



The
Sovini
Group



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

2024-2029

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01 Foreword

Roy Williams – Sovini Group CEO

In any successful organisation it is important that the ethos of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion comes from the top and this commitment is backed by the senior leadership team and Board of management.

What is most pleasing to me is the way our staff from all levels of the organisation have taken this commitment, have ran with it, using their vast creative abilities and will to 'do the right thing' and have made it their own.

I am immensely proud that our progress in this area over recent times has been driven by the passion, hard work and vision of our staff-led 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group', our 'Inclusion Squad' and the contributions of all that have attended and contributed to the numerous events and initiatives that we have facilitated.

Over the period of the last Twelve months alone, since this Strategy was last refreshed, this has been instrumental to a number of achievements. Amongst many others, we have:

- Improved scores in staff perception surveys across all categories (and for all companies in the Sovini Group) including questions linked to equality, diversity and inclusion (achieving highest ever internal scores and benchmarked scores when compared with similar external organisations)
- Facilitated a number of open access 'lived experience' talks with invited guest speakers, improving awareness and understanding of the barriers experienced by individuals with a range of conditions and from different backgrounds e.g. disability in the workplace, living with Dyslexia and coping with eating disorders
- Expanded our mailing list for our job vacancies to draw from a wider pool of talent, including 30 organisations that provide specialist equality, diversity and inclusion support / advocacy services and changed job adverts to include a prominent equality statement
- Facilitated a 'neurodiversity celebration week' and commenced a 'supported internship programme', providing work experience and improving the employment prospects for young people with special educational needs
- Developed a universal equality, diversity and inclusion form to be used across all parts of the business to improve the data we hold about our customers, so we can tailor services to their individual needs



- Improved our connections with local advocacy groups to ensure our customers (of our registered housing providers) get the support they need and so they can influence / have their say about the issues that are important to them e.g. 'Polskie Merseyside' helping our Polish customers take part in our 'Neighbourhood Café' events

As with everything we do in the Sovini Group we are consistently looking to improve and we will look to build upon these and many more successes over the period covered by this Strategy.

As we look forward, a key theme for this Strategy and weaving its way through all our Strategic documents is our cast iron commitment to ensure our services are equitable and accessible to all groups of people regardless of their characteristics, background or circumstances.

This applies equally to what we do as a Group of interconnected businesses with significant impact on local economies, what we do as an exemplar employer and what we do for the thousands of customers we provide services to, on a daily basis.

We know that there will be challenges to realising this ambition, not least of which will be making improvements to ways in which we capture data and the analysis of this information to ensure we identify any areas where there are potential barriers or issues that we need to address.

Having witnessed the year-on-year progress that has been made since we first introduced our Group-wide Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy three years ago, I have every confidence that we will once again rise to these challenges and will continue to work towards our shared vision of 'a better future' for all.

Roy Williams

02 SUMMARY OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Overall aim	Ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at the forefront of all business activities including strategic planning and service delivery across the Sovini Group		
Areas of focus	Customer Service Delivery	Role as Employer	Role as Business Entities
What we want to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent and accessible customer services that are available to all groups regardless of protected characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a working environment where everyone feels welcome and is able to achieve their potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of equitable and ethical business activities that create a better future for all
What we will do (objectives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess services for any barriers and reduce or remove where possible • Work with customers to ensure we identify and meet support / communication requirements • Promote cultural / characteristic inclusion activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote staff-led engagement, inclusion and welfare activities • Monitor and assess recruitment / development opportunities and ensure they are free of potential barriers • Take a zero-tolerance stance to all forms of harassment, discrimination or unjust practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in strategic equality, diversity and inclusion partnerships • Promote ethical business practices through procurement and business relations • Provide support for community based equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe, sustainable and inclusive communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract and retain an excellent and diverse workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovini Group achieves social gain in areas of operation
Links to wider Sovini objectives / Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovini Group Strategic Plan, Individual entity strategic plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovini Group Strategic Plan, Sovini People Management Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sovini Group Strategic Plan, Sovini Value for Money Strategies, Sovini Procurement Strategy • Environmental, Social, Equality reporting
Monitoring and Measuring	Customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction, benchmarking, management information, awards and accreditations, attainment of standards, legal compliance		

03

INTRODUCTION AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The Sovini Group was established to bring together a diverse range of entities that work in close collaboration for mutual benefit across a range of interlinked business areas. Listed below are the individual entities that make up the Sovini Group:

- Sovini Ltd
- One Vision Housing Ltd (OVH)
- Pine Court Housing Association Ltd (PCHA)
- Sovini Charities Ltd
- Sovini Commercial Ltd
- Sovini Property Services Ltd (SPS)
- Sovini Trade Supplies Ltd (STS)
- Sovini Homes Ltd
- Sovini Construction Ltd
- Sovini Waste Solutions Ltd
- Amianto Services Ltd
- Teal Scaffold Ltd
- Sovini Land Acquisition Ltd



Whilst each entity has its own governance arrangements, management structures and clearly defined strategic aims and objectives, there is a common purpose of 'creating opportunities and changing lives' and a shared vision for 'a better future'.

To support this common purpose, a number of cross-cutting strategies (such as this EDI Strategy) have been developed that outline expectations and commitments of the Group as a whole, regardless of the areas of specialism or service delivery, however, there is a key focus throughout this Strategy on the services to customers received by the Group's Registered Providers of Social Housing.

Customer representatives were consulted in the Strategy review process for this iteration, are integral to on-going monitoring and will be included in all future reviews.

By giving support and endorsement for this Strategy each Sovini entity aims to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in everything that they do. To achieve this, the Strategy identifies **three key provisions** for action (see below on Page 8), monitoring and continuous improvement.

When viewed together these three areas cover the entirety of business operations both for the individual entities within the Sovini Group but also the collective strength of the Group structure and positive impacts that it has when working together to

promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

In delivering this Strategy as it evolves and changes over time, the Sovini Group will always ensure it complies and where possible exceeds the prevailing legal and regulatory requirements.

This will include having due regard to 'Protected Characteristics' as defined in the Equality Act 2010, as set out below, meeting all other requirements of the Act and ensuring the relevant entities in the Sovini Group are compliant with the Charities Commission rules.

Protected Characteristics:

- Age
- Gender reassignment (gender identity / expression)
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

04

STRATEGIC AIMS

- Provide strong leadership and influence across all Boards to promote equalities issues at the local, regional and national scale
- Provide accessible services free from any barriers, real or perceived, that are available for all groups, are tailored to individual needs and address inequalities
- Go beyond compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements by developing and adopting best practice
- Promote good relations between all groups with protected characteristics
- Maintain and develop strong working culture where there is equality of opportunity for all groups, everyone feels valued / included and diversity is actively encouraged and appreciated
- Ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in all decision making, business practices, service delivery, relations (internally/externally) and through supply chain management
- Never ignore – where we see discrimination, victimisation, harassment or differential treatment as a result of personal characteristics we take affirmative, corrective action
- Never stand still and seek year-on-year improvement and innovation

The above strategic aims will be incorporated into our Group-wide Performance Management System and their delivery will be supported by a number of 'objectives' or assigned as actions in team or individual Service Delivery Plans.

This will ensure we are able to monitor and report on progress and take remedial steps if any areas of concern or anomalies are identified.

We produce an Annual Report into our equality, diversity and inclusion activities / achievements which has improved our visibility and accountability for our Boards, our staff and our customers.



05 KEY PROVISIONS FOR ACTION

- **Customer Service Delivery**

This will include services that are provided on a transactional or contractual basis e.g. services provided to tenants and leaseholders in rented accommodation or in the provision of internal business relationships between Sovini Group entities and those with external partners

- **Role as Employers**

Recognising that the greatest asset of the Sovini Group are the circa 830 employees, all Sovini entities aim to promote fair recruitment / working practices and opportunities for progression that are available for all

- **Role as Business Entities**

As a significant player in the regional economy, Sovini Group entities recognise their responsibility to promote good business practices internally, in the supply chain relationships they establish / maintain and for the benefit of the wider communities in which they operate

The Strategy, projects forward on a rolling basis in five yearly timeframes to fit with the wider strategic planning framework within the Group and will be subject to an annual refresh and review.

Led by our multi-team Equalities Steering Group, the aim of this refresh will be to constantly improve and move our equalities agenda forward, recognising areas where we can do more or do things differently and ensuring the Group entities lead the way as champions of equality, diversity and inclusion.

We will look to build on many of the initiatives commenced in the last iteration of the strategy to ensure there are no barriers in accessing our services for all of our customers, in particular the tenants of our Registered Providers.

The refresh process will also ensure there is appropriate read across and synchronicity with wider strategic planning across the Sovini Group and the aims outlined below pervade and guide other plans such as our People and Learning Strategies, Value for Money Strategies and individual entity Corporate Plans.



06

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The following section provides an overview of the Sovini Group's current position (June 2024) in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion provisions and achievements.

The overview is broken down across the three Key Provisions for action and is applicable to all Sovini Group entities unless there are specific issues that apply to one or more entities, in which case these will be identified separately.

Key Provisions and actions

Customer Service Delivery

- Good levels of 'customer profile' information available for registered providers existing customers - (equalities information provided on a voluntary basis relating to protected characteristics of lead household members). Ability to analyse information (using Power BI Reporting) per characteristic and finer level of detail e.g. by ethnic group, against customer satisfaction reporting to identify any anomalies or barriers to service, including complaints, lettings and transactional survey results. We are continuing to progress a number of initiatives to improve the capture of customer profile information and ensure existing data is accurate, including reminders to customers with call hold messages, on automatic email replies and through the functionality of the 'My Account' facility on websites (Registered Providers only). Our aim is to improve data held about whole households and ensure all communication needs are met
- We have carried out a 'data cleansing exercise' and made contact with every customer who had previously stated that English was not their first language to ensure communication needs are addressed in the best way possible
- We have established a cross-team 'Knowing our Customers' working group to ensure better use of data from all angles e.g. linking asset management information with customer data for proactive maintenance and investment prioritisation
- Linked to above we have established a customer 360° and segmentation project ensuring there is better data capture of customer information, improved analysis of the information held and better synchronicity between systems
- Through collection of Tenant Satisfaction Measures on an ongoing basis, via structured perception surveys, we

are able to identify quickly any areas of underperformance / dissatisfaction and put improvement plans in place including specific actions relating to customer characteristics

- A number of specialist support services are available to sustain tenancies for vulnerable groups e.g. comprehensive aids and adaptations service (assisting customers with disabilities – registered providers only) and furnished tenancies
- Working in partnership with specialist service providers we have established a refuge facility for families fleeing domestic violence
- Carried a comprehensive review of customer communications methodology to ensure inclusivity for customers who do not or cannot access information digitally
- Safeguarding provisions in place to protect vulnerable groups – Sovini-wide, including policies, procedures, staff training and mobile reporting applications (includes areas where there are equalities implications concerns raised in regard to age, gender, race, modern slavery)
- No current or historic complaints / legal challenges against Sovini companies on equalities grounds and full compliance with Equalities Act and, where applicable, regulatory requirements e.g. Regulatory Framework for Social Housing Providers (applicable to registered providers only) and Charities Commission compliance
- Effective policies and procedures in place for tackling hate crime (including Customer Access Team acting as hate crime reporting centres) and development of specialist roles within the Team e.g. safeguarding and support for those who experience domestic abuse

Role as Employers

- Full suite of People and Learning Policies in operation to protect staff and ensure compliance with employment / equalities legislation. Most relevant Policies include:
 - Bullying, Grievance and Harassment Policy – setting out Sovini Group's zero tolerance stance to all forms of harassment in the workplace or associated with work related activities. This Policy has close links with the Disciplinary Policy and the Sovini commitment to fully investigate any allegations of harassment on any grounds and take action where staff are found to be responsible for these types of behaviour
 - Family Friendly Policy – setting out the provisions Sovini entities have in place to facilitate maternity, paternity, adoption and surrogacy arrangements
 - Special Leave and Flexible Working Policy – Including details of Sovini entities response for dealing with flexible working requests (as outlined in the 'Children and Families Act 2014')
- High levels of staff profile information available which can be analysed against recruitment / promotion and staff satisfaction results for any anomalies, under-representation or potential barriers to progression (with affirmative answers in all information fields) increasing from 40% completion to rates to those consistently above 85% over recent times. We have also increased the range of questions to ensure

we capture data on issues that may require additional support e.g. caring responsibilities

- Mandatory equality diversity inclusion training via e-learning in place for existing staff and Board Members as part of induction / on-boarding which is regularly refreshed. We have extended the range of non-mandatory e-learning courses available for staff on equalities issues in support of awareness campaigns we have supported during the year e.g. fertility awareness and dealing with the menopause
- Free to access employee assistance scheme available – with referral to specialist support groups and advice for any member of staff that may be experiencing issues impacting on their wellbeing (either work related or in their personal life outside of the workplace)
- Internal staff surveys / feedback and those linked to external awards and accreditations e.g. Investors in People show high levels of satisfaction / perception with equalities provisions
- Multi-team staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group established to drive forward actions and agenda
- Regular 'E & D Focus-On' communications to all staff to raise awareness of equalities issues and start conversations at team meetings, with ability of staff to suggest topic areas
- Regular open access 'Lived Experience' talks to provide first-hand knowledge and to raise awareness of equalities issues
- The Group continues to buck the national trend on gender pay at Group level the mean pay gap for woman is -3.5% and median is -9.33%. On ethnicity pay in October 2023 the gap stood at 6.24% (mean) 4.52% (median) - which is line with employee make-up
- Strong culture and track record of promoting employee health and wellbeing including mental health as demonstrated by achievement of Investors in People – Platinum Standard
- Sovini Group members have attained or retained the following Charter-marks:
 - Mindful Employer (demonstrating the organisations commitment to better mental health at work)
 - Navajo Charter Mark (Sponsored by In-Trust Merseyside and supported by the LGBTQI+ community)
 - Disability Confident Employer (demonstrating a commitment to inclusive recruitment practices and positive workplace cultures)
 - Fair Employer Charter (recognising employers who promote fair working practices e.g. payment of real living wage)
 - Menopause Workplace Pledge (encouraging a supportive environment for colleagues experiencing the menopause)
 - Caring Business Charter (awarded to businesses who offer high quality employment opportunities to young people who have experience of the care system or are ex-forces)
- An Equalities Hub has been established on the employee engagement application providing access to a wealth of equalities information and the popular chat facility linked to the Equalities Staff Group
- In 2023 we recommenced our 'Pathway into construction' initiative providing work placements for female higher education students and encouraging female entrants into the construction industry

- Commencing in 2023 and ending in July 2024, we facilitated a neurodiverse internship programme offering paid work experience placements for school leavers with special educational needs – increasing full time employment prospects for all attendees

- We have revised our annual staff appraisal process to include an assessment of all leaning support needs e.g. Dyslexia and visual impairments so these can be addressed when providing training materials / most appropriate learning methods

Role as Business Entities

- No legal or regulatory challenges or prosecutions for breach of equalities legislation on record
- Modern Slavery Act compliance actions and statements in place
- Chain of custody accreditations in place for timber imports (to ensure all timber products come from sustainable and ethical sources i.e. they are free from exploitative working practices such as forced child labour)
- Preferred supplier arrangements require proof of equality, diversity and inclusion commitments / prosecutions and these are monitored for compliance
- EDI Policies in place for individual entities and commitment backed by Group-wide Policy Statements
- Key partner in local strategic forums e.g. Sefton Adult Safeguarding Board (and sub-groups), Sefton Childrens Safeguarding Board, MAPPA, MARAC, Sefton Domestic Abuse Partnership, Sefton Children and Young People's Partnership Board
- PCHA is a specialist BME housing provider for the Chinese and Southeast Asian communities in the Liverpool City Region and is a member of the BME National - (A national collective of housing associations promoting equality and diversity in the delivery of housing and support services)
- Provided sponsorship and wider financial support for cultural events and initiatives to promote racial harmony, cultural awareness, celebrating diversity e.g. support for 'Inclusion Plus Football Club' (Merseyside's first women's LGBTQIA+ football team), Community-led Chinese New Year Celebrations and support for vulnerable members of the Chinese community in food package distribution and partnership work with 'The Florrie' delivering Christmas pallets to the BME community



07 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

As with everything we do in the Sovini Group we want to constantly improve and will strive to be the best that we can. The boxed section below highlights specific areas across our role as service providers, employers and business entities where we want to improve and will focus our efforts on but we also believe it is important to highlight 'why' do this and what benefits it will bring.

Listed below is the 'rationale' or 'thinking' behind our support for promoting equality and diversity and inclusion in everything the Sovini Group does:

- We believe, as a Group built on sound ethical principles and commitment to excellent customer services, that promoting equality, celebrating diversity and facilitating inclusion are the right and just things to do
- We believe in diverse communities where everyone regardless of their personal characteristics, background or beliefs is treated fairly and given the same access to opportunities and services, tailored to individual needs
- We believe we can make a positive contribution in eliminating all forms of discrimination, victimisation and harassment
- We believe that diverse workforces with a wealth of cultural influence are more innovative, productive and lead to better decision making
- We believe in our role as influencers and leaders to drive positive change in the communities we represent and work in
- We believe that that promoting equality, celebrating diversity and facilitating inclusion makes good business sense

Key Provisions and actions

Customer Service Delivery

- Be recognised by customers as being fair and equitable service providers and attract new customers from diverse backgrounds
- Provide a range of services that have been tested and are regularly audited for ease of accessibility for all groups and needs (ensuring we assess accessibility issues through our transactional and perception surveys)
- Ensure all customers:
 - Know how to access our repairs services
 - Know how to report issues that may be of concern to them
 - Know how to access the complaints service for any areas of dissatisfaction
 - Have appropriate opportunities to influence service delivery
 - Through better data capture, ensure our service offer is tailored to individual customer's needs, including:
 - Addressing any support needs they may have through direct means and partnership working with other agencies
 - Ensuring we are using their preferred methods of communication
 - Making reasonable adjustments to our service provision to take account of any vulnerabilities – either enduring or due to specific circumstances helping them to live independent lives, sustain tenancies (registered providers only), play an active role in community lives and add value to those communities
 - Addressing any concerns they have about barriers to a fair service that may be related to a protected characteristic, in any way
- Go beyond legal and regulatory minimum requirements and develop and adopt best practice that is learnt from other providers and by working in partnership with representative groups and advocacy services
- Build upon existing customer engagement structures to ensure there are clear lines of influence and feedback between customers and governance arrangements / decision making for Sovini entities, taking lived experiences of equalities issues into consideration
- Demonstrate how the Sovini registered providers meet Public Sector Equality duties



Role as Employers

- Continue to meet all legislative and regulatory requirements (exceeding statutory minimums)
- Attract and retain the best people and increase the diversity of the workforce at all levels (reflecting the make-up of the communities in which we operate)
- Continue to narrow gaps and champion a 'levelling up agenda' e.g. our progress in gender pay gap reporting
- Increase staff satisfaction / perception of Sovini as a fair and equitable employer and address any areas of dissatisfaction or under-performance with guidance from the Sovini Staff Equalities Steering Group / Inclusion Squad
- Retain / achieve awards and externally verified accreditations that demonstrate Sovini commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion provision and that act as driver of continuous improvement
- Mental Health Awareness training to be rolled out to all managers and specialist training provided for aspiring managers / leaders
- Promote diversity in recruitment and hiring by reviewing all job descriptions and person specifications to attract a broader candidate pool
- Encourage diverse interview panels to bring different perspectives

Role as Business Entities

- Ensure strategic direction of the Sovini Group entities is informed by diverse opinion / lived experience (as more diverse teams are proven to add value to business decision making)
- Be a partner of choice for business activity based on our strong support for equality, diversity and inclusion with like-minded companies in supply chain management and any joint ventures
- Increase influence at local / regional strategic forums including statutory delivery partners such as local and combined authorities to champion equality agenda and support national campaigns, where applicable
- Provide support for initiatives / agencies within areas of operations that promote cultural cohesion and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

08 HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

The following section considers the Strategic Aims outlined above on page 5, our assessment of 'where we want to be' and translates these into actions or 'objectives' that we intend to undertake over the next five years.

The high-level actions identified below will be incorporated into cross-organisational Service Delivery Plans for the period 2024-29.

Key Provisions and actions

Customer Service Delivery

- Build on the improved reporting capabilities / analytics of customer profile information across a wider range of service delivery areas and make results available for senior management teams, Boards of Sovini entities, EDI Steering Group and customer representation groups (where necessary working with external advocacy groups if any barriers or adverse / differential service provisions are identified)
- Continue campaign to complete datasets of customer profiling information where information is missing across certain categories and improve capture of whole household information beyond lead tenants (registered providers only)
- Increased resources available in the Customer Experience Team including appointment of a Customer Experience Co-ordinator (due to start in June 2024) and creation of Customer Experience Apprentice position (recruitment expected in September 2024)
- Carry out extensive equality impact assessment on access to all frontline services / key decisions including customer journey mapping (registered providers only), identifying any potential barriers and delivering actions for improvement
- Over 2024, develop and implement a 'See Something – Say Something Policy' or similar, to complement the already operational 'Vulnerable Persons and Reasonable Adjustments' Policies (registered providers only) – to ensure fair access to services and greater staff awareness of customer vulnerabilities
- Establish customer-led equality, diversity and inclusion focus groups (with interest in specific protected characteristics – where appropriate) or work with existing representative structures to incorporate equality aspects into their remit e.g. Tenant Scrutiny Groups. Work collaboratively with customer representative groups and Sovini Equalities Steering Group on problem solving where any discrepancies or potential barriers to service are identified and develop mitigation measures
- Provide equality, diversity and inclusion training for involved customers
- Develop greater customer involvement in Equality Impact Assessment process for changes to service provision – (Registered Providers Only) in line with the Customer Voice Strategy (OVH)
- Develop better signposting to support networks / partnership working with external agencies e.g. Victim Support in anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse cases (including customer self-access directory available via websites – Registered Providers only)
- Through marketing and website promote awareness and participation in local cultural events
- Provide dedicated funding and administration support for customers to hold their own cultural enrichment and awareness raising events (with support from central Stakeholder Engagement and Marketing and Communications Teams)
- Ensure customer satisfaction and perception monitoring captures customer opinions on equality, diversity and inclusion performance and benchmark results with peer providers to set targets for improvement
- Explore options to develop a 'good neighbourhood management standard' (registered providers only) in conjunction with customers that promotes inclusive communities
- Work with customers to develop and implement a staff 'Code of Conduct' as per the requirements of the 'Competency and Conduct Standard of the Regulatory Framework (when enacted)



Role as Employers

- Continue to develop staff led equality, diversity and inclusion support networks and initiatives (including 'lunch and learn' events and 'lived experience' guest speakers)
- Retain / achieve awards and externally verified accreditations e.g. Navajo and fulfil all action plan requirements
- Maintain campaign to capture complete datasets on staff profiling information (demonstrating why this is important, ensuring it is up-to-date and analysing information to identify any areas for further action)
- Amend internal staff satisfaction monitoring to ensure it fully captures perception of equality diversity provisions
- Continue to produce regular equality, diversity and inclusion broadcasts via Executive Management Team Vlog and Equalities Steering Group
- Build on established links with local equality, diversity and inclusion networks and advocacy groups and use to broaden appeal / coverage of vacancies including Liverpool City Region Equality Hub
- Review recruitment pages on website to ensure there is clear support / encouragement of more diverse range of applicants (include testimonies from existing staff)
- Maintain online diversity forum via internal communication channels (OurSpace and Microsoft Teams)
- Capture equalities information at all stages of job application and monitor for any potential barriers to employment
- Deliver manager recruitment training to include awareness of unconscious bias in shortlisting and selection
- Over the course of this Strategy aim for all people managers across all Sovini entities to attain Level 2 qualifications in mental health awareness / mental health first aid
- Build on links established with local training colleges to promote 'Women into trades' campaign and develop guaranteed interview scheme for female applicants for trade vacancies
- Explore options for establishing a pathways into employment and housing scheme for ex-offenders and prison leavers
- Ensure EDI monitoring as a standard agenda item at team meetings
- Continue to facilitate equality, diversity and inclusion awareness raising campaigns and participation events
- Contribute to sector wide reporting being developed by National Housing Federation on equalities monitoring
- Encourage staff to access optional EDI training available via 'My Learning'
- Examine succession and development opportunities within the Group to ensure no barriers exist for any group with protected characteristics
- Provide continued support for neurodiverse students, improving employment prospects through internship programme
- Expanding the training provided to frontline staff to ensure they understand how to support specific customer needs (in line with recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report – 'relationship of equals')

Role as Business Entities

- Continue partnership working with fellow housing providers as part of Liverpool City Region Housing Association Group to share best practice / benchmarking information / promotion of events on equality, diversity and inclusion issues
- Increase active membership of local strategic forums to influence equality issues
- Improved marketing of Sovini Group offer with stance on equality, diversity and inclusion as a selling point for like-minded companies
- Demonstrate strong performance and track record on equality, diversity and inclusion provisions as part of Environment Social Governance (ESG) reporting with funding providers and as part of marketing opportunities
- Develop sponsorship opportunities to promote local equality / advocacy groups and events (linked to revised internal approach to maximising the benefits of supply chain relationships and achieving value for money)
- Work with advocacy and support groups to review service literature to ensure it is accessible to all groups
- Provide analysis of known profile information (customers and staff) including any remedial actions to Registered Provider and Sovini Group Boards – annually
- Provide EDI training to Boards
- Ensure the composition of Boards are reflective of the communities in which the Sovini Group operates
- Improve equality impact assessment processes to capture any planned changes to frontline service



09 HOW ARE WE GOING TO MEASURE IT?

We know that there will be wider business benefits from delivering on the actions outlined above and additional improvements we identify as this Strategy evolves and progresses. Promoting equality, celebrating diversity and facilitating inclusion will enrich the communities we operate in, make working for the Sovini Group a better all-round experience and will improve performance and profitability.

It may be difficult to attribute some of these wider benefits directly to the actions outlined above although we will monitor the overall impacts over time. Listed below, however, are

the ways in which we will be able to assess the direct effectiveness / impacts of our equality, diversity and inclusion actions:

Key Provisions and actions

Customer Service Delivery

- Transactional surveys and satisfaction monitoring
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures and reporting requirements
- Focus Group feedback (internal and customer-led)
- Benchmarking
- EIA actions

Role as Employers

- Staff survey results
- Diversified workforce – as evidenced by staff profiling information
- Collated feedback from job applicants (both successful and unsuccessful)
- Quarterly report on EDI activity made available to all staff
- Report of staff / customer profiling data and analysis provided to OVH Board on an annual basis

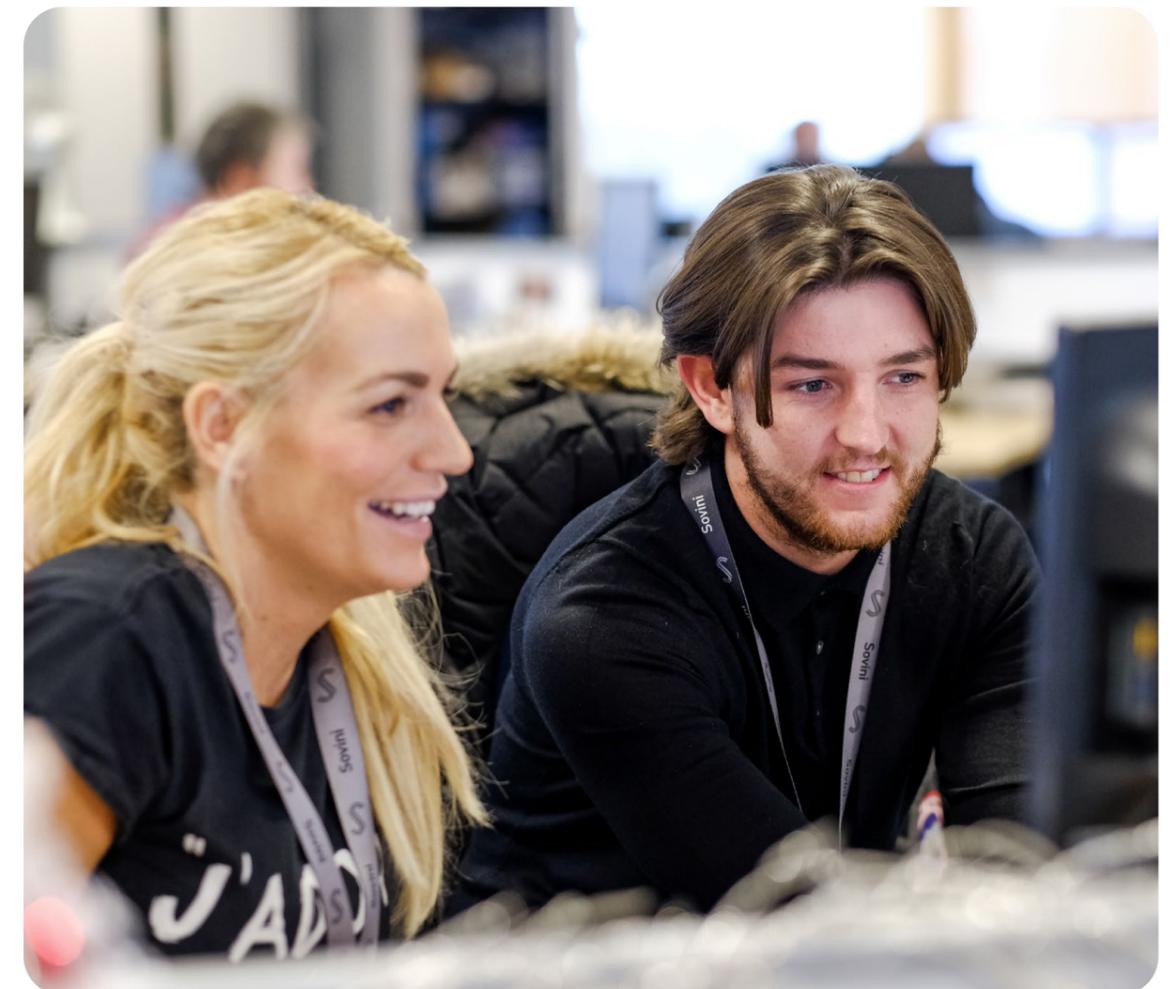
Role as Business Entities

- Legal / regulatory compliance

10 REVIEWING OUR APPROACH

Whilst this a five-year strategy, it is scheduled to be reviewed on an annual basis, with the next scheduled review to take place in July 2025. However, any changes in relevant legislation will be considered throughout the year.

The EDI Steering Group will be responsible for undertaking a review of progress in delivering the strategy and this progress will be reported to Board as part of the annual review.





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