

Neighbourhoods and Communities Strategy

2024-29

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Foreword by Ian Mitchell – Managing Director (Housing)

Early in 2024 One Vision Housing (OVH), as a key partner in the Sovini Group, launched a marketing campaign entitled ‘Discover your / our purpose’. The aim of the campaign was to reinforce the importance of the great work that we do day in, day out, in line with our vision of *a better future* and our mission of *creating opportunities and changing lives*.

For OVH and indeed for every single person that works for The Sovini Group, this is ultimately about the difference we make through delivery of our landlord services, providing decent, safe and affordable homes for people to live in, but it is also about the communities and neighbourhoods in which those homes are located.

OVH provide a wide range of services and operate a network of connections that go beyond the traditional landlord function but are just as important in combining to make communities and neighbourhoods sustainable and inclusive for all.

It is apparent that across a range of our strategic plans we already outline a number the non-landlord functions we are engaged in and our plans for improvement in these areas. However, following engagement with colleagues the consensus was that it would be beneficial to work with our customers bringing these strands together, into one place, which is what this Strategy aims to achieve.

This line of thinking is also in tune with the ‘specific expectations’ that the Regulator of Social Housing has set out in its revised regulatory framework, applicable to all social housing providers in the ‘Neighbourhoods and Communities Standard, effective from April 1st, 2024.

By developing this Strategy and by keeping it under review, we aim to identify all the services that help ‘glue’ our communities together and help them become stronger and better places to live.

This includes areas where we, in our role as a landlord, can do more but also recognising that we can’t achieve everything on our own and that we need to maintain and develop strong partnerships to be able to identify and tackle problems, as well as to join up service provision and make the best use of resources.

We have always had a strong tradition of partnership working at OVH, be that with our customers, other housing providers in our areas of operations, voluntary and specialist service providers, local authorities or other statutory agencies. This strategy reaffirms these commitments and sets out a framework for continuous improvement to make our neighbourhoods and communities even better places to be.



Ian Mitchell
Managing Director (Housing)

Background and Context

As a modern housing provider, One Vision Housing (OVH) has overseen diversification in its role and core functions over recent times. This has included an expansion of its property portfolio through a successful and progressive development programme, but also a wider range of products as we have adopted new forms of tenure, including market rent, shared ownership and rent to buy.

Alongside the greater number of properties and variety of housing products has come a diversification of our service offer that is borne, in part, through changing customer expectations and in part through challenges in the external operating environment.

The financial pressures on statutory and voluntary service providers over recent times have meant that they are being asked to provide more and more support for communities but with reduced resources.

This has meant other organisations such as housing associations have had to rethink their service offer to help plug gaps or at least develop more effective partnerships to ensure support for communities is maintained.

OVH has embraced this collaborative ethos and has developed strong and effective strategic and operational partnerships across all areas, in particular services that are intended to promote community safety and provide support for those who experience anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse or hate incidents.

Whilst the existing partnerships are strong and deliver positive outcomes for our neighbourhoods and communities, we always strive for continuous improvement.

This Strategy, which pulls together strands from our existing Strategic Plans, aims to identify from an internal perspective, those areas for action where we can continuously improve but is also the start of more detailed conversations from an external perspective of where improvements can be made.

As part of our action plan for implementing this strategy we will work with our existing partners to see what we can improve together, what new services and linkages we need to develop, and we will also consult with our customers to ascertain the areas they think would benefit from greater collaborative working.

As a starting point, this first iteration of this Strategy will concentrate on the areas for collaboration that are included in the revised Neighbourhoods and Communities Standard of the regulatory framework for social housing, including:

- Safety of shared spaces
- Local co-operation
- Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents
- Domestic abuse

Where are we now?

OVH has a long-standing history and track record of partnership working, has established effective working relationships with a wide variety of external agencies and is part of several multi-agency forums, at local and regional levels for strategic influence and more effective day-to-day operations.

These mutually beneficial arrangements ensure there is a joined-up approach to local service delivery, the right expertise and specialisms are in place, duplication is reduced, and the use of resources is optimised.

To facilitate a comprehensive coverage of partnership arrangements and to ensure workloads in maintaining attendance / input required is evenly distributed, OVH maintains and keeps under review a register of all external meetings and collaborative groups.

The register is updated on an annual basis but also in response to any events or situations that require co-ordinated and localised actions e.g. an increase in anti-social behaviour activity or facilitation of community celebration events.

The table below details our current provisions and promises in the following four key areas:

- Safety of shared spaces
- Local co-operation
- Anti-social behaviour and hate incidents
- Domestic abuse

This table also provides non-exhaustive examples of the kind of work we are already doing in these areas and the partnerships we have formed.

Safety of shared spaces	Local co-operation	Anti-social behaviour and hate Incidents	Domestic abuse
<p>OVH recognises that residents' perceptions of neighbourhoods and communities are influenced by a multitude of factors that go beyond the appearance and condition of properties and areas where it has management responsibilities.</p> <p>This includes all other areas within the built and natural environment that adjoin its properties such as pathways, roads, streetscapes and local amenities such as greenspaces and parks.</p> <p>Although the responsibility for upkeep of these areas may lie with other partner agencies or private entities, OVH acknowledges it has a pivotal role to play in making sure they are safe and well maintained and it will often be one of the first agencies that the community approaches to raise awareness of issues (due to OVH's accessibility,</p>	<p>As a major landlord that (as of August 2024) provides employment for 166 staff and 100's more in its supply chain, as a major investor into existing homes and with an extensive development programme, OVH recognises the significant role it plays in the local economy, as an environmental champion and in promoting the health and wellbeing of its customers.</p> <p>Through its close partnership working with Housing Options Teams and role as a member of the Contract Board for Property Pool Plus (sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme), OVH also plays a key role in enabling the strategic housing function of local authorities it operates in, to be discharged.</p>	<p>With a well-resourced and specialist Community Safety Team in place and a clear policy outlining partnership arrangements / full range of legal powers, OVH has a comprehensive and effective approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour within our communities and neighbourhoods.</p> <p>OVH has taken the decision to separate out its policy and operational response to 'anti-social behaviour', 'harassment and hate crime' and 'domestic abuse' to ensure ease of reporting and appropriate, prompt and nuanced support is provided to customers that experience these types of behaviour.</p>	<p>From discussions with other housing providers in our area of operations (August 2024) we have found that we are dealing with a much higher number of cases of domestic abuse cases than our peers.</p> <p>We believe this is not necessarily due to a greater prevalence of abuse being perpetrated within our properties, but more down to the fact we have provided domestic abuse awareness training to all our front-line staff (including our contactors carrying maintenance work on our behalf), have easy systems for reporting and have a strong track record of taking decisive / sensitive actions to support and protect victims/survivors.</p>

<p>presence and ability to reach out to the wider partnership).</p> <p>OVH's promises for the safety of shared spaces include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing-on information / need for action to relevant agencies when it is informed by its customers or through its own observations (e.g. reporting fly-tipping or graffiti to local authorities) • Working with other agencies on the formulation of joint action plans / projects where required <p>Examples of current initiatives / partnerships include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Police and community groups and local authorities on the 'Clear, Hold, Build' projects to promote lasting community safety in areas that have suffered gang related activity or prolonged anti-social behaviour (includes 	<p>OVH's promises to promote local co-operation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH is committed to creating local employment opportunities through direct job roles, through support for apprenticeship programmes and pathways into employment such as work experience and targeted internships • OVH is committed to contributing to sector wide and local action to reduce carbon emissions and improve the energy efficiency of its housing stock via delivery of the Sovini Group Carbon Reduction and Environmental Management Strategy and the OVH Asset Management Strategy (refreshed on an annual basis) • OVH will endeavour to capture and keep up-to-date comprehensive customer data records and will assess customers support needs and 	<p>OVH's promises in dealing with acts of anti-social behaviour and hate incidents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH takes seriously all reports of anti-social behaviour, from or directed towards its customers and staff, taking prompt action to prevent harm, keeping victims informed of likely timescales for actions and using the full range of legal powers to bring about lasting solutions • OVH will maintain close working protocols with the Police and all statutory agencies to deliver the most appropriate and effective response to anti-social behaviour or hate related incidents and will develop joint action plans for those that transpire at the neighbourhood level • OVH's Customer Access Team will act as a 'Hate Crime Reporting centre' providing a safe, secure environment 	<p>OVH's promises for dealing with domestic abuse include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH will offer accessible, timely, proactive and effective services for all customers that may experience domestic abuse, regardless of protected characteristics • OVH will provide training for all front-line staff (directly employed by OVH) so that they understand the potential and far-ranging, detrimental impacts that domestic abuse, in all forms, can have on the lives of survivors • OVH will work in partnership with external agencies and advocate groups to provide appropriate support for domestic abuse victims/survivors <p>Examples of current initiatives / partnerships include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH has partnered with a specialist support provider to
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<p>improvements to physical spaces such as play areas, parks and investment in community gardens)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on customer feedback and intelligence, we work with key partners to deliver a series of monthly ‘days of action’, engaging local residents and addressing environmental issues in the shared spaces across our communities. • We work with Sefton MBC to address fly tipping and other environmental challenges affecting our communities. 	<p>(with customer permissions) will make relevant referrals to internal support mechanisms and external partner agencies to ensure health and wellbeing is maintained</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through nomination agreements and close partnership working with local authorities’ Housing Options Teams OVH will ensure statutory housing duties (including homelessness prevention) are met and best use is made of available accommodation • In partnership with the Local Authority, OVH will implement jointly agreed local lettings policies where required to promote sustainability and wellbeing <p>Examples of current initiatives / partnerships include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the ‘Education Business Partnership for the Liverpool City Region’, ‘The Learning Foundry’ and local 	<p>with trained staff for making alerts</p> <p>Examples of current initiatives / partnerships include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH have developed a joint ‘Cells – Behavioural Intervention’ project with Merseyside Police, aimed at young people who may be at risk of becoming involved in criminality (in areas where there is a high prevalence of anti-social behaviour) • OVH are Board members and take an active role in operational meetings of the hate crime multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) in areas of our operations 	<p>facilitate a refuge facility for survivors of domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH is member of the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board (Sefton), a standing member of the domestic abuse MARAC, is a key delivery partner in the ‘prevent and protect’ initiative and is also an integral part of the Sefton Community Safety Partnership. The above activity and wider service driven provision contributes to achievement of the objectives of the Domestic Abuse Strategy for Sefton MBC (the local authority area where the majority of OVH’s stock is located), in line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requirements
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	<p>schools on projects such as our supported internship programme for neuro diverse students, in conjunction with our wider Sovini Group partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OVH will continue to work closely with the Liverpool City Region Housing Association (LRCHA) Group- made up of housing associations with stock in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to progress carbon reduction initiatives. The group will work closely with the combined authority to identify which properties / areas would benefit most from carbon reduction measures (i.e. those in worst condition and / or with the highest prevalence of fuel poverty – it is estimated that 65% of homes in the region are EPC band D or worse). This will include a unified front for ensuring:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The evidence base to support applications for central		
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	<p>government funding is strong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There is cross organisational involvement in energy infrastructure projects e.g. district heat networks linked to new development plans○ Efficiency is achieved through pooled budgets, achieving economies of scale and utilising shared resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">● As a Scheme Administrator for the Property Pool Plus (PPP) sub-regional Choice-Based-Letting Scheme in Sefton and a key representative on the Contract Board that oversees delivery of the scheme in the wider Merseyside area, OVH will continue to be a key enabler of local authorities strategic housing function, meeting identified housing		
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	need and preventing homelessness		
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Where do we want to be?

As can be seen by the table above, OVH already have a wide range of services and partnership arrangements in place to address and manage the four key areas outlined in the Neighbourhood and Communities Standard of the Regulatory Framework.

Actions in these four areas weave their way through other strategic documents and will be updated as these plans are reviewed on an annual basis, including:

- The OVH Strategic Plan
- The Sovini Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy
- OVH Independent Living Strategy
- OVH Customer Voice Strategy

We also cover the more traditional aspects of the landlord function that are important to the physical fabric of neighbourhoods i.e. maintenance, investment / improvement of properties and development of new ones to meet housing need in asset focused strategies, including:

- The OVH Asset Management Strategy
- The Sovini Group Carbon Reduction and Environmental Management Strategy
- The OVH Development Strategy

Despite this seemingly comprehensive coverage, as with everything we do at OVH we are always striving for continuous improvement.

The 'where we want to be' is therefore not a finite destination but is a progressive movement that contributes to the following key strategic aims:

- **Improve customer satisfaction in OVH's role of managing neighbourhoods and communities**
- **Meet and maintain the required outcomes / specific expectations of the Neighbourhoods and Communities Standard of the Regulatory Framework**
- **Contribute to the strategic aims of partner organisations**
- **Improve overall perception of neighbourhoods as thriving and inclusive places to be**

As part of this journey and in line with the ethos of the 'Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard' of the Regulatory Framework, we have conducted a consultation exercise with those involved with our 'Customer Voice' engagement mechanisms and more generally for all customers, via our website.

The responses to this consultation exercise confirmed that OVH is currently working with the right kind of partner agencies to provide joined-up responses to community issues although could improve communication of when these partnerships meet, what the remit is and how local people can get involved.

Taking these suggestions on board as part of the action plan that supports delivery of this Strategy, OVH will look to improve publicity of joint meetings/ forums where it is appropriate and when the public can have an input.

How are we going to get there?

Listed below across the four themes outlined in the Neighbourhood and Communities Standard are actions or objectives that will contribute to the achievement of the aims set out above.

These actions will be incorporated into Service Delivery Plans and assigned to the relevant teams or individuals across the organisation for monitoring progress and ensuring they remain on track within expected timescales through the performance management system. As well as ‘action-owner’ monitoring, this system allows collated performance reports to be produced for senior management and Board monitoring to assess effectiveness and to instigate any mitigation measures should for any reason performance not reach the levels expected.

Safety of shared spaces	Local co-operation	Anti-social behaviour and hate Incidents	Domestic abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OVH will continue to work with Merseyside Police Authority using pooled information of criminal activity and incidence of anti-social behaviour for targeted application of the ‘Clear, Hold, Build’ partnership. This will include, where appropriate, investment and improvement of environmental facilities such as community gardens In 2024-25 OVH will look to introduce a revised format for ‘patch’ management of neighbourhood areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OVH will always ensure all vacancies are advertised locally and will encourage applications from a diverse pool of talent (including links to over 30 specialist advocacy and support groups) Alongside partners from within the Sovini Group, OVH will continue to support the hugely popular apprenticeship programme offering pathways into training and employment for local school leavers and facilitation of ‘work taster’ sessions for year 11 students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the course of this strategy, OVH will continue to develop signposting to support networks / partnership working with external agencies e.g. Victim Support in anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse cases (including customer self-access directory with localised information, available to customers) From 2024 onwards, OVH will implement improvements to the processes for triaging of low level ASB reports, to ensure they are assigned to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OVH will continue to support a specialist domestic abuse refuge facility on an agency-managed basis and will explore possibilities of developing additional specialist housing support services over the course of this strategy Commencing in 2024, OVH will recruit a new resource to manage both safeguarding referrals and support domestic abuse victims/survivors based in the Independent Living Team

<p>(splitting out revenue and tenancy / neighbourhood management functions). This will free-up capacity for partnership working and joint initiatives such as ‘estate walkabouts’ to identify and remedy any issues causing concern for shared spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having carried out a comprehensive audit, OVH will deliver a programme of investment and improvement for all outside play-spaces currently in management over 2024-25 • In 2024-25 OVH will continue to work with other registered providers and Sefton MBC on the ‘Poets Street Project Partnership’ aimed at putting residents at the centre of positive change with the first planned ‘days of action’ focused on delivering environmental improvements and encouraging positive behaviours 	<p>to help them decide career paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH will continue to work in partnership with the ‘Mersey-care Integrated Health Team’ to find tailored support packages for customers with acute health needs and via ‘social prescribing’ solutions. From 2024 onwards OVH will work with this partnership on establishing a similar model for ‘complex needs’ support e.g. working with those with drug and alcohol dependencies • Through continued active membership of strategic forums e.g. Sefton Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board, Sefton Partnership Board and Housing Options Teams, OVH will contribute to local authorities’ strategic aims and legal compliance e.g. with Supported Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and 	<p>the appropriate teams and our response is effective / proportionate and all potential vulnerabilities of customers are taken into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of our ongoing improvements to ‘Customer Voice’ activities and strategic objectives of the Customer Voice Strategy we will look to establish special interest forums, including a forum specifically to drive positive change in anti-social behaviour / hate crime management • To ensure OVH’s services for managing anti-social behaviour and hate crime are externally verified and to match or exceed best practice OVH will continually benchmark with other housing providers and will keep all actions required to retain the ‘Resolve accreditation for housing providers’ up-to-date, ready 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2024 OVH will commence a review of initial assessment / risk assessment processes for anti-social behaviour cases to ensure any potential domestic abuse is identified and wider vulnerabilities are considered • Over the course of this strategy OVH will review actions required to join the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance and work towards achieving accreditation
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	<p>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OVH will continue to be a key delivery partner of the 'Housing First' initiative to reduce street homelessness alongside other housing organisations / statutory care providers and similar initiatives specifically for veterans and in collaboration with probation services • Commencing in 2024, OVH will mount a publicity campaign to improve public awareness / participation in local partnerships, building this into the delivery of the 'Neighbourhood Café' initiative (a series of safe spaces and informal environments for communities to discuss issues of local concern) • OVH will continue to work with partner agencies to maximise funding opportunities for Wave Three of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and 	<p>for a re-accreditation process in 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a 'Peer Assessor' of the Resolve Accreditation we will work with other housing providers to help them reach the necessary levels required of the Standard and have developed a unique apprenticeship role in the Community Safety Team, with training being provided by the Resolve partnership • Over 2024/25 we will look to develop a 'Good Neighbour Policy' – encouraging positive behaviours and prevention of issues reaching anti-social behaviour levels • Over 2024-25 we will work with Sefton MBC on delivering training for front line staff understanding hate crime incidents and how best to support victims 	
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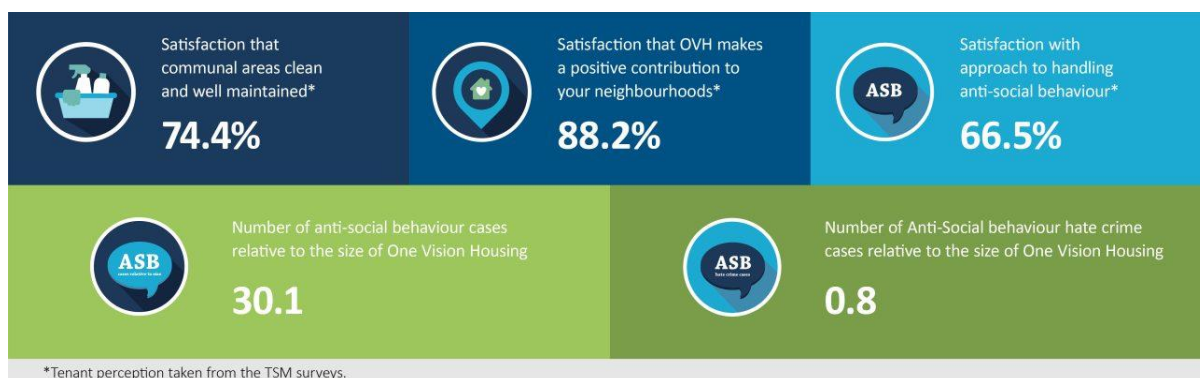
	<p>any funding made available to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to improve energy efficiency and lower carbon emissions in its housing stock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2024 onwards OVH as part of the Sovini Group have introduced a revised approach to contract management for suppliers, clearly defining and maximising contributions to social value activity. This approach coupled with the work of Sovini Charities organising sponsored events will enhance the resources available for community development activity and grants available (Community Development Fund) to local groups for community safety projects • OVH will continue to be a key member of a local collaborative group with other housing providers for sharing best practice and joint initiatives on tackling anti- 		
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	social behaviour / community safety		
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How are we going measure it?

The key themes that are outlined in the Neighbourhoods and Communities Standard are also included in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) that were introduced from April 2023 for all social housing providers.

The TSM's include a standardised set of questions and performance monitoring categories so that meaningful comparisons can be made between different housing providers nationally. Below is OVH's performance in the relevant categories to this strategy for the period 2023-24:



OVH is required to publish performance at least annually against the TSM's but will also provide quarterly updates and this information will be shared with the Customer Scrutiny Team and the Board of management.

This information will be used by the Scrutiny Team to hold OVH to account and by the Board to assess progress against the strategic aims outlined in this and other strategic plans.

As many of the issues in this strategy involve a collaborative approach with external partners and service providers, OVH will also explore options for future iterations of this strategy for developing joint perception surveys and analysis at the neighbourhood level (i.e. canvassing the views of wider stakeholders other than just OVH customers), to drive continuous improvement and to determine future areas for action.

OVH will also look to adapt and repeat the consultation exercise with customers, outlined on pp 11- 12 above, when the strategy is due its annual review, to ensure the objectives continue to meet customer expectations.