



**Building a truly modern
housing association**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

How our approach will
drive the journey

2021-2026





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Introduction

We have an ambitious five year Corporate Strategy 2021-2026 which builds on the strengths that come from our past and develops an organisation which will be fit for the future needs of our customers and communities.

Our strategy identifies six themes that will support us in our journey to become **a truly modern housing association**:



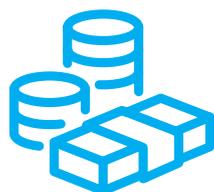
Our Customers



Culture of People and Continuous Improvement



Sustainability, Environmental and Social Value Creation



Economic Value Creation



Digital and Intelligence



Leader, Partner and Influencer

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is designed to support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and reflects the new challenges and opportunities we face both as an employer and as a service provider.

We know that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion makes us a more effective social housing provider and is a key enhancer of our ability to make positive changes in our local communities and to deliver excellent customer services. This role is becoming increasingly important. We want to create places where people want to live; where they feel safe and able to get involved in local community activities. We are committed to creating social value with help from our partners and stakeholders.

People make Platform and our vision is to be an inclusive and fair workplace that offers a truly modern people experience and is reflective of the localities in which we work. We want to create a workplace that offers both flexibility and the necessary support to colleagues who have to balance their home responsibilities with their workloads and their own well-being. This will create a place where people can be themselves and feel that their differences are valued and used to drive our business forward.



Our Challenges

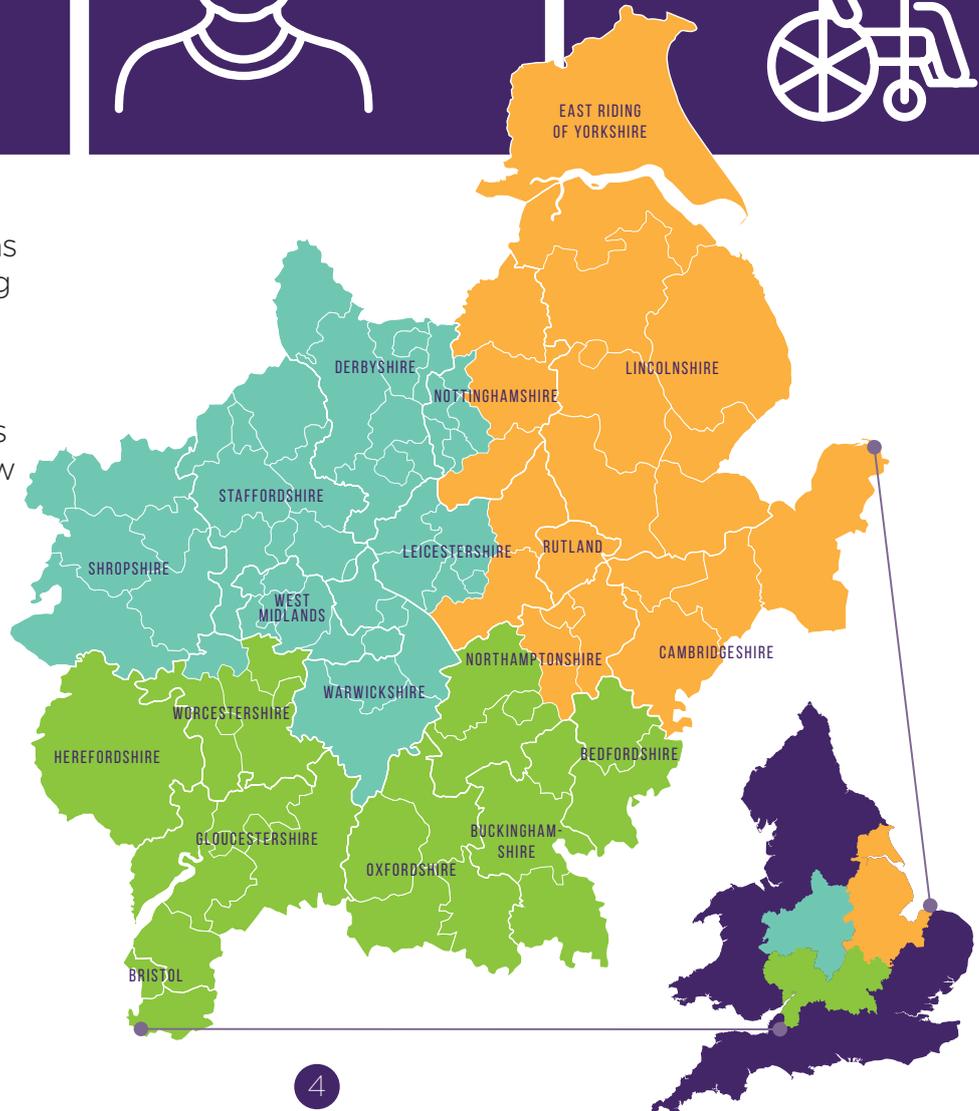
The demographic diversity and geographical size of our operational area, offers a unique set of challenges and opportunities across our communities.

These include:

<p>A range of both urban areas that are home to a variety of cultures, faiths, languages, and immigration statuses, and more rural areas that are less diverse which can present challenges with community cohesion.</p> 	<p>Differing inclusion, belonging and identities can present challenges in levels of engagement or social isolation.</p> 	<p>Social mobility and economic inequalities present both pockets of deprivation and affluence, sometimes side-by-side.</p> 
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Our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion aims to focus on acknowledging diversity, learning about it, and celebrating it as a strength. We believe that focusing on commonalities and shared values will allow us to deliver social values across our three localities.

- **Tame**
Urban
- **Witham**
Rural
- **Severn**
Urban/Rural Mix





Our values are part of our DNA

They will inspire and guide us through everything we do.

Our people values are



People Matter



The way we treat each other

We put colleagues and customers at the heart of everything we do. Valuing difference, we are free to challenge each other and are open and honest in our relationships.



Own It



The way we want to work

We say what we'll do and then we do it. We listen, understand and are empowered to make decisions. We look for our own ways to learn and adapt and focus on what we can do.



One Team



The way we deliver our services

We are connected, collaborative and in it together. We want everyone to reach their potential and be the best they can be. We actively support each other to make this happen.



Be Brave



The way we look towards our future

We are curious and courageous. We look for better ways to do things, are comfortable trying them and learn quickly. We are not afraid to stand out from the rest and celebrate our successes.

Our People Values are underpinned by a set of behaviours which outline the actions and ways of working that all our colleagues must all work to demonstrate.

Our Priorities



Our Customers and Localities

- Greater insight
- Tenancy and wider support
- Diverse range of service options
- Customer co-design and involvement
- Tailored services



Our People and Workplace

- Employer of choice
- Recruit and nourish diverse talent
- Understand what matters to people at Platform

our values and behaviours



Our Processes and Impacts

- Engagement and involvement across the business
- Equality impact assessments
- Positive influence and impact



Our Data and Technology

- Essential data collection to develop customer insight
- Understand identities and vulnerabilities
- Well-tailored service options



Our Customers and Localities



We want to gain greater insight into our localities and customers in order to improve their experience of our services and to engage with them in a more inclusive way. We would like to offer the support they require to sustain their tenancy, engage with local economies and contribute to the wider community. A key part of this is a forensic focus on data management and technology.

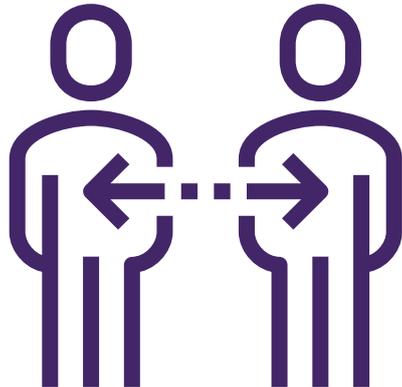
This will give us the insight we need to understand our local communities, plan and deliver excellent services and boost customer satisfaction. It will also allow us to offer diverse range of options for customers to engage with us in opportunities to co-design and scrutinise our services.

Our priorities

- Develop a holistic approach to data management and the collation and retention of customer insight.
- Use the insight to enhance customer experience and increase service satisfaction.
- Involve a diverse range of customers in co-designing and scrutinising our services and performance.
- Deliver fair and uninhibited access to our services.
- Develop key partnerships to ensure we provide a holistic approach to meeting needs. This is especially crucial for some of our most vulnerable customers.
- Join forces with key partners to help create safe and cohesive communities.
- Engage and empower local Community Diversity Champions to help drive forward the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- As part of our Customer Engagement Strategy, attract a diverse mix of customers for our involvement opportunities.
- Meet customer's aspirations for home ownership.

Making it Happen

- Continue refining our data through our Customer Insight Working Group and others groups.
- Monitor customer satisfaction by Diversity and Inclusion characteristic. We will learn from shortcomings and celebrate successes.
- Challenge discrimination, prejudice, hate crime through local campaigns and events.
- Continue developing our Community Diversity Champions Programme.
- Work with partners to influence change and policy as appropriate.
- Continue to identify ways to offer accessible customer engagement opportunities, e.g. our Customer Experience Panel.
- Review intelligence about the make-up of our localities and use this to inform decisions around our operating model for customers.
- Promote our shared ownership options to a diverse audience.



Our People and Workplace

We are ambitious about the future and about becoming a sector leader in creating a genuinely inclusive workplace. We want to be an employer of choice – not only in the social housing sector but also across the region. Our focus is on recruiting and nurturing diverse talent, which includes giving opportunities to diverse candidates in developing their leadership skills through a range of opportunities, including through our Apprenticeship Strategy. This will enable us to build an inclusive workplace that fosters creative collaboration and engagement, and creates a sense of belonging and wellbeing.

To deliver on our ambitions we will work to understand what really matters to people at Platform.

Our priorities

- Recognise and embrace the value of diversity and put inclusion and belonging at the heart of our business.
- Reflect our diverse demographics and create an environment where colleagues from different backgrounds can thrive.
- Equip colleagues with the up-to-date knowledge and skills they need to deliver an innovative approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Use our Apprenticeship and Work Placement programmes to embed the values of inclusivity and social mobility.
- Ensure colleagues are genuinely engaged, appreciated and rewarded at work and that we are creating an inclusive and flexible workplace.
- Offer clear career progression and professional development pathways and drive satisfaction through a customer focused and socially sensitive business approach.
- Support and encourage colleagues to champion the areas of diversity they feel passionate about.
- Make sure our policies and processes reflect what people need and expect.
- Encourage diversity in our senior leadership team.

Making it Happen

- Grow a business-wide Diversity Champion Programme and other staff networks.
- Develop Directorate and Team reporting on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion tasks, as well as Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).
- Analyse our workplace data and align our recruitment to reflect demographics of local communities.
- Include Strategies, Policies, projects into the Equality Impact Assessment framework where appropriate.
- Analyse our colleague engagement results by protected characteristics.
- Report on skills, careers opportunities and work done to reduce workplace inequalities.
- Promote opportunities to work in the housing sector to local education providers.
- Deliver a trainee Board Programme that develops future Board members.
- Deliver learning that equips colleagues with the skills to deliver fair and accessible services.
- Develop an inclusive Apprenticeship programme in collaboration with our partners.



Our Data and Technology



Gathering and meaningful analysis of data plays a crucial role in the development of customer insight - which is essential to building services with our customers at their heart. That also means understanding the unique needs of our customers e.g. we know we provide services to disproportionately high numbers of people declaring disabilities and experiencing various forms of socio-economic exclusion.

Our priorities

- Develop the processes and tools needed to enable effective customer data collection.
- Improve and enable access to services using latest technology. We will specifically focus on accessibility standards.
- Investigate the use of assistive technology solutions for safe homes.

Making it Happen

- Regularly review service and accessibility information.
- Liaise with specialist stakeholders to make best use of assistive technology.
- Develop dashboards that provide easy-to-understand analysis of EDI data that is accessible to all colleagues.
- Ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is an integral part of our approach to transformation and innovation.



Our Processes and Impacts

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is one of the essential conditions of successfully delivering our new corporate strategy. It is a core work strand which involves engagement with, and involvement of, all parts of our business. It runs through all levels of the organisation from Board to customer facing roles, resulting in a better, planned and more coherent approach to service design and delivery.

Whether it is carrying out equality impact assessments of all our policies and projects, or examining our workplace for any hidden elements exposing us to the risk of developing systemic biases, we will focus on finding equitable solutions. We will also ensure that our influence and positive impact in the area of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is shared not only across our sector but also beyond and across wider communities.

Our priorities

- Eliminate unconscious bias in processes, policies, strategies and project development.
- Refresh procurement practices to ensure they reflect our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles and strive to do business with organisations that share our values.
- Develop a suite of tools to help us measure the social value we deliver across our services.

Making it Happen

- Ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies are in place and are shared with and understood by colleagues across the Group.
- Include major strategies, policies and projects in the Equality Impact Assessment framework where appropriate.
- Update the Group Procurement Framework to ensure Equality, Diversity and Inclusion guidelines are clear.
- Ensure the social value we deliver is identified and measurable.
- Work in partnership with customers to co-design our services.
- Work to ensure that contractors we work with understand our expectations in terms of our People Values and Behaviours when acting on our behalf.



We cannot do it alone

We provide affordable homes and serve customers from Herefordshire in the West to the Lincolnshire coast in the East; and from the Derbyshire Dales in the North to the Cotswolds in the South.

Through relying on our well-established legacy partnerships and by creating new ones, we have managed to establish a large and constantly growing portfolio of partner organisations and stakeholders who collaborate with us on achieving our equality, diversity and inclusion goals.

We pride ourselves on relying on their expertise in areas such as disabilities awareness, LGBT or BAME inclusion, social inclusion and many others, while in return, offering our insights and strengths to aid positive community outcomes that lead to adding social value or policy change.

We also have a growing group of Customer Diversity Champions that we rely on to provide that specialist understanding and knowledge around different customer needs.





Our Checks

We recognise and celebrate the significant Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work that has already taken place across the Group.

This includes establishing robust partnerships with our stakeholders, learning from their expertise and experiences and using our position to influence others across the sector and beyond.

However, we know there is still more to do. A Group-wide steering group, Platform Together, will continue driving and embedding the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda across the business ensuring accountability for clearly defined targets and KPIs.

Made up of colleagues from across the Group and Board, Platform Together will represent both colleagues and communities and will work to ensure we deliver on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments in all we do, from day-to-day-business, to service and strategic planning.

The Board and the Executive Team monitor the work of Platform Together. They also review the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan, which supports this strategy. The group will be supported by an expanding cohort of Diversity Champions who will become specialists in their lead areas.

