

# Group Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

2019 - 2022

ForViva 

## Executive summary

The ForViva Group's shared vision is 'Improved Lives'. ForViva is a force for good. Our mission is to challenge inequalities and making a difference to people's lives. It provides structure, size and stature to group members ForHousing and Liberty.

Together, we believe in a better way to do business. One that gives back and uses profits for good. Communities can thrive and do more when we do more and by working for good, working together and focusing on simplicity, we make things happen.

We believe that diversity enriches our culture, both in the work place and in communities. It is central to the Group's vision that everyone, including tenants, customers, clients, stakeholders, colleagues, partners and Board Members, treat each other with respect, regardless of race, disability, ethnicity, gender (including transgender), age, sexual orientation, or beliefs, and that our colleagues and Boards reflect the communities they serve.

The purpose of the Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is to set out the strategic direction for the next three years, ensuring maximum impact on everyone we interact with both inside and external to the Group, within the constraints of our budget and remit.

The Strategy is underpinned by our compliance with the Equalities Act 2010 and builds on its principle of integrating Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into policy and practice. The development of this Strategy has been against a backdrop of continued cuts in public sector funding and services, a roll out of wide ranging reforms to the welfare benefits system and targets to increase the demand for affordable home ownership. All this directly impacted social housing providers, tenants, customers, clients, colleagues, partners and stakeholders.

Compared to national averages, some communities are truly diverse, but there is a great deal of inequality: in access to good education; healthcare; to a living wage; employment; and in the potential for and likelihood of happiness and wellbeing. All of these things relate to poverty, which is not inevitable and for which there is no justification.

## Context

At present communities are not reaching the national average in the key indicators in relation to health, education and employment. Crime, perception of crime, and anti-social behaviour (ASB) remain issues for tenants. By transforming our Group we will address the challenges ahead by looking at what we can do differently to be able to invest more.

We will be investing to support communities, to achieve the Group's vision of "Improved Lives". We aim to tackle the drivers of poverty and maximise positive impact, within the constraints of our resources and our remit in an increasingly challenging environment.

As well as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion being integral to all services, it is a vital part of our People policies and recruitment programme. We will continue to promote a positive work culture to which every colleague and every Board Member contributes and within which they are able to develop to their full potential to meet corporate priorities. We

embed, and will continue to embed, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across all our work. The combination of experienced and motivated colleagues and supportive Boards puts us in a strong position to do this.

## Definitions

**Equality** is ensuring people or groups of people are treated fairly and equally.

**Diversity** is about recognising, respecting and valuing people's differences.

**Inclusion** is to embrace all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other need. It is about giving equal access and opportunities and taking action to remove any barriers to allow people to participate fully and not feel excluded.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are different and need to be applied together. Equality of opportunity will only exist when we recognise and value differences and work together for inclusion.

## Priorities and outcomes

Our key priorities are that through effective partnerships, we will:

- provide quality homes, places and services that promote diversity
- challenge inequality
- remove barriers to support people to participate fully and not feel excluded

Ultimately, we will be a force for good to make more things possible for more people.

We will achieve these priorities by continuing to embed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activities when providing core services, recruiting and developing colleagues and in our partnership working. In turn we will deliver the following outcomes:

- services meet the diverse needs of tenants, customers, clients, partners, stakeholders, colleagues and the communities we serve
- a range of engagement and involvement methods reflect changing tenant demographics, that ensure emerging digital methods are accessible
- together working with partners, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion remains mainstream in the business
- demonstrable leadership in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across the workforce, with a commitment to excellence
- an employer of choice for all

## Activities

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion must be a guiding principle in our pursuit of objectives across all areas of the business. We will review all data, seek to fill data gaps, and gain a baseline measure of tenants, colleagues and Boards. We will set ambitious, but achievable targets to ensure equality of opportunity and diversity in all areas of the business and report regularly on progress to key stakeholders. Senior colleagues and managers will act as role models and champion Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through everyday attitudes and behaviours to ensure our culture is one fuelled by passion for what we do, one of mutual respect, trust and openness, and where everyone works collectively to achieve our shared vision.

This will involve working towards the following priority objectives in both the delivery of our core services, our partnership working and as an employer. We will:

- invest in technology that allows tenants and customers easy access and more choice of access to services
- gather and analyse demographic information and business intelligence that will help to develop and shape services and our business
- provide homes to people who need them through a fair and transparent allocations policy and process, for tenants from all backgrounds
- work to create the right conditions for community cohesion to happen and remove barriers where possible. Community cohesion is integral to functioning communities
- provide a wide range of channels and methods for tenant involvement to ensure the representation of tenant involvement groups and structures so they are more reflective of the diverse communities where we operate
- work with partners who demonstrate a genuine commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This may be by having their own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and practices or by agreeing to sign up to the Group's
- develop our procurement processes to increase opportunities for new organisations and to diversify the supply chain
- use all media to demonstrate a clear business rationale for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and articulate its benefits to tenants, customers, clients, colleagues, stakeholders and partners - future and present
- seeking opportunities to influence local, regional and national agendas with our key objectives in mind
- adopt an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and undertake equality analysis to embed inclusion throughout our culture and practices
- provide Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training to all staff and Board Members and involved tenants to ensure an understanding of roles and legal responsibilities

### **Data protection and confidentiality**

The use of personal information will be treated confidentially and will be fair and lawful. The Group will ensure that personal information is not kept for longer than is necessary; is secure, adequate, relevant and not excessive. The data subject has the right to withdraw this consent at any time.

## Measuring success

### Monitoring Arrangements

The Group will seek external challenge and evaluation on its equality and diversity framework using the Diversity in Business Accreditation assessed annually and currently rated at the highest Exemplar level for two group members. This assesses:

- Organisational Leadership - Commitment to diversity as a tool for managing core business performance
- People Management & Organisational Culture - Achievement of an inclusive organisational culture and engaged workforce
- Customer Communications and Satisfaction - Engagement with diverse customer needs
- Community, Partnership & Supplier Diversity - Commitment to embedding diversity within your supply chain and relationships with your local community
- Diversity Action Planning - Plans for embedding diversity further across your business

### Monitoring Information

We will collect, monitor and analyse diversity information. Monitoring will be used to ensure that our policies and activities are inclusive, fair, transparent, promote equality of opportunity and do not have an adverse impact on any particular group. It will inform and improve employment practices, service delivery and partnership working. If through monitoring any discrimination is identified, the Group will take necessary corrective actions to eliminate it. Equality analyses will be completed on strategies and policies. Actions from these assessments will be monitored by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Service Excellence Group. No information will be published or used in any way which allows any individual to be identified. Individuals can request to have equality information that they have provided removed at any time.

## Equality analysis

Date of approved equality analysis	March 19
Actions taken forward to mitigate any potential negative impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This Strategy is designed to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share the same protected characteristic and those who do not.</li></ul>

## Governance

As a key corporate priority, this Strategy was approved by the ForViva Board. All staff have day to day responsibility to deliver this Strategy and compliance will be monitored through the management chain and one to one appraisals.

Version (2) and date (Sept 2019)