

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2025

“Everyone should be able to be their whole self at home and at work. Our backgrounds, experiences, identities and unique abilities shape us and build our individual skills, knowledge and perspectives. When we involve and value everyone’s contributions, we all benefit. When we co-design our policies with our customers, we better understand the impacts of our decisions on people with different values, needs and priorities. And when we do that, we design better policies and services, and everybody benefits.”

Mary Noone, Policy Manager



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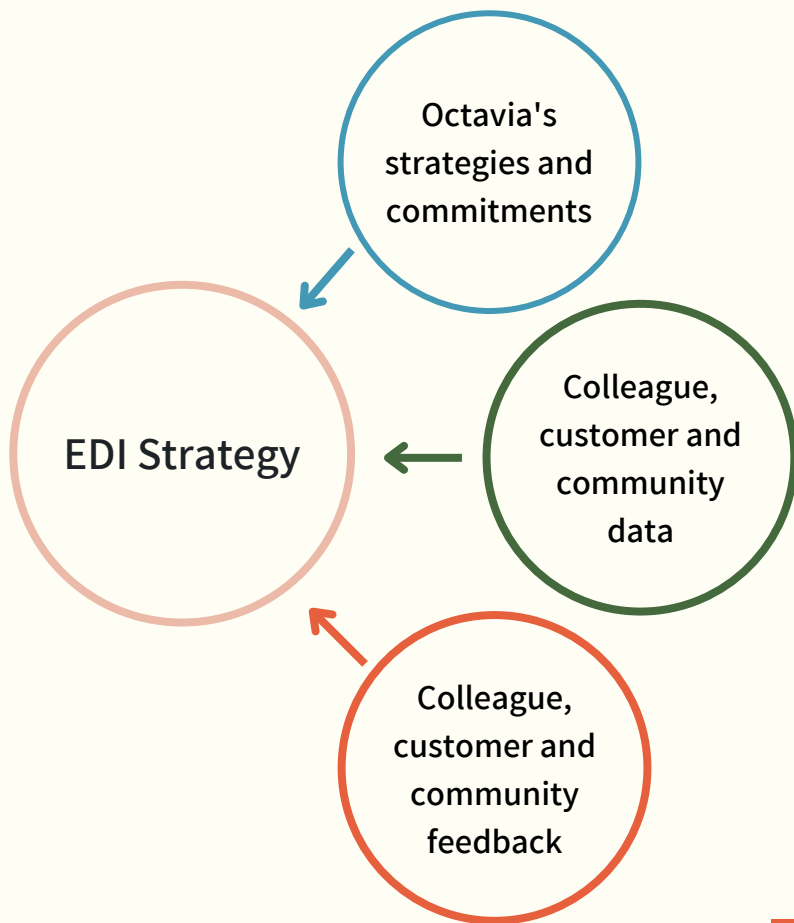
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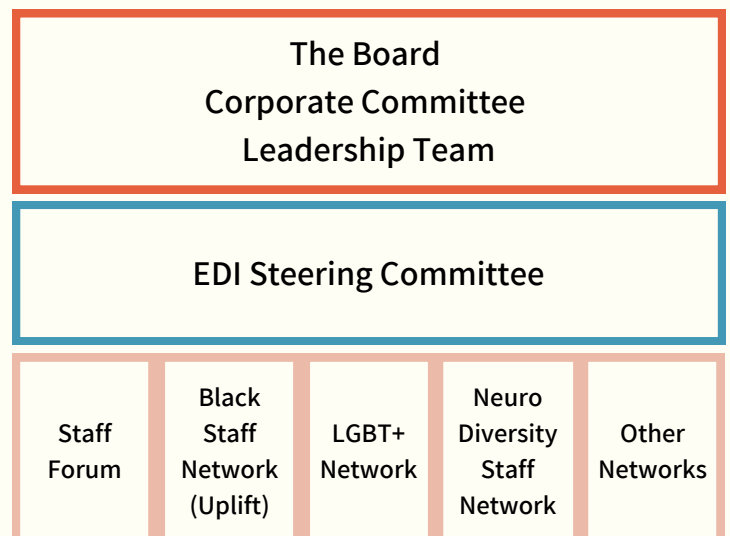
Approach and Governance

This is Octavia’s equality, diversity and inclusion strategy covering 2023 to 2025 for our colleagues, residents, care users and communities.



It has been developed taking into account the work of our previous EDI taskforce together with our commitment to being an anti-racist organisation, which we set out in 2020. Our Corporate, People and Sustainability strategies, and data and feedback from our colleagues, customers and communities have been integral in forming this vision. Best practice, legislative and regulatory requirements and taking into account the expectations of our partners also form key inputs into this Strategy.

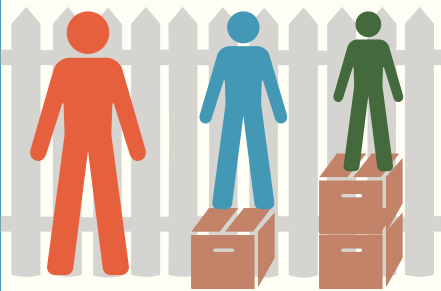
The governance underpinning this strategy and the delivery of its objectives is led by the EDI Steering Committee. This committee is made up of members of our staff networks as well as numerous departments and teams across Octavia. These include all our customer facing departments as well as policy, sustainability, communities, resident engagement, communications and health & safety.



What is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion?

EQUALITY

Equality means fair treatment, opportunity and access to resources



'Who is trying to get in the room but can't?'

DIVERSITY

Diversity means all the ways in which we differ



'Who is in the room?'

INCLUSION

Inclusion means ensuring that everyone is given the opportunity to participate



'Has everyone's ideas been heard?'

EDI Strategy Commitments



An Exemplar Anti-Racist Organisation

Our commitment to race equality is a key part of creating an equal, diverse and inclusive organisation. We recommit to the Black Lives Matter pledges made in 2020 and acknowledge the hard work of the previous EDI Task force, Black and global majority colleagues and especially the work of Uplift, our Black Staff Network. These commitments form the key actions in our anti-racist pillar:

Increasing awareness and understanding

- Build the knowledge and capability of our leaders and allies to support our anti-racist ambitions
- Develop resources that help increase knowledge and awareness of EDI, including the lived experiences of racism globally and in the UK
- Connect with external networks to share ideas and identify best practice on being anti-racist

Supporting our black and global majority colleagues

- Continue to support the Black Staff Network (Uplift) to create a safe place for sharing and mutual support, as requested by staff. This group will sit alongside other affinity groups and feed into the EDI Steering Committee
- Ensure our Mental Health First Aid (Wellbeing) supports staff to deal with trauma and mental health effects of racism and inequality

Taking affirmative action where necessary

- Develop a talent progression programme to open up pathways to leadership roles, to improve the representation of Black and global majority staff at leadership level
- Increase the diversity of the board to better reflect our communities

Amplifying voices and supporting our black and global majority communities

- Fund, support, partner and amplify the voice of local charities and other non-profit organisations supporting and led by black and global majority people in our communities
- Explore how our procurement activity can open up opportunities for organisations led by black and global majority communities

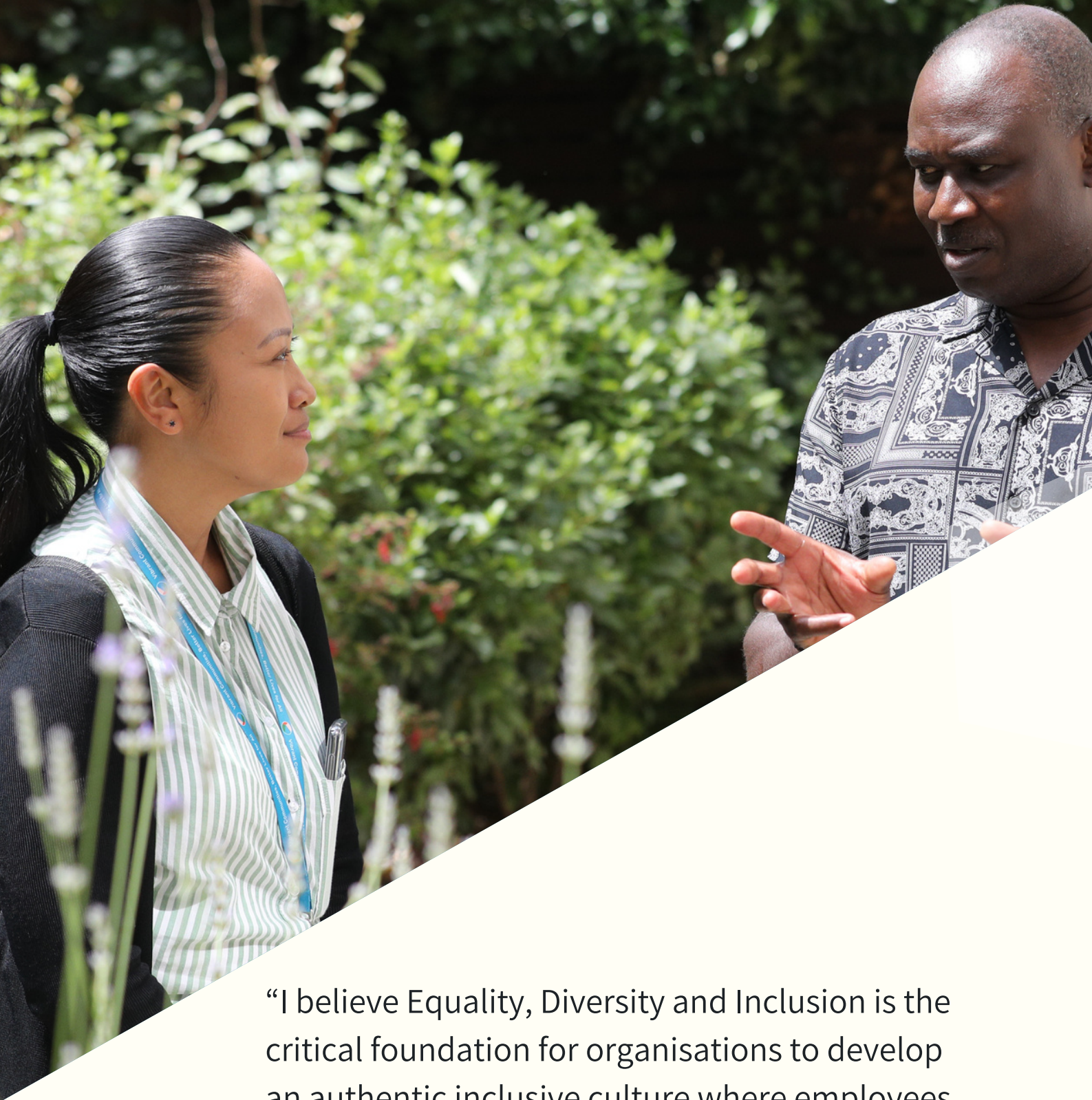
Delivering these initiatives will result in these outcomes:

- A consistent understanding across Octavia about Anti-Racism as well as of EDI standards and principles
- A positive change in behaviours, where constructive feedback is acted on and non-inclusive behaviours reduce
- Enable us to develop, promote and progress the careers of black and global majority colleagues

I feel valued and supported. I know there is a zero-tolerance approach to racism and I feel confident that action will be taken.

As an organisation we are a beacon of best practice for anti-racism. Other organisations look to us for advice and support.

I know the staff and volunteers that support me understand my background. They resource and partner with organisations run and led by people like me.



“I believe Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is the critical foundation for organisations to develop an authentic inclusive culture where employees from all backgrounds - regardless of their colour, ethnicity or disability - are respected, have a voice and are afforded equal opportunities in the workplace in order to flourish and maximise their potential, from front-line roles to the Board.”

Angela Marcelle, Head of Retail

Talented, Supported and Representative Staff

The people-centred pillar of the Corporate Strategy and our People Strategy sets out a clear vision for creating a culture that is inclusive and facilitates connection, openness, and trust. These commitments build on and develop the vision set out in these strategies:

We will be representative of our diverse communities at all levels

- We will review our recruitment processes to ensure we are attracting and selecting diverse candidates
- We will put in place coaching, mentoring and sponsorship plans to support our diverse colleagues to access development and promotion opportunities

We will identify and remove barriers to colleagues being their full selves at work

- We will build a culture that is inclusive and facilitates connection, openness and trust, enabling individuality, creativity and resourcefulness
- We will review our People policies to ensure we are creating inclusive and positive work environments
- We will rework our Equality Impact Assessment at policy development and creation, to ensure policies are created with EDI in mind, and not as an after-thought

We will improve inclusion and accessibility for all colleagues, no matter where they are based

- We will create more opportunities for colleagues to meet and learn about and from one another, paying special attention to colleagues based outside of Emily House
- We will introduce regular bulletins from our Leadership Team to keep colleagues updated on the work of all areas of the organisation
- We will join the Disability Confident employer scheme and develop guidance for managers to help them agree accommodations with team members

Leaders will be accountable to our EDI aims

- We will make it clear that supporting EDI in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers
- We will utilise the Values and Behaviours Competency Framework as part of our performance management to include KPIs for EDI

Delivering these initiatives will result in these outcomes:

- Higher levels of trust from colleagues who can see themselves represented at all levels of the organisation, including in senior leadership roles
- Make Octavia an attractive employer, enabling us to recruit more people from diverse backgrounds, and to retain them and progress their careers
- Build greater accountability in our leadership for getting accessibility and inclusion right from the start

I have the tools, resources, and line management support to meet my (access) needs.

I see people who reflect me, in senior leadership and on the board.

Staff across the organisation connect with me, understand my background, and make adjustments to meet my needs.

“EDI is about recognising and embracing the fact that we are living and working in an environment where people are diverse and have diverse needs. Octavia should be a place where colleagues feel safe to talk about their diverse needs, a place where they are being treated fairly, where they are supported and encouraged to bring their true selves to work so they can succeed in their roles.”

Geanina Oprea, Learning Management System Coordinator



Accurate EDI Data

The diversity data we collect is essential to understanding the diversity of our people, the communities we serve and the ways we interact and engage with one another. The commitment to accurate data ensures we improve the quality and breadth of data we hold, to enable us to build inclusive environments for all:

We will close our colleague EDI data gaps

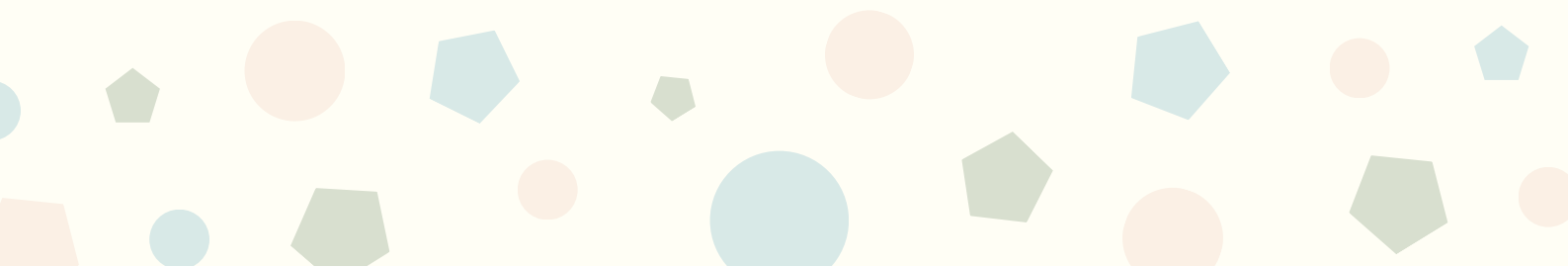
- We will standardise questions using the National Housing Federation's (NHF) recommendations, utilising the NHF's EDI data tool to understand how representative we are of our local communities and against other Housing Providers
- We will make sure that data is not just about numbers but also about opening up opportunities for conversations, looking to understand why colleagues may feel uncomfortable sharing their personal data with us

We will improve our customer EDI data reporting

- We will interrogate our customer data to identify gaps in service provision across our diverse communities, constantly reviewing this data to understand the impact of interventions and initiatives
- We will find and listen to the human stories and case studies that highlight what we get right and what we can improve

Pay gap reporting

- We will publish gender, disability and ethnicity pay gap reports enabling an intersectional view of this data
- We will appraise the EDI data of our partners and suppliers, taking account of their commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability



Delivering these initiatives will result in these outcomes:

- Greater clarity about who our colleagues and customers are and how they feel
- Build confidence and engagement when data shows the action we take is having an impact
- Greater transparency and accountability to our colleagues, customers and partners

I feel confident in sharing my identity and background and know this will be used to improve how services are designed and adapted to suit my needs as an Octavia customer.

I feel safe to share my diversity data and know how this information is used to better include me and understand where there are gaps, to enable my full participation as an Octavia employee.

I know that whatever personal data I disclose it will only be shared according to best practice standards and in line with GDPR. I will never be personally identifiable from that data.

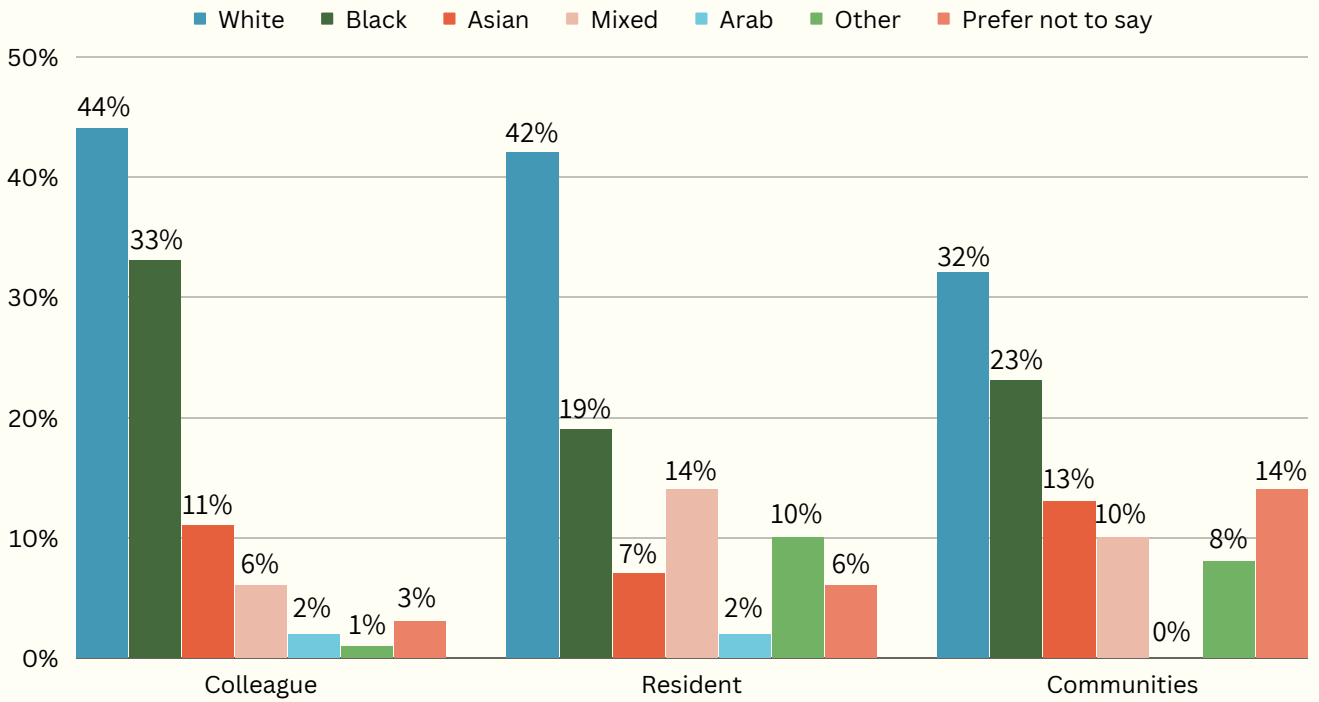


“EDI is connection and understanding, with acceptance and accessibility for everyone. Not just for the ones that are comfortable and confident to speak out, to ask.”

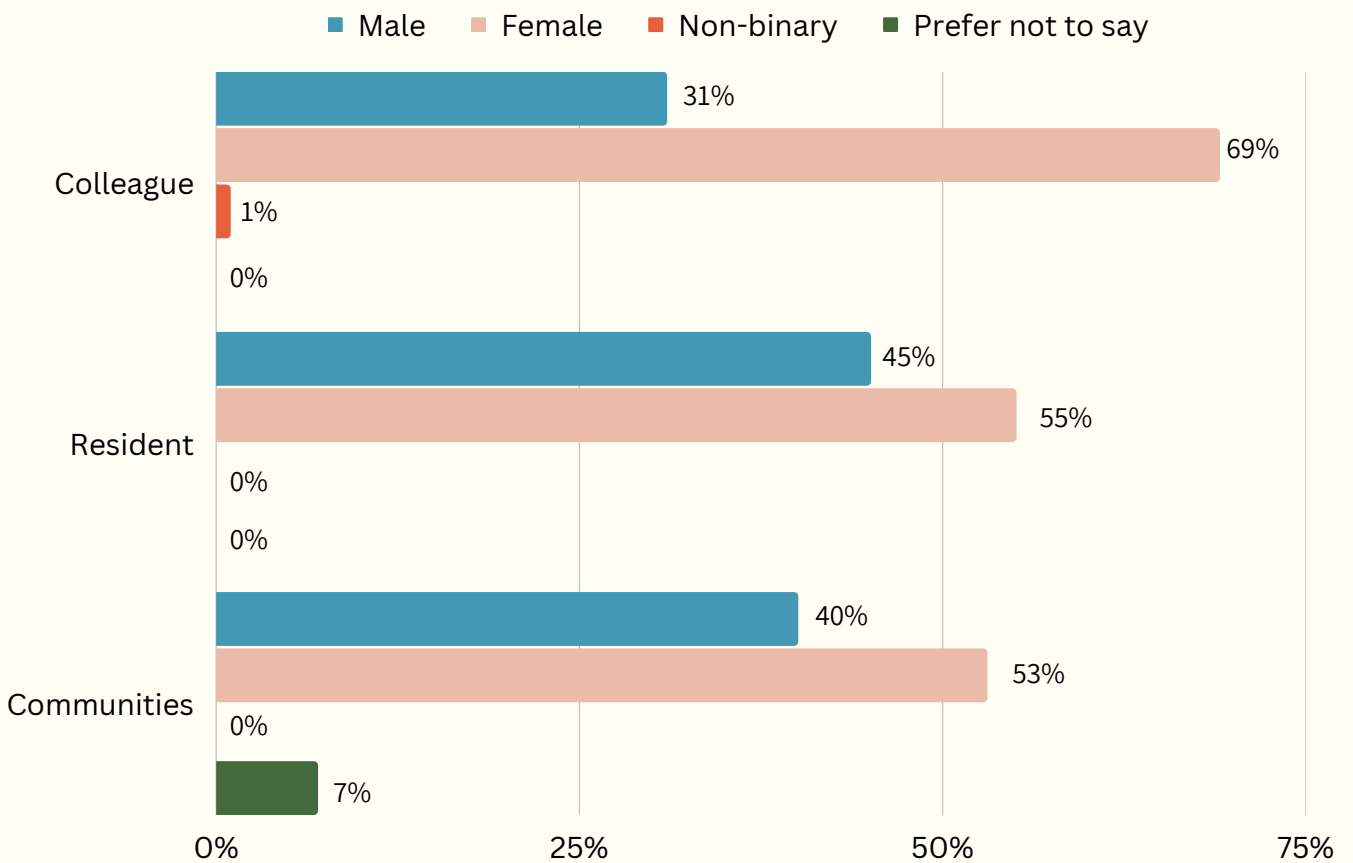
Alica Krmac, Care Scheme Support Officer

Our Diversity Data

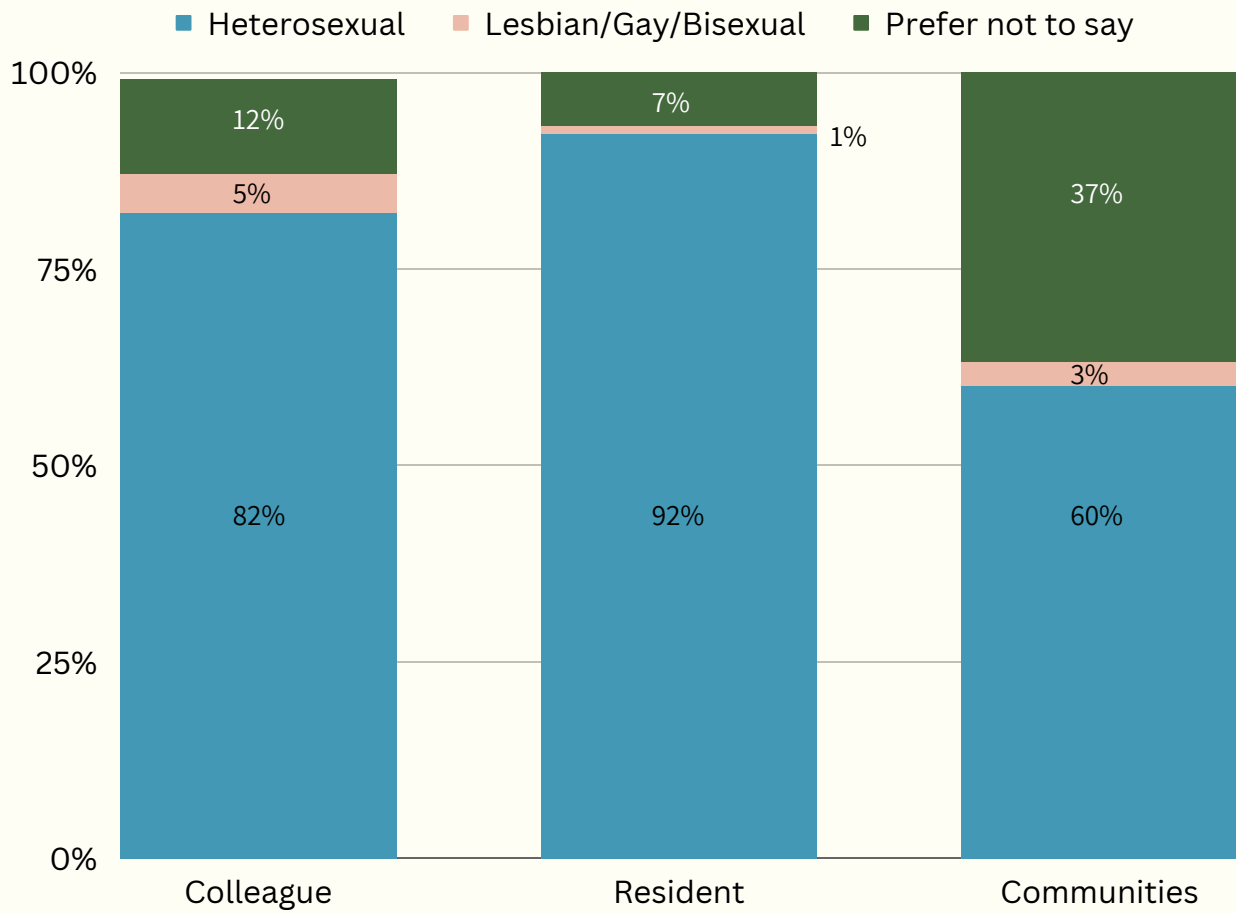
Ethnicity



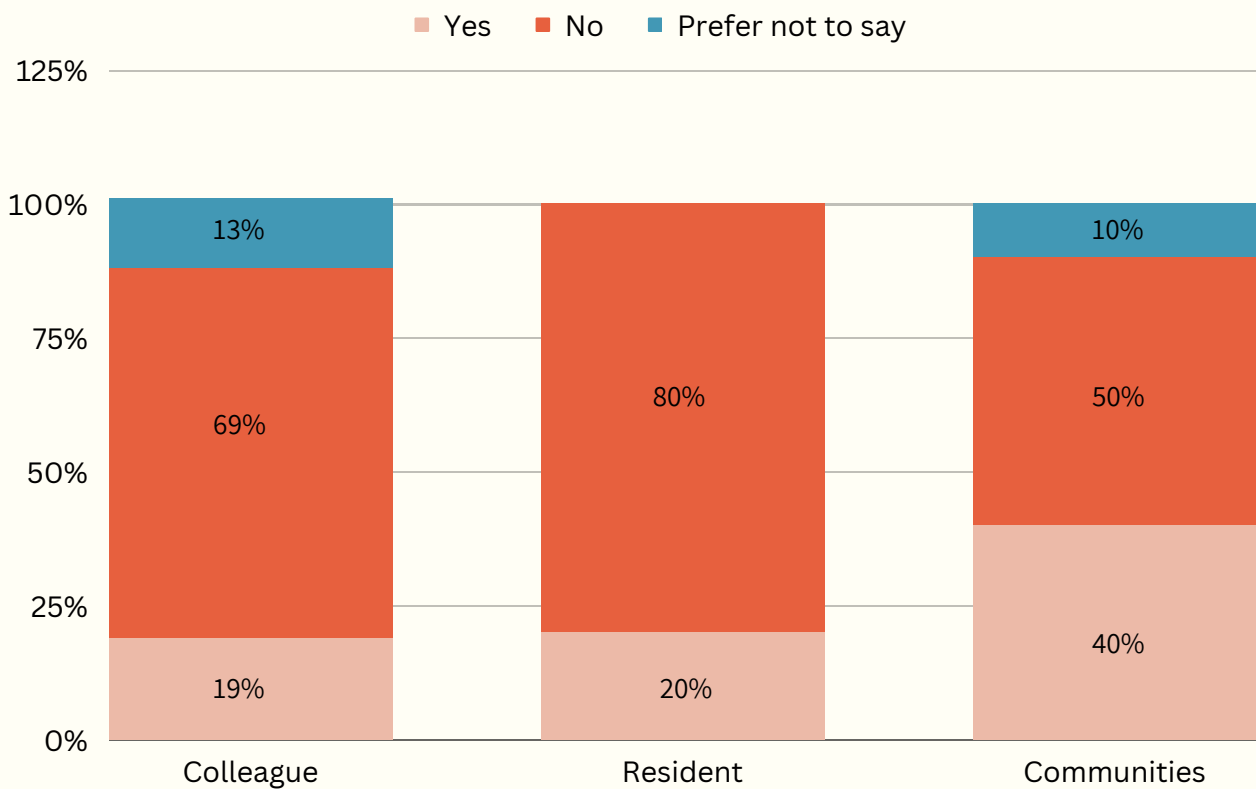
Gender



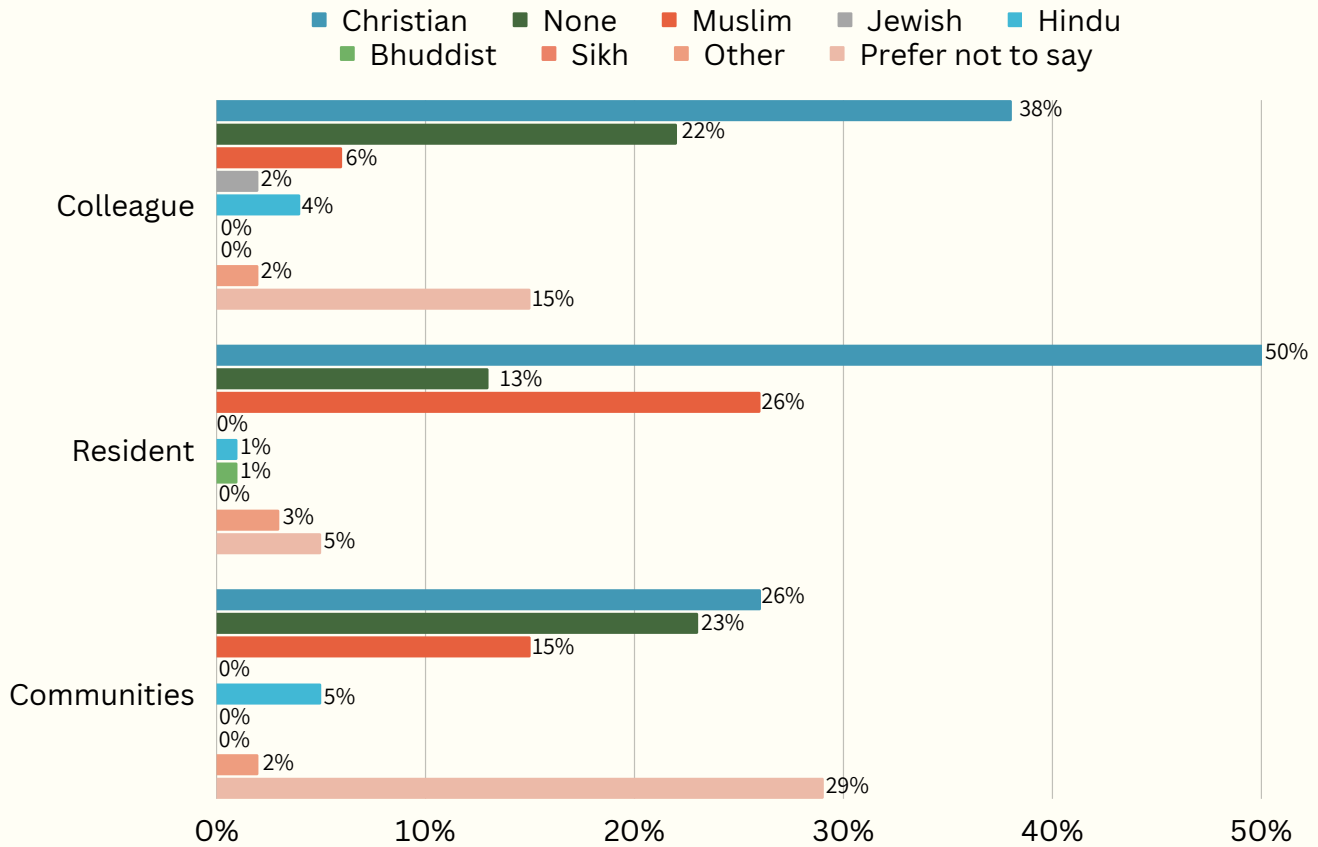
Sexuality



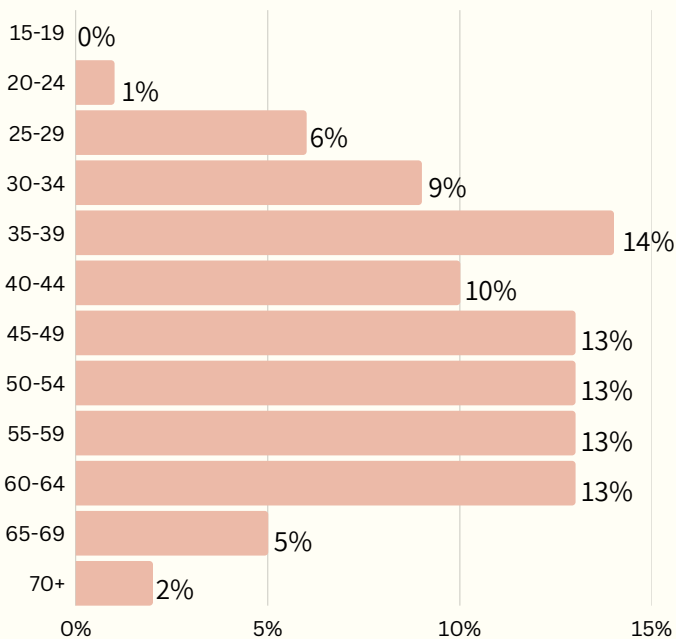
Disability



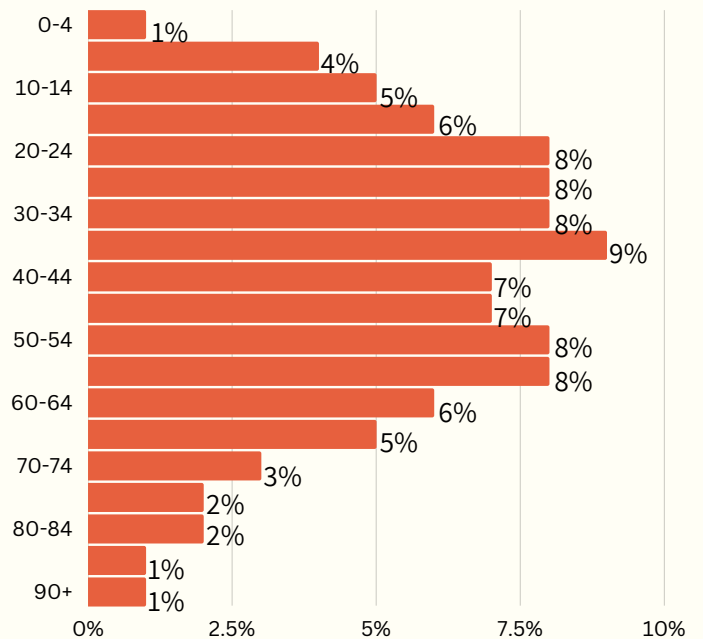
Religion



Colleague Age



Resident Age



Colleague data: January 2023

Resident data: January 2023

Communities data: April 2021 - March 2022 data from a sample of Communities service users. Please note data excludes colleagues, residents or communities service users who have not provided their diversity data.



“For me EDI is about working in an environment that allows me to be my whole self and embraces the many aspects of what makes me who I am. When you are truly comfortable in an environment you are more creative, dedicated and want to do better. I want to be allowed to learn and grow in a space that enables me to expand my mind, supports my ambitions yet recognises the various challenges I may experience, but helps to push these out of the way because what I bring to Octavia is valued.”

Stephanie Oji, People & Culture Manager

Equitable and Inclusive Access to our Services

We know a customer's background and identity can impact the service they receive. We will work with our customers to ensure we develop and deliver services to them in the most inclusive way. Identifying areas of underrepresentation, removing barriers, and targeting support to those who need it:


Inclusive access to our services

- We will work in partnership with residents and communities to understand their needs when accessing our services. This will help to remove barriers and improve accessibility
- We will find and listen to the human stories and case studies that highlight what we get right and what we can improve
- We will ensure customer policies are created with EDI in mind, and not as an afterthought

We will actively monitor and address underrepresentation of groups using our services

- We will review our data to understand where disadvantage occurs, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups
- We will identify barriers that customers experience through data analysis and through regular opportunities for feedback
- We will constantly review our customer data to understand the impact of interventions and initiatives

Financial resilience

- We will continue to deliver financial inclusion support to vulnerable and marginalised groups during the cost-of-living crisis
 - We will do all we can to mitigate the unequal impact on our most vulnerable communities
 - We will utilise our networks and partner with local charities and other non-profit organisations
- 
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Delivering these initiatives will result in these outcomes:

- Colleagues and leaders feeling empowered to work inclusively every day, resulting in improved customer satisfaction and colleague engagement
- Better outcomes for our customers, reducing the impact of inequality and building financial resilience
- Mitigation of bias in our decision-making

Services are designed and adapted to suit my unique needs and background. It is simple to get things done with Octavia.

I feel supported because EDI training and resources enable me to understand different lived experiences and better serve our customers.

Services are easy to access and engage with. When I have an issue, I know how to get support



“I think for me to feel valued, I need to feel understood. I really appreciate when people ask questions about my culture out of genuine curiosity. I think what often happens is people are nervous to ask questions because they fear how this may come across, and this isn't to say overly intrusive questions are okay! But I definitely feel more of a connection to individuals that don't avoid the opportunity to know more about me and my background because it is a huge part of who I am.”

Suna Ramadan, Fundraising Manager

Resourced and Connected Staff Networks

Our staff networks allow colleagues to have safe spaces for support and a platform to promote and celebrate their diversity with colleagues. We already have three fantastic networks and want to grow and develop others:

Staff Networking offering

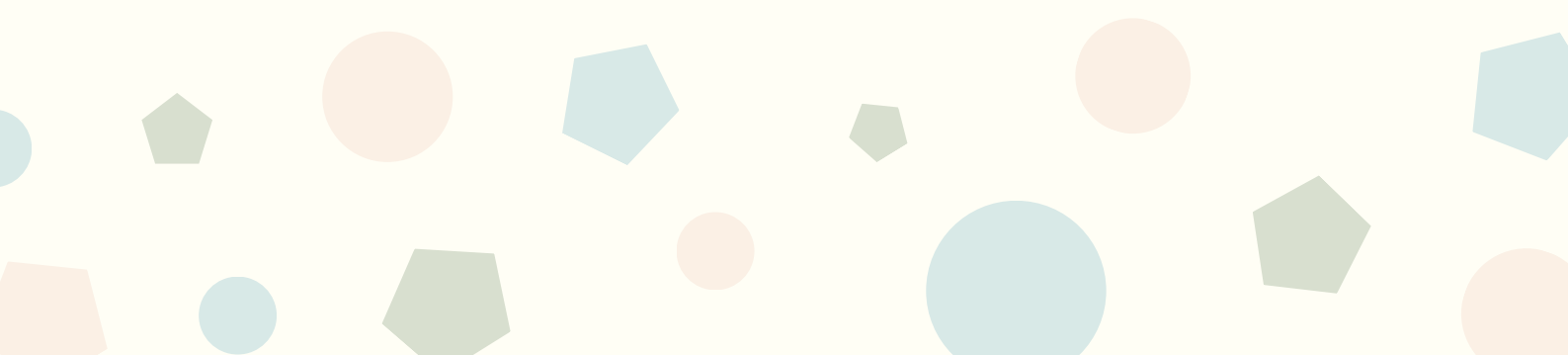
- We will identify gaps in our staff networks and support colleagues to set up new groups
- We will continue to support existing staff networks to create safe spaces for mutual support, education and advocacy. Staff networks will feed into the EDI Steering Committee, ensuring a space for issues to be shared and escalated
- We will reflect on how accessible networks are to customer-facing colleagues, as well as those not based at Emily House
- We will connect our staff networks to external organisations such as House Proud

Allyship and advocacy

- We will develop a network of allies and advocates to promote EDI across all areas of the organisation. Allies will be supported with training and coaching
- We will encourage staff networks and our allies group to collaborate and support one another

Mental health support

- We will work with our Mental Health First Aiders to support our staff network groups, acknowledging the emotional impact on staff network officers when creating and developing spaces of support for colleagues



Delivering these initiatives will result in these outcomes:

- Colleagues from minoritised backgrounds feeling better supported and valued, increasing trust in the organisation
- Improved engagement between leadership and colleagues, with colleagues feeling they are being listened to
- Greater confidence in how to talk about equality, diversity and inclusion and challenge non-inclusive behaviour
- A consistent understanding across Octavia of EDI standards and principles with lived experience

I understand how to constructively challenge privilege so I can be an effective advocate for my colleagues.

I have access to staff networks in which colleagues understand my background, support me and advocate on my behalf.

I get to meet different colleagues on a regular basis and that has built my understanding of the diversity of my colleagues and the customers they work with.



Black Staff Network

Uplift (Black Staff Network) was created as a space for Black staff in Octavia to connect and share, to promote racial equality across all departments and positions and to provide support with racial disparities within the working environment. Uplift empowers Black staff and reminds us that we matter within Octavia.



LGBT+ Staff Network

For colleagues who identify as LGBTQIA+ and allies of the LGBT+ community. The aim of the group is to support, advocate and promote LGBTQIA+ equality and awareness both internally and externally, as well as to provide a safe space for mutual support and opportunities for social and professional networking.



Neuro Diversity Network

For colleagues who have experience of or interest in neurodiversity. We believe embracing neurodiversity in the workplace means creating an environment that is inclusive and empowers both employees and employers to be more creative, agile, and innovative.



Wellbeing Group

The Wellbeing Group is run by colleagues who are trained mental health first aiders or who have an interest in wellbeing at work. The group provides peer support when carrying out the role, as well as driving wellbeing projects at Octavia. When we feel supported in our physical, emotional and mental health, we are given the opportunity to be our best selves.

Staff Forum: The Staff Forum represents all Octavia employees, by providing a vehicle for consultation with staff on important issues. It provides opportunities for colleagues to have their say. The aim of the Forum is to contribute to the continuous improvement of Octavia's performance, including an improvement in management performance and decision-making, and employee performance, wellbeing and job satisfaction.

“As the chair of the Black Staff network, EDI is incredibly important, it’s about truly representing, embracing, celebrating and supporting differences. As humans we have to keep learning, keep reviewing, without that you can’t change the outcomes. It’s about encouraging and supporting people to be honest, to look within themselves and do their own self-reflection. That means looking at your own ignorance’s and educating yourself.”

**Edwardine Lockhart, Chair of Uplift (Black Staff Network)
and Tenancy Support Officer**



Targets and Metrics

Based on the table below, you can see that Octavia is already an incredibly diverse place to work, especially in terms of gender and ethnicity. However, we know there is work to do to achieve greater diversity in leadership and on our board. We have set targets for the diversity of our colleagues based on the 2021 census data for London, as we want to be representative of the communities we serve.

Measure	Unit	Current Jan 2023	London Census Data 2021	Target 2025	Current Data Collection (All Staff)	Data Collection Target 2025 (All Staff)
Women	All Staff	69%	51%	50%	50%	80%
	Leadership	55%				
	Board	29%				
Trans/ Non-binary	All Staff	1%	1%	1%	50%	80%
	Leadership	0%				
	Board	0%				
Black and Global Majority	All Staff	53%	46%	50%	50%	80%
	Leadership	33%				
	Board	14%				
Disability	All Staff	19%	16%	15%	20%	60%
	Leadership	8%				
	Board	14%				
LGBT+	All Staff	5%	5%	5%	47%	60%
	Leadership	15%				
	Board	0%				

Accurate data has already been identified as a key commitment in this strategy. Our diversity data gap for colleagues is large, and you will see above that we have set a data collection target of 80% for 2025. We consider this an essential target which not only ensures our data is accurate but that colleagues trust us to share their diversity data with us. Our Board have already shown leadership in this by sharing their diversity data fully.

Measuring Outcomes

The outcomes we are looking to achieve from the initiatives and activities underpinning each EDI Strategy objective will be measured by our newly designed staff and resident engagement surveys, due to be rolled out later in 2023. These surveys will include questions that enable us to identify a baseline and then measure progress for each outcome on a yearly basis.



Conclusion

Delivering this ambitious three-year strategy will ensure we stay true to our social purpose; delivering equality through homes, support, and opportunity, where we attract more people from diverse backgrounds and retain those who are already with us.

These ambitions will be delivered by a workforce and leadership committed to anti-racist and inclusive practice. They will be directed and measured by accurate data, ensuring equitable access to our services and resourcing our staff networks. Through this, we will build trust and pride to be part of Octavia, whether as a colleague, customer or partner.

“Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is more than just a tick box checklist or commitments set out in a document. It needs to be a concept sitting at the very heart of the way we work with each other as colleagues and especially in delivering services to our residents.”

Peter Walkinshaw, Resident Involvement Manager

