The Sovini Group

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

2026 - 2031



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# FOREWORD

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are fundamental to the values and purpose of The Sovini Group. They underpin our business success, shape a workplace where our people can thrive and ensure the delivery of fair, inclusive and accessible services for our customers and communities.**

Our commitment to EDI is embedded across our key strategies, including People, Customer Voice, Neighbourhoods and Communities and extends to the way we work with partners and suppliers. We expect our supply chain to share our values and support our commitment to equality, fairness and inclusion in everything we do.

This strategy supports an inclusive workplace where everyone can succeed, promotes equality of opportunity, and helps us attract and retain a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve. It is brought to life through the leadership, passion and everyday actions of our people and through strong, values-led partnerships.

**Roy Williams**
Group Chief Executive Officer

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# INTRODUCTION




The EDI Strategy has been developed in line with the Group's Corporate Strategy for 2026–2031, the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and wider human rights legislation. It supports our commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering inclusion across all protected characteristics.

## Overall Aim of Strategy

*To embed EDI across all aspects of service delivery and leadership, delivering fair, inclusive and accessible outcomes while creating a culture where our people and services reflect and respond to the diverse communities we serve.*

The EDI Strategy will cover three specific areas of priority, each with a core objective:

**Customers and Communities** – To deliver fair and accessible services that meet the diverse needs of both our internal and external customers tailoring support to individual circumstances

**People and Employment** - To foster an inclusive culture where our people feel a strong sense of belonging, and where our workforce increasingly reflects the diversity of the communities we serve

**Partnerships & Supply Chain** - To work with partners and suppliers who share our commitment to EDI, fostering inclusive relationships and ethical practices that support fair outcomes for our customers and communities

The EDI Strategy also supports delivery of The Sovini Group Corporate aims set out in the Sovini Group Strategic Plan:

- → To maximise efficiencies and Value for Money
- → To maximise stakeholder value
- → To ensure compliance and regulatory excellence
- → To maintain our established reputation
- → To promote excellence in people management
- → To maintain profitability and viability
- → To achieve growth and build resilience

The Sovini Group comprises not-for-profit organisations (One Vision Housing and Pine Court Housing Association), commercial companies and a charitable entity who are all united by our shared vision of 'a better future' and our mission of 'creating opportunities and changing lives.'

A Better Future

*creating opportunities & changing lives*

The EDI strategy has been designed to promote a culture that reflects the Group's values and code of behaviours:

## Our Values

**Enterprise** **Courage** **Passion**

**Authenticity** **Success**

## Code of Behaviour

The EDI strategy has been designed to promote a culture that reflects the Group's values and code of behaviours:

- → **Professional Competence:** Delivering services to the highest standards
- → **Respect:** Treating everyone with dignity and equally
- → **Honesty:** Being truthful and transparent in our communications with our customers
- → **Accountability:** Taking responsibility for our actions
- → **Pride in Work:** Delivering work that we're proud of

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# WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The following section provides an overview of The Sovini Group's current position in relation to the three key areas of priority.



## People and Employment

### Understanding Our People

We capture all EDI information, including caring responsibilities and neurodiversity, enabling us to better understand our workforce and provide more targeted and responsive support. A disability questionnaire has been introduced to further understand and support our disabled colleagues in their working environment.

### Partnerships and Networking

We have established a number of partnerships across the region to support with understanding and promotion of EDI within the Group resulting in attendance at recruitment events in local mosques and work experience for individuals from under-represented groups, particularly care leavers.

### Awareness and Training

Mandatory EDI training is in place for our people and Board Members. Additional learning is encouraged through MyLearning and other external training provisions. An annual calendar of events and awareness campaigns such as 'Autism Awareness' and the 'Pathway into Construction' for young females is communicated.

### Employee Voice

Our people feel able to be themselves, reflected in high satisfaction levels relating to EDI, with 94% of colleagues reporting they feel included and have a strong sense of belonging at work. We continue to create a culture that is open and supportive where our people feel that they can be themselves.

### Employee Profile

As a Group our workforce reflects the communities that we serve with increases in all under-represented groups within the last 12 months.




### Gender Pay Gap

We continue to buck the trend in relation to the Gender Pay Gap with the average hourly earnings being higher for women than men across the Group. In addition, in Sovini Property Services where there is a legal requirement to report on Gender Pay although it is still largely male dominated with the average hourly earnings being higher for men we have seen an improvement in over the last three years.

### Accreditations and Charter Marks

We have attained and retained a number of accreditations or Charter-marks such as the Mindful Employer, NAVAJO Charter Mark, Disability Confident Employer, Fair Employer Charter, Menopause Workplace Pledge and the Sefton Caring Business Charter.

### Meeting our Statutory Obligations

We continue to comply with all employment, equality and regulatory requirements exceeding statutory obligations and expectations. Providing a full suite of strategies and policies to ensure fair practice across the Group.

### Ambassadors and Champions

Diversity Leaders forum is held quarterly with employees from across the Group that act as ambassadors and advocates for groups that are under-represented, as well as a multi team EDI Steering Group established to drive forward actions.

## Customers and Communities

### Customer Data and Insight

We have continued to collect good levels of customer equality monitoring within our Registered Providers to reduce gaps. Data is analysed at a detailed level and combined with customer satisfaction, complaints, lettings etc. to identify potential barriers or service inequality.

### Initiatives and Awareness

We have launched specific initiatives to improve data quality including reminders, automated email responses and My Account. Over 100 fair access to service surveys have been carried out with customers with known vulnerabilities, resulting in a detailed action plan to improve services.

### Understanding Needs and Tailoring Services

A full data cleansing exercise has been completed for customers whose first language is not English to ensure communication needs are appropriately met. Specialist support services for vulnerable groups, including aids and adaptations, furnished tenancies, leaving care initiative and sustainability officer, and on-going support has been set up.

We continue to deliver community engagement activities, ensuring fair access to services for all customers. We have worked in partnership with local community groups to offer inclusive engagement opportunities.

### Working Groups and Continuous Improvement

'Knowing Our Homes and Customers' working group has been established to make better use of linked asset, customer and service data. Tenant 360/Silent Tenant report is in place to improve data capture, analysis and system alignment across the organisation.

### Accessibility and Inclusion

Customer communications have been reviewed to ensure inclusivity for customers who cannot access digital channels, resulting in improved use of preferred formats such as large print or hard copy.

### Safeguarding

Comprehensive safeguarding arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable customers, including policies, employee training and reporting mechanisms. Robust policies and procedures are in place for tackling hate crime, including designated reporting arrangements and specialist customer access roles.

## Partnerships and Supply Chain

### Chain of Custody

Chain of custody accreditations are held for timber imports, ensuring all timber products are sourced from sustainable and ethical suppliers that are free from exploitative labour practices, including forced child labour. This is supported by annual internal and external validation audits.

### Preferred Suppliers

Procurements and preferred supplier arrangements require demonstrable commitments to EDI during the onboarding process and tendering stage.

### Modern Slavery

We continue to raise awareness, implement actions and publish statements in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act across the supply chain and with all other stakeholders.

### Networking and Partnerships

The Group are key partners in local strategic forums, including the Sefton Adult Safeguarding Board and its sub-groups, Sefton Corporate Children's Board, Multi agency public protection arrangement (MAPPA), as required. Multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC), Sefton Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, and the Sefton Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

### Minority Specialists

Pine Court Housing Association (PCHA) are recognised as a specialist minority housing provider primarily for the Chinese and Southeast Asian communities in the Liverpool City Region and a member of BME National, a collective of housing associations promoting equality and diversity in housing and support services and influencing national Housing Policy.

### Sponsorships

The Group funds and sponsors local and cultural initiatives that promote inclusion, cultural awareness, and diversity. Sovini Charities and Sponsorship Steering Group oversees this, enabling organisations, including SMEs, to apply for sponsorship and receive targeted support.

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# WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

## People and Employment

→ To recruit a workforce that fully reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, across all companies at all levels of the Group.

→ To embed EDI as part of everyday conversations across all teams, with employees consistently demonstrating inclusive behaviours in the workplace.

→ To further support care leavers, offering clear pathways into work.

→ Continue to strengthen a recruitment approach that attracts and selects people from a wide range of backgrounds, ensuring equitable access at every stage.

→ Maintain our culture where everyone has fair access to development, progression and opportunity.

→ Embed our Race and Culture Group into our culture influencing practice and driving meaningful change.

→ Further engage Diversity Leaders to increase visibility, empower them to shape culture, and champion inclusion across the organisation.

→ To maintain a workplace where every employee feels a strong sense of belonging and confidently champions inclusion.

→ To have a clear understanding of those with a disability across the Group and how we can best support them.

→ To fully support women's health and promote awareness across all age groups.

→ To fully embed mental health awareness and support where Mental Health Mates are a visible and an active support network.

→ To be further recognised externally for our approach to EDI through accreditations and awards.

→ To ensure working spaces are accessible, inclusive and EDI friendly, offering an adaptable working environment for all.

→ To continue to build upon the positive work we have achieved in our commercial male dominated companies in attracting women into the construction sector.

→ To attract Generation Z (14-29 years) into roles within our Group with a focus on our agile offer.

## Customers and Communities

→ To continue to be a fair and equitable service provider, attracting and serving customers from diverse backgrounds.

→ To continue to routinely test services and audited for accessibility, using transactional and perception surveys to identify and address barriers.

→ A position where our communities are connected, inclusive and empowered with increased opportunities for all customers and communities to engage, influence decisions and experience meaningful lasting community impact.

→ Services are tailored through improved data capture so that:

- Communication preferences are respected
- Support needs are proactively identified
- Reasonable adjustments are embedded into service delivery
- Vulnerabilities, whether long term or situational, are responded to effectively
- Concerns raised by customers can be actively addressed

→ Customer engagement structures strengthened to ensure lived experience of equality and inclusion directly reflects customer base.

→ Best practice continues to be adopted through partnership working.

## Partnerships and Supply Chain

→ To be a partner of choice supporting EDI across our supply chain.

→ Continue to deliver Social Value across all Group entities and proactively champion EDI to benefit the communities we serve.

→ Strengthen influence within local and regional strategic forums, including engagement with statutory delivery partners such as local and combined authorities, to champion the EDI agenda and actively support relevant national campaigns.

→ Provide support to initiatives operating within the sector promoting cultural cohesion and foster positive relations advancing the awareness of EDI.



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# HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

## People and Employment

→ Analyse workforce data by company, role and seniority to identify gaps with a specific focus under-represented groups in senior and strategic roles and use insights to shape targeted initiatives.

→ Reintroduce EDI through monthly toolbox talks, equipping managers with simple prompts to lead regular, practical conversations with their teams.

→ Conduct internal Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap analysis to understand disparities and shape targeted interventions prior to becoming a legal requirement.

→ Analyse recruitment at all stages such as application, shortlisting and selection through a data mapping process to understand if vacancies are being accessed and recruited to by all and to guide further decisions.

→ Continue to work with partners building strong relationships to understand some of the challenges under-represented groups face and widen our reach into these communities.

→ Analyse the data captured in the disability questionnaires and implement positive changes for our people.

→ Create a clear and embedded Menopause Action Plan that ensures anyone experiencing menopausal symptoms are supported, understood and are able to thrive at work.

→ Maintain commitments to Investors in People, NAVAJO, HouseProud and the Fair Employment Charter and explore opportunities for other EDI focussed accreditations or awards.

→ Liaise with under-represented groups to ensure that workspaces are accessible, inviting and inclusive for all. Share insights and progress from Group forums to build understanding, accountability and impact.

→ Work with local schools and colleges within the wider Liverpool City Region to discuss career pathways in housing and construction.

→ Build upon our Women in Construction pathway programme and develop an initiative to encourage both internal and external talent to explore, access and progress within construction-related roles.

## Customers and Communities

→ Enhanced reporting and analytics across a wider range of service areas, with outputs shared with Boards, senior management, involved customers and customer EDI groups.

→ Ongoing exercises and targeted campaigns will be used to recover missing customer profiling data.

→ Whole household data capture will be strengthened to ensure services respond to everyone in the household where applicable, not only lead tenants.

→ Equality Impact Assessments and customer journey mapping exercises to be completed.

→ Customers will be more actively involved in Equality Impact Assessment processes, aligned with existing customer voice arrangements.

→ Training will be provided to involved customers and available to wider customer base to increase understanding of EDI.

→ Strengthen partnerships, expand engagement opportunities and deliver inclusive initiatives that bring communities together, while celebrating milestones such as One Vision Housing's 20th anniversary to drive community cohesion activities and build shared pride.

→ Stronger signposting and partnership working will be developed with specialist agencies.

→ Joint working with PCHA to create Group EDI Customer forum.

→ Awareness and customer participation in cultural and community events will be promoted through marketing and digital channels.

→ Dedicated funding and practical support will be made available to enable customers to organise their own cultural and awareness raising activities.

→ Promote and encourage applicants from under-represented groups for all tenure types where applicable.

## Partnerships and Supply Chain

→ Continue to foster collaborative partnerships with other housing providers, participating actively in the Liverpool City Region Housing Association Group to facilitate the sharing of best practice, benchmarking activities, and the promotion of events and initiatives centred around equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

→ Enhance marketing efforts to emphasise the Group's commitment to EDI as a core value, thereby attracting partners and companies who align with our organisational ethos.

→ Demonstrate our proven track record in EDI through transparent Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting, providing funders and partners with clear evidence of our dedication to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of our operations.

→ Develop sponsorship opportunities to support and champion local equality and advocacy groups, as well as community events. This approach will be integrated with our enhanced supply chain management to maximise social value and cost efficiency.

→ Work collaboratively with advocacy and support groups to review and improve our service literature, ensuring accessibility for all individuals.

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# HOW ARE WE GOING TO MEASURE IT?

## People and Employment

→ Workforce profile analysis against census information

→ EDI profiling and recruitment data for under-represented groups at application and selection stage

→ Employee feedback from EDI survey and employee survey

## Customers and Communities

→ Customer satisfaction and perception monitoring (explicitly include questions on EDI performance)

→ Analysis of profile of Involved customers to be representative of the wider customer base.

→ Track, monitor and report on successful applicants for all tenures broken down by each protected characteristic.

## Partnerships and Supply Chain

→ Analysis of sign-ups to The Sovini Group's Social Standard capturing EDI principles.

## How are we going to monitor the success of the strategy?

Progress against the three key themes and objectives across The Sovini Group will be monitored on a regular basis by the EDI Steering Group and action plan.

The Steering Group will ensure that all actions contribute to the achievement of objectives outlined in The Sovini Group Corporate Plan and will maintain 'The Golden Thread.'

The Boards of The Sovini Group members will also receive an annual report on performance against high-level strategic aims and objectives. This strategy will also be subject to an annual review.

## Consultation

Customers have been consulted in the development of the Strategy. This includes both internal customers, our people and external customers, which are largely tenants of our Housing Associations.

It is intended that a summary version of the Strategy will be included on our website and internally on our employee app OurSpace.

## Risk Management

Risk is actively managed at both strategic and operational levels. The Sovini Group operates within a robust Risk Management Framework, supported by proportionate risk management measures, including assurance processes and internal controls, to ensure effective oversight of risks related to our people and culture.

To manage and reduce exposure to risk, The Sovini Group has implemented the following control measures:

→ **Specialist Resources:** Dedicated and knowledgeable specialists who support and manage all EDI issues as well as access to an employment law legal experts, available when required

→ **Robust Management Training Programmes:** All our people are required to attend mandatory training which requires them to complete annual refreshers

→ **Communication and Engagement:** EDI is actively promoted through regular updates on OurSpace, team meetings and staff briefings, alongside dedicated forums that provide opportunities for open dialogue, feedback and employee voice

→ **Horizon Scanning:** Continuous monitoring of the operating environment and changes in the law relating to EDI that may impact the business and its people

→ **External Accreditations:** We currently have a number of accreditations linked to EDI including Investors in People and Investors in People Health and Wellbeing both Platinum, NAVAJO, Disability Confident etc.



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