# Racial Equality Group: Quarterly Briefing 2, August 2021

Welcome to the second edition of the quarterly briefings produced by the Racial Equality Group, a diverse cross-sector network of housing professionals who are committed to conversation and action towards racial equality within our sector and with the communities we serve.

We also want to encourage social landlords to take action towards racial equality, especially with regard to how they deliver services and support their black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

Where possible, we will include a contact for the items we include in the briefing, so readers can start more conversations and develop their practice.

## In Conversation with David Lammy… how to be an anti-racist organisation

On May 25, 2021, the Racial Equality Group hosted its first public event, a conversation with David Lammy MP, on the topic of how to be an anti-racist organisation. The webinar was hosted by Charmaine Simei, Director of Community Investment at Longhurst Group and Co-Chair of the Racial Equality Group, and Jerome Williams, Equality and Diversity Manager at Sovereign.

David Lammy was the Racial Equality Group's ideal first speaker for its first public event, being one of the foremost commentators on race issues in the UK. Attendees came away with various suggestions from David on practical steps they can take towards racial equality, from the importance of getting middle manager buy-in through formal appraisals, to the importance of setting organisational targets.

You can view the full webinar here

## Octavia Housing Association

In July 2020, Octavia published a blog about their commitment to combatting racism in the wake of George Floyd's murder and the resurgent Black Lives Matter movement. They published a follow up blog in July 2021, reporting on their progress towards becoming an anti-racist organisation one year on. Octavia have taken a range of actions, both internally as well as with their communities.

Sarah Shaw, Director of Housing, Care and Communities said:

> *"As part of our commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation, we've undertaken a whole range of actions in the past twelve months.*
>
> *We're particularly proud of our work with local communities and residents, where we have been taking concrete steps to target specific groups, especially where they are overrepresented or underrepresented in accessing different services or parts of our organisation. For example, we're looking at who accesses our support services and why, and which groups are more likely to be served notices, so we can take steps to help them achieve better outcomes. We've made particular progress with overcrowding, using data to identify families in overcrowded homes and then support them to maximise their chances for a move.*
>
> *Amplifying the voices of young people in our communities is also a key part of our work. Building on the success of our youth projects, we supported young people in writing and producing two new films about unconscious*

*bias and structural racism, which were premiered in July at the Everyman Cinema on the King's Road. Those films have since been entered into several film festivals. This year, five young people involved in our creative projects secured offers at leading institutions such as The Brit School and the London Film School, the highest number of offers in any one year to date.*

*Through our new Communities strategy, we continue to deliver employment and training support for young people, offering the exciting opportunity to join up different services to provide firm pathways into the creative industries and higher education.*"

If you would like to speak to Sarah about Octavia's work, you can contact her at this email.

## Sovereign Housing Association

In April, Sovereign published their Equality and Diversity Strategy 2021-2024. The strategy is centred around four key strategic themes: customer inclusion and engagement, employee inclusion and engagement, representation, and leadership. The strategy includes the concrete actions they will take to reach their ambitions under each theme, as well as their monitoring procedure through their EDI Forum.

Jerome Williams, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager said:

*"Customers are the heart of our business, so it was right that they have a central focus in our EDI strategy. Our EDI strategy has an external customer focus and an internal employee focus, and both are important elements to help us achieve our goals as an organisation.*

*We'll be talking to our customers more than ever over the next three years to ensure that our actions are meaningful and directed where they're most needed. Later this year, we will be building a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the diversity our customer base. We're also seeking the opinion of customer experience groups who meet regularly with board and senior managers, recommend targets for our service levels, commission resident-led reviews where they are unhappy with a service.*

*Internally, we've been working hard to embed EDI and to give our people opportunities to be a part of our journey. Colleagues have established employee networks for collaboration and support and have discussed their views with our senior leaders about our progress and ideas for EDI development throughout the year. Our directorates are all currently developing EDI action plans to focus our EDI work and to ensure that action is taken on the strategy where it's need within the business.*

*Our EDI Forum formally monitors progress and is made up from colleagues at every level and business area. Its four working groups align with the four themes of the strategy and are tasked with developing and taking forward our EDI action plan and reporting back quarterly. The EDI Forum will monitor the progress each working group is making as well as progress against the action plans and provide challenge where necessary."*

If you would like to speak to Jerome about Sovereign's EDI work, you can contact him at this email.

## Articles and resources

A selection of recent articles relating to racial equality:

- Inside Housing launched new series on racism and housing at the end of May, including pieces on damp and fuel poverty, the disproportionate impact of the housing crisis on black people, and changes to representation of people from ethnic minorities at board and exec level
- The major story relating to race and racism in the past three months has been the treatment of black members of the English football team. A selection of stories here

- In July, Welsh government finished consultation on the draft version of The Race Equality Action Plan for Wales. The section on housing starts on page 90. The finalised plan will be published in autumn 2021.
- Back in March, Scottish Government published a final summary of their Race Equality Action plan from 2017-21. Their actions on housing are shown on page 107.
- An article from Nov 2020 focuses on how Optivo apply principles of inclusivity and diversity to residents and communities.
- Tai Pawb, the Welsh housing and social justice charity, published a blog summarising progress one year on from George Floyd's murder. They will soon publish the results of a baseline survey of 800 colleagues about social housing and racism.

## Funding

Recent news about funding for black, Asian and minority ethnic communities:

- Liverpool City Region have announced £3.2 million of funding for their developing Race Equality Hub. The funds will target employment inequalities and remove barriers in the labour market. Work to establish the Hub will start this Autumn.
- The National Lottery Community Fund and The Ubele Initiative have jointly announced a new £50 million partnership fund for Black and Minoritised Community charities and grassroots groups, over the next five years. Details on making applications are yet to be announced.

## Past resources

In each briefing, we will include links to resources which have come out before the previous quarter between briefings:

- SHF Race Report - 40 years of tackling racial inequality in Britain. Stuart Hall Foundation, 2021. This report summarises a selection of government-commissioned and influential independent non-governmental reports between 1981 and 2017.
- Racial discrimination in UK housing has a long history and deep roots. Kevin Gulliver, LSE, 2017