

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2024 - 2027



Our new Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

This is Orwell's second Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and this strategy shows a shift of focus, in line with our People and Culture strategy, from formative, foundational and basic awareness-raising work to a more mature vision of EDI within an organisation who are fully engaged with the importance of inclusivity and the enrichment this brings to colleagues and customers.

EDI is fundamental to the 'people-focused' aspect of our values and fairness, respect, equity, diversity, inclusivity and engagement are truly embedded in our culture as who we are and what we believe. We have moved to a position where EDI is becoming integral to all we do and is considered in every action: ensuring it is everyone's responsibility and that our colleagues feel empowered to be proactive in their adoption of a culture of inclusivity. We know that only by building a truly inclusive environment, can diversity and a sense of belonging thrive.

Equity of treatment is at our heart: from giving people the equal chance of a home that meets their needs, to giving our colleagues

equitable opportunities for their personal growth and development. We truly believe that it is important for people to see themselves represented in the organisations they engage with, and that their voices are heard in the decisions that affect them. We have been working to ensure that Orwell reflects our community demographic in terms of all colleagues, our Executive Team and our Board. There are still some steps to be taken to ensure we are fully reflective and this strategy details the aims and objectives we hope will bring us closer to this aim.

We are committed to ensuring Orwell is an organisation based on a firm footing of physical and psychological safety, where everyone feels comfortable being themselves and where people can openly express themselves and everyone respects this. We want our customers to know that their home is their sanctuary, and they don't need to change who they are within this safe space, ensuring they will be supported by people who respect and embrace differences as positive.

This strategy paves the way to Orwell becoming truly inclusive, demonstrating this through clear, measurable, tangible and positive outcomes for all.

Our first EDI strategy showed the way and our new strategy sets us more ambitious and aspirational goals, based on 6 key drivers: improved data gathering to support decision making, communicating those decisions and

progress to hold ourselves accountable and build greater awareness of positive change; attracting and developing a diverse workforce that has equitable opportunities; working in partnership with those with a variety of lived experience and subject matter experts to adopt best practice, and providing a broad spectrum of learning opportunities to support inclusivity (both through awareness and to support equity of opportunity).

Our focus remains total inclusivity as we believe that this is the culture from which diversity grows, but with greater knowledge and greater understanding we want to move from just 'supporting' to being proactive, anti-discriminatory, forming partnerships, undertaking initiatives, speaking out and being strong allies and colleagues that are willing to share lived experience feeling truly safe. This strategy is fundamental to our cultural beliefs and values here at Orwell and we know that understanding, empathy, respect, creativity and innovation born out of safety and difference is how we can achieve the aspirational objectives in our Strategic Plan.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, Inclusion and Diversity:

How we will achieve our objectives



EDI is embedded across all Orwell values. Through this strategy we see our focus for 2024-2027 as:

People-focused

Being a great employer by ensuring we have a psychologically safe workplace where people are all respected and supported.

Ambitious

Through providing equitable opportunity to all, to ensure everyone can fulfil their aspirations and in turn, fulfil our aim to provide exemplary support to all customers.

Collaborative

We respect one another and work together in a way that gives the best outcomes for us as colleagues, and for our customers.

Effective

We use our differences positively and through these are stronger, more innovative and happier.



Strategic Aims we are working to achieve:

- ▲ Low colleague turnover.
- ▲ Inclusive recruitment practices to recruit and retain a diverse group of people who understand, support and champion our values.
- ▲ Being a happy, healthy workplace where people are comfortable being their authentic self and feeling supported and empowered.
- ▲ Growth of our brand and reputation.
- ▲ Being an employer of choice.
- ▲ A highly skilled, professional workforce who understand the importance of diversity to succeed and embrace inclusivity in all they do.

All these aims feed into one of our People and Culture objectives – that of nurturing an inclusive environment by demonstrating Fairness, Respect, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement.

To achieve this objective, we will focus on six drivers of success:



Expanding data collection, storage and analysis



This will deliver:	A more accurate picture of the demographics of our colleagues, customers and communities.
Why do we need this?:	To better understand the makeup of our colleagues, customers and communities to inform business planning and decision making and to better tailor internal benefits and our external services to meet individual need. To assist in defining and tailoring initiatives and support that will benefit our colleagues, customers and communities and being able to provide evidence of the impact of these initiatives.
How will we deliver?:	By collecting information that facilitates understanding of our colleagues and communities; by working closely with our customer insight team to support our EDI knowledge of our customer demographic and through working with stakeholders and partners to share information and benchmark; by collecting data whilst meeting our commitments under GDPR; by communicating the purpose and use of data; by sharing insights about how data drives objectives and business decisions; by using the data to inform us of the unique requirements of our customers; by using the data to better serve the needs of those in marginalised communities; to help us identify any trends around feedback and complaints to drive continuous improvement in service levels.
How will we measure success?:	By improving the colleague EDI survey response rate to at least 50% with a move to self-reporting by 2027; clear recruitment, onboarding and career path statistics in place by 2025 to challenge any bias; working to design data collection information and having meaningful customer data by 2027; by evidencing year on year positive changes in internal alignment between colleagues, customers, Executive Team and Board; by tri-annually benchmarking our data against the National Housing Federation, ensuring external alignment and increasing diversity year on year.

Developing best practice through recognised accreditations



This will deliver:	Varied and innovative specialist support to support the discovery of new approaches, processes and practices that ensure continuous improvement and reflect external expert review.
Why do we need this?:	To ensure we are consistently challenging ourselves to become more inclusive, maintaining consistently high standards and seeking ways to enhance education and training; through heightened awareness of appropriate and respectful behaviour, minimising the risk of institutional, structural or systemic discrimination.
How will we deliver?:	By working with recognised experts and colleagues, customers and communities with different lived experience to understand their unique needs; by working with local and national accrediting bodies to measure current practice against best practice using advice and information to improve and where relevant and appropriate, working towards awards that provide demonstrable positive impact, using feedback to improve our practice and services and altering our approach, language, actions and support to align with advice and learning through effective gap analyses; sharing all information collected with the Board to ensure awareness of our colleagues and customers.
How will we measure success?:	By achieving Disability Confident Leader Status in 2024 and put in place an Action Plan using the report gap analysis to further improve and regain accreditation in 2026 ; by improving our accreditation score with the Housing Diversity Network from 12 distinctions to 22 distinctions by 2025; by achieving HouseProud Pledge Pioneer in 2024; by being asked to contribute to external advisory panels / networks / speaking opportunities on EDI at least 4 times a year; by an increase in diversity through the whole colleague life cycle and more shared lived experience from within the organisation; one award application for an EDI supportive initiative by 2027.

Expanding inclusive recruitment and performance practices



This will deliver:	Increased diversity of applicants and clear pathways for equitable opportunities for all who would like this.
Why do we need this?:	To ensure the same opportunities for all regardless of background or experience; to ensure unconscious bias is eliminated as far as possible from all recruitment and performance processes; to ensure greater accessibility for applicants and colleagues in all areas including recruitment and learning and development. To ensure a career pathway and succession plan that includes people from diverse backgrounds – ensuring opportunities are equally available to all.
How will we deliver?:	By anonymising our recruitment process; by including more detail about our approach to EDI on our website and in all job packs; by recruiting on a broad and specialised range of job boards; by regularly reviewing our policies and procedures, ensuring they are updated in line with both best practice, legislation and our cultural desire to be fully inclusive and accessible and all have Equality Impact Assessments; by including EDI discussions in interviews, one to ones, team meetings and appraisal processes; by providing relevant and regular training to recruiting teams and leaders; by reviewing overall accessibility in all formats; by setting up a mentoring programme and clear succession planning ensuring focus is given to underrepresented areas; by using the experience of other specialists and like-minded organisations to support practice and change.
How will we measure success?:	By monitoring and showing improved diversity at application, shortlisting, offer and onboarding stages across all protected characteristics with focus on those showing the least diversity in our colleague EDI Survey (Gender, Ethnicity and Sexual Orientation); by increasing diversity across our colleague group evidenced through EDI survey; by reducing the gender pay gap year on year through a focus on diversity within Care and Support; by working with Independent East partners to facilitate a Board Traineeship programme.

Developing a comprehensive EDI learning programme



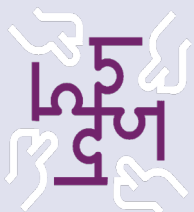
This will deliver:	A consistent approach to knowledge building with improved awareness of different lived experiences to increase understanding of anti-discriminatory behaviour and positive interaction and outcomes.
Why do we need this?:	To ensure people understand Orwell's culture in relation to EDI and act accordingly. To raise awareness of diverse views and beliefs. To ensure colleagues have a high level of awareness of EDI and so are able to act inclusively.
How will we deliver?:	With at least 6 Knowledge cafes around a broad range of topics each year and by co-working with partners to further enhance our programme and subject matter coverage; by supporting colleagues to share their own lived experience; by actively supporting special interest and awareness days / weeks / months; by working with partners who will help raise awareness; by building a library of resources of suggested reading, videos, webinars and podcasts for our colleagues to access when they need additional knowledge or support; by rolling out our own bite-sized EDI guidance and information videos.
How will we measure success?:	By adding at least 1 new EDI course or training programme over each of the next 4 years; by achieving 90%+ on mandatory EDI training attendance; by organising at least 6 Knowledge Cafes each year; by increasing attendance at Knowledge Café events to an average of 50 attendees by 2026; by increasing the number of colleagues accessing our EDI Resource Library by 20%; by at least four colleagues sharing their lived experience each year; through achieving higher engagement scores year on year in our colleague survey as it relates to EDI matters.

Consistent accessible communication across multiple internal and external platforms



This will deliver:	Effective communication to all. A clear and consistent way to share information with the largest possible audience, encouraging engagement and dialogue.
Why do we need this?:	To ensure that everyone is able to access the information we share whether colleague or customer and that flexible communication methods enable everyone to share their views and have their voices heard. To know that we are passing on our information effectively.
How will we deliver?:	Working with the Communications Team and Customer Insight team, and in line with the internal and external communications strategies, to ensure we know our audience's communication needs through data collection and feedback. By using this information to determine how, what and when we communicate and through increasing specialist learning to ensure we are providing all we can.
How will we measure success?:	by reviewing the feedback collected from our colleague EDI survey and customers to guide the formats and designs we create and the channels we use; every document we produce will offer alternative versions and we will act on requests for alternatives within one week by 2025; by publishing on Workplace that the FREDIE group, ORG and those with lived experience have checked current communication tools and methods once a year; to have updated all documents to ensure accessible standards are used by 2026; the brand guidelines updated in 2024 to include accessibility best practise; by recognition of accessibility via accreditation, feedback or relevant award.

Developing internal and external networks and partnerships



This will deliver:	greater collaboration to provide a broad range of expertise to share experience and knowledge and raise internal awareness. Through proactive involvement this will solidify our assertion that we are not passive supporters of EDI but work actively in partnership with others to influence change. A group of external specialists to support ongoing learning.
Why do we need this?:	To ensure we learn from those with a range of lived experience, and to share our expertise with those who may benefit; to share resources and spread cost to ensure greatest reach and opportunity; to have more impact in the external environment and in our communities through joint and collaborative initiatives; to be clear, proactive allies who do not just speak about EDI but genuinely champion support and change.
How will we deliver?:	By developing our internal colleague networks so that those from marginalised groups have visibility and a voice and that we ensure their collective experience is considered when making decisions; by engaging with different communities and their representatives; by building specialist external networks to share expertise and keep abreast of changes; to collaborate with partners and share resources to minimise cost and support increased awareness.
How will we measure success?:	By increasing the number of members in our FREDIE network by 50% by 2026 and increasing the FREDIE group diversity year on year; by increasing the number of colleague networks to include LGBTQ+, Disability, and Carers by 2026; by working with at least 5 external organisations that represent our diverse communities to support initiatives and contribute wherever possible as engaged partners and allies by 2026; by supporting specific initiatives vocally and in a high profile manner on social media (at least four per annum); by sharing our resources and knowledge both formally and informally with at least 4 organisations per annum.

Together we make a difference



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