



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy



Great homes.
Strong communities.
Bright futures.

Welcome

Welcome to our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy for 2023-2027. This strategy sets out our ambitions for the duration of our current corporate plan, detailing how we will embed equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation and develop our equality roadmap to respond to socio-economic and diversity challenges.

As a social landlord and employer, we continue to be firmly committed to our fundamental purpose of providing homes and meeting the housing needs of our tenants. We recognise the value of diversity both within our workforce and communities, and are therefore committed to creating an environment where difference is celebrated, supported, valued, and reflected within our workforce and customer base.



What is Equality, Diversity & Inclusion?

When we talk about equality, diversity and inclusion, it's with an understanding that these are separate but interlinked issues, that will require varying approaches.



Equality

To us, it means doing more to ensure equity for our customers, colleagues and stakeholders. Ensuring everyone is treated fairly and according to their needs, eliminating any barriers that may prevent them from receiving what they require.



Diversity

To us, it means valuing difference and the contribution this makes towards a better and more innovative organisation. This means promoting an environment that welcomes and values diverse backgrounds, thinking, skills and experiences.



Inclusion

To us, it means ensuring everyone has the opportunity to participate and no one is made to feel they don't belong, whether they be a customer, colleague or provider. Perspectives and differences are accepted and shared, leading to improved decision making.



Our Values

SLH has an embedded set of corporate values that support our vision, shape our culture and enable us to create an environment that welcomes and celebrates difference.

Our values guide the way we make decisions and work with our tenants, colleagues and stakeholders.

Where are we now?

The 2020 Social Housing White Paper has compounded the importance of ensuring as a sector we have the architecture in place to ensure all tenants are safe, heard, living in good quality homes, and have effective routes for resolving disputes and grievances.

Black Lives Matter, the inequality of the Covid-19 response, and events such as Grenfell and the handling of the Awaab Ishak case have brought into sharp focus how much work there is still to be done both as a sector and in wider society.

The Housing Ombudsman's report into Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, prompted by the inquest into Awaab Ishak's death from prolonged exposure to mould highlighted a culture of 'othering' with residents' complaints being dismissed or mishandled on the basis of preconception and unconscious bias, resulting in patterns of exclusion and marginalisation.

At SLH, we recognise the fundamental importance and continuity of equality, diversity and inclusion in supporting the identification and eradication of unconscious bias to prevent such service failures. Our intention is therefore to create a strategy that reflects this and supports us in meeting the evolving challenges we will face as an organisation in our contributions toward creating a more equal and fair society where all voices are heard and reflected in the services we provide.



Where do we want to be?

We want to be an organisation for everyone. A provider of homes in thriving neighbourhoods where everyone is able to be themselves.

Link to SLH's vision and strategic themes

The following strategic themes provide the focus for this strategy.

- Develop and implement an equality roadmap to respond to socio-economic and diversity challenges
- Embed equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation.



Vision for the strategy

This strategy will be integral to the delivery of our vision of:

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To create successful, sustainable, and thriving communities we know we must fully embrace equality, diversity and inclusion. We want everyone to feel welcome as a tenant of SLH and play our part in encouraging diversity, inclusion, and acceptance in our communities. We want to create a diverse workforce that reflects our current and future tenant base. We want our colleagues to feel they belong and are comfortable being their authentic selves.

Through this strategy, we will seek to demonstrate leadership in equality, diversity, and inclusion to our colleagues, our communities, and the wider housing sector. By 2027 we will be demonstrating sector-leading practices across all areas of EDI. This means we will have:

A diverse workforce that promotes equality, diversity, inclusion, and acceptance in our communities

Strategy objectives

This strategy has four key objectives

Through these objectives, we will make better decisions, empower colleagues to deliver the best possible services to our residents and enable them to adapt to the ever-changing environment in which we operate.



How do we get there?

Attract and retain a workforce that is representative of our wider society

We will take action to improve the profile and representation of all underrepresented groups but particularly people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ and disabled people where we know that we have low representation rates. Positive and intuitive recruitment practices will help us widen our pool of applicants.

We will

- review our recruitment data to understand trends and highlight any potential issues in recruiting diverse talent so that we can address them.
- review our recruitment, selection and onboarding approach to ensure our methods are inclusive and encourage and support candidates from underrepresented groups.
- implement positive action measures on Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and disability recruitment.
- explore pledges and accreditations that will support our commitments to EDI and demonstrate that commitment to potential candidates.
- use the results of pulse and other colleague surveys to measure and assess colleague engagement.

Demonstrate best practice in identifying and preventing discrimination, bias, barriers, or other unfair treatment in all aspects of our service delivery.

As a provider of social homes, our tenant base will cover a diverse range of people with differing housing and community needs. It is therefore essential that we continue to understand the needs of both current and future tenants so we are able to provide a consistent and fair service that enables us to build better and more sustainable communities.

Our ambition under this strategy is to understand the emerging needs of our tenants and ensure we have the appropriate mechanisms in place to engage with them and ensure their voices are heard. We will work with tenants who have struggled to manage living in their homes or have experienced a change in their circumstances and provide them with access to the support, development opportunities and training they need to thrive.

We will

- analyse tenant data regularly to help identify and adapt to their needs and reshape our services to accommodate those needs.
- ensure that incidents of hate crime are identified and that our tenants fully understand how we define and respond to them.
- review complaints, ASB data and our key service areas to identify and address potentially negative equality impacts on underrepresented groups.
- deliver an action plan in response to findings from the Better Social Housing Review.



How do we get there?

Create opportunities for our tenants and communities to diversify, grow, develop, and thrive.

There are decades of deep-rooted and institutionalised stigma around social housing, which will take quite some time to change.

SLH will continue to play our part in this, through our continued commitment to the NHF 'Together with Tenants' charter and our Better Social Housing Review action plan which seek to strengthen relationships between housing associations and residents.

As outlined in the NHF Code of Governance, being accountable to tenants is a characteristic of a well-governed association. This is something that requires consistent consideration to ensure our framework for tenant engagement continues to provide equitable opportunities for all to have their say. Our ambition under this strategy is to ensure that our tenants' needs are considered in all aspects of service delivery to ensure the homes and communities in which they live enable them to thrive.

We will

- ensure our board has access to insight into the views and needs of the organisation's residents (including insight into their concerns and complaints) and uses this to inform decisions where appropriate.
- ensure there are policies, frameworks and opportunities which enable, encourage and support residents to engage with, influence and contribute to strategic decision-making.
- continuously review our board composition so it reflects the population we serve.
- build on our collaborative working links with community programmes, partners and organisations in Speke and Garston and the wider Liverpool City Council region to help us understand local housing needs.
- engage with a representative range of tenants to ensure that the services we provide are designed with them in mind.
- analyse tenant data to help us shape and adapt our services to their needs.
- develop training for equality impact assessments to ensure EDI considerations are made when reviewing relevant policies and procedures.

Create opportunities for all colleagues to achieve equitable outcomes, accept and celebrate differences and promote inclusion in all aspects of their work.

Regardless of their identity or background, everyone deserves the opportunity to develop their skills and talents to their full potential, work in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment and feel confident to share their views and experiences.

Our ambition under this strategy is to ensure that our working practices provide an inclusive environment for all. We will therefore continually review our processes, procedures, and behaviours to ensure our approach does not put any group at a disadvantage.

We will

- provide our colleagues with the continued training and resources needed to encourage knowledge within the organisation and recognise and respond to the diverse needs of our residents.
- undertake an organisational audit to assess our current position on EDI.
- support colleagues by providing enabling solutions to help them overcome any health/well-being or personal challenges that may arise.
- ensure that colleagues are aware of and are offered reasonable and appropriate adjustments to support their physical and mental health conditions.



Assessing the impact

Everyone at SLH has personal responsibility for EDI in our areas of work.

We want to demonstrate leadership in this area to our colleagues, our communities, and to the wider housing sector. Our board, therefore, will have overall accountability for the delivery of this strategy, monitoring progress and playing its part in advancing our commitment to inclusion.

Work in this area will also be overseen by our EDI forum, Everyone Counts, which was established in 2021. The forum is made up of a nominated representative from all areas of the business including our joint venture, Avela Home Service. As well as sharing good practice and keeping up-to-date with learning, the forum will have responsibility for reviewing our action plan, updating objectives, and ensuring we continue to take action on all EDI matters to enable us to continuously improve both as a social landlord and an employer.

Our board will receive updates on equality and diversity from 'Everyone Counts' including an annual report on progress.



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