



The  
**Sovini**  
Group

# A Better Future

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion  
Annual Report**

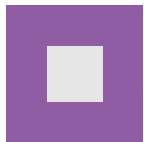
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2021/22

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# 01

## CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHANGING LIVES

**Our customers, colleagues and the communities we serve are at the heart of everything we do.**

We promote a positive culture of valuing and celebrating diversity. Our work environment is welcoming, and colleagues can expect to be treated fairly, with respect and free from discrimination

Throughout our workplaces and communities, we ensure the correct working practices, culture and behaviours are in place to provide a supportive environment for all our stakeholders to thrive in.

This report highlights the Group's proactive approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion during 2021/22.





# 02

## CHAMPIONING CHANGE

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During 2021/22, our Diversity Champions continued to champion change, supporting the Diversity Steering Group to set the strategic direction for equality and diversity in line with the organisation's values.

We currently have Diversity Champions from across the Group, whose role is to promote and improve diversity at The Sovini Group, creating an inclusive culture for all employees.

The Diversity Forum is a thriving environment, full of like-minded colleagues with a collective ambition of celebrating diversity, embracing cultural differences and aspiring to create the happiest, healthiest workplace for all colleagues.





# 03 OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As an organisation, we are proud to promote a positive culture of valuing and celebrating diversity. Our work environment is welcoming, and colleagues can expect to be treated fairly, with respect and free from discrimination.



This commitment is supported by the accreditations and charter marks which The Sovini Group has been awarded, and during 2021/22 we were proud to be named as a Mindful Employer, Disability Confident Employer and to have achieved the NAVAJO Charter Mark.

## MINDFUL EMPLOYER

The Sovini Group is an accredited Mindful Employer, recognising our commitment to better mental health at work.



## NAVAJO CHARTER MARK

In July 2021, The Sovini Group proudly received the Navajo accreditation: a quality mark sponsored by In-Trust Merseyside and supported by the LGBTQ+ community networks.



## DISABILITY CONFIDENT EMPLOYER

The Sovini Group is a Disability Confident Employer, recognised for our commitment to inclusive recruitment practices and changing behaviours and cultures in the workplace.





# 04

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Understanding the diversity within our workforce ensures that we can tailor and improve our services to suit individual needs, identify underrepresentation in the workplace and create a culture of openness and honesty, enabling employees to be themselves.

During 2021/22, The Sovini Group's Diversity Steering Group launched a campaign to achieve 100% profiling data for employees across the Group.

By February 2022, we had successfully collected 100% of profiling data for Teal Scaffold and Aminato Services, with the remainder of the Group at an impressive 84%.



# 05

## AN AUTHENTIC VOICE

Everyone has lived and everyone has life experiences. These experiences make us unique, but they can also bring us together.

Throughout 2021/22, we shared lived experiences with our customers and colleagues in a bid to create a community and culture that is inclusive and accepting of others.

Showcasing a broad range of topics, including gender reassignment, neurodiversity, mental health and suicide, the lived experience workshops gave individuals a platform to share their stories in order to raise awareness and challenge the stigma surrounding protected characteristics.

### World Suicide Prevention Day - Creating Hope Through Action

World Suicide Prevention Day, observed on 10 September every year, aims to start the conversation about suicide and to show that recovery is possible.



In the UK, men are three times as likely to die by suicide than women. In the Republic of Ireland, the rate is four times higher among men than women. While there has been a reduction in the number of people completing suicide over the last ten years, the numbers are still worryingly high.

Kylie Cousins, Development Coordinator for OVN shares her story to help break the taboo around suicide after her dad took his own life in December 2020.

Suicide.

A word that stops us in our tracks. A word that makes us all feel slightly uneasy; not in an ill-intentioned way, we just never really know how to approach the subject to the families bereaved by suicide.

I was exactly the same. I always thought they would never want to talk about it, or it would upset them, or it was simply too raw. It's a sensitive subject and I never wanted to say the wrong thing.

On 21st December, 2020, my dad took his own life.

Still, 9 months on, I'm struggling to comprehend the emotions I had felt on that day.

You never really expect it to happen to you, but when it does, there's no right or wrong way to react. I am a mother to 2 young children, so my main priority was making sure Christmas was perfect for them. One of the hardest things I have ever had to do is act like everything is okay, for their sake, while deep down I was drowning in every emotion possible.

### Black History Month blog

As part of our Black History Month celebrations, Dave Brown - Director of Operations for Pine Court - shares his story and tells us why he's #proutdobe a Liverpoolian of mixed heritage.



"Black History Month is celebrated each October in the UK and February in the United States.

"This year's Black History Month is more important than ever. It's not just a month to celebrate the continued achievements and contributions of Black people in the UK and around the world, it's also a time for continued action to tackle racism and ensure Black history is represented and celebrated all year round.

"I am of mixed heritage from a West African and Welsh background - my grandfather on my father's side was from Sierra Leone (but born a British subject as it was colonised at the time and didn't gain independence until April 1961) and his Mother was born in Scotland Road in Liverpool! Both of my mother's parents were from Wales and growing up, I was surrounded by my aunts and uncles and cousins many of whom are black Liverpoolians - the Liverpool Black community is the oldest in Europe. Despite challenges, Black presence has grown and contributed to all aspects of Liverpool life.

"The theme of this Year's Black History Month is "Proud to Be" and it's been a challenging time for many Black people, with so much in the media about racism, inequality and injustice.

"Reflecting back on my own life and especially since the Black Lives Matter movement last year has been a realisation for me as I continue to recall several incidents of discrimination and racism that I almost accepted as part of growing up in the city due to the ignorance and prejudices of others. I won't go into detail on this blog but may save that for another time. It's safe to say that I am proud to be both a Liverpoolian and from mixed heritage and accepted by my friends, peers and colleagues who see me for who I am despite coming from diverse backgrounds.

"Diversity should be recognised and celebrated - celebrating our differences, as well as our common interests, helps unite and educate us. I'll sign off with this quote from American filmmaker Ava DuVernay (check out "When they see Us")



06



## UK'S BEST WORKPLACES FOR WOMEN

In 2021 The Sovini Group was named UK's Best Workplace for Women™ for the fourth consecutive year. Great Place to Work® ranked the Group in pole position every year since the award's inception in 2018.

Great Place to Work® helps organisations create exceptional, high performing workplaces where employees feel trusted and valued. The UK's Best Workplaces™ for Women award enables outstanding organisations to celebrate their achievements, build their employer brand, and inspire others to take action.

The award recognises organisations who work hard to ensure people aren't discriminated against, create fair access and advancement for all, and foster a sense of value and empowerment in employees.

"We pride ourselves on our inclusivity, with equality at the heart of our award-winning culture. Our commitment to fair and equal rights for all remains strong. We continue to buck the national trend on gender pay\*, with a gap of -7.6% in 2021/22 in favour of female employees. In spite of the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, The Sovini Group has continued to thrive and build on its ethos to 'create opportunities and change lives'."

**Kerry Beirne,**  
Director of People and Learning

### Autism Acceptance Week – My Story

Lindsay Hill shares her family's story in celebration of Autism Acceptance Week.



One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, as well as their three million family members and carers.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world.

Lindsay Hill, Internal Communications Lead for Sovini shares her family's story in order to challenge the stigma around autism. Watch the video in full below:





# 07

## EMPOWERING FEMALE COLLEAGUES

The Group continues to buck the national trend on gender pay, with a gap of -7.6% in favour of female employees. As the UK's Best Workplace for Women™, we took the opportunity to celebrate and support our female colleagues throughout 2021/22.

### Pathway into Construction

After a short hiatus due to the pandemic, 2022 saw our Construction Pathway initiative make a welcome return. Female students from across the Liverpool City Region enrolled on the week-long programme which saw them gain valuable work experience in the industry alongside Group partners Sovini Trade Supplies, Sovini Property Services, Sovini Construction and Teal Scaffold.

Aimed at encouraging female students to consider a career in the construction industry, the Construction Pathway programme culminates in an interview skills and CV writing workshop with the Group's People & Learning Team, to support students in securing future employment.

### Women in Construction Week

Statistics suggest that in the UK's construction industry, women currently account for just over 10% of the workforce, reflecting their under-representation in an industry that fails to attract and retain females.

As an organisation, we are committed to challenging the preconceived perceptions of women working within the industry and show that as an employer we aim to recognise and eliminate any barriers.

During Women in Construction Week 2022, we put the spotlight on our female colleagues, giving them the opportunity to share their experiences and advice for other women considering a career in construction.



### Menopause matters

As an employer we are committed to supporting any colleagues who may be going through a difficult time, but we also recognise that we have a duty to ensure our managers are equipped with the information they need to deal with sensitive issues which they may encounter within their teams.

In 2021, all managers and colleagues were invited to attend a session on the menopause, delivered by YourTime2Change.





# 08

## SUPPORTING MEN AND THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

The Mental Health Foundation states that in England, around one in eight men has a common mental health problem such as depression, anxiety, panic disorder or obsessive-compulsive disorder, with the highest suicide rates amongst males aged 40 to 49.

During Men's Health Week 2021, we encouraged our male colleagues to share their #itsoknottobeok experiences.

Men from across the Group stepped forward to bravely share their stories – from grief counselling to attempted suicide – in a bid to encourage others who may be struggling to open up and ask for help.



# 09

## CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES

We strive to create thriving, inclusive communities for our colleagues and customers.

Our Community Development Fund is available for voluntary and community groups who want to deliver projects or services that benefit customers in our communities.

In 2021/22, The Sovini Group generated £23.6 million in social value\* (£43.7 million generated in uncertified social value)

\*Social value is a way of measuring the additional benefit to the wider community, over and above the services or goods delivered. We use the Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT) social value toolkit to independently certify the impact our services and activities have on the local community.







### Projects supported by the Community Development Fund in 2021/22 included:

#### Wirral Chinese Association

The funding for the Wirral Chinese Association School was utilised to promote the Chinese language and culture. The Wirral Chinese Association Luncheon Club has been running for circa 25 years and aims to prevent social isolation and provide those in our communities with an opportunity to socialise.

#### Activities included:

- Chinese New Year celebrations
- Festival celebration workshops and performances
- Chinese calligraphy
- Storytelling
- Arts

#### Netherton Park Neighbourhood Centre's Christmas campaign

Funding from the Community Development Fund was used to donate pallets of toys, food and hygiene products to the Netherton Park Neighbourhood Centre's Christmas campaign.

The donations were used to create Christmas care packages for vulnerable residents in the local community, with each pallet benefitting between 50 and 60 families.

#### Success through collaboration

We work in collaboration with partner organisations across the Liverpool City Region to support our customers and local communities.

#### New Horizons

Group partner, Pine Court Housing Association launched their employability project, New Horizons, which aims to encourage diversity and inclusion in workplaces across the Liverpool City Region. Working in partnership with The Women's Organisation and Steve Biko Housing Association, the project has been designed to help the local BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) community get employed through empowering sessions, including one-to-one employment advice, skills workshops, volunteering, and work placements.

#### Community COVID vaccine clinic

Bilingual employees from Pine Court Housing Association supported the NHS to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations to over 1500 people from the local Chinese community.

Pine Court employees provided a translation service between NHS staff who were administering the vaccine and members of the public attending the pop-up clinics during December 2021 and January 2022.

#### Keep Warm, Keep Well

Group partner Sovini Property Services supported Halton Housing's Keep Warm, Keep Well initiative in November 2021.

The campaign, which was aimed at vulnerable members of the community, provided information, advice and guidance to residents and the general public around healthy eating, staying active and keeping warm during the winter months amidst rising energy costs.

The event was also attended by partners including United Utilities and Citizen's Advice, and guests received slow cookers and other energy efficient household items free of charge to help them 'keep warm, keep well'.



# 10

## OUR VISION FOR EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for 2022 – 2027 outlines key areas for improvement.

With the support of the EDI Forum, Steering Group and partner organisations such as Navajo, The Sovini Group will work towards achieving the following:

### Customer Service Delivery

Here is what we want to achieve:

- Provide support to vulnerable customers, helping them to live independent lives and play an active part in their communities
- Be recognised as a fair and equitable service provider and attract new customers from diverse backgrounds
- Provide services that are easily accessible to all
- Work in partnership with representative groups and advocacy services to share best practice, ensuring our services exceed legal and regulatory requirements
- Utilise our Customer Voice Group to ensure clear lines of influence for customers, taking lived experiences of equality issues into consideration



### Our role as an employer

Here is what we want to achieve:

- Attract and retain the best people and increase the diversity of the workforce at all levels, reflecting the demographic of the communities in which we operate
- Continue to narrow the gender pay gap and champion a 'levelling up agenda'
- Measure and increase employee's perception of The Sovini Group as a fair and equitable employer
- External verification of our commitment to creating an inclusive workplace culture through awards and accreditation

### Role as Business Entities

Here is what we want to achieve:

- Ensure strategic direction of The Sovini Group is informed by diverse opinion and lived experience
- Increase influence at strategic forums to champion the equality agenda and support national campaigns
- Be a partner of choice for like-minded companies, based on our strong support for equality, diversity and inclusion in supply chain management



## Success

We Will Be The Best

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## Authenticity

We Do What We Say We Will Do

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## Passion

We Love What We Do

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## Courage

We Dare To Be Different

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## Enterprise

We Never Stand Still



sovini.co.uk



info@sovini.co.uk



03337 331 200