

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

April 2024 – March 2027

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1. Introduction

Welcome to MSV Housing's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategy for 2024 – 2027 which sets our commitment to EDI for customers, colleagues and partners.

This strategy has been developed in conjunction with the MSV Way 2024 - 2027, which is our corporate plan that sets our clear intentions to put customers at the heart of our business, provide homes people can be proud of and deliver the very best performance to raise our customer promise, of Healthy Homes and Fair and Friendly Service.

The MSV Way also sets out our vision and values, and these, along with our promise to customers is set out below. Our values, underpin our behaviours and guide everything we do.



The image below identifies the three key themes - **People, Place & Performance**, which will be our main focus within the MSV Way. Within our People theme one of our strategic priorities is to create a truly inclusive and diverse environment.

Our EDI strategy supports the MSV Way and is guided by our values. It sets out our plans for fulfilling our strategic priority to create a truly inclusive and diverse culture. As part of our approach to embedding EDI we are committed to ensuring fair and equal service provision to unheard voices, ensuring everyone is treated with respect. We have an ambition to ensure EDI is at the heart of what we do and to be known for our proactive and innovative approach to EDI which raises aspirations, creates opportunities, and breaks down barriers.



This EDI strategy builds on the progress we have made so far and sets out the foundation of what needs to be in place within the next three years. It has been shaped with input from colleagues, board and committees, staff network groups, customers, and our Scrutiny Panel. We appreciate that we cannot achieve our aims without continuing to work with colleagues, customers, and partners.

Although this strategy sets out our overarching commitment to advance EDI, it is not an isolated document and there are a range of other strategies that support this commitment (namely Neighbourhood, Customer Voice, Customer Experience, People, Asset Management and Growth).

Embedding Value for Money and Risk Assurance

Each of the objectives within the corporate plan and associated strategies are supported by a medium term financial business plan and inter-dependencies between core strategies and corporate cross cutting strategies. This is further supported by a link to the strategic risk framework and MSV's approach to achieving value for money.

MSV measures itself against the Value for Money Metrics set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. Also, in line with the MSV Value for Money strategy, each strategy and business function has targets to make best use of social housing assets and resources available. Regular reporting will be presented to the Board on value for money in delivering this strategy, tested through customer voice, impact and influence, achievement of budgets, appropriate procurement and continuous performance improvement.

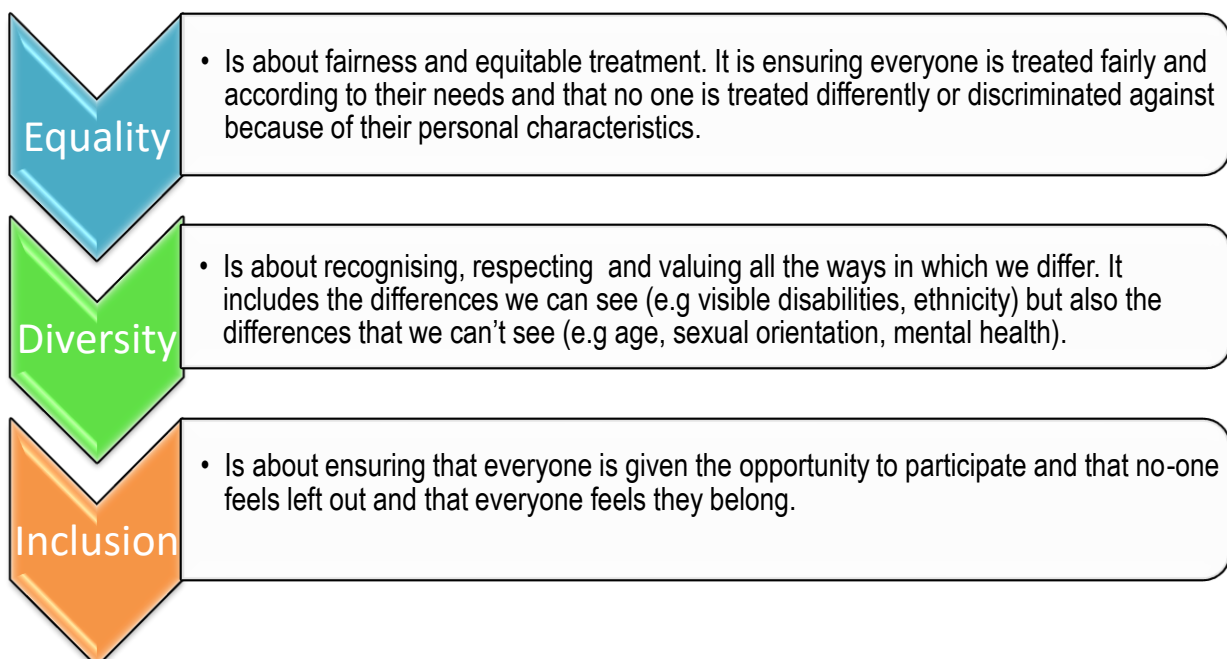
This strategy is also aligned with the Strategic Risk framework, setting out how it will be delivered and progress measured, ensuring risk mitigations are in place. This strategy is

linked with key aspects of the current strategic risk register, which will be identified within each risk and strategy update report in this area, with triggers in place to signal any risk of non-delivery.

2. Words Matter – What do we mean by Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

We know that people can sometimes be uncertain about the words they use when talking about equality, diversity and inclusion. Language is evolving all the time and the language we use and words we choose to express ourselves matter.

We have summarised below what we mean by some of the key words and phrases that we use throughout this strategy. This is not a complete list and the aim is for it to be a starting point to help everyone understand this strategy. We know that there are often different views and opinions about the best way to describe what these words and phrases mean.



Protected Characteristics are characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010. Further information on this is included in section 3 of this strategy and in our EDI **Policy**.

Outside of the Equalities Act 2010 there are other 'characteristics' that are also commonly subjected to unfair treatment either consciously or unconsciously which can lead to inequality. Examples of these include:

- Caring responsibilities
- Care Leavers
- Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

- Socio-economic backgrounds
- Ex armed forces
- Ex offenders
- Refugee status

Although we have a legal responsibility to ensure we do not discriminate against those identified as having protected characteristics, MSV's EDI strategy will consider all those facing unfair treatment and inequality and not just those protected by the law.

The diagram below sets out the nine protected characteristics:



In December 2023, MSV undertook an Inclusive Language Survey as a result of a cultural shift across the housing sector. The term Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) was deemed to be outdated and not representative of MSV's culture.

Following an analysis of the results of this survey and careful consideration by our Anti-Racism Task Force (ART) and Equality and Inclusion (EDI) groups MSV has unanimously chosen the term 'Ethnically Diverse' to be used going forward as inclusive language. It is felt that this is representative of the colleagues, customers and communities we serve.

In Appendix 1 - The table provides a further glossary of some helpful EDI terminology, (although it should be noted this is not exhaustive list).

3. Context

Whilst we are committed to creating a truly inclusive and diverse environment because we feel it is integral to our business and absolutely the right thing to do, we are also governed by legal and regulatory requirements. This strategy goes beyond fulfilling our legal and regulatory obligations and reflects the regional, national and social housing context as well as taking account of the diverse needs of our colleagues, customers and communities we serve.

Legal & Regulatory

As a social landlord, service provider and an employer MSV has both legal and regulatory duties we must comply with. The Equality Act 2010 is the key piece of legislation and provides protection against discrimination due to characteristics that are protected by this Act.

The act also includes the Public Sector Equality duty which sets both general and specific duties to which public bodies (or those providing public services) means that MSV Housing, providing some public duties, must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate any form of unlawful discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant characteristic and people who do not.
- Foster good relationships between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) sets standards with which we must comply, this includes the recently introduced Consumer Standards (1st April 2024), which states Registered providers:

- Must use relevant information and data to:
 - Understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers and additional support needs; and
 - Assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services.
- Ensure that communication with and information for tenants is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants.
- Ensure that landlords services are accessible, and that accessibility is publicised to tenants. This includes supporting tenants and prospective tenants to use online landlord services if required.
- Allow tenants and prospective tenants to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about landlord services.
- Treat tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect.

MSV is also required to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) new Complaint's Handling Code (introduced 1st April 2024) The code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents. The National Housing Federation's (NHF) Code of Governance 2020 also sets out standards which require us to embed resident focus, inclusion, integrity, openness, and accountability.

The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) professional standards include what an inclusive housing professional is:

- Unconscious bias – address own behaviours and assumptions.
- Perspective – recognise, value and draw on a wide range of perspectives to deliver best service.
- Inclusive – demonstrate sensitivity to customs, culture and beliefs of others.
- Collaboration – build collaborative relationships, challenge zero tolerance towards inappropriate, offensive, or discriminatory behaviour.
- Holistic – promote diversity of views and experiences, listen, and understand.

Although the Greater Manchester Good Landlord Charter, which acknowledges that housing is fundamental to people's health and well-being, has not been implemented to date, MSV is committed to the principles of the standards which focus on delivering safe, decent, and

affordable housing, driving up housing standards, recognising good practice and supporting tenants.

Regional, National and Social Housing

At a national level, the economic crisis, reduction in public sector funding and services, the worsening housing and homelessness situation, the Awaab Ishak's tragic case, the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing health inequalities, Black Lives Matters movement, along with a number of other emerging challenges impacting on customers, colleagues and partners have quite rightly put the inequalities and discrimination that some minority groups experience at the forefront of agendas. Research demonstrates that some of these minority groups are likely to experience disadvantage in accessing suitable and safe accommodation, accessing the labour market, and accessing physical and mental health services.

The recent HOS spotlight report on attitudes, respect and rights assesses what it means to be vulnerable in social housing in 2024, what 'vulnerable' means and how social landlords can better respond to the needs of those residents. The report makes a number of recommendations, which have informed this strategy.

What our own data tells us

In developing this strategy and to enable us to make informed decisions we have considered what our own data tells us regarding the diversity profile of colleagues and customers. We have also used data from the NHF EDI Data Tool, which compares our workforce to our local communities, the Greater Manchester Housing Provider's (GMHP) Diversity, Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Equalities (DICE) report, 2023, on the equality and diversity work and impact amongst housing providers and the National Census 2021.

Section 9 – contains links to further information/resources as well as providing a snapshot of the current position regarding colleagues and customers based on the NHF EDI Data tool, 2023.

4. What we've achieved so far

Since MSV was established in 2017 we have made considerable progress in embedding our commitment to EDI, but we recognised that there is still much work that needs to be done...

Some of our achievements so far are summarised below:

- Developed close working partnerships with community organisations to help tackle a range of issues around equality, diversity, inclusion, hate crime and wider community safety.
- Building more specialist supported homes to enable independent living for people with disabilities, mental health issues, women fleeing domestic abuse, care leavers and people who have been homeless.
- Specialist team support for tenancy sustainment and financial resilience.
- Involvement in the LGBTQ+ HouseProud Customer group – Rainbow Roofs
- Celebrating a range of events annually, including LGBTQ+ History Month, Black History Month, International Women's Day
- Established Positive Futures to support employment and training opportunities within the Moss Side area.

- Active members of the Greater Manchester Housing Providers group focusing on Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion & Equality (DICE)
- Involvement in the first Pride in Ageing Accreditation Extra Care Scheme in the Greater Manchester area at Elmswood Park
- Participation in mentoring schemes with both the GM Boost Programme and the Housing Diversity Network scheme
- Supporting social value and local employment opportunities
- Commitment to the Care Leaver Pledge
- Offering a range of learning and development opportunities and toolkits to help raise awareness on a range of subjects including (neurodiversity, observing Ramadan, Banter v Bullying, mental health, deaf awareness)
- Newsletters, podcasts, Q&A on range of EDI subjects
- Staff Network Groups covering race and ethnicity, LGBTQ+, Menopause and Domestic Abuse
- Anti Racism Taskforce which was set up following the Black Lives Matter movement.
- Mindfulness sessions
- Review of various policies and procedures that impact on EDI.
- Introduction of Vulnerability and Cause for Concern policies
- Disability Confident Employer accreditation
- Commitment to Harry's Pledge and support for carers.
- Good Employment accreditation and Living Wage
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Signed up to the NHF Chair's Challenge, to create a vision for board to become more equal, diverse and inclusive.
- Reviewing and extending language translation service.
- Investors in Diversity accreditation.
- Awarded Housing Provider of the Year, 2022 by National Centre for Diversity.
- Developing a Diversity Pay Gap reporting, beyond our legal obligation.
- Monitoring customer satisfaction levels based on customer EDI profiles.

5. Where we want to be and how we will achieve this

Moving forward we want to build on the progress we've achieved so far. Based on our strategic priority of creating a truly inclusive and diverse environment we have developed three goals to help us get there. These are:

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
Understand better the diverse needs of customers to ensure our services reflect these needs	Create a diverse and inclusive workplace culture that values colleagues	Work proactively with communities and partners to champion Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Why are these goals important?

- ✓ By using data for purpose it helps identify gaps and improve services for customers and colleague experience
- ✓ Identify disparities.

- ✓ Demonstrates our values and keeps customers at the heart of what we do.
- ✓ Helps us support customers and tailor services by understanding their needs better.
- ✓ Empowers customers' voices to help shape change.
- ✓ Involving and empowering diverse voice of colleagues helps shape an inclusive culture.
- ✓ We start to embed our inclusive values.
- ✓ We help people learn and develop and deliver best customer experience.
- ✓ Widens access to the best talent.
- ✓ Empowers colleagues to do thing differently and think differently.
- ✓ Demonstrates our ambition to be proactive, innovate and lead EDI change.
- ✓ We set expectations for leaders.
- ✓ We improve some key processes and ways we think about EDI across the organisation.

To achieve these three goals, we have developed an action plan, which will help us to focus our efforts and drive change and improvements. The action plan is included in section 7.

6. Monitoring our progress

Everyone has responsibility for EDI within MSV, from our frontline colleagues, though to senior leaders and board and committee members. Appropriate resources to deliver our plans are in place.

Our Board has overall accountability for the delivery of this strategy, whilst the People & Governance Committee will monitor progress regularly. The Assistant Director – Strategy & Engagement will lead on the delivery of the strategy, and this will be overseen by MSV's EDI Steering Group, with regular progress reporting to the Senior Leadership and Executive teams. An annual summary will be produced to reflect on what has been achieved.

Measuring EDI success will broadly be through qualitative and quantitative measures, including:









- ✓ Range of KPI data and demographics for colleagues and customers.
- ✓ Complaints satisfaction.
- ✓ Gauging who's speaking up, showing up and what people are saying via customer and colleague experience.
- ✓ Outputs and achievements from employee networking groups.
- ✓ Leadership, mentoring and learning and development delivered and outputs.
- ✓ Diversity Pay Reporting
- ✓ Coaching conversations
- ✓ Partnerships and collaborations
- ✓ Accessibility












7. Summary Action Plan

1. Understand the diverse needs of customers and ensure our services reflect these needs			
Specific Action	Timescale		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3

Improve our use of data and insight to enable us to understand and anticipate customer needs, identify vulnerabilities and shape services appropriately.	
Review and analyse customer data to identify and address any entrenched inequalities.	
Ensure customers from diverse backgrounds have greater awareness of services and opportunities available to them.	
Ensure our online services are accessible to all and easy to use (including interpretation and translation offer) ensure everyone aware of translations, interpreter use service (Colleague)	
Ensure our Hubs and community buildings are accessible for all.	
Involve a diverse range of customers in co-designing and scrutinising our services and performance.	
Support customers who may be struggling through our specialist support services.	
Challenge discrimination and hate crime through customer events and campaigns.	
Through Positive Futures, continue to develop our employability advice and training services for the most disadvantaged.	
Continue to support independent and successful living.	
Review website and update to show MSV's commitment to EDI.	
Incorporate EDI best practice and decision making into all MSV services.	
Support Domestic Abuse victims to access MSV services.	

2. Create a diverse and inclusive workplace culture that values all colleagues			
Specific Action	Timescale		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Improve our use of data and insight to enable us to analyse, understand priorities and highlight any potential issues.			
Review data at employee lifecycle touch points (recruitment, promotions, disciplinaries, leavers, grievance etc) to establish any impact of our approach.			
Develop our employer brand to ensure MSV is recognised as a diverse and inclusive organisation.			
Continue to implement changes to our recruitment and selection practices to attract and retain a diverse workforce that is representative of the communities we work in.			
Develop our diversity pay gap reporting and seek to close any identified gaps.			
Develop clear pathways to personal development for colleagues who represent our communities			
Improve our diversity at leadership levels and above to reflect our commitment to EDI.			
Review our Equality Impact Assessment and ensure it is embedded across the organisation.			

Become a culturally competent organisation.				
Develop and grow our EDI Staff Networking forums.				
Implement EDI training for Board and Committee Members				
Create an EDI Board Champion				
Embed our Inclusive Language approach.				
Take steps to break unconscious bias.				
Ensure clear consequences for anti-inclusive behaviours through robust policies, procedures, actions and training protection from bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.				
Raise awareness of diversity by promoting and celebrating different diversity events.				

3. Work proactively with communities and partners to champion Equality, Diversity & Inclusion			
Specific Action	Timescale		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Develop a plan to engage with under engaged communities, to improve understanding of their needs.			
Increase collaboration with regional and national partners to champion EDI good practice and improve outcomes.			
Challenge and lobby policy makers to help improve lives of those experiencing inequality or discrimination.			
Ensure our suppliers are able to demonstrate their commitment to EDI.			
Ensure our Procurement Framework reflects our commitment to EDI.			
Ensure all contractors we work with understand our expectations in relation to EDI.			
Develop work placement and volunteering opportunities to underrepresented groups.			
Extend our school and college engagement provision in the communities we operate.			
Encourage colleagues to use their volunteering leave to support community groups within the areas we operate.			
Source other EDI partners to help support MSV's delivery of priorities and goals.			
Review our membership of programmes and forums which may aid in championing EDI.			

This summary action plan will be developed internally with leads allocated and

timescales agreed.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Glossary of EDI Terminology

Terminology	Explanation
Ally	Is someone who actively promotes the culture of inclusion. An ally, regardless of their own ethnicity, sexuality, religion, ability, etc. recognises that they can and want to make a concerted effort to understand obstacles marginalised groups face.
Bias	Is an inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way this is closed-minded or unfair.
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)	As referred to above we recognise the recent debates and different perspectives about the use and limitations of this term, specifically that it should not be taken as referring to a singular group or identify. MSV will no longer be referring to this as appropriate terminology to use going forward.
Cultural Sensitivity	Means an ability to understand and interact with people in a way that recognises and respects diversity and cultural differences, including values, beliefs and behaviours.
Discrimination	Being unfair to someone or to behave badly towards people - In equality law, there is an important difference between what is described as ‘lawful’ and ‘unlawful’ discrimination. Unlawful discrimination means treating a person unfairly because of their protected characteristics. However, there are also circumstances when certain forms of discrimination are lawful under the Equality Act.
Ethnic Diverse	Is the existence of people from a variety of cultural and diverse backgrounds within a single area.
Ethnicity	This refers to a group’s shared cultural norms.
Equity	Where colleagues, customers and partners benefit equally from opportunities, regardless of their background, identity or experience.
Intersectionality	Is about recognising the fluid diversity of identities that a person can hold, such as gender, race, class, religion, etc.
Lived Experience	This is about personal knowledge gained through involvement or experience in everyday events. When we refer to this in our strategy it is about wanting

	personal and firsthand experiences of our customers, colleagues and partners to help guide and be reflected in our work.
Positive Action	This is permitted, voluntary measures under the Equality Act to remedy the disadvantages or underrepresentation experienced by people who share protected characteristics.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Name of Strategy	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy	
Date of Assessment	15/03/24	
Name & Role of Assessors	Sian Leighton, Assistant Director – Strategy & Engagement	
What are the desired outcomes of the strategy?	<p>The EDI strategy supports the MSV Way and sets out MSV’s plans for fulfilling our strategic priority to create a truly inclusive and diverse culture. The strategy focusses on three goals to help meet our strategic priority. The Strategy defines how we intend to achieve these goals (via an action plan) and how we intend to monitor progress.</p> <p>Overall, the desired outcome of this strategy is to ensure fair and equal service provision, ensure everyone is treated with respect, raise aspirations, create opportunities and breaks down barriers.</p> <p>The strategy also explains our legal and regulatory obligations, however, it is MSV intention to go beyond just our legal obligations as there are other ‘characteristics’ that are also commonly subjected to unfair treatment either consciously or unconsciously which can lead to inequality. Examples of these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Caring responsibilities ➤ Care Leavers ➤ Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) ➤ Socio-economic backgrounds ➤ Ex armed forces ➤ Ex offenders ➤ Refugee status 	
Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function?	Colleagues, board and committee members, customers, other stakeholders/partner organisations.	
Who will be consulted and what types of consultation will be carried out?	Colleagues, EDI Working Group, Engagement Forum, SLT, Customers, Scrutiny Panel	
Summarise any evidence considered	Notes of meetings held with above groups, along with feedback.	
Could the function have a differential impact on:	What evidence exists to support your analysis?	

	Yes / No	
Race Consider language and cultural factors	YES	<p>The EDI strategy document refers to the context in which the strategy was developed.</p> <p>As part of the drafting, various demographics, data, feedback from customer forums, reports – both internal and external have been considered and help to shape our action plan to address some of the inequalities that exist.</p>
Gender reassignment Consider people proposing to or have undergone a process of having their sex reassigned.		
Disability Consider physical, visual, aural impairment, mental, learning difficulties		
Age Consider Elderly or young people		
Sexuality Either know or perceived		
Gender		
Religion or belief Consider religious or cultural observance including non-belief, practices of worship		
Other protected or vulnerable characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marriage or civil partnerships • pregnancy or maternity? 		
<p>If the answer is NO to <u>all</u> questions and no differential treatment has been found there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.</p> <p>If the answer is YES to any of the questions please complete the rest of the form.</p>		
In what areas could the differential identified be considered to have an adverse impact in this function and what solutions will be introduced to overcome these adverse impacts?	N/a	
In what areas could the differential identified be considered a positive impact in this function and what strategies will be introduced to safeguard and spread these positive impacts?		The purpose of the EDI strategy is included in the desired outcome section. Our overall vision is that the implementation of the EDI strategy will have a positive impact on those who have a 'protected' or 'other' characteristic'.

Which Action Plans have these solutions/strategies been transferred into?	The EDI Strategy Action plan 2024-27.
Who will be responsible for monitoring these Action Plans?	Assistant Director – Strategy & Engagement, with oversight by the EDI Working Party and regular reporting to SLT and People & Governance Committee

9. Links to further information/resources

Link 1 – Snapshot Data of current position regarding colleagues and customers based on the NHF EDI Data Tool, 2023

The link to the document can be found [here](#)

Link 2 – GMHP Dice Report, 2023

The link can be found [here](#)

Link 3 - Census Data, 2021

The link can be found here - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>