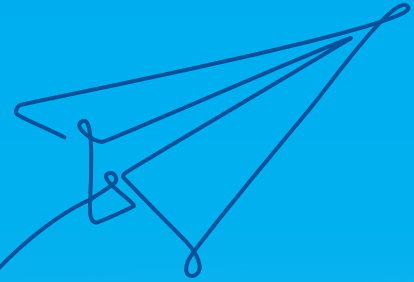
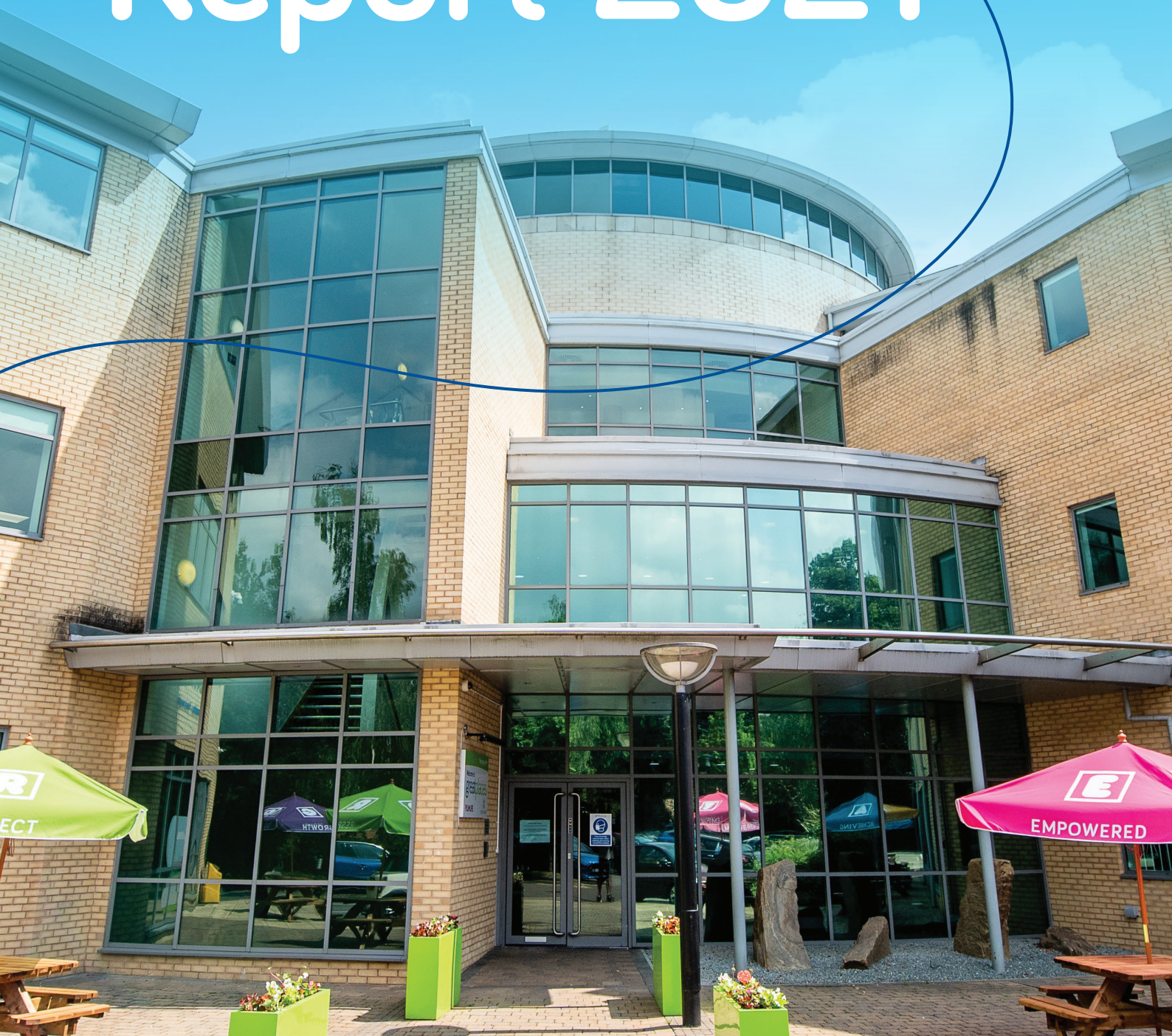


great
places
HOUSING GROUP



Sustainability Report 2021



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1. Our vision

Great Homes,
Great Communities,
Great People

Great Places Housing Group exists to improve the lives of the people living in our 24,000 homes across the North West and Yorkshire. We are much more than just a landlord, providing a wide-range of services and promoting partnership work to create vibrant, sustainable communities.

The Group, which is supported by approximately 800 colleagues across five regional offices (our Manchester head office, Stockport, Oldham, Sheffield and Blackpool), encompasses:

- **Great Places Housing Association** – providing general needs rented homes and tenancy services as well as accommodation and services that promote independence and wellbeing for some of society’s most vulnerable people.
- **Plumlife** – an award-winning affordable home ownership company. Plumlife helps people to fulfil their home ownership dreams through schemes such as Shared Ownership as well as outright sale.
- **Cube** – developing quality new homes for market sale and private rent.

Our vision strongly aligns with the criteria in the voluntary new Sustainability Reporting Standard (the standard) for the housing sector launched in November 2020:



- Great Homes – Maximising our investment in **Sustainable Homes**
- Great Communities – Building Successful, **Vibrant Communities**
- Great People – Providing Outstanding **Customer Service and Support**

Our Values to help us support this vision are:

- We passionately embrace **creativity, change** and **innovation**.
- We are **fair, open** and **accountable**.
- We **appreciate** the **effort** of everyone who works here.
- We promote **partnerships, efficiency** and **value** for money.
- We **know, respect** and **care** about our customers.



2. Executive summary

The Sustainability Reporting Standard is a framework for housing providers to report on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance in a transparent, consistent and comparable way. The standard aligns to the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Working to the standardised reporting on sustainability has highlighted how aligned Great Places' work is to the SDGs and the positive impact our work has on many of them, both directly and indirectly.

The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals:

Direct impact

- 1 – No Poverty
- 2 – Zero Hunger
- 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing
- 4 – Quality Education
- 5 – Gender Equality
- 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation
- 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy
- 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth
- 9 – Industry Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10 – Reduce inequalities
- 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13 – Climate Action
- 15 – Life on Land

Indirect impact

- 14 – Life Below the Water
- 16 – Peace Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17 – Partnerships for the Goals



As one of the UK’s 86 early adopters, Great Places has pledged to be open with customer partners and investors on our ESG performance and aims for the future.

We believe that Great Places makes a significant and positive impact on the people who live and work in the communities we work in and the surrounding environment. There is a clear link between the standard and many of our existing strategies, including Affordable Development Strategy, Carbon Management Strategy,

our Code of Governance and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy.

This report provides us with the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment in these key areas to a wider audience of stakeholders and investors, through key metrics and case studies, assessments and analysis of the full extent of our impact. A full list of Criteria within each Theme is listed in appendix 3.

Summary of ESG Criteria Themes:

The ESG report is broken down into the following themes, and these are further broken down into detailed criteria – C1- C48.

ESG	Theme #	Theme Name and Criteria covered (a full list of the criteria is contained in appendix 3 for reference)	Description	Directly influenced Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
Social	1	Affordability & Security Criteria C1-C5	This theme seeks to assess the extent to which Great Places, provides homes that are genuinely affordable to those on low-incomes. The theme is made up of five criteria, including the tenure mix of new and existing properties and security of tenure.	1, 2, 7 & 11.
	2	Building Safety & Quality Criteria C6-C8	This theme seeks to assess how effective Great Places is at meeting its legal responsibilities to protect residents and keep buildings safe. The theme identifies three areas of performance to assess - gas safety checks, fire risk assessments and compliance against the Decent Homes Standard.	3 & 11.
	3	Resident Voice Criteria C9-C11	This theme seeks to assess how effective Great Places is at listening to and empowering residents. The theme is made up of three criteria that cover board scrutiny, complaint handling and resident satisfaction.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11.
	4	Resident Support Criteria C12	This theme seeks to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives that Great Places runs to support individual residents. The theme is made up of two criteria that cover: What support is provided? and How successful is it?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 & 11.
	5	Placemaking Criteria C13	This theme seeks to highlight the wider set of activities that Great Places undertakes to create well-designed homes, places that meet local needs and provide great places for people to live and enjoy. The theme is made up of one criterion, a space for the housing provider to give examples of their placemaking or placeshaping work.	3, 9 & 11.

ESG	Theme #	Theme Name and Criteria covered (a full list of the criteria is contained in appendix 3 for reference)	Description	Directly influenced Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)
Environmental	6	Climate Change Criteria C14-C19	This theme seeks to assess how the activities of Great Places are impacting on climate change. This theme considers current practice, as well as the changes being made to improve performance in the future. The theme is made up of seven criteria, including the distribution of EPC ratings and heating sources, emissions data, capacity for renewable energy production, and environmental strategy.	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 & 15.
	7	Ecology Criteria C20-C21	This theme seeks to assess how the housing provider is protecting the local environment and ecology. The theme considers both policies and the results of the housing provider. The theme is made up of two criteria that review different elements that impact the local ecology: sourcing materials, waste management, managing pollutants, water management and biodiversity.	6, 7, 11, 12, 13 & 15.
	8	Resource Management Criteria C22-C24	This theme seeks to assess how Great Places manage the use of resources. Its three criteria cover sourcing materials, waste management and water management.	6, 7, 11 and 12.
Governance	9	Structure & Governance Criteria C25-C30	This theme seeks to assess the quality, suitability and performance of the corporate and governance structure. The theme is made up of six criteria including ownership, governance and risk approaches.	5, 8, 10 & 11.
	10	Board & Trustees Criteria C31-C41	This theme seeks to assess the quality, suitability and performance of the board of trustees. The theme is made up of eleven criteria including demographics of the board, ownership, experience and independence of the board.	5, 8, 10 & 11.
	11	Staff Wellbeing Criteria C42-C46	This theme seeks to assess the extent to which Great Places is a good employer to its internal staff. The theme is made up of five criteria, the CEO-worker pay ratio and a disclosure on being a Living Wage employer.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 & 10.
	12	Supply Chain Criteria C47-C48	This theme seeks to assess the extent to which Great Places uses its supply chain to achieve positive outcomes. The theme is made up of two criteria covering social value and environmental impact in procurement.	7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12.

A summary of the performance against many of the criteria is contained within Appendix 2. More detail against all metrics within the Standard are outlined under the relevant theme headings later in the report.

3. Social

In line with our vision, we look to build Great Communities and Great Homes for our customers.

Great Homes

We aim to help tackle the housing crisis by building 11,000 new homes in the ten years from April 2020. We are also committed to ensuring our portfolio of homes are maintained to a high standard. By managing our homes proactively, we act in the best interests of the organisation and its customers.

As society and personal circumstances change, we look to work with our customers to ensure that our homes continue to meet their needs. We also pledge to continue to build and maintain strong links with health and social care commissioners and other partners to promote independent living and good health.

We want to ensure we have the right homes in the right location for our customers, meeting their needs in both terms of quality and affordability.

Great Communities

We recognise that we have a key contribution to play in the communities we operate in regardless of how significant our presence is in that neighbourhood. By using technology to provide the services that customers need, promoting independence through a strong self-service offer where our service principle and service delivery framework has been focused around a “do with, not for” approach and hence focusing our resources on supporting the most vulnerable, we can help to create safe, vibrant and sustainable communities that our customers want to call home. Our relationship is a two way process and we look to build upon the feedback we receive.

Our core landlord services provide a solid foundation, but we cannot create great communities on our own. We continue to work with customers and a range of partners, in a spirit of collective responsibility, to identify and build on existing strengths and resources. We create effective partnerships to deliver services that bring the maximum benefit to individuals and their communities. We also monitor the work we do with our partners to ensure that it continues to be of real value.

Beyond our core landlord service, we continue to offer Independence and Wellbeing services in a variety of ways, including Extra Care and Sheltered housing for the over 55's and schemes for those with dependency issues or learning difficulties. These services have been part of our customer offer for many years and will continue to be so.

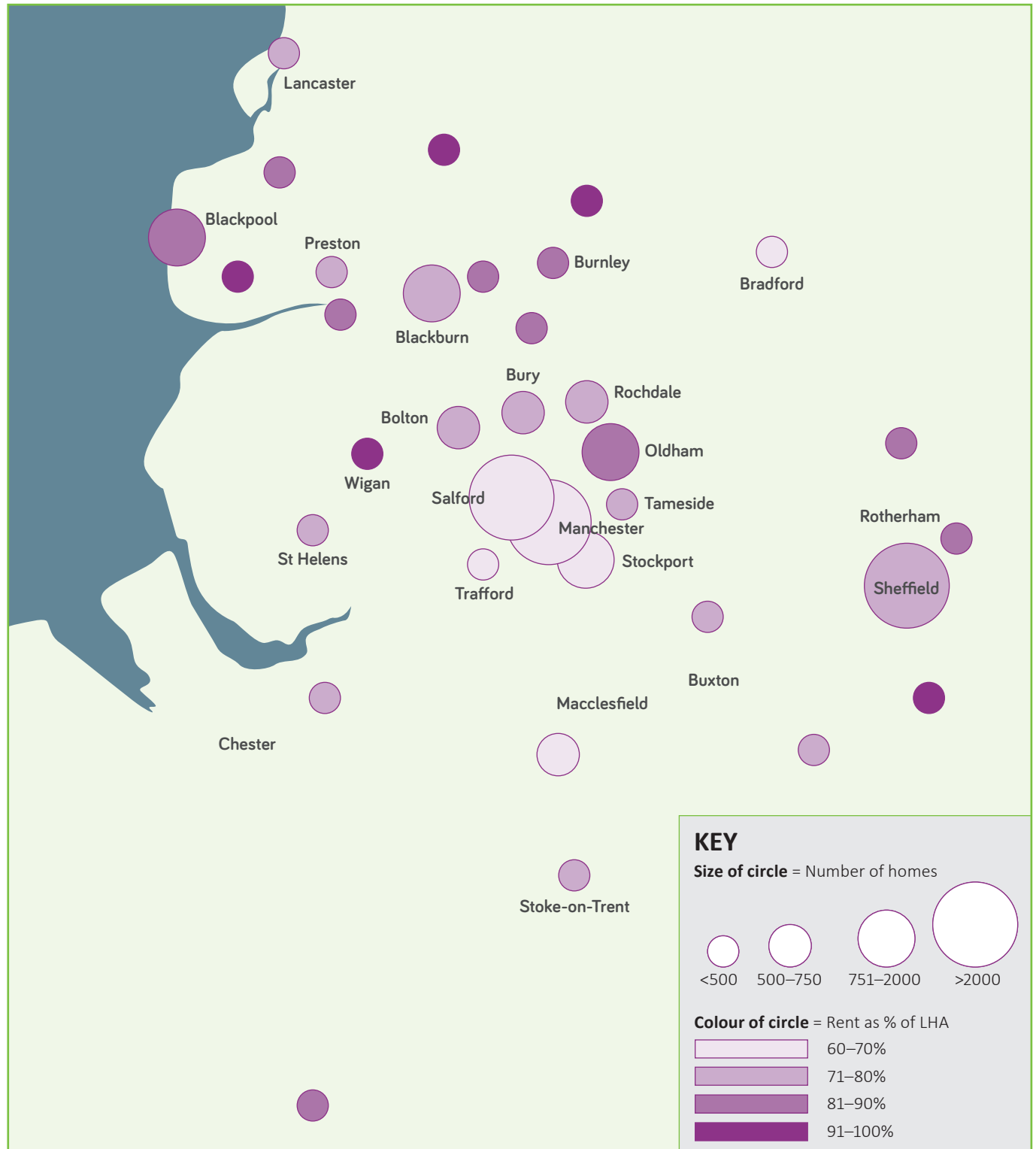


Theme 1 – affordability and security

C1. Housing provider specific “Affordability” indicator

Our average rents remain significantly below the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and private market rents for the areas we operate in. We are pleased to say that, on average, we charge rents at 72% of LHA and only 68%

of private rents. Details of our rents compared to LHA and Market Rent provided by local authorities are contained in appendix 1.

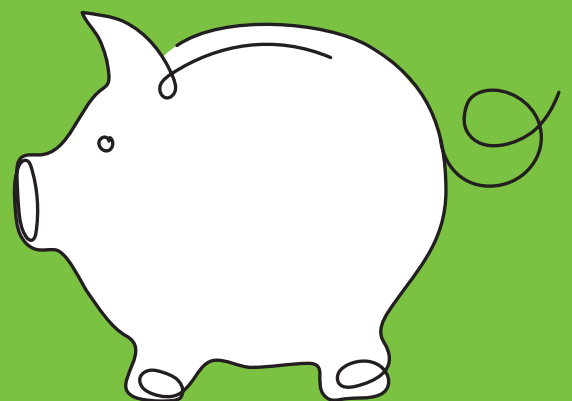


We understand that affordable rents alone might not improve the quality of life for our tenants and therefore we have schemes in place that help address fuel poverty and food poverty. Below is an example of a new initiative in Blackburn that we have worked with key partners to achieve:

A £20,000 donation from Countryside Properties, one of our development partners, along with other donations from partners and suppliers were received to top up our own £100k community resilience fund, which is making a big impact in some of our communities. For example a £2,000 allocation from the fund was made to The Welcome Community Centre in Knutsford and we've allocated a further £2,000 to Blackburn Hub as part of our efforts to ensure we're financially supporting organisations across other regions that we operate in. Blackburn Hub are proud to share that they will be using our donation for a specific project in partnership with Westholme School. The funding allowed them to provide approximately 800 meals to some of the most vulnerable families in the area.

The school are currently working with voluntary, community and faith-sector organisations to support families and elderly residents in need. The main way that they are helping people is by providing freshly-cooked meals to reduce some of the pressures people are currently facing with food poverty.

Our partnerships are important more than ever during times like these. Being committed to helping customers during these challenging times, it's fantastic to hear how our donations are positively affecting those most in need of support through this pandemic.



CASE STUDY

JANE STREET SALFORD

In autumn last year the Deputy City Mayor of Salford (and Lead Member for Housing & Neighbourhoods), Cllr Tracy Kelly, joined by Great Places' Chief Executive, Matthew Harrison and Mike Watson from Watson Homes to visit the first phase of our new affordable housing development at Jane Street, Salford. Delivered by Great Places and Dérive (Salford City Council's development company) and built by Watson Homes, the new development provides a mix of 43 much needed two and three bed houses and one and two bed cottage flats for affordable and social rent. During her visit, Cllr Kelly welcomed Great Places' new customer, Simon Kelsall to his new home. Commenting on his new home, Simon Kelsall, said: "I'm so proud and



happy with my flat. It's spacious and finished to a high standard - having a garden is an added bonus! There's a nice community here already and I'm looking forward to the future in my new place."

CASE STUDY

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH URBAN SPLASH DELIVERS AFFORDABLE HOMES IN THEIR LATEST PHASE OF NEW ISLINGTON

In September 2020, Great Places signed a deal with developer Urban Splash to provide affordable housing on the latest phase of their New Islington neighbourhood development. The agreement increased the proportion of affordable housing provision at New Islington to 31%. The new properties at Piercy Street were marketed as shared ownership through our first-time buyer subsidiary Plumlife Homes. Each of the shared ownership homes offered the same specification as the open market homes and feature three or four bedrooms as well as a private terrace, car parking and access to the Piercy Street residents' garden overlooking the Ashton Canal.



C2, C3 and C5. Number of homes, the tenure types of these and customer tenancies

We are keen to make our customers feel secure in their tenancies. As a result, all of our rental homes have a life time tenancy agreement.

The number of properties Great Places owns and / or manages has increased by 325 (excluding the increase following the merger with Equity) in the year ending March 2021.

Properties 31st March 2021	Total Owned and / or Managed	Of Which were additional this year	% of total homes	% of new homes in 2020/21
General Needs – social rent	10,921	83	44.8%	25.5%
General Needs – affordable rent	5,142	141	21.1%	43.4%
Low Cost Home Ownership	2,753	91	11.3%	28.0%
Supported Housing	1,392	5	5.7%	1.5%
Supported – Housing for older people	479	0	2.0%	0.0%
Intermediate Rent	382	0	1.6%	0.0%
Non Social Rented	324	0	1.3%	0.0%
Social Leased	1,505	3	6.2%	0.1%
Non Social Leased	1,494	5	6.1%	1.5%
Total	24,392	325	100%	100%

C4. Actions taken to address Fuel Poverty

Great Places is committed to helping the most vulnerable and making a real difference to fuel poverty. We have programmes in place to increase the physical energy efficiency of homes, which in turn can help protect tenants against cold homes and high energy bill costs.

Coronavirus has resulted in many customers experiencing a reduced income and an increased number of households may now be struggling with their energy bills, especially as it gets colder and as energy prices increase sharply. More than ever, we realise the need to invest in the health and wellbeing of our customers and reduce unnecessary strain on the NHS. Having a warm energy efficient home can help reduce the frequency and severity of health problems like flu, heart attacks and depression, which have all been linked to cold homes.

Great Places is committed to supporting customers who may need help managing their finances from time-to-time. Our website includes a range of advice and resources to directly support our customers (or signpost to other partners that can provide support). For example Energy Angel helps find the cheapest gas and electricity deals, and we provide, information for the customers on how to heat their home efficiently, along with guides on energy saving in the home and how to operate their heating systems and any new technology we've installed.

Our frontline colleagues are also trained in energy awareness so that they are able to give our customers the support they need or signpost them as appropriate. We also work in partnership with the Energy and Money Saving advice service LEAP to help customers who may need additional support.

Theme 2 – building safety and quality

C6, C7 and C8. Safety Checks and Build Quality

The safety of our customers is of paramount importance. This is demonstrated by the level of accredited gas safety checks (99.9%), the number of compliant fire risk assessments completed (99.7%) and the fact that all our homes (100%) continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

With regards to gas checks, compliance with regulations to mitigate risks to building and customer safety was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, but by 7th April 2021 the number of gas safety checks had returned to 100%.

Great Places' fire safety works programme makes good progress. Customers are at the forefront of everything we do and their safety is paramount. We acknowledge that we need to respond to an ever-changing external environment and have plans to address the requirements of the White Paper "The Charter for Social Housing Residents" and new and emerging Building Safety legislation. Great Places does not have many properties over 18 metres tall, but we have identified around 30 buildings, comprising around 1,000 apartments, which we have categorised as higher risk and which required an intrusive survey to identify whether there are any concerns. To address this risk we invested over £2.5m on safety works within our properties in 2020/21 and expect to invest similar amounts in the next two years.

Theme 3 – resident voice

C9 & C10. How Residents hold Great Places to account and Customer Satisfaction

Great Places' scrutiny group "Insight" was made up of eight volunteer customers at 31st March 2021 and we continue to try to attract more residents to join Insight. Insight act as a critical friend with a direct reporting line to the organisation's Board, to whom they present their findings and recommendations. Insight's function is to review a small number of selected service areas of their choosing (normally 3-4 areas per year). This feeds in to our future planning of all our services. The scrutiny activity also provides customers with a voice and an opportunity to challenge, hold us to account and influence the development of future services.

Performance, satisfaction and feedback information is reviewed to identify a service area to scrutinise. An area is chosen by Insight on the basis of a rise in the number of

complaints, a dip in performance or customer satisfaction, or to evaluate changes implemented following a service review.

Insight meet with the relevant head of service who will present an overview of the service and provide an opportunity to ask questions. A scope is agreed for the review and tasks identified along with information to be collected to inform the review.

As well as working with Insight we are also keen to engage with as many customers as we are able to. In January 2020 we contacted a number of customers around the contracts procured to ensure customers are safe in their home including Gas Safety, Fire, Lifts, Asbestos, Electrical checks. Customers told us what is important about making the appointment, carrying out the check/repair and following this up after the visit. This feedback has been picked up by our compliance and procurement teams who will incorporate these customer requirements into the procurement and contract management once successful contracts have been awarded.

Similarly in February 2021 Great Places conducted consultation with customers across all our tenures in relation to customer voice. This included survey's and virtual workshops with our leaseholders. This feedback will feed the development of a new Customer Voice strategy, planned to launch in 2021/22.

Also in 2020/21 customer consultation was completed around our revised Corporate Plan, via a range of means. The most important areas for customers were:

- Keeps you safe in your home
- Support safe neighbourhoods
- Keeps you informed
- Range of ways to access services
- Listen to views

As part of the data collection, customers will speak with internal colleagues and consult or survey other customers to test whether experiences of service delivery meet the service offer or promise. It also is an opportunity to identify 'what matters most to customers'.

The data is then summarised and recommendations proposed to the service head, who will develop an action plan and feedback. A report is written of the findings and recommendations, which is presented to Board along with the head of service who will respond on behalf of Great Places.

Customer satisfaction is an important and high-profile performance measure at Great Places and has been one of our corporate Critical Success Factors every year since these were introduced in 2014.

The customer voice and satisfaction are also central in our Corporate Plan and a key focus in our 10-Year ambitions. Colleagues across Great Places actively engage with satisfaction as it supports Sharing Greatness, our colleague incentive scheme.

Customer Satisfaction is collected on an ongoing basis after any service transaction, following the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) methodology. Customers who have contacted Great Places are sent an SMS, asking them to rate Great Places' overall services on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being poor and 10 being good. We ask the same question of all our customer groups (General Needs, Supported Housing, Leaseholders and Shared Owners) allowing us to drive improvements across all service areas, geographic areas and customer groups. The annual target for 2020/21 was set at 7.3, this was based on previous performance and is comparable to peer organisations in our sector. Our year-end performance was 7.3, increasing slightly from 7.2 for 2019/20 and meaning we achieved our target.

The pandemic had a significant impact on satisfaction. Initially we saw an increase due to our ability to maintain an emergency repairs service and making welfare calls to vulnerable customers. However, over time we have seen the impact change as colleagues have had to isolate and this has adversely impacted our service delivery and satisfaction levels. This has been experienced by a number of organisations nationally and we compare well to the rest of the sector nationally.

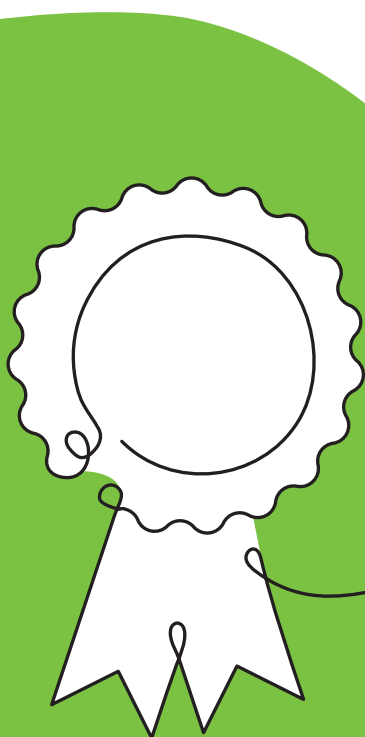
The SMS also includes a free text option, asking the customer to tell us why they provided the score they gave. By combining the data collected within the survey with the information associated with the customers most recent contact, and categorising the more qualitative free text response, we are able to analyse common themes and track the impact of changes made to address poor satisfaction.

Great Places is a member of the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) and through our membership we can benchmark our performance both within housing and across other sectors. We can also benefit from a survey that the Institute provides on our behalf providing some external assurance around our satisfaction levels.

As well as our headline satisfaction measure, we also measure customer satisfaction with:

- our repairs service (8.91 at March 2021 decreasing marginally from 8.95 in 2019/20 primarily due to the impact of the pandemic)
- new build homes (8.60 for 2020/21)
- sales process (Plumlife sales was 9.26)
- ease of contact (3.88 although it should be noted that a low score represents better performance for this measure in-line with the ICS) and
- the service received from key contractors, such as Sure Gas at 7.07.
- Net Promoter score
- ease of doing business with

In the White Paper there is a clear focus on the need to enhance customer voice, communication and engagement focused on building safety. This is mirrored in the Building and Fire Safety legislation. We are developing our approach based on learning from the Fire Safety early adopters and forthcoming guidance from MHCLG and the HSE expected in early 2022.



C11. Customer Complaints

Customer experience is important at Great Places and a new team was established to look at this in 2020. The team look at what can be learnt from complaints and compliments so that best practice can be shared around our services.

During 2020/21 we closed 147 complaints. Six complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman of which two were upheld. These complaints led to five different service improvement actions. One case is still awaiting an outcome, Great Places have already actioned a service improvement from this complaint.

Great Place are continually looking to improve the services we offer to customers and this is evidenced by the fact that although three complaints weren't upheld, these have still led to improvements taking place for the benefit of our tenants and communities. In 2021/22 Great Places will launch a revised complaints policy to ensure an enhanced service to our customers, via a newly created central team. There will be a focus on enhanced reporting and continued collaborative working across the business to ensure feedback from complaints is listened to, responded to and improvements made as needed. This will include case reviews and implementation of an improvement tracker. We will seek to ensure wider engagement with customers on complaints through delivery of our revised Customer Voice Strategy.

Theme 4 – resident support

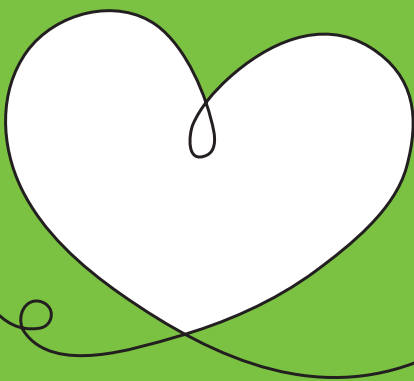
C12. Support Services offered to Residents.

Great Places is more than just a social landlord. As a business with a social purpose, we are committed to investing money and resources into our communities to improve the lives of our customers and their families.

Our dedicated Community Investment team delivers a range of support services including employability and financial resilience help for customers, recognising the benefits of helping our customers to become economically active through employment and self-employment. Not only is work regarded to be the key route out of poverty for families, especially those in social housing homes where multiple disadvantages can be seen, but in increasing household incomes we can expect higher rates of tenancy sustainment, improved wellbeing, and stronger local economies. Our role is to level up and generate opportunities that our customers otherwise wouldn't have access to. We also look to remove barriers and empower them to make choices about their own futures.

Last year we helped more than 700 households into work, training, and volunteering opportunities and provided employability guidance and support to 380 people. In addition, our Hardship and Community Resilience Funds, established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, provided over £100,000 of financial support (and attracted funding from partners) to community-based projects and initiatives providing a lifeline to customers and making a significant difference to their lives.

Great Places' Independence and Wellbeing services exist to help people to live independently and enjoy positive physical and mental wellbeing. From supported accommodation for people with specific needs, including those with enduring mental health challenges; young parents; people with disabilities; people leaving homelessness and care-leavers, to a tenancy coaching service which last year helped 303 customers to sustain their tenancies and achieved a success rate of 100%. We also work with a range of partner organisations who provide care services.



Theme 5 – placemaking

C13. Examples of where Great Places has engaged in Placemaking activities

Placemaking is an important part of our history and that commitment has continued particularly within our 5 anchor neighbourhoods or our 7 community centres.

We have taken a holistic approach to our neighbourhood planning. This has seen us publish master plans for our “anchor” neighbourhoods which refers to areas where we have the greatest density of homes. These plans set out objectives and commitments to those neighbourhoods across our community investment, development, assets and housing management services. The Community Investment service has a dedicated Place and Regeneration team working across our communities to connect customers to local opportunities and develop partnerships with the VCSE sector.

Another key part of our Community Investment team is a dedicated Fundraising service which builds the capacity of our VCSE partners in our neighbourhoods by drawing down external funding. Last year more than £500,000 of funding was secured for organisations and to deliver support services. This is complemented by our Resilience Fund launched last year to support organisations in our neighbourhoods to implement their Covid recovery plans. More than £100,000 has been invested so far, together with our supply chain partners who have generated £430,000 of social impact for our communities.



CASE STUDY

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF NORTHMOOR

In the Northmoor area of Longsight, one of our anchor neighbourhoods, we have set out commitments around developing the local economy through Community Wealth Building Principles. Great Places has invested more than £17 million over the last 25 years to provide new affordable homes and transform Northmoor into a modern and inclusive place to live and work. This year saw our Assets team complete a £700,000 refurbishment project of an Edwardian Cooperative building, home to the Northmoor Community Centre funded by Great Places. The centre houses two retail units, which will be tenanted by social enterprise or community impact businesses as well as providing around 20 apartments. At the same time, the Neighbourhoods teams provide a high standard of housing management to the customers living in the apartments on the upper floors of the building and



refer customers from the neighbourhood into the Northmoor Hub, a neighbouring new service where customers can access employability, welfare and wellbeing support. The Hub has already seen a lot of activity with the Employability Coach fully booked and it received a visit from Andy Burnham the Mayor of Greater Manchester who recently came to officially open the new centre. Since opening the Hub has seen a significant number of local customers take advantage of the various services the Hub offers that will support them to become more financially resilient.

CASE STUDY

CREATING A NEW COMMUNITY HUB FOR OUR WYBOURN NEIGHBOURHOOD

On Wybourn, a large community of family homes in Sheffield, and another of our anchor neighbourhoods, we are pleased to be building a new community centre that will be governed and run by the community itself with support from Great Places. The investment in the centre and 12 new social rented apartments is in excess of £2 million. The centre will comprise a large hall space, suitable for significant community projects, training, crèche, exercise activities and can also be hired for social functions. There will also be a kitchen space large enough to facilitate healthy eating sessions, cooking for community events and social function hire. We have also worked with the developer, Tanbry, to increase the projects social value by employing two local residents on site. Tanbry's participation in the Sheffield Building Block training programme has also



provided five work experience training opportunities for individuals looking for a career in construction. Tanbry has also undertaken 100 hours of grounds maintenance work preparing communal spaces for a community allotment and orchard and made a commitment to working with local primary schools to educate pupils on construction industry career opportunities. A community artist has also been appointed to work with the Wybourn community to design and create a mosaic piece of art that will be attached to the Centre.

4. Environment

Great Places works hard to reduce the environmental impact of its communities and delivery of our services. Great Places recognises that our day to day activities have an impact on our environment, be it from the operation of our office buildings, our development programme, the waste that we generate or emissions from our vehicles in managing our properties across the 41 local authorities in which we operate.

Great Places has in place a Carbon Management Strategy, which covers the four years 2021-2024. The aim of this is to reduce our environmental impact in the areas where our emissions are greatest:

- Development
- Assets and Investment
- Operations
- Customers and colleagues
- Natural Capital
- Waste

Extreme weather events, an outcome of climate change, are already impacting our customers, colleagues and stakeholders. Climate change is due primarily to the increased use and burning of fossil fuels, and Great Places plays its part by minimising its energy use across every activity within the business and especially within our homes. Only by taking bold and radical action will Great Places be able to reduce its carbon emissions and further limit consumption of scarce natural resources.

The effects of climate change are constantly in the media and our stakeholders, including colleagues and customers, are increasingly aware that Great Places needs to take positive and substantial steps to help reduce emissions and lead by example.

Our goal is to create sustainable homes where the customer can afford to heat the home, and where we effectively coordinate Carbon Management, Investment and repair improvements to minimise disruption to the customer and work to create a home that is zero carbon ready. This means we see our investment work as a preparation for our homes to be ready to be zero carbon in the future.

Great Places has been undertaking various carbon reduction measures for some time. We have in place a cross organisational Carbon Management Team chaired by the Director of Sustainable Assets. The team has developed a strategy and associated action plan and is leading on the completion of the actions and giving direction to Great Places.

As referred to within our affordability section we already have programmes in place to increase the physical energy efficiency of our homes. The intention of these is to protect tenants against cold homes and high energy bill costs, but this clearly has the added benefit of reducing energy usage. We are however also aware of the potential to improve tenant health with warmer, more energy efficient and affordable homes and this has been a key driver of this programme.

We are keen to assist our tenants using our “do with, not for” approach and with this in mind our website gives advice and resources for our customers, from signposting to help them to find the cheapest utility deals, to tips around how best to heat their home efficiently, and useful guides. We also look to promote new technologies that can help with energy usage or that improve efficiency.

By 2028 we have targeted ensuring all of our homes have an EPC rating of C or above. This will mean investment of over £10m in over 3,500 homes. The current split of EPC ratings for our homes is shown in the response to C14 below. With our change to working practices and the introduction of our Hybrid working model “Greater Working”, we expect to see colleague mileage falling and this should have an effect on the related emissions.

CASE STUDY

PARTNERING WITH BRE GROUP ON RESEARCH TO TACKLE CARBON EMISSIONS

As part of our carbon management strategy, this year we have teamed up with building research specialists BRE Group on a research project to develop a strategy for our affordable development programme to be zero carbon ready by 2038. As part of the project, BRE, who provide research and advice to a range of bodies including the UK Government, undertook a comprehensive analysis of Great Places' current operations and practices to understand what net zero carbon will mean for the team. This included

undertaking a market assessment of technological solutions, liaising with customers, including internal and external stakeholders to build a picture of their requirements, and working with us to update our specifications and standard house types to be flexible for the future. The aim is to identify the changes needed and provide a range of practical recommendations that we can implement to reduce the carbon footprint of our future affordable development programme.

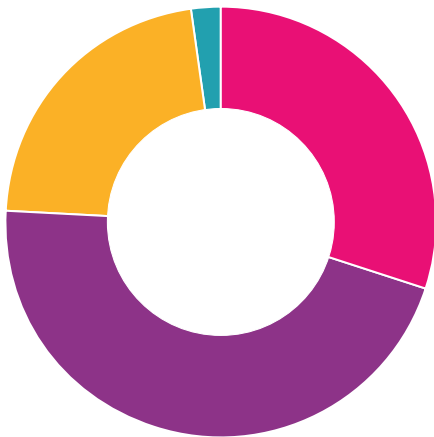


Theme 6 – climate change

C14 and C15. EPC ratings of current and new Homes

The following chart shows the EPC ratings for our Homes. Great Places has targeted the 3,500 homes that fall below EPC C and getting these to that standard by 2028. Alongside this, work has begun to look at the implications of zero carbon homes within our Development plan. At present all newly developed homes will have a minimum of EPC rating of B. We have aligned ourselves with the Greater Manchester target of achieving net zero by 2038 and ensure we collaborate with other housing associations in the region by participating in the Low Carbon Asset Managers group.

EPC ratings for our homes



- A – 0%
- B – 30%
- C – 46%
- D – 22%
- E or worse – 2%

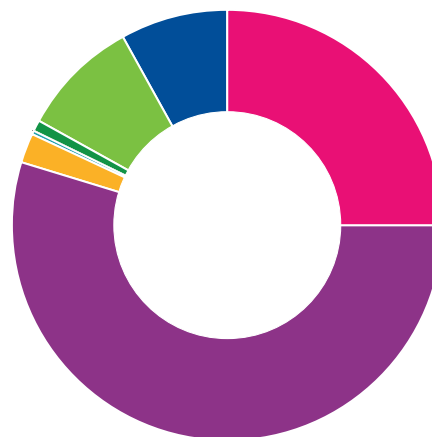
C16. Scope 1, 2 and 3 Greenhouse Gas emissions.

We have calculated our scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions in line with the Greenhouse Gas Protocol. Scope 1 covers the carbon emissions directly emitted by Great Places including the gas to heat offices, landlord and communal areas of properties owned and operated by Great Places, and the diesel consumption of our fleet carrying out Great Places’ business. Scope 2 comprises the emissions associated with energy consumed directly by Great Places’ properties, but which is supplied by others who used fossil fuels to produce that energy. This includes electricity and district heating where provided by third parties. For the previous financial year, our scope 1 and 2 emissions were 3,407 tonnes CO₂e.

We are in the process of calculating our scope 3 emissions and have a target of completing this task by end of December 2021. We are working with other Housing Associations across the Greater Manchester region to ensure we are including the same data within our scope 3 emissions to enable best practice sharing and working together on our net zero targets.

Our 2019/2020 scope 1 and 2 Carbon Footprint is detailed below:

Great Places Scopes 1 and 2 Carbon Footprint (tCO₂)



- Electricity – 797
- Gas – 2130
- District Heating – 92
- WFH – 3
- Exported Renewable Electricity – 1
- A/C Refrigerant Leaks – 40
- Fleet – 345
- Grey Fleet – 305

We think creatively in the way we can reduce our impact on the planet in many different ways, like where we invest cash deposits. This year we deposited £10m in a Barclays “Green Deposit”. Barclays uses this cash to fund their Green Bond purchase programme, which in turn buys bonds from green issuers where the use of proceeds meets a green framework. It is estimated that this overall fund saved c1.5 million tonnes of CO2 last year, based on the latest Barclays Green Deposit fund report and we are pleased that our cash deposit was part of it.¹

C17. Energy Efficiency actions in the last 12 months

Great Places has targeted homes without an EPC to ensure we have good data on energy performance and to give us the ability to prioritise our worst performing homes. We have also undertaken a programme of loft and cavity wall insulation to improve the energy efficiency of over 147 homes.

Great Places has also invested over £5m to install Photovoltaic Panels on over 1,000 homes which have generated over 10 million kwh of electricity since they were installed. The generated electricity is used free of charge by the occupants. We have also installed a 70 kwh peak photovoltaic panel system on our Head Office to reduce our reliance on grid electricity and also we replaced the air conditioning units to more efficient models to reduce our carbon footprint.

1. Disclaimer from Barclays: “Figures provided in this Green Deposit impact report are based on data published by issuers of green bonds. As part of their yearly disclosure exercise, every issuer will publicly publish an impact report. Our impact report is a simple aggregation across all relevant impact reports of issuers from whom we hold green bonds in our Green Bond Investment Fund. The aggregated numbers are prorated to reflect the size of our holding relative to the total green bond program of the issuer. The methodology that we have implemented, to assess the impact of our Green Bond purchase program is at Barclays’ discretion and is an in-house methodology owned by Barclays.”



CASE STUDY

WORKING WITH KNAUF ON PILOT TO HELP RETHINK APPROACH TO IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Recently, we undertook a detailed project to demonstrate the success of quality assurance in retrofit and lobby for change to how retrofit projects are undertaken. We partnered with Knauf Insulation and Knauf Energy Solutions (KES) to deploy their innovative kit to measure the fabric efficiency of the home and ‘meter’ the savings derived from the retrofit. Twinning this fabric efficiency measurement – before and after retrofit – with robust quality control allowed us to deliver warm comfortable efficient homes to all residents in the project. Some of our new retrofit projects will be suitable for Wave 2 bid from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

This project looked at retrofit from a new and innovative angle. It successfully tackled and closed the performance gap in retrofit. Great Places installs insulation so that it will reduce carbon emissions and energy bills. There has always been a concern however on how we are able to assess the success of this work and how much it reduces the energy demand. This was the guiding principle of the project partners and the innovation developed by KES which looks to provide certainty around the efficacy of the outcomes



of a retrofit. Following the work, all 28 of the buildings that were part of this pilot scheme were continuously assessed by machine-learning sensors to deliver real life information on the improvements to energy efficiency and savings. The results were significant. The energy efficiency of the average home was found to have been improved by 31% — adding up to energy savings of £400 a year. Overall, across all the buildings, energy efficiency improved between 20% to 51% creating energy savings of between £228 and £660. The project highlights how similar works can represent a real return on investment for our customers and can go a significant way to helping us realise our 10 year ambitions to improve the energy efficiency across our homes and achieve an Energy Efficiency Performance rating of C for all our homes by 2028 helping lowering running costs for our customers and reducing the incidence of fuel poverty.

C18. Mitigating Climate Risk

The risks presented by climate change have a potential impact on our customers and as a result new build developments are carefully considered in regard to existing flood risk, and no developments that are within current flood zone 3 are taken forward. Those within flood zone 2 are developed closely with the architect and contractor in partnership with the local authority planning department to design in mitigating measures. This includes either lifting the entire level of the site or the ground floor level of the building to move the site into flood zone 1 classification levels. When Great Places is involved in larger schemes near to bodies of water, we consider the possibility of offsite works to alleviate upstream flood risk. Sockets are elevated on the ground floor to mitigate for future changes. Where feasible driveways are installed with permeable paving to limit standing water. Where communal landscaped areas are required to be provided, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) options are the first solutions considered in order to retain water within the site and provide a slow release to assist with wider flooding in the neighbourhood.

In regard to overheating, site layouts are considered in relation to local context and the requirements of the planners. Solar shading on the building itself is not currently implemented, however south facing exposure is limited where possible and landscaping is often used to help with natural shading and cooling. Great Places operates a fabric first approach to carbon reduction which results in very airtight buildings. As such, ventilation is a key consideration in design, and considerations around moisture and air circulation are taken into account in all rooms particularly centralised rooms such as bathrooms or utility rooms. Great Places has experienced overheating recently in two of our older person apartment blocks and undertook remedial works including additional air conditioning to mitigate this.

A project is currently underway to assess Great Places standard house types and specification in line with the longer-term goal of achieving net zero carbon developments by 2038, and overheating will form a key part of that.

Great Places are part of the Off-Site Homes Alliance (OSHA) which was formed by 18 Housing Associations in November 2020 following research undertaken by Homes for the North (H4N.)

As developers of predominantly affordable homes in the north of England, the OSHA partners recognised the risks of continued reliance upon traditional building methods and supply chains, and sought to convert the clear opportunities of off-site manufacture into long-term and sustainable reality.

The H4N research was undertaken by Total Flow and highlighted that the off-site volumetric manufacturing sector was largely fledgling, lacking client interaction and lacking the forward order books to support investment for the long term in R&D, lean manufacturing, standardisation, quality improvement and zero carbon specification, which would, in turn, create sustainable and resilient businesses. Concurrently, Housing Associations were increasingly recognising the potential benefits of off-site manufactured homes, particularly in respect of achieving Future Homes Standard and, eventually, net zero carbon.

C19. Environmental information available to Residents

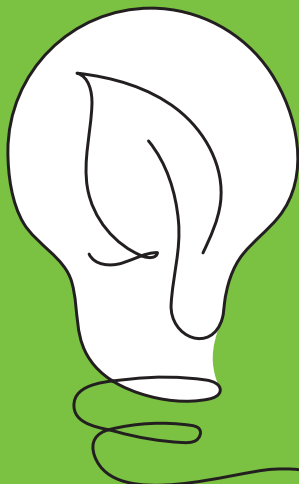
As referred to earlier our front line employees and our website look to give our customers advice and guidance on reducing their energy use or using it as efficiently as possible. Along with our guides on energy saving in the home, the website has links for customers to access so they can find out how to best operate their heating systems and any new technology they have installed. If they do not have a copy of the user manuals for their heating systems, customers are able to contact us with a photo or the make and name of model, and we will send the user guide to them. There is also a home repair hints & tips page, which has links to information on how to reduce damp and condensation in the home, with an advice leaflet for the customer.

When residents move into new build properties the Development team provide a Home Demo within seven days of occupation. This provides residents with details on how to effectively manage their homes and use the features effectively, including providing where appropriate explanations for why certain features are in their homes. In regard to ventilation, this includes information on the importance of trickle vents and the merits of ensuring fans are left on a trickle constantly, particularly in the bathroom. The use of boilers and thermostats are explained along with tips for setting timers to be as efficient as possible. The Development team also undertake a follow up call six to eight weeks after

occupation to ensure that the resident is comfortable with the use of their homes, and final checks are undertaken at the end of the 12 month defect liability period.

New residents of new build homes are also provided with a Home User Guide (HUG) and supplemental information in support of this. The HUG provides details of the features of the home and the local neighbourhood, and provides tips for sustainable decoration and procurement as well as disposal of waste. All new build properties are also provided with a full suite of bins appropriate for the local authority to encourage recycling in place.

Supplemental guides provided include a “Mini HUG” which pulls out key information on the boiler alongside repairs reporting information. A specific lawn care guide is also provided to ensure the green space is well maintained and work is underway to provide more specific information for plant maintenance. The final document provided is a guide to drainage to encourage residents to not block their drains by flushing inappropriate products down the drains as this affects water usage and can lead to blockages and damp. In addition, we hold a guide on condensation and how to prevent it which is provided if the resident is expressing concerns in regard to this, but this is not currently provided as standard.



Theme 7 – ecology

C20. Increasing Green Space and Promoting Bio-Diversity

The profile of green spaces and bio-diversity has been increasing for a number of years and Great Places have commenced work to ensure our communities have green spaces and we enhance the bio-diversity in these areas. We are introducing and sustaining wild flower meadows across our schemes. This has been highlighted in new developments within Sheffield and at our Park Hill development in the city. Plans are also underway to identify and create landscape improvements retrospectively to older schemes to re-establish and increase green spaces.

Great Places has also introduced a new tree policy, where we encourage the sustainability of healthy trees with a robust tree management programme. Where possible, we are looking to replace any trees felled with new saplings. In addition, our work with partners such as Cheshire Green Waste has meant we can recycle our green waste into compost and introduce this back into green spaces.

C21. Reducing Pollutants

Reducing pollution will also have a significant impact on the areas in which Great Places operates. To achieve this work has taken place around a number of areas:

In Development, Great Places ensures legal compliance with pollution legislation at all times on our new builds. There have been no reportable incidents on any of our schemes in the last year.

In relation to air emission, Great Places has undertaken significant work to minimise air emissions especially those associated with travel. We are currently trialling electric vans with the aim of a minimum of 20% carbon reduction on our new fleet which will also include hybrid vans. We have electric charge points located at one of our offices and with the possibility of installing more at our offices and schemes. We encourage colleagues to commute to work via active travel and have welfare facilities including bike stores, showers and lockers. We achieved first place in Greater Manchester for the participation rate in “Cycle September 2020”. In addition we ensure that our gas boilers and air conditioning systems are serviced and maintained annually to ensure they are running efficiently.

Theme 8 – resource management

C22, C23 and C24. The use of, and future use of Responsibly Source Materials, Waste and Water Management

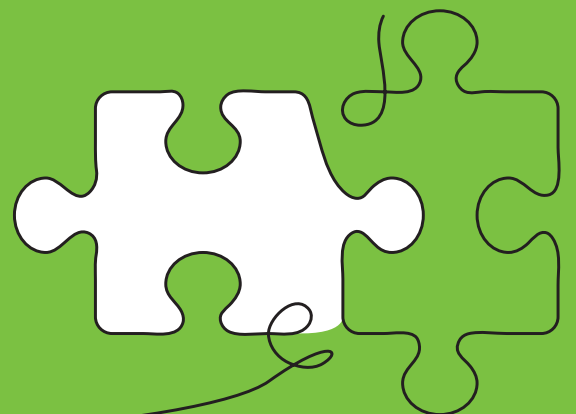
Great Places is exploring future strategies to further reduce our environmental impact. One of these approaches relates to water management. Our process for the implementation of this is shown below:

1. **Compile list of Corporate/ Landlord/ Communal Water Supplies**
Including addresses and details of the supply.
2. **Obtain consolidated invoices from suppliers and direct debits**
3. **Cost Comparison & Compliant Procurement**
4. **Quantify and analyse consumption**
5. **Carry out water surveys, identify water saving, recycling opportunities & remove or reduce waste:**
6. **Consider Alternative Water Sources & Drainage**
7. **Water Efficient Appliance & Equipment Procurement**
8. **Minimising the Risk from Legionella**
9. **Protecting Water Supplies**
Review contamination risk of water supplies due to flooding.
Review Emergency Plans for mains water supply failure to corporate properties.

New Builds

All new build developments are fitted with a water meter in order to allow the resident to effectively monitor and manage water usage. The new build specification also requires flow restrictors to be applied to all taps to limit water usage.

Development of new properties is seen as a key area to deliver Great Places growth and ESG aims. Whilst we don't currently have an adopted strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced building materials we are conscious of this, and consider this with our frameworks and our supply chain choices. Similarly with our handling of development waste while no clear strategy is in place yet, our ethical responsibilities are always considered.

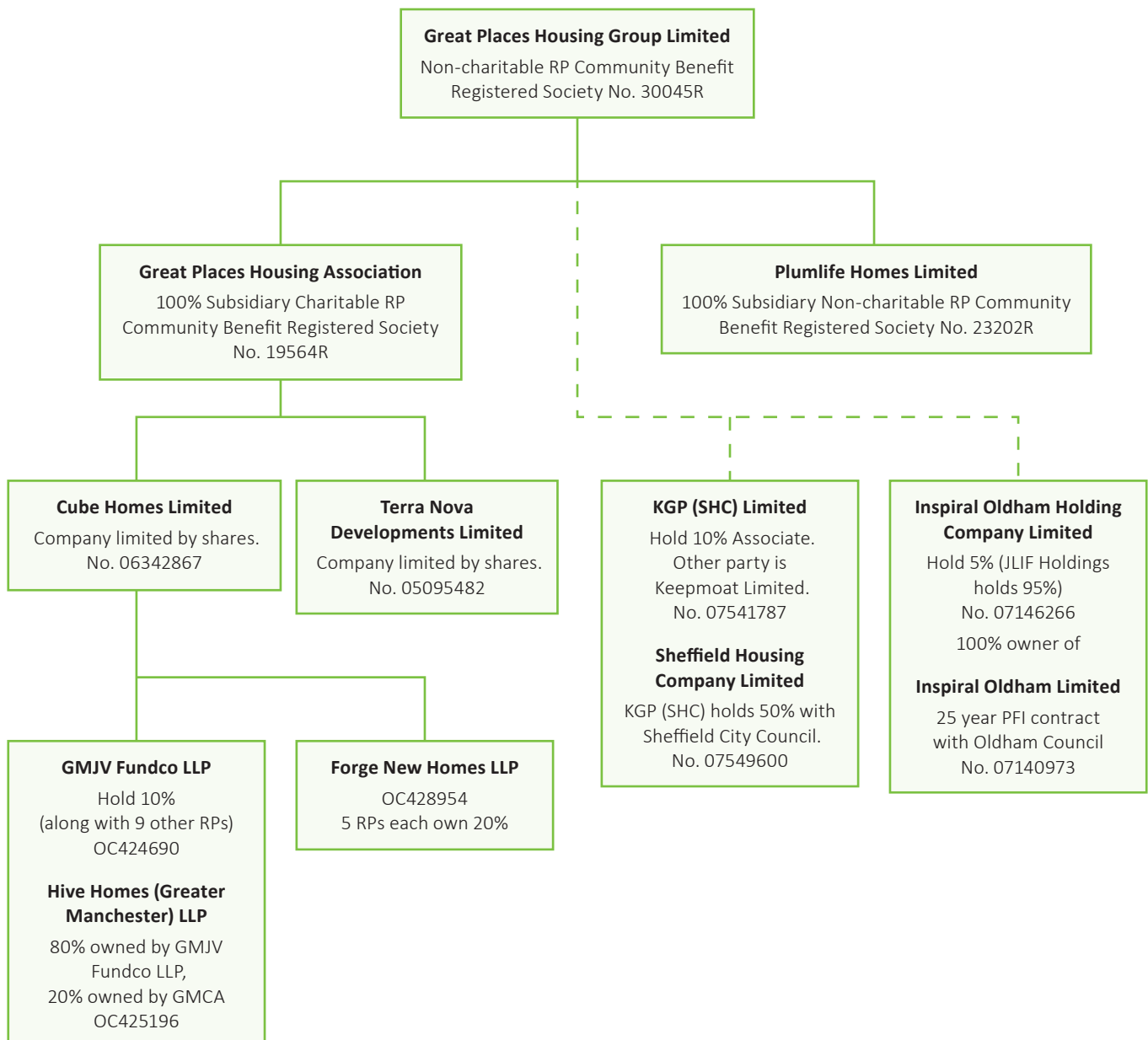


5. Governance

Theme 9 – structure and governance

C25 and C28. Is the Housing Provider Registered with a regulator of Social Housing? Is the Housing Provider “not for Profit”?

Great Places Housing Group Limited is a registered housing provider. Great Places Housing Group is also parent company of two other registered housing providers Great Places Housing Association which is a not for profit registered provider, with Charitable status, and which owns almost all of the Group’s homes, and Plumlife Homes Limited:



Great Places Housing Group and Great Places Housing Association (the main stock holding company) are not-for-profit or as we prefer to say “Profit for Purpose” organisations. This means surpluses we generate are reinvested in new homes, existing assets and existing services.

C26, C27 and C30. Outcome of the Regulators In Depth Assessment (IDA). Code of Governance and Adverse Regulator Findings

As at 31 March 2020 Great Places Group Limited received an interim regulatory grading of G1 V2, following our merger with Equity Housing Group. However following a recent in depth assessment (IDA) carried out by the regulator in spring 2021, this rating was since uplifted to the highest possible rating, G1 V1 in July 2021.

Great Places follows the 2015 National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Governance “Promoting Board Excellence for Housing Associations”. An independent triennial Governance review carried out in late 2020 confirmed that the Group was fully compliant with that code. It is our intention to adopt the new 2020 NHF Code and we expect to be compliant with that new code by March 2022.

Great Places hasn’t been subject to any regulatory enforcement action over the last 12 months. We have self-reported two data breaches to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) which resulted in no further action, and we were contacted by the HSE in relation to a complaint, but there were no negative findings as a result.

C29. Management of Risk

At Great Places, we recognise that risk – whether positive (opportunity) or negative (threat) – and the need to provide assurance that this is being well managed, is a part of everyday life. Our Code of Governance gives Board the ultimate responsibility for:

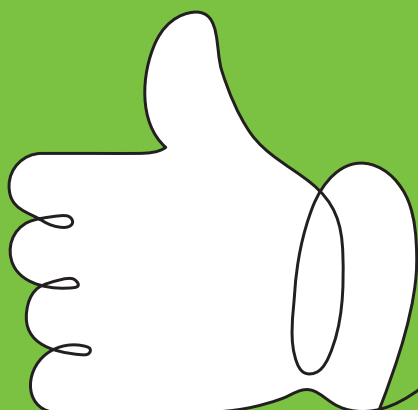
- establishing, overseeing and reviewing systems of internal control and;
- establishing and overseeing a risk management framework

Detailed scrutiny and evaluation of the risk management and internal control framework are delegated to the Audit and Assurance Committee and the terms of reference for the Committee reflect this duty – linking closely to the internal and external audit provision, and the assurance provided by external specialists as required. Despite that, the Board are responsible for setting our Risk and Assurance Strategy and our risk appetite, and ensuring that all decisions made are in line with this statement.

Risk management and assurance are complimentary processes linked to the effective governance of the organisation. Essentially, risk management provides assurance to the Board that: all material threats to the business have been identified, evaluated, and mitigated; and assurance sources provide confidence that controls are adequate and effective, and that mitigation plans are proportionate and cost effective.

Our approach has matured significantly in recent years, with the Board and the Audit and Assurance Committee pivotal in driving risk management – which is framed around the three lines of defence model and pulled together via our Assurance Map. Our risk management process is framed around 3 key stages: risk identification – risk assessment – risk mitigation

The financial pressures on the organisation brought about by the current operating and political environment require a sound strategic approach to risk management and we continue to use sensitivity and stress testing to model scenarios which push us out of our tolerance limits or challenge our financial “golden rules” and use control measures and mitigating activities to address these.



Theme 10 – board and trustees

C31, C32, C33, C34 and C40. Board Demographics, turnover, tenure, % of non-executive directors and Board Effectiveness review

Great Places Group board was made up of 11 members at 31st March 2021. It is currently 30% Female, only one member of the Board is an executive director. The average age of the board is 61. The average tenure is three years, and the maximum term for a board member is 9 years, this is on the basis of two terms of three years, then up to three single year extensions. At the 31 March 2021 there were no declared BAME or disabled board members. However the group's commercial subsidiary board includes two independent Board members one of whom is BAME. Great Places has a Board Succession plan in place which commenced with three new appointments in September 2021, replacing three long standing board members. Following those appointments the percentage of BAME members on our Group board has increased to 18% and the average age has reduced to 57. A further two board members are due to depart in 2022, with new members to be recruited by September 2022. We will continue to work with external consultants who are already helping us to continue to improve the level of diversity within our Board whilst retaining the key skills and expertise that have contributed to our success.

Over the last two years, our Board of 11 has reduced to a Board of 10, with three departures and two new appointments creating a turnover of 27%. The executive team has been stable over the same period with no changes. In January 2021 an independent governance review was reported completed. This gave a clean bill of health to all of the Governance arrangements including our approach to Board succession and appraisal. We retained our G1 following our IDA undertaken in the spring of 2021.

The Board is Chaired by Tony Davison. Tony is a highly experienced businessman. A former Managing Director at Bostik, he has also served as a local councillor, has been the Chair of Governors of a College of Further Education, a Governor of Manchester Metropolitan University and is currently a director of Crewe Alexandra Football Club. Tony is also a member of the Remuneration & Appraisal Committee at Great Places. The board also includes our CEO Matthew Harrison as the only Executive Board Member.

C41. Conflicts of Interest

Declarations of interest are made at start of all Board meetings and a register of interests is maintained. If an interest is declared that Board member may be asked to not participate in any vote on a given item and possibly not to contribute to any discussion on that item. In 2018, a Board member was required to stand down from the Board due to a newly arising conflict (a senior management role with another local RP) that meant they would have been unable to participate in most Board discussions. This was mutually agreed.

C35 and C38. Audit and Assurance Committee and our External Auditors

Two committees report into board. These are the Audit and Assurance Committee and the Remuneration and Appraisal Committee. Both comprise four non-executive Board Members. The Audit and Assurance Committee includes three qualified accountants from very different sectors within it's membership as well as a vastly experienced senior housing professional.

Our external auditors (BDO) have been in place for 7 years with our current Audit Partner (Julien Rye) – the lead partner for the past 3 years. A policy regarding the independence of the External Auditors is reviewed annually. This limits the value of any non-audit work that the external auditors can undertake. We will be re-tendering for audit services in 2021.

The Group's Internal Audit function is outsourced to PWC.

C36 and C37. The Remuneration Committee and Succession Plans

The Remuneration and Appraisal Committee comprises four non-executive Board members. This Committee has a wide range of responsibilities, including Board succession. In November 2020 the Remuneration and Appraisal Committee approved changes to the Board Succession and Recruitment Policy. This policy supplements the Code of Governance in detailing how Great Places will ensure the provisions around board membership, renewal, succession and recruitment are put into practice. In addition to some minor changes, the Committee also discussed in detail the implications for the policy regarding changes being proposed by the new 2020 NHF Code of Governance and incorporated these as

appropriate. A succession plan is in place which identifies the term-lengths of all Board members and adequate provisions are in place to ensure that Non-executive directors are replaced with individuals with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience. In 2021, three new non-executive directors were recruited successfully, and an additional two are to be recruited in 2022. Information is fed back from both Committees to the full Board to ensure they are fully aware of all issues relating to Recruitment and Succession.

Theme 11 – staff wellbeing

C45 and C46. Physical and Mental Health, and Staff Sick Days

Staff Wellbeing has always been a key priority for the group with Great People being a key element of our vision. The group has a number of key targets and one of those is the reduction of staff sickness. To help achieve this we have an ongoing programme focused on health and wellbeing initiatives and activities. A variety of mental wellbeing activities take place across the year providing easy to access support, initiatives and activities to colleagues. Some of the mental wellbeing topics covered in the last year include sessions on building resilience and creating strong mental health webinars that were developed to support colleagues' who may be experiencing poor mental health.

We introduced another course which colleagues can access via our Learning Experience System, focusing on finding relief and building resilience. This was designed specifically to provide easy to use tools and techniques to manage stress, anxiety and excessive worry that people may be experiencing as we transition from lockdown to new ways of living and working. We have also arranged Mental Health First Aid training for over 50 of our colleagues including members of our Senior Leadership Team.

During the last 18 months however focus on staff wellbeing has risen as it became an important strategic consideration through the pandemic. We have been very aware of the impacts of Covid, particularly in regard to mental and physical health. We have introduced:

- Mental Health First Aiders. Over 50 of our colleagues, including members of our senior leadership team have received training to be a confidential listening ear for anyone struggling with poor mental health while also providing informed support and signposting.

- Webinars on building resilience and creating strong mental health as well as introducing practical support through our Learning Experience System with easy to use tools and techniques to manage stress, anxiety and excessive worry.
- 'Space to Talk' sessions on the impact of caring responsibilities, mental wellbeing issues and the impact of our new ways of working
- Mental wellbeing workshops focusing on isolation and anxiety
- A 'Powering our people' campaign, designed to empower colleagues to look after their mental health, and for managers and colleagues to make positive changes to the way they work
- A 'Time to Talk' session focused on mental wellbeing
- Menopause awareness workshops
- Workshops for managers designed to help them manage a remote team
- Bespoke wellbeing offers created to support colleagues in financial crisis
- Two physical wellbeing initiatives to raise money for our corporate charities, and
- An eight-week Body Transformation Challenge featuring live Zoom personal training sessions, taken up by over 100 colleagues. Due to popular demand, we launched another eight-week challenge for the Summer.

We have also run a number of engagement events, including:

- Virtual colleague events including a Leadership Conference, Managers' Conference and an All-Colleague Conference and Awards Ceremony
- Regular 'Chat with Matt' CEO sessions, which gave colleagues the opportunity to ask questions to our Chief Executive
- A bi-annual Intelligence Gathering survey (Pulse survey)

In the future, we are hoping to provide further support to colleagues, who are personally or may have a family member or friend experiencing addiction issues. In addition, we would like to enhance the current offer and offer a more tailored service to colleagues who may be experiencing domestic violence. We have already started to deliver Menopause Awareness Workshops and sessions on coping with Asperger's.

As well as supporting staff with their mental wellbeing, we are also supporting them as they maintain their physical well-being. Each year our Chief Executive registers for the Great Manchester 10k run and leads the run as part of an organisational team.

We also host a variety of activities focused on physical wellbeing, including body transformation challenges, relay challenges, football tournament and bike rides. With the implications of lockdown resulting in restrictions on leaving the house and exercising, two COVID-friendly fundraising campaigns were introduced. These initiatives saw colleagues' walking/running/cycling/ jogging/ rowing 1275.6 miles collectively.

We offer colleagues a free flu vaccination annually, these take place at on site clinics within our offices to ensure it is open to as many colleagues as possible.

Our benefits package offered as standard to all colleagues from the first day of employment also offers healthcare support, covering eye test, hospital parking and a whole host of other medical benefits.

This range of support has helped us reduce our average number of sick days from the previous year (9.3) to 8.3 days, which is below our planned target of 8.8 days for 2020-2021.

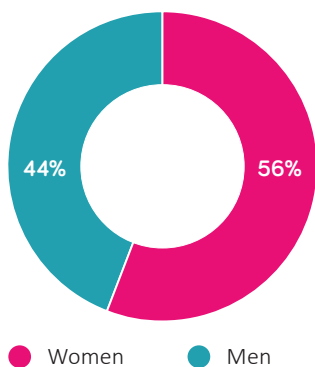
C42, C43 and C44. Real Living Wage, Gender Pay Gap and CEO salary comparison

Great Places pays a Real Living Wages to all colleagues.

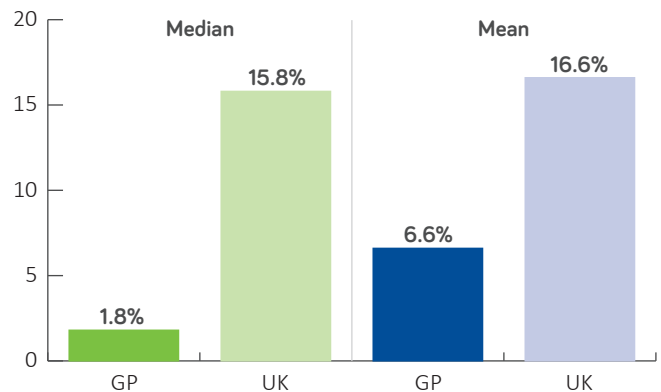
Our reporting on gender pay gap information shows the following:

On 5th April 2020, we employed 721 permanent or fixed term colleagues.

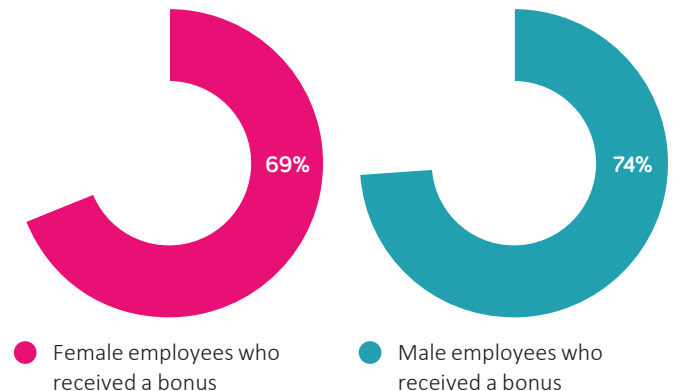
Percentage of male and female colleagues



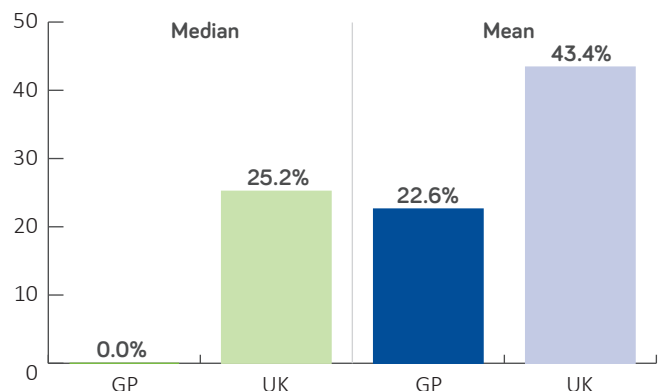
GPHG 2020 Gender Pay Gap – Percentage Women Received Less Than Men



Percentage of male and female colleagues who received a bonus



GPHG 2020 Gender Bonus Gap – Percentage Women Received Less Than Men



The CEO salary is 7.1 times greater than Median pay for staff.

As well as complying with our legal duties to publish our Gender Pay Gap, Great Places has also taken the decision to report its Ethnicity Pay Gap. Great Places recognise that this is not a legal requirement, but have taken the decision to report in line with our wider EDI commitment to promote race equality and inclusion.

Theme 12 – supply chain

C47. Social Value

Our pioneering approach to social value remains a priority for us. We feel our approach has been different for a few years now. In 2018 we ensured that social value was fully considered in our contracts, i.e. how we spend money and how our services are ultimately delivered.

Seeing social value aligned with our profit for purpose ethos has resulted in more partnerships with our suppliers than ever before. Having specialist resource allows a tailored approach to each and every contract, so that outcomes delivered are relevant and meaningful. It helps to connect the dots between what needs to happen and what would bring about additional benefit. This is usually influenced by our internal stakeholders, shaping social value criteria around their requirements. This is quite different to how a lot of other social landlords and other public sector organisations work.

In 2020, we won a national award for ‘Embedding Social Value in Contract Management’, due to our innovative approach of capturing and measuring social value in a tangible way, having good governance and colleague involvement. More recently (June 2021), social value contributed to Great Places being added to the ‘Top 30 Sustainable Housing Providers’ list, with the carbon measuring tools created as part of the social value criteria.

This remains a key priority this year which has seen so many challenges for our customers and colleagues, with many experiencing difficult times through unemployment, illness and additional caring responsibilities.

We have looked to address these challenges by providing a range of support to some of the most vulnerable people and organisations across our communities over the last 12 months. Much of this has been made possible with the generous support of our valued suppliers. Through their social value contributions, we have provided life-changing opportunities, support and services to customers and organisations across our communities and those impacted most by the pandemic.

These include:

- £557k total Social Value, comprising of £143k in funding, £24k in donations and £390k in social impact.
- 30 contractors supported 53 Social Value Projects.
- Great Places was awarded the National Social Value Award in 2020.
- We have supported 13 customers into jobs or apprenticeships plus 9 work placements with our suppliers.
- 429 customers supported during half-term breaks with food and activities.
- 263 hours volunteered by our suppliers.
- Social Value provided 1,000 meals and food parcels to local groups and charities.
- 25 toolkits were donated to Housing First, plus 25 properties receive free handyman support.
- 10 e-readers were provided to set-up book swaps at our Independence and Wellbeing schemes plus 15 tablets were donated to various schemes.
- 60 supply chain employees from seven of our contractors have received carbon literacy training.
- 380 people were given a cheery Christmas as a result of Social Value.



CASE STUDY

GREAT PLACES HELP STAR AND BEVAN BRITTAN FORM SOCIAL VALUE PARTNERSHIP

Last year, Blackpool based mental health support service, Stand Together and Recover (STAR), received expert advice from legal specialists Bevan Brittan, thanks to social value support offered as part of its involvement with Great Places' Legal Services Procurement Framework. Bevan Brittan responded to STAR's request for help in securing new premises as part of its plans to provide additional support services for Blackpool residents. The OJEU compliant Legal Services Framework was procured to meet Great Places legal needs and that of other Housing Associations. All applicants to the framework are also expected to offer social value commitment as part of the rigorous tendering process.



C48. Environmental Impact

We recognised that one of our biggest opportunities to improve sustainability was through our supply chain, specifically during the tender process. Measures introduced include smaller regional lots, to encourage local supply, thus reducing miles travelled and air emissions. We have also created a bespoke carbon calculator, that measures estimated emissions during the contract period, as well as awarding weighting to organisations that make tangible pledges to reduce their carbon footprint, as well as dedicated weighting for carbon related questions, and choosing green products as standard in core item lists.

Further to this, waste management, local spend and VCSE spend are social value targets within our Innovation Chain North (ICN) development framework, as well as commitments to participate in carbon literacy training. This has seen 35 contractor staff participate as part of tender commitments, that will have a rapid rise over the next 12 months as contracts mobilise. Pre-pandemic, we introduced the social enterprise Open Kitchen as our catering firm for our Head Office. This initiative has helped save tonnes of food waste, achieving a significant reduction in the carbon footprint of our office catering.

We have made a number of changes to the business including colleague engagement, changing tariffs, undertaking extensive retrofit works, building new homes above building standards minimum. We have also introduced procurement strategies to encourage our suppliers to reduce their carbon footprint over the lifetime of the contract. We have also sought to purchase energy efficient equipment and consider the carbon footprint of the whole life of products.

We have introduced numerous sustainable travel incentives (bike sheds, showers, lockers, hair dryers) resulting in Great Places being confirmed as top active travel business as part of Love to Ride for the North west and second in the UK.

We have also introduced training for front facing colleagues to ensure they are able to give carbon advice to customers as appropriate and we are currently undertaking a review of our stationery purchasing to move to lower carbon products.

Our Distribution Centre supplies materials to our repairs team and to other local RP's. This means that there is a need for fewer of these centres locally which reduces delivery journeys for our suppliers and those that would be used by the other local RP's using our facility.



6. Conclusions

2020/21 indicators highlight the positive steps Great Places' has made in the key areas of the Sustainability Reporting Standard to ensure that we continue to support our customers, communities and staff. We are particularly proud of the affordability, quality and safety of our homes. Full details of the affordability by local authority are disclosed in the appendices, but we are clearly way below private rents while also delivering high quality homes.

As an early adopter of this standard, it is clear that Great Places are at the early stages of elements of sustainability reporting. We recognise our need within certain areas to ensure more robust processes for recording data, particularly with regards to Environmental aims and performance. This will direct our investment which in turn will see us achieve results quicker. We are also aware there needs to be an element of caution with new green technologies. Great Places wants to retro fit the more widely adopted systems to ensure our customers' homes experience the least disruption and to be able to ensure we can maintain them in the future. This will hopefully ensure that we don't incur additional spend in the future replacing equipment within these homes.

As stated within our Carbon Management Strategy we are focusing on the larger generating areas first to really increase our impact and see some quick gains in future. In the years to come we hope to be able to celebrate our successes in these areas within these reports while also seeing our customers costs reduce due to the efficiency of their homes.



7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Rent Affordability detail (general needs stock)

Local Authority	No. of Homes	Average of current weekly rent	Rent as % of LHA	Rent as a % of Market rent
Barnsley	237	£88.25	90%	80%
Blackburn with Darwen	892	£91.93	80%	72%
Bolton	636	£98.86	78%	71%
Blackpool	956	£90.27	82%	78%
Bradford	30	£86.32	68%	80%
Burnley	117	£96.26	90%	79%
Bury	519	£92.85	79%	68%
Cheshire East	688	£101.52	70%	65%
Chesterfield	19	£101.31	92%	79%
Cheshire West and Chester	163	£103.33	80%	71%
Derbyshire Dales	18	£98.35	79%	67%
Fylde	164	£103.20	91%	77%
High Peak	269	£97.43	79%	73%
Hyndburn	118	£95.19	87%	81%
Lancaster	299	£92.06	74%	67%
Manchester	2,080	£92.21	60%	46%
Oldham	971	£93.42	81%	64%
Pendle	196	£93.38	91%	78%
Preston	203	£97.53	75%	70%
Ribble Valley	124	£99.03	95%	71%
Rochdale	630	£97.79	75%	66%
Rossendale	43	£100.63	87%	71%
Rotherham	245	£84.34	88%	76%
Salford	2,151	£96.79	62%	56%
Sefton	91	£86.15	78%	72%
Sheffield	2,020	£87.54	71%	62%
Shropshire	4	£99.79	89%	77%
South Ribble	69	£99.53	86%	78%
Stockport	801	£88.42	63%	59%
Stoke on Trent	78	£91.02	77%	70%

Local Authority	No. of Homes	Average of current weekly rent	Rent as % of LHA	Rent as a % of Market rent
Tameside	47	£98.54	74%	64%
Trafford	453	£98.11	67%	55%
Wigan	164	£101.02	92%	81%
Wyre	316	£91.52	83%	72%
Total	15,811	93.51	71%	62%

Appendix 2

Summary of performance against many criteria

Theme	Criteria	Indicator	Outcome
Affordability	C1	Average rents as a proportion of average market rent	68%
Affordability	C1	Average rents as a proportion of average Local Housing Allowance	72%
Security	C5	Proportion of homes with at least 3 year fixed tenancy	100%
Building Safety	C6	Proportion of homes with gas safety compliance	99.9%
Building Safety	C7	Proportion of homes with Fire Risk Assessment	99.7%
Building Quality	C8	Proportion of homes that met the Decent Homes Standard	100%
Residents Voice	C10	Customer satisfaction (out of 10)	7.3
Residents Voice	C11	Complaints upheld by the Housing Ombudsman for 2020/21	2
Climate Change	C14	EPC ratings of C and above - start of year	75.7%*
Climate Change	C15	EPC ratings of C and above - homes developed in year	100%
Governance	C25	Registration with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)	Yes
Governance	C28	Registered as a 'for profit' provider	No
Governance	C26	Most recent viability and governance ratings from the RSH	G1 / V1
Governance	C31	Maximum tenure of Group Board	6 Years**
Governance	C34	Proportion of Group Board that are non-executive directors	90%
Governance	C38	Length of service of external audit company / partner (years)	9 / 3
Staff Wellbeing	C43	Gender pay gap (mean basis)	1.8%
Staff Wellbeing	C46	Average number of sick days per employee	8.3

* there are a number of properties where we haven't got EPC ratings as yet, a plan is in place to collate these.

** in exceptional circumstances the maximum tenure can be extended to 9 years.

Appendix 3

Criteria detail

Theme #	Criteria #	Theme	Type of Criteria	Criteria	Measurement Unit
Affordability and Security					
T1	C1	Affordability and Security	Core	For properties that are subject to the rent regulation regime, report against one or more Affordability Metric: 1. Rent compared to Median private rental sector (PRS) rent across the Local Authority 2. Rent compared to Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	% of PRS rent % of LHA rent
T1	C2		Core	Share, and number, of existing homes (homes completed before the last financial year) allocated to: – General needs (social rent) – Intermediate rent – Affordable rent – Supported Housing – Housing for older people – Low-cost home ownership – Care homes – Private Rented Sector	% properties, number of properties
T1	C3		Core	Share, and number, of new homes (homes that were completed in the last financial year), allocated to: – General needs (social rent), – Intermediate rent – Affordable rent – Supported Housing – Housing for older people – Low-cost home ownership – Care homes – Private Rented Sector	% properties, number of properties
T1	C4		Core	How is the housing provider trying to reduce the effect of fuel poverty on its residents?	Qualitative response
T1	C5		Enhanced	What % of rental homes have a 3 year fixed tenancy agreement (or longer)	% of homes
Building Safety and Quality					
T2	C6	Building Safety and Quality	Core	What % of homes with a gas appliance have an in-date, accredited gas safety check?	% of homes
T2	C7		Core	What % of buildings have an in-date and compliant Fire Risk Assessment?	% of buildings
T2	C8		Core	What % of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard?	% of homes

Theme #	Criteria #	Theme	Type of Criteria	Criteria	Measurement Unit
Resident Voice					
T3	C9	Resident Voice	Core	What arrangements are in place to enable the residents to hold management to account for provision of services?	Qualitative response
T3	C10		Core	How does the housing provider measure Resident Satisfaction and how has Resident Satisfaction changed over the last three years?	Qualitative response
T3	C11		Enhanced	In the last 12 months, how many complaints have been upheld by the Ombudsman. How have these complaints (or others) resulted in change of practice within the housing provider?	Qualitative response
Resident Support					
T4	C12	Resident Support	Core	What support services does the housing provider offer to its residents. How successful are these services in improving outcomes?	Qualitative response
Placemaking					
T5	C13	Placemaking	Enhanced	Provide examples or case studies of where the housing provider has been engaged in placemaking or placeshaping activities.	Qualitative response
Climate Change					
T6	C14	Climate Change	Core	Distribution of EPC ratings of existing homes (those completed before the last financial year)	% of Homes rated A % of Homes rated B % of Homes rated C % of Homes rated D % of Homes rated E or worse
T6	C15		Core	Distribution of EPC ratings of new homes (those completed in the last financial year).	% of Homes rated A % of Homes rated B % of Homes rated C % of Homes rated D % of Homes rated E or worse
T6	C16		Enhanced	Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 green house gas emissions	kg CO2 equivalent
T6	C17		Enhanced	What energy efficiency actions has the housing provider undertaken in the last 12 months?	Qualitative response
T6	C18		Enhanced	How is the housing provider mitigating the following climate risks: – Increased flood risk – Increased risk of homes overheating	Qualitative response
T6	C19		Enhanced	Does the housing provider give residents information about correct ventilation, heating, recycling etc. Please describe how this is done.	Qualitative response

Theme #	Criteria #	Theme	Type of Criteria	Criteria	Measurement Unit
Ecology					
T7	C20	Ecology	Enhanced	How is the housing provider increasing Green Space and promoting Biodiversity on or near homes	Qualitative response
T7	C21		Enhanced	Does the housing provider have a strategy to actively manage and reduce all pollutants? If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?	1. Yes 2. No, but planning to develop a strategy 3. No, no plans to develop a strategy
Resource Management					
T8	C22	Resource Management	Enhanced	Does the housing provider have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building works? If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?	1. Yes 2. No, but planning to develop a strategy 3. No, no plans to develop a strategy
T8	C23		Enhanced	Does the housing provider have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials? If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?	1. Yes 2. No, but planning to develop a strategy 3. No, no plans to develop a strategy
T8	C24		Enhanced	Does the housing provider have a strategy for good water management? If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?	1. Yes 2. No, but planning to develop a strategy 3. No, no plans to develop a strategy
Structure and Governance					
T9	C25	Structure and Governance	Core	Is the housing provider registered with a regulator of social housing?	Yes/No
T9	C26		Core	What is the most recent viability and governance regulatory grading?	G1/V1 etc.
T9	C27		Core	Which Code of Governance does the housing provider follow, if any?	Name of code
T9	C28		Core	Is the housing provider Not-For-Profit? If not, who is the largest shareholder, what is their % of economic ownership and what % of voting rights do they control?	Name, %, %
T9	C29		Core	Explain how the housing provider's board manages organisational risks	Qualitative
T9	C30		Enhanced	Has the housing provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (e.g. data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches or notices) - that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?	Yes/No

Theme #	Criteria #	Theme	Type of Criteria	Criteria	Measurement Unit
Board and Trustees					
T10	C31	Board and Trustees	Core	What are the demographics of the board? And how does this compare to the demographics of the housing providers residents, and the area that they operate in?	Add commentary if useful
Qualitative response					
T10	C32		Core	What % of the board AND management team have turned over in the last two years? Add commentary if useful	%
T10	C33		Core	Is there a maximum tenure for a board member? If so, what is it?	Yes/No
Length of tenure					
T10	C34		Core	What % of the board are non-executive directors?	%
T10	C35		Core	Number of board members on the Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience	Number and description of experience
T10	C36		Core	Are there any current executives on the Remuneration Committee?	Yes/No
T10	C37		Core	Has a succession plan been provided to the board in the last 12 months?	Yes/No
T10	C38		Core	For how many years has the housing provider's current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?	Number of whole years
T10	C39		Core	When was the last independently-run, board-effectiveness review?	Date
T10	C40		Core	Are the roles of the chair of the board and CEO held by two different people?	Yes/No
T10	C41		Core	How does the housing provider handle conflicts of interest at the board?	Qualitative
Staff Wellbeing					
T11	C42	Staff Wellbeing	Core	Does the housing provider pay the Real Living Wage?	Yes/No
T11	C43		Core	What is the gender pay gap?	% gap
T11	C44		Enhanced	What is the CEO-worker pay ratio?	Number
T11	C45		Enhanced	How does the housing provider support the physical and mental health of their staff?	Qualitative response
T11	C46		Enhanced	Average number of sickdays taken per employee	Number of days
Supply Chain					
T12	C47	Supply Chain	Enhanced	How is Social Value creation considered when procuring goods and services?	Qualitative Response
T12	C48		Enhanced	How is Environmental impact considered when procuring goods and services?	Qualitative Response

