Housing Ombudsman Service

Generating Social Value through Supplier engagement

Self-Certification response 2022

Supplier name:	Redacted

Completed by:	Redacted
Date:	06/05/2022

Please answer the questions below as comprehensively as possible. Please return your response to me by email by 29 April 2022

Environmental concerns

Question	Comments
How do you control your energy consumption within your office premises without compromising on staff health and safety?	[Redacted] operates an Environmental Management System ISO 14001 across all our contracts. Our Environmental Strategy uses ISO 14001 to achieve our objectives and targets across the three themes: climate mitigation, resource efficiency and biodiversity. To achieve carbon reduction targets, we have adopted the Energy Management System Standard ISO 50001 in our most energy-intensive parts of the business. This involves leadership commitment through to processes and procedures, to highlight opportunities and risks to improve building energy performance. The System monitors and reports, enabling removal of excess usage, optimising energy performance without compromising on staff comfort levels. The System supports us to reduce the energy demand. We also focus on reducing overall carbon emissions through other means, such as purchase of 100% of renewable electricity. Some examples of our opportunities to reduce consumption are improvements in lighting controls, energy efficient lighting and equipment (e.g. computers, printers) and striving to increase staff awareness on energy efficiency e.g. 'switch it off' campaigns, Green Ambassadors and posters, newsletters and reminders in place to reduce energy use.

Do you know the extent of your carbon emissions footprint that you can control as an organization? What plans have you in place to reduce it?	[Redacted] have set out the following targets: • Achieve net zero scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions from our own assets, leases, and business travel by 2030. • Achieve net zero carbon for our absolute emissions by 2050, working with our value chain to deliver this commitment in line with climate science and the Paris Agreement. To ensure [Redacted] meets these targets, a Carbon Reduction Plan has been created and progress will be reported annually against our 2019 baseline emissions. This includes scope 1 and 2 emissions; it also includes part of scope 3 (employee commuting). We have several plans to reduce emissions in 2022: • [Redacted] launched our Sustainable Procurement Charter in 2021 which will initiate engagement with our supply chain on net zero carbon to begin to address our scope 3 emissions. • Extend the coverage of the Energy Management System to other larger energy consuming parts of our business, updating our energy policy and strategy to target energy efficiency, including energy targeting and management software. • Review our organisational boundary approach for carbon reporting, considering if the financial control approach rather than the operational control approach would be more suitable for our operations and help meet our global customer requirements. • Review our emission reduction targets taking into account forthcoming Science Based Target Initiative net zero pathway guidance for the marine transport sector in order to continuously improve our carbon reporting and help meet our global customers' requirements.
Do you operate a paperless environment? If not do you have plans to enable that?	[Redacted] uses Office 365, Sharepoint and Microsoft Teams in our office and home-based environments to facilitate collaborative working online reducing the requirement for printing. We promote pull printing (you only print at the device as needed via a PIN), for essential printing. We also promote and education on non-essential printing through our Learning Management System available

| | to new starters during induction and as part of the annual [redacted] essentials E-learning for all staff. |

Tackling economic inequality

Question	Comments
What % of your workforce is paid the minimum wage?	In our Customer Services Operating unit we commit to paying 100% of our staff the National Living Wage (£9.50 April 2022), regardless of age.
Do you recognize a union and do you facilitate staff joining it?	[Redacted] has extensive experience of ensuring service continuity by working collaboratively with the customer, incumbent providers and trade unions. Specifically, to deliver people transition we work closely with Trade Union representatives at the earliest opportunity to establish a joint communications plan for the transfer staff. On contracts, where applicable, we hold Employee Communications Forums with nominated staff representatives and Trade Union representatives with the aim of listening to, understanding and resolving local concerns. In our Customer Services area, we recognise two different unions at our [redacted and redacted] sites, the union representatives / officials often run recruitment events which we support as necessary. An example of [redacted] engaging with trade unions is the National Framework Agreement which sets out the high-level terms of engagement between Unite and [Redacted] Defence business, in the UK Defence sector. The agreement establishes the terms of reference for the working relationship, wherever Unite is the Trade Union recognised by [redacted] in its Defence business, including dispute resolution, health and safety, facility time etc.
What % of the jobs or roles you have created over the past 12 months have been provided to school leavers or graduates?	[Redacted] launched its graduate programme in 2019. In 2021 we welcomed 12 graduates into the Business. Our agent recruitment is managed by our recruitment partners therefore we do not track this information. School leavers are recruited if the contract we are recruiting for permits under 18's.

Workforce Well being

Question	Comments
Are you working towards or are you accredited as one of the top UK 100 best/great places to work? Or a member of an alternative recognized scheme?	We have been awarded silver in the Inclusive Employers Standard, improving on our previous bronze achievement. We are members of the 5% Club – a commitment to building and developing our people. We are one of the leading employers of ex-service personnel and reservists in the UK and are a Gold Award member of the MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme, the Armed Forces Covenant. [Redacted] holds 'Leader' status with the Disability Confident Scheme, is a Stonewall Diversity Champion organisation and has signed up to the Mental Health at Work Commitment.
Does your organization keep records of exit interviews? If yes, how do you apply any learning?	At [Redacted], the option to participate in an exit interview is made available to all employees leaving [Redacted], although participation must be voluntary and the interview must be taken as soon as possible. Exit interviews are ideally undertake face to face but can also be conducted over the phone if necessary. Employees have the option of requesting that their interview is completed with an alternative manager and concerns can be raised directly with HR is necessary. An exit interview should be relaxed and informal and scheduled to allow time to take action on any

	issues. The supporting template prompts feedback on areas of improvement and managers must use skillful reflective listening to understand any points the leaver may raise. Managers are required to take action on any issues identified and implement change to help [redacted] retain employees. Working with their HR People Partner, the manager will maintain a record of issues that leavers have raised and will seek to address them. Through identifying contributing factors that they can address through information, behaviour, cultural change etc. managers can undertake quick action to ensure colleagues feel engaged, motivated and valued. Records of exit interviews are sent to HR for recording.
What is your organisation's staff retention rate for grades most likely to be employed in our service?	Our Customer Services division attrition rate in 2021 was 12%. This includes positive and negative attrition and also attrition on contracts which have come to their natural end.
How do you balance providing a service and making a profit with establishing good working practices for your staff?	To provide a good service to our customers we develop our culture based on four key values - Trust, Care, Innovation, Pride. These values shape our behaviours and is supported through our Code of Conduct, 'mycode', which defines the expectations we have on our people and on our supply chain. All of our activity is governed the [redacted] our policies and standards which are accredited to ISO9001, ISO45001 and ISO14001. In [redacted], our experience and our expertise is solely delivered to and for governments and this single focus helps us to understand our customers and to recognise where and how we could leverage our services, size and experience to bring additional value to the communities we work with. Balancing our approach to business, our SMS also includes a well-developed commitment to our employees via our People policy which assures fair and transparent working practices for colleagues, recognising that "great people flourish when they are engaged, inspired and motivated to give their best". Ways [redacted] support colleagues to feel engaged, inspired and motivated include:

Inclusion Hub – a single access point for our Employee Networks to leverage collective power to support engagement activities and a resource for guidance and information.

Wellbeing Hub - a central place for support and guidance, a range of documents and materials are held here covering all six pillars of our wellbeing strategy, financial, physical, community, mental, social and career.

People Fund – support [redacted] colleagues and their families when they face extraordinary financial challenge.

Our annual staff survey (ViewPoint) measures employee engagement, seeking colleague views on working at [redacted]. ViewPoint provides valuable feedback to keep doing what we do well and what needs to improve.

Tackling workplace inequality

Question	Comments
What is your pay gap between genders? Why do you have a gap and what are you doing to close it out?	[redacted] gender pay gap continues to show marked improvement reducing from 12.9% in 2017 to 10.2% in 2020 and then 6.96% in 2021, exceeding our target to get below 10% by the end of 2022. Our ambition is to reduce this further. The reasons for our gender pay gap are: • There are more men than women in senior positions, but we continue to drive progress in this area, with women in leadership forming a key Diversity and Inclusion metric for our senior leadership team. • There are more men than women in our more highly skilled and specialist roles, many of which are also those that have traditionally been male dominated, particularly within certain sectors such as Justice & Immigration, and Defence. This report highlights some of the actions we are taking across our business to address this talent gap. • There are more women than men in our lesser skilled roles, reflecting that overall we do employ

a large number of women (44% of our UK workforce at April 2021). We are pleased that our 2021 engagement survey, Viewpoint, highlighted positive progress in our female colleagues' perception of their career opportunities with [redacted].

Ensuring we have true gender diversity across our leadership is one of the most important aspects of Diversity and Inclusion - and a leading indicator for success in other areas. But to really get a multi-dimensional picture of what the barriers and enablers are, we need to use both qualitative and quantitative data.

For the qualitative research we partnered with an external provider to ensure a level of openness through confidentiality, and the report given back to [redacted] was thematic and anonymized. Two experts in gender inclusion interviewed nearly 40 leaders across our business on their lived experience and what they were seeing as the barriers and enablers. While these were predominantly female, it was also important to include male perspectives.

For the quantitative analysis we conducted a deeper dive into our numbers globally and at a Divisional level on the trends over time. This included representation at different levels and business units/sectors, and the attraction and promotion of females and males. Predictive analysis to reach our 35% females in leadership by 2023 was also conducted. Combining this data with women's lived experience has given us our brief for what we need to do differently and the core actions that will bring about change.

Some of the highlights for 2022 to progress in closing the gap include:

• The introduction of a Women in Leadership Development Program with Oxford to be launched in 2022.
• A real and genuine focus on talent, development and progression with 50% representation of females on our Oxford Leadership program in 2022.

	• Renewed focus on mapping the talent market and enabling greater success for females at the interview/selection phase. • Focus on highlighting female promotions and success through the Annual People Report and monthly Leadership Bulletin, as well as a campaign in the UK called 'Woman of the Month' through [redacted] Inspire. • Executive mentors for high potential females to provide advocacy and sponsorship for future promotion • A focus on exit interview, not only optional questionnaires, with females in leadership positions. • Integration of Inclusive principles through MyCatchUp which support managers having regular conversations with colleagues on a wide range of topics Over the coming year we will continue to integrate these programs to ensure sustainability for the future.
Do you provide scholarships or advanced learning opportunities for your staff? If yes, how are they selected for this?	Career development programmes for staff are available through a number of programmes including: • [redacted] CLiMB – a management development programme accredited through • GROW and LEAD - Talent Development Programmes Our online Learning Management System also offers 15,000 courses to help staff fulfil personal objectives and career aspirations. Our career development programmes are designed to support and accelerate progression across the organisation by increasing visibility of emerging and diverse talent at more senior levels. In 2019, [redacted] launched our first Graduate Programme. The flagship programme offers an amazing launchpad for a fast-track management career and the unique opportunity for Graduates to get directly involved in solving some of the real and pressing challenges of delivering essential public services. Our online Learning Management System also offers 15,000 courses to help staff fulfil personal objectives and career aspirations.

	Apprenticeships on offer to HOS staff and Agents include Customer Service Practitioner Level 2, Customer Service Specialist Level 3, Learning and Development Level 3, and the L6 Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA), developed with the University of Wolverhampton and providing a structured routeway into leadership roles. The [redacted] LMS is open access to all staff and the majority of content is available without cost or need for manager approval. A number of more specialist courses require management approval to confirm this is part of an agreed development plan, and a small number of courses attract a fee which is paid by the relevant contract or functional team. [redacted] employees can be nominated or can self-nominate for advanced learning opportunities. The process of referral for our GROW and LEAD talent development programmes has been updated to enable employees to apply directly and remove barriers to advanced learning opportunities. The application process has been amended to be inclusive and to give regard to unconscious bias.
Have you used positive discrimination techniques in your recruitment campaigns? Why have you needed to do this and what has been the results? Are you maintaining this practice?	[redacted] committed to equality of opportunity and to creating job opportunities for people who might face challenges or additional barriers to employment. During recruitment we use 'blind' recruitment techniques (e.g., gender 'decoding' and removing names) to create candidate lists to minimise employment inequality. Our Employee Diversity and Inclusion network has over 2,700+ members including; All [redacted] managers (including recruiting managers) receive D&I training and will facilitate pre-screening video interviews (including a voice only option) where the hiring manager has not previously viewed the candidate's CV. Job adverts and job descriptions are designed to remove conscious and unconscious bias, interview panels will have diverse membership

(where possible), and equality data from all applicants will be tracked and monitored.

Equality for Women: [redacted] has a longstanding public commitment to reach 35% employment for women in leadership roles. Since 2018 we have ranked in the top 25% of FTSE 250 companies for gender balance at Board and Senior Leadership levels and our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy aims to increase female leadership positions by 3%. In 2021 representation of women increased to 33% in [redacted] Board and 31.8% of Executive Committee members.

Equality for multi-ethnic groups: In 2020 [redacted] signed up to the Race at Work Charter, an initiative launched in partnership between the BITC and UK government, designed to improve outcomes for Black, Asian and minority ethnic employees in the UK.

Equality for LGBT+ colleagues: as active members of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme we will advertise recruitment opportunities to the LGBT+ community.

Equality for people with disabilities: [redacted] is an active member of The Valuable 500 an organisation that collaborates and connects with 500 of the world's most influential global businesses for disability inclusion. [redacted] is a member of the Sunflower Scheme that aims at changing perceptions about protected characteristics at work. We also guarantee interviews for people with disabilities.

Our recruitment campaigns have been needed to enable [redacted] to have a truly diverse and inclusive workforce at all levels of the organisation. We strive to attract, develop and retain colleagues from the broadest possible talent pool, promoting unlimited equality of opportunity and operating with zero tolerance for any form of discrimination. Not only do we firmly believe this is the right thing to do, we believe that diverse teams, reflecting the communities they

| | serve, outperform in the quality of services we deliver to our customers.

We acknowledge that we have much more to do to make [redacted] a truly diverse organisation and our workplaces as inclusive as they can be. We are passionate about challenging ourselves to do more and do it faster, recognising that outcomes, not words, are the only true measure of our progress. |