group will employ more than 3,000 people and will be a major contributor to the Welsh economy. As we grow, we will be extending our use of modern methods of construction to create environmentally conscious and sustainable developments and utilise partnering to deliver solutions that meet health, housing, leisure, and workplace needs.

## Out Values

We are **passionate**, taking pride in everything we do and driven by a positive, infectious attitude. This fuels our desire to work together to create environments where people can flourish and a happier, healthier Wales.

Our passion makes us **ambitious**. We are curious, embracing new ideas that will provide great experiences for our customers and colleagues and always looking to find ways to challenge the 'norm'.

But our ambition is based on listening and being **respectful**. We value our customers and staff and listen to and learn from them; we never create change for the sake of it but use insight to help us respond to their needs.



# Environment

## Theme 1 – Climate Change

C1 Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year)

As at 31 March 2023 (excluding shared ownership, supported housing and Homebuy), the EPC ratings were:

Rating	Number	%
A	18	<1%
B	1,532	29%
C	2,710	51%
D	874	17%
E or worse	27	<1%
No current Certificate	115	2%
Total	5,278	100%

C2 Distribution of EPC ratings of new homes (those completed in the last financial year)

As at 31 March 2024 (excluding shared ownership, supported housing and Homebuy), the EPC ratings for new homes handed over during 2023/24 was:

Rating	Number	%
A	8	9%
B	48	54%
C	33	37%
Total	89	100%

### C3 Does Linc have a Net Zero target and strategy? If so, what is it and when does Linc intend to be Net Zero by?

We do not have a formal Net Zero target and strategy at Linc but have been undertaking lots of work to position ourselves well for the future. All homes built as part of our development programme with funding via Social Housing Grant (and other Welsh Government Grants) must meet high energy criteria and meet EPC A in the main, with the option of the AECB Passivhaus approach which meets EPC B but delivers very low energy bills for customers.

For our existing properties, we aim to meet the requirements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS 2023), which contains a focus on energy efficiency and affordable warmth. The Standard sets out milestones to achieve net zero, which are:

- 2027 – Target Energy Pathways and Whole Stock Assessments for the entire stock
- 2030 – All properties to achieve SAP 75 (middle of the EPC C band)

Onward decarbonisation to net zero will take time and is an area of focus as we determine deliverable pathways to net zero for each of our properties.

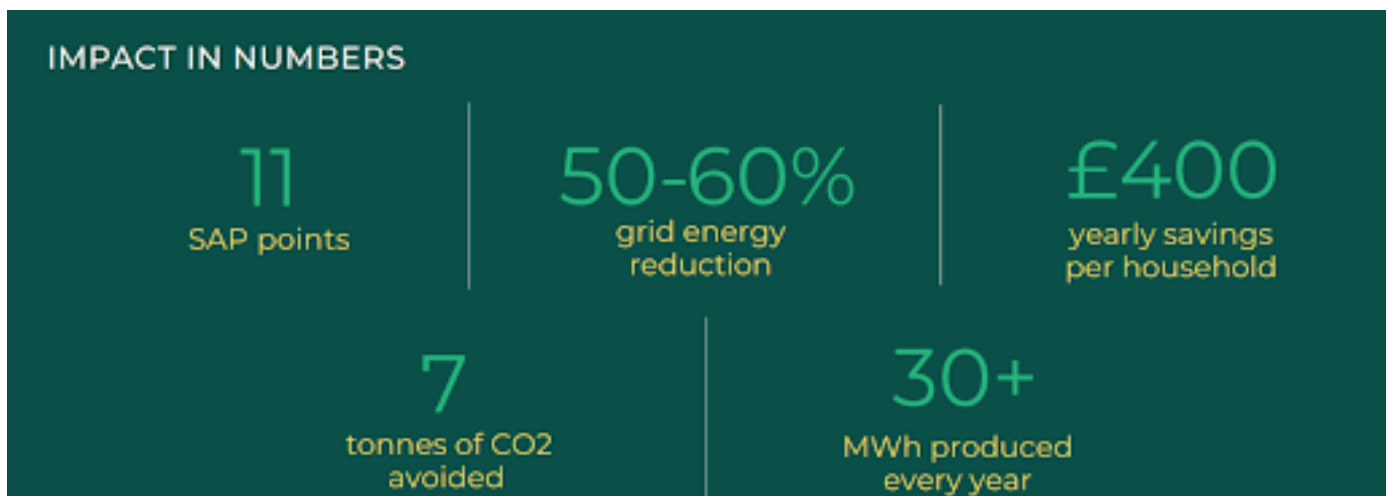
Pobl Group has a Net Zero Strategy in place, which is currently being updated following the merger in April 2024, as well as being augmented by supporting strategies such as a Decarbonisation Strategy for New Homes, currently being finalised.

## C4 What retrofit activities has Linc undertaken in the last 12 months in relation to its housing stock?


During 2023/24, we installed photovoltaic solar panels and batteries in 87 homes.



We used a different approach at our scheme, Cwrt Alexandra in Abertillery, providing two communal batteries where energy generated from the solar panels was shared equally between all customers. A case study shows significant savings have been made for customers.








We have installed energy-efficient triple glazed windows in 73 homes.

Since 2020, we have successfully secured funding via the Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) rounds 1, 2 and 3. In October 2022, we embarked on a new study to determine how older properties could meet the emerging energy efficiency standards.

The study involved a deep retrofit of four void properties which would be fitted with a selection of energy-saving and energy-efficient technologies to determine what measures make the best carbon savings in a real-life setting. The properties were all 100-year-old, mid-terraced properties and have been fitted with the following energy efficient measures:

- new doors and triple-glazed windows;
- insulation in the loft, walls and underfloor to prevent heat escape;
- photovoltaic solar panels to generate electricity;
- additional new technology including insulating paint (said to bring the same benefits as 50-75mm of wall insulation); and
- intelligent energy systems.

Evaluations of the effectiveness of each technology before, during and after the deep retrofit will be used to inform future programmes and will be made available to other social landlords, developers, and contractors for the benefit of people across Wales. The findings will assist us to meet net zero targets set by the Welsh Government for social landlords by 2030 and will provide the customers with warm, comfortable, and energy-efficient environments.



Two properties are now occupied, enabling the inclusion of customer usage and feedback within the study. Works completed to date have resulted in improved energy efficiency for each property:

**Property 1** – Occupied (Retained gas heating system)

Previous SAP Score – 69 (EPC C)

Current SAP Score – 92 (EPC A)

**Property 2** – Occupied (Air source heat pump)

Previous SAP Score – 69 (EPC C)

Current SAP Score – 74 (EPC C)

The remaining two properties are anticipated to be completed by December 2024.

**Property 3** – In progress

Infra-red heating panels (and standard mechanical ventilation)

**Property 4** – In progress

Infra-red heating panels (and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery)

## C5 Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Green House Gas emissions

Following the merger with Pobl Group in April 2024, we adopted the Group's approach to carbon accounting. The table below shows our emissions data for the financial year 2022/23 and 2023/24.

	Activity	Total emissions (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)		Reduction/ (increase)
		2024	2023	
Scope 1	Natural gas	2,379	3,345	966
	Fleet and refrigerant gasses	16	32	16
Scope 2	Electricity	1,076	1,066	(10)
Scope 3	Customers' homes	8,326	9,323	997
	Supply chain	5,783	6,267	484
	Business operations	285	275	(10)
<b>Total tCO<sub>2</sub>e</b>		<b>17,865</b>	<b>20,308</b>	<b>2,443</b>

## C6 How has Linc mapped and assessed the climate risks to its homes and supply chain, such as increased flood, drought and overheating risks?

With new developments, we undertake an assessment of flood risk as part of the technical due diligence. The NRW (Natural Resources Wales) flood maps provide us with the risk category of the site and whether we can progress the development. A full flood risk assessment is undertaken as part of the planning process to show what mitigation measures are required for the scheme.

Our development designers consider various matters in relation to potential overheating of homes and orientation and footprint can be designed to minimise solar gain and maximise opportunities for cross ventilation etc.

For our existing homes, we know from experience and past events that over 90% of Linc properties are positioned at high elevations above sea level with the likelihood of flooding reduced. However, it has been acknowledged that there is a need to categorise our existing homes in respect of flood risk primarily we have started to undertake a process to identify schemes with Flood Risk and look at appropriate mitigation strategies.

Whilst impact on supply chains is not specifically considered in a standalone way, the broader sustainability of our supply chain is something we consider, and this would include the impacts from climate change on costs, distribution and other factors where it is relevant.

## Theme 2 – Ecology

C7 Does Linc have a strategy to enhance green space and promote biodiversity on or near homes?



*Wildflower meadow - Hill Street, Newport*

One of the key principles of our Growth (Development) Strategy for 2022-27 was to 'Embrace biophilic design and maximise opportunities for green spaces and biodiversity.' This has been an integral part of our development approach for the last few years with new schemes designed to maximise green spaces and opportunities to improve biodiversity.

For existing homes, we have made inroads into improving biodiversity, and this is something we would like to do more of in the future.

Linc did not have a strategy for existing homes, but as a newly-merged Group this is part of the wider Group strategy and Linc will take the opportunity to adopt, inform and further develop the approach which will improve our homes and communities.

## C8 Does Linc have a strategy to actively manage and reduce all pollutants?

We do not currently have a strategy specifically related to pollutants. We are finalising our Decarbonisation Strategy for New Homes which references our intentions around pollutants.

The Strategy includes our plans to gradually move away from building materials that contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) towards natural fibre insulation, adopting natural materials in favour of materials that may contain pollutants.

All our new build developments will have, via planning, a CEMP (Construction Environmental Management Plan) which is usually prepared by the contractor and sets out the approach in relation to pollutants on site. This includes but is not limited to: impact on surface water runoff from site, dust, and noise.

We recognise we need to consider implications from existing uses on land that we acquire, e.g. garage sites, former works, etc. for contamination, consider the risks in relation to contaminant sources and decide if those risks are unacceptable.

We have contributed to the Welsh Government Policy Mapping Tool for procurement which will be live as part of the wider public sector procurement reform. It is anticipated that Linc will be using the policy mapping tool, which includes questions guiding consideration of pollutants and other environmental matters as part of developing a procurement and contract specification.

For our existing homes, consideration of pollutants and their effects has been considered as part of a review undertaken against the Fitness for Human Habitation Standards. From this, actions have been identified in terms of radon gas, VOC's, lead and biocides and how these can be managed/reduced in the future.

## **Theme 3 – Resource Management**

C9 Does Linc have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building and repair works? If so, how does Linc target and measure performance?

Our Linc Growth Strategy included a commitment to extend the use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and off-site manufacturing techniques to speed up construction and encourage the use of more sustainable construction materials.

Now, as a merged Group with the Decarbonisation Strategy work underway, we plan to enhance our work in this area, determine specific targets and measure our performance. In one of our schemes, we have undertaken a carbon calculation of the building which includes embodied carbon as well as operational carbon assessments and once the scheme is completed and reviewed, we hope to roll this out across all Group schemes.

We will be adopting the Welsh Government Policy Mapping Tool once live which includes questions to guide consideration of using responsibly sourced materials.

## C10 Does Linc have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials?

Linc does not yet have a strategy for waste management for new build development at Linc, but it can feature in BREEAM and Considerate Constructor visits. We have used the WRAP initiative previously and are interested in exploring this further in the future. We will be looking at this as an opportunity to develop a Group-wide approach to waste management across the business.



Wherever possible, waste materials are re-cycled on our new developments, for example:

- Defective foundations at Sunnyside Wellness grubbed up, crushed and re-used on site
- Dressed stone at Devonshire Place, dismantled and cropped for re-use in new housing

From 6 April 2024, it became law in Wales for all businesses, charities and public sector organisations to sort their waste for recycling. It applies to all waste and recycling collectors and processors who manage household-like waste from workplaces. The Welsh Government introduced this law to improve the quality and quantity of how we collect and separate waste and as a business we have embraced these new rules.

## C11 Does Linc have a strategy for water management?

We do not yet have a strategy for good water management, but it is an area we are keen to progress for new build developments and our commitment to reducing water use is included within the Group's decarbonisation Strategy. This will be tied into our approach to phosphate/ nitrate management and how this affects the delivery of new developments in some local authorities. We will look to develop a strategy as part of the wider Group.

Wherever possible, water butts are installed at our newly developed homes, and we are actively installing them in all our suitable general needs properties when they become void.



# Social

## Theme 4 – Affordability and Security

C12 For properties that are subject to the rent regulation regime, report against one or more affordability Metric.

Rent affordability is assessed in a range of ways at Linc. For general needs and sheltered homes, rents are run through the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) Living Rent Model. This states that a living rent should be affordable for a household with someone in full-time employment, working the average number of hours per week (including overtime) and earning around the minimum wage. Within the model, rents are considered affordable if rent, as a percentage of gross lower quartile earnings, is below 28%.

Rent affordability is also considered through other measures. The biennial Welsh Government Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) indicates 80% of Linc's customers were satisfied their rents offer value for money (benchmark: 80%). We consult with our customers on an annual basis on our rent setting policy and use insight from our customer facing staff who are best placed to identify if customers begin to struggle. As at end of March 2024, 64% of our customers were in credit, our evictions remained low, and we maintained below target levels of rent arrears.

We have compared our rents against both the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates for 2023/24 and the private sector rents based on the latest published figures. The figures below demonstrate how our rents compare.

Average rent as a percentage of LHA levels: **98.5%**

Average rent compared with local market rents: **77.4%**

Our more specialist accommodation such as adapted properties, extra care, and bungalows, are not run through the JRF Living Rent Model. For these we use other measures to determine affordability including rent account balances, evictions (zero), and satisfaction survey results on rent providing value for money.

C13 Share, and number, of existing homes (owned and/or managed) complete before the last financial year.

Composition of total homes owned or managed as at 31 March 2023:

General needs	3,146	59%
Supported housing	343	6%
Housing for older people	946	18%
Low-Cost Home Ownership	209	4%
Intermediate rent	385	7%
Care homes	207	4%
Market rent	86	2%
Other (retail units)	9	<1%
Total	5,331	100%

## C14 Share, and number, of new homes (owned and/or managed) that were completed during the last financial year

Composition of new homes handed over during 2023/24:

General needs	69	77%
Intermediate rent	20	23%
Total	89	100%

## C15 How is Linc trying to reduce the effect of high energy costs on its residents?

The Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) indicates that housing providers properties must meet a minimum standard, this includes having heating systems that are affordable to run. As part of the improved WHQS 2023 we are working towards the targets set in the standard to map out pathways for improving all of our properties to meet the net zero targets.

We are actively engaged with the Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES) grant programme and working to improve the efficiency of our heat networks.

Our Neighbourhood Officers support customers with advice on how to minimise utility bills and maximise incomes.

## C16 How does Linc provide security of tenure for residents?

Linc complies with the Renting Homes (Wales) 2016 Act and provides eligible customers with the most secure type of contract available under the legislation. We provide extensive support and guidance to customers to maintain their contracts, and this includes those who maybe struggling to maintain their contract, either through non-payment of rent, or other issue.

## Theme 5 – Building Safety and Quality

C17 Describe the condition of Linc’s portfolio, with reference to safety checks and assessments.

The table below shows key safety and compliance measures as at 31 March 2024:

Gas	Fire	Electrical	Asbestos	Legionella
99.79%	96.7%	99.4%	100%	100%

C18 What percentage of homes meet the national housing quality Standard (WHQS)? Of those that fail, what is Linc doing to address these failings?

100% of properties comply with WHQS. This comprises 81.5% which fully meet all requirements and 18.5% known as ‘acceptable fails’ which have a compliant pathway or exemption.

With the introduction of WHQS 2023, we are in the process cross referencing acceptable fails against the new Standard, which will inform of new target investment. By March 2027, we will have target energy pathways in place which will inform us of what we need to do to meet the Standard. By March 2030, all our properties need to meet SAP 75 (the middle of the EPC C band) and by 2034, SAP 92 (EPC A threshold).

## C19 How does Linc manage and mitigate the risk of damp and mould for its residents?

We reviewed our procedures in line with a directive from the Welsh Government, issued to all Registered Social Landlords, to ensure timely and effective responses to reports of damp and mould.

Each report is tracked through to completion with regular reporting provided to senior leaders and our Board. During 2023/24, we received 648 reports of damp and mould which equated to 12% of our housing portfolio.

Our contractors help us identify cases of damp and mould when carrying out servicing, repairs and property condition surveys, which may otherwise have gone unreported.

Intelligent energy systems have been installed in a number of our homes, enabling live information on property performance and determines the risk of damp, mould and condensation. The data identifies homes with excess heat/cold and assists us in prioritising our planned work programmes.

As part of our wider Sustainability and Decarbonisation Strategy, we have committed to ensuring the minimum rating of all our homes is EPC rating C wherever possible. This will make our homes more efficient to heat and help prevent conditions which leading to condensation and mould growth.

Useful tips on how to prevent/reduce condensation and minor mould growth are provided to customers via our website, social media channels and in new lettings information packs.

## Theme 6 – Resident Voice

C20 What are the results of Linc’s most recent satisfaction survey?  
How have we acted on these results?

The results shown in the table below are those collated in our latest Welsh Government satisfaction survey, carried out in November 2023. We are at or above the June 2024 benchmarks in seven out of the 12 categories.

500 (10%) customers across a mix of general needs and older persons’ accommodation from a cross-section of the local authority areas we operate in took part in the survey.

Question	2023/2024	Benchmark (2024)	Position against benchmark
Service provided by Linc	88%	79%	Above
Neighbourhood	92%	81%	Above
Quality of home	92%	79%	Above
Safe and Secure Home	90%	84%	Above
Rent – Value for Money	80%	80%	Equal
Service Charge – Value for Money	62%	67%	Below
I Trust Linc	74%	75%	Below
Repairs and Maintenance	55%	73%	Below
ASB Handling	83%	62%	Above
Listens to Views and Acts on Them	83%	65%	Above
Influencing Decision Making	70%	62%	Below
Influencing Services Management	54%	62%	Below

There were a number of areas fell below benchmark based on customer feedback, particularly in satisfaction with repairs and maintenance, and customer involvement in decision-making and services. To address these issues, a number of improvement actions were undertaken including: conducting specific user research with customers to explore the feedback; collaborating with contractors to enhance performance; refreshing our contractor management approach; and reviewing complaint themes.

Real-time satisfaction data is collected for our key transactional services enabling systemic issues to be identified and improvement plans put in place. Results are reported to our Board as part of our suite of Key Performance Indicators.

## C21 What arrangements are in place to enable the residents to hold management to account for provision of services?

Linc has a Tenant and Resident Strategic Group (TRSG), which works with the association to provide scrutiny, challenge and support on strategic decision making.

## C22 In the last 12 months, in how many complaints has the national Ombudsman determined that maladministration took place?

Zero.



## **Theme 7 – Resident Support**

C23 What are the key support services Linc offers to its residents?  
How successful are these services in improving outcomes?


We provide customers with signposting and support through a variety of channels. Our Neighbourhood Income team provide regular signposting to customers relating to income. Our in-house support team provide wellbeing support to customers who maybe struggling to maintain their tenancies. During 2023/24, they managed 162 cases through a range of wellbeing initiatives, including support with challenges such as domestic abuse and hoarding.

These services support customers to manage and maintain their tenancies and minimise the need for legal action and ultimately evictions.

## **Theme 8 Placemaking**

C24 Describe Linc's community investment activities, and how it is contributing to positive neighbourhood outcomes for the communities in which its homes are located.

We aim to deliver sustainable communities providing safe, secure and energy efficient affordable homes whilst creating the right environments for people to flourish.



Our approach has been to embed Social Value in all our projects, meaningfully engaging with local communities at an early stage, making strong links with local customers, community groups, third-sector organisations and local businesses. Our key aspiration alongside building new homes is to maximise the positive impact on communities and minimise the negative. We are using development activity as a catalyst to create opportunities for local people, local businesses, the environment, and heritage.

The seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 form the 'golden thread' through everything we do. As adopters of the Placemaking Wales Charter, our designs incorporate opportunities to ensure that our schemes 'fit' into the existing context and into the existing communities, enabling a true sense of place.



# Governance

## Theme 9 – Structure and Governance

### C25 Is Linc registered with the national regulator of social housing?

Yes. Linc is a Registered Social Landlord, regulated by the Welsh Government with registration number L109.

### C26 What is Linc's most recent regulatory grading/status?

Linc's last Regulatory Judgement was received in July 2022 and was found to be Compliant (Green) for both Governance and Tenant Services, and for Financial Capability.

This is the highest category the Welsh Government can award.

### C27 Which Code of Governance does Linc follow?

We follow the Community Housing Cymru Code of Governance.

### C28 Is Linc run as a not-for-profit organisation?

Yes. Established in 1977, Linc-Cymru Housing Association Ltd (Linc) is a Registered Society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 and a Registered Social Landlord regulated by the Welsh Government.

All profits are reinvested for the benefit of our customers rather than being distributed to shareholders.

## C29 Explain how Linc's Board manages ESG risks. Are ESG risks incorporated into Linc's risk register?

Linc's Board own strategic risks and delegate responsibilities to its various Committees, eg, Audit, Development and Care Committees, its Senior Leadership and Risk Management Groups.

The Board defines a high-level statement on its appetite to risk taking and risk management within its Risk Management Framework. Both are reviewed annually. Strategic and operational risks are reviewed quarterly by the Risk Management Group and reports provided to Board, Audit Committee, and the other respective Committees.

Internal independent risk audits are carried out followed by in-depth risk assessments and are reported to Board.

ESG has been incorporated into the Strategic Risk Register within our risk around Regulation and WHQS. The new Group Risk Register will ensure ESG risks are captured appropriately.

C30 Has the housing provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches etc.) - that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?

Yes. One of our Nursing Homes, Tŷ Coch in Cardiff, was subject to an adverse inspection report resulting in a Priority Action Notice in March 2024. It was re-inspected in July 2024 and the Priority Action Notice was lifted and silent inspection ratings of Good across all 4 domains given by the Inspector.

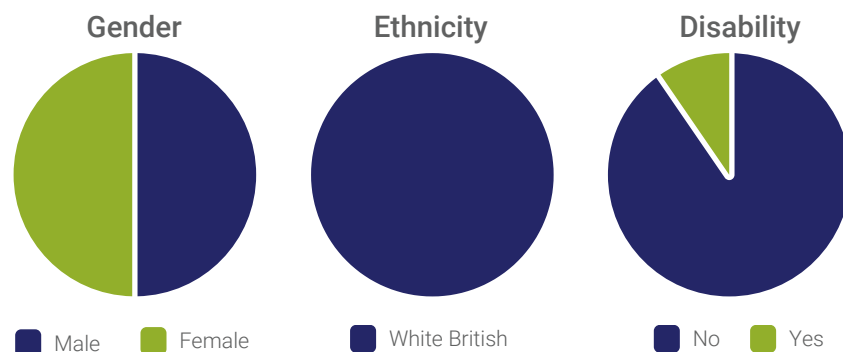
## Theme 10 – Board and Trustees

C31 How does Linc ensure it gets input from a diverse range of people, into the governance processes?

We are a participating member of the Pathways to Board Programme which together with other local RSL's assists applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds to obtain places on Boards.

We have adopted the Rooney Rule and are actively improving our data collection around equality and diversity, both for colleagues and customers.

The make-up of Linc's Board in March 2024 was:



Average age: **58**

Average tenure: **3.6 years**

Whilst we do not have resident board members, feedback is provided to the board via our Tenant and Resident Strategic Group by means of regular reports including the outcomes of user research projects they carried out.

We recognise we have work to do in terms of the diversity of our Board and this will be addressed as part of the merger with the Pobl Group.

### C32 What percentage of the Linc's Board and Senior Management Team have turned over within the last two years?

Between April 2022 and March 2024, Board turnover was 9% (one person) and during the same period, Senior Management Team turnover was 29% (one person).

### C33 Number of Board members on Linc's Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience.

Three non-executive Board members on Linc's Audit Committee in 2023/24 have relevant financial experience outside Linc, which is summarised below for these three individuals:

- Finance Director (Qualified Chartered Accountant and BA (Hons) Economics)
- Head of Savings/Area Manager Building Society (Masters – Business Admin/BSc - Banking and Finance/Chartered Institute Insurance)
- MBA and Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers.

### C34 What percentage of Linc's Board are non-executive directors?

As of 31 March 2024, 100% of Linc's board were non-executive directors.

### C35 Has a succession plan been provided to Linc's Board during the last 12 months?

Yes. Ahead of the merger with the Pobl Group, we worked with an independent governance specialist to map the skills and competencies needed for the new Group Board. This specialist supported us through the recruitment process, helping us create our approach to succession planning and NED development.

### C36 For how many years has Linc's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?

3 years.

### C37 When was the last independently-run, board-effectiveness review?

Campbell Tickell led on the Board recruitment process ahead of our merger with the Pobl Group in April 2024. This included a skills analysis to ensure the right mix of skills and competencies were secured for the new Group Board.

## C38 How does Linc handle conflicts of interest at the board?

Declarations of Conflicts of Interest are recorded at the start of each Board Meeting. Where a conflict is declared, Non-Executive Directors will withdraw from the discussion and decision.

A Non-Executive Director Code of Conduct is in place.

## **Theme 11 – Staff Wellbeing**

### C39 Does Linc pay the Real Living Wage?

Linc paid the Real Living Wage across its services including nursing homes and independent living schemes, except for a small number of roles from a previous transfer of engagements which paid at lower levels during 2024.

### C40 What is the median gender pay gap?

Our Mean Gender Pay Gap is 18.1% and Median is 8.7%

Our intention is to reduce the gap and have parity across the workforce. As we merge with the Pobl Group, we will continue to support the recruitment and promotion of women at managerial and senior management levels. We plan to work together to review all our combined roles along with our recruitment process and succession planning. We will ensure women are not at a disadvantage at any of the stages. Our new approach to agile working and the Group's family friendly policies support this.



## C41 What is the CEO: median worker pay ratio?

This is 6.22 and is recorded in the Community Housing Cymru CEO Pay Transparency Report.

## C42 How does Linc ensure equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is promoted across its staff?

We embrace diversity and seek to create a sense of belonging for staff and this is supported by the FREDIE approach across the group. We have been awarded the Investors in Diversity accreditation and are Disability Confident. We have signed up to Tai Pawb's 'Deeds Not Words Pledge' and are committed to tackling injustice and to be leaders in equality and inclusion.

Targeted mandatory training undertaken this year, provided colleagues with a better understanding of equality, and belonging and supported us to promote positive action.

Our merger with the Pobl Group will see a further enhanced approach with its 'Inclusive by Instinct Plan', setting out commitments around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and its FREDIE Steering Group to inform, challenge, monitor and innovate to ensure we demonstrate fairer outcomes for colleagues and customers.

## C43 How does Linc support the physical and mental health of its staff?

Linc has a dedicated Wellbeing Officer, reviewing current wellbeing issues, emerging themes and how they may be able to assist colleagues' wellbeing. They provide face to face and online support to colleagues if they have any worries or difficulties that may be affecting them at work or home. Our Wellbeing Officer works closely with colleagues who are on long term sick providing supports to them and their managers to return to work and maintain attendance.

Our Wellbeing Strategy focusses on the four pillars of wellbeing, Financial, Physical, Emotional and Societal, with our Wellbeing Champions encouraging staff to talk about their concerns early on supporting them to prevent matters escalating.

Most of our managers have been trained in iAct, an accredited training programme assisting in the recognition of indicators of stress and support their staff members when they may need it.

We embrace diversity and seek to create a sense of belonging for staff and this is supported by the FREDIE approach across the Group. We have been awarded the Investors in Diversity accreditation and are Disability Confident. Signed up to Tai Pawb's 'Deeds Not Words' Pledge, we are committed to tackling injustice and to be leaders in equality and inclusion.

Our Employee Assistance Helpline is a free service available to all staff 24/7.

## C44 How does Linc support the professional development of its staff?

Linc operates a programme of regular meetings for all colleagues with their line managers. In these meetings, wellbeing and personal development and learning are key discussion points. We actively encourage and support colleagues to attain relevant professional qualifications, from financial, emotional and time perspectives. Support is provided to colleagues to undertake learning outside of professional qualifications to enhance their knowledge skills and experiences.