

Sustainability Report 2022



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1. Our vision

Great Homes,
Great Communities,
Great People

Great Places Housing Group aims to improve the lives of its customers living in its 25,000 homes across the North of England. More than just a landlord we provide a range of services, forming strong partnerships to support and build vibrant sustainable communities. Employing over 800 colleagues and more in our supply chain, we're proud of the significant economic contribution we make across the North of England. A committed developer we also plan to build over 3,000 new homes over the next three years as part of our development programme.

The Group comprises:

- **Great Places Housing Group** – non-asset holding parent.
- **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** – a 'profit for purpose' housing organisation operating in the North West and Yorkshire. The multi-award winning sales teams specialise in offering first-time buyers affordable homeownership solutions, via options including Shared Ownership, Help to Buy or outright sale. Its Plumlife Management team manages over 6,000 leasehold, shared ownership and rented properties across the North West, providing high-quality facilities management and lettings services.
- **Cube** – developing quality new homes for market sale and private rent.
- **Terra Nova Developments** – developing new homes for the Group through in-house construction.

Our vision strongly aligns with the criteria in the Sustainability Reporting 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 that support us to deliver 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

We are reporting against The Sustainability Reporting Standard (“the Standard”), a framework for housing providers to report on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) performance. The Standard aligns to the United Nations’ (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Working to the standardised reporting on sustainability highlights how our work contributes towards their achievement, 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



Great Places has pledged to be open with our customers, partners and investors on our ESG performance and objectives for the future.

We believe the Great Places makes a positive impact in the communities where we work and the surrounding environment. There is a clear link between the Standard, our investment through social value and many of our existing strategies, including the 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 1.

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 2 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 offers to support individual residents. The theme looks to assess the support that is provided and how successful it is.	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. It also shows how we achieve our vision, particularly around Great Homes and Great Communities. The theme is made up of one criterion, a space for the housing provider to give examples of their placemaking or place shaping work.	3, 9 & 11.

ESG	Theme #	Theme Name and Criteria covered (a full list of the criteria is contained in appendix 2 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 for our homes including the new build ones 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 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 the criteria with quantitative responses is contained within Appendix 1. 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 build Great Homes and create Great Communities for our customers.

Great Homes

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

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 safe, secure, warm and well maintained. By managing our homes proactively, we act in the best interests of the organisation and its customers.

As society, family and personal circumstances change, we 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.

Great Communities

More than just a landlord, we recognise the important role we have to play in supporting our customers in all areas we operate in.

Through our Service Delivery Framework, focused on a “with not for” approach combined with using technology to provide services customers need, we look to promote independence through a strong self-service offer.

Focused on supporting the most vulnerable we help create safe, thriving sustainable, communities that our customers want to call home. We recognise the power of partnerships in achieving this and work with customers and a range of partners to identify and build on existing strengths and resources. Through effective partnership working we deliver services that bring maximum benefit to our customers and their communities, using ongoing evaluation to ensure our work continues to offer real value.

Beyond our core landlord service, we continue to offer a variety of Independence and Wellbeing services for our customers. These include extra care and independent living for older customers as well as schemes for customers with dependency issues or difficulties.

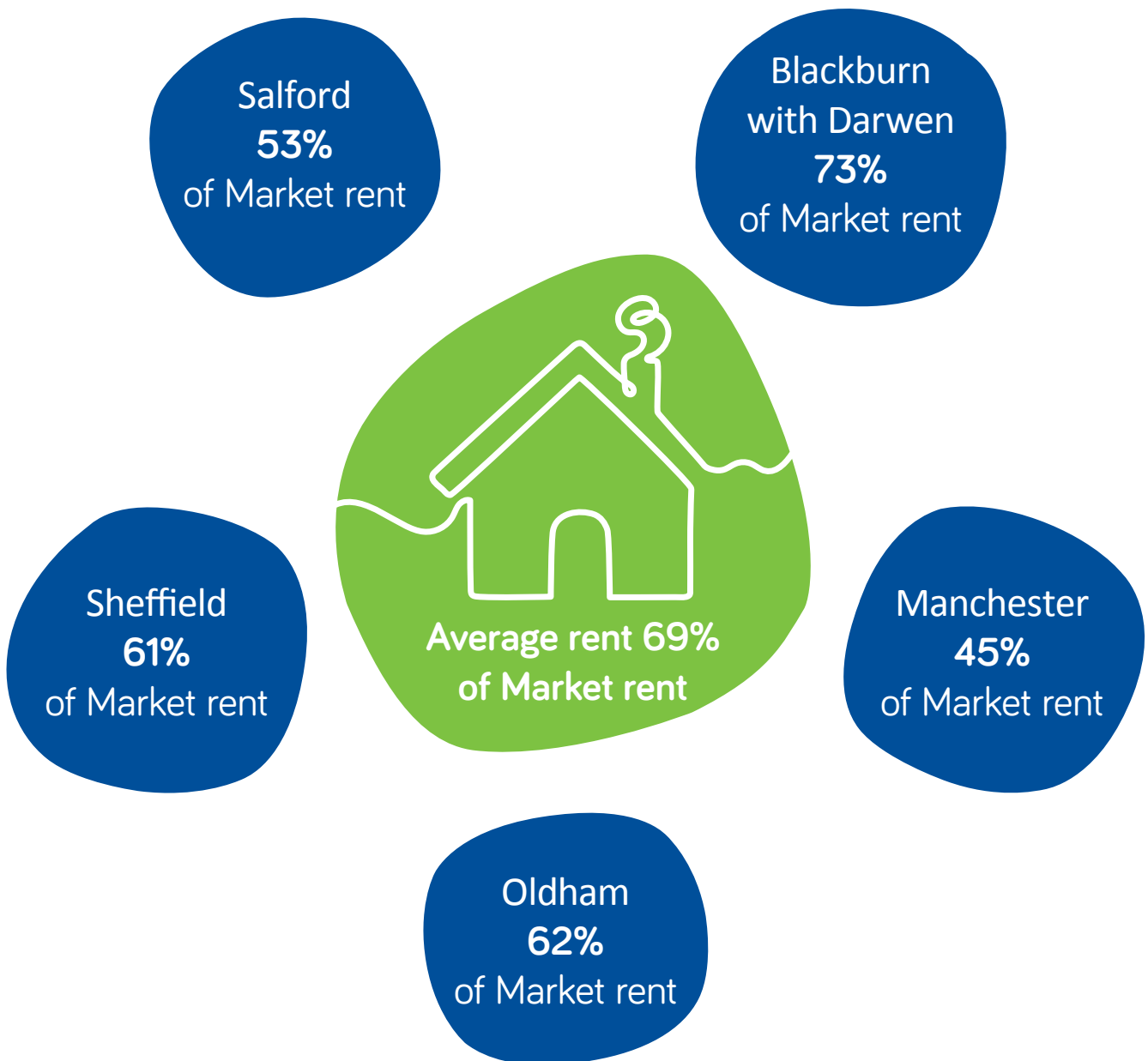


Theme 1 – affordability and security

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. On average, we charge rents at 81% of LHA and only 68% of private rents. Details of our social and affordable rents compared to LHA and Market Rent in the the top five local authorities we operate in are shown below (full rent details for all local authorities we operate in can be found in Appendix 3).

Affordable rents alone cannot improve the quality of life for all of our customers, particularly with the current cost of living pressures so we have a variety of schemes in place to support customers facing fuel or food poverty, outlined in C4.

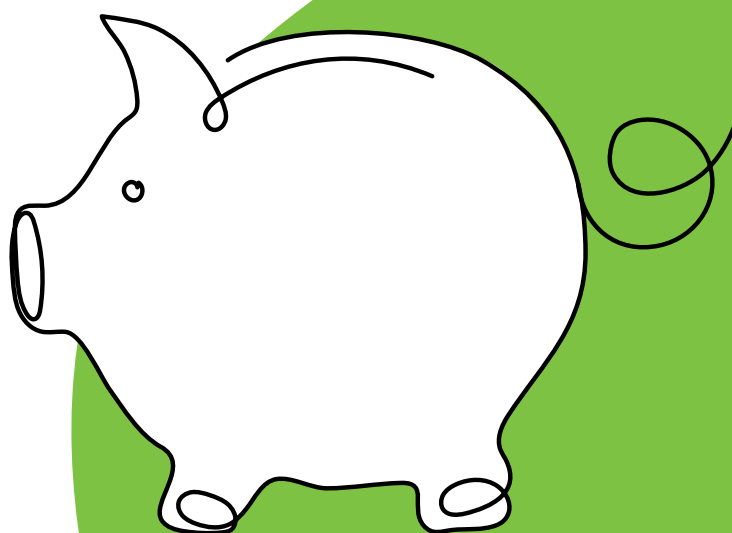


C2, C3 and C5. Number of homes, tenure types and customer tenancies

A key priority is making our customers feel secure in their tenancies. As a result, all of our owned social and affordable rented homes excluding probationary tenancies have a lifetime tenancy agreement.

The number of properties Great Places owns and/or manages has increased during the year and the group has developed 557 new properties in the 12 months to the end of March 2022.

Properties 31st March 2022	Total	of which were additional this year	% of total homes	% of new homes in 2020/21
General Needs – social rent	10,222	35	41.0%	6.3%
General Needs – affordable rent	5,430	289	21.8%	51.9%
Low Cost Home Ownership	2,664	233	10.7%	41.8%
Supported Housing	1,316	0	5.3%	0.0%
Supported – Housing for older people	479	0	1.9%	0.0%
Intermediate Rent	338	0	1.4%	0.0%
Non Social Rented	289	0	1.2%	0.0%
Social Leased	1,568	0	6.2%	0.0%
Non Social Leased	86	0	0.3%	0.0%
Total owned	22,392	557	89.9%	100.0%
Managed but not owned	2,516	0	10.1%	0.0%
Total (inc. managed not owned)	24,908	557	100.0%	100.0%



CASE STUDY

HOMES ENGLAND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

In September 2021, it was announced that Great Places Housing Group had been successful in its bid to continue to be a Homes England strategic partner. The £240.8m of funding secured will enable us to develop 4,920 grant-funded homes across the North by 2028. This announcement built on Great Places' excellent delivery success which resulted in a high volume of homes being built by the organisation over the past few years. The proposals drew out Great Places' expertise in delivering high-quality, sustainable neighbourhoods and reflected our extensive work on low carbon and leadership in Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) agenda. The strategic partnership fits our growth ambitions and provides real certainty of funding to enable the future delivery of new homes at scale. Using the strategic partnership with Homes England, Great Places will also continue to deliver its new homes with a wide range of partners.

The strategic partnership contracts have enabled delivery of nearly 2,000 homes to date, a mix of social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership properties. A further 1,200 new homes for social rent, affordable rent, rent to buy and shared ownership are being delivered through partner Registered Providers using our SP1 (including DPS) and SP2 funding.

We have successfully delivered a range of projects this year and have 1,500 homes on site across Greater Manchester, the Sheffield City Region and Lancashire. Delivery of our first Strategic Partnership is ahead of schedule and we claimed our £52.6 million grant allocation six months early. Some of these projects include our first fully volumetric development at Shorrocks Lane in Blackburn and our first in-house construction site at Horace Street, Bolton.



1872 Construction begins at the Mill Lane site.

1874 Official opening.

1974 The building gains Grade II Listed status.

1989 The building closes.

Work starting on the historic Ancoats Dispensary, this scheme was enabled by Strategic Partnership funding

C4. Actions taken to address Fuel Poverty

Rising energy prices in the past year mean that an increasing number of our customers are facing fuel poverty, so we have enhanced our service offer to support our customers struggling with their energy bills, particularly the most vulnerable. Customers' bills were also a key consideration when developing our specification options to meet the 2021 changes to Part L of the Building Regulations and the Future Homes Standard. Great Places' fabric first approach with our new-build developments, combined with our work to actively reduce the number of homes beneath an EPC C to improve the efficiency of our stock will play an important role in reducing our customers energy demand.

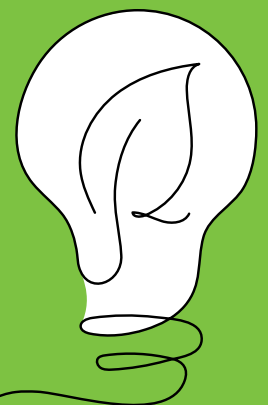
In October 2021, we relaunched our Financial Resilience service to equip and empower customers to access the right support resources, make informed decisions and take appropriate action to manage their finances. A key aspect of this work focuses on supporting households facing fuel poverty. Customers are signposted to National Energy Action, a fuel poverty charity that has partnered with Great Places, who can support them with emergency fuel payments. In 2021/22 over £5k of one-off payments were given to our customers. Other services include advice on energy efficiency, fuel payments, tariffs, grants and other support the customer may be entitled to. The service created £24k in savings in the last year and supported over 200 customers.

The wider financial resilience support offer addresses issues such as personal debt that can lead to fuel poverty. This helps customers regain control of their finances securing affordable payment arrangements. The Financial Resilience Team's specialist support helps customers maximise their income and access additional support such as food banks. In addition to advice, Great Places' Household Assistance Fund provides emergency financial support for those customers facing a crisis situation through discretionary payments. In 2021/22 the fund helped 130 customers with a total of £26k of support. Additional advice and resources are also provided on our website and in regular customer communications, to enable customers to self-serve and manage their finances.

Great Places is investing an additional £25,000 in both its Household Assistance Fund and National Energy Action partnership in 2022/23 to support our customers facing financial hardship.

Great Places' Energy Broker advises on the best energy deals for our corporate buildings and our homes for where we purchase energy. We consider utilising specialists to get us the best energy deals (currently a green tariff) for our customers, best practice.

We are also reviewing the energy efficiency of our heat metered stock and will continue to assess efficiency and options to improve it.



Theme 2 – building safety and quality

C6, C7 and C8. Safety Checks and Build Quality

Our customers' safety is of paramount importance. In our corporate plan we've committed to ensure customers can be confident their homes are safe. This is demonstrated by the high level of completed accredited gas safety checks (99.9%) and that 100% of our homes continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard. While these figures from March 2022 are good, we continue to work towards getting gas safety check figures to 100%.

In response to our ever-changing operating environment, we have plans in place to respond to requirements outlined in the Social Housing White Paper "The Charter for Social Housing Residents" and new building safety legislation. In addition, we have implemented a proactive campaign to raise customer awareness around damp, mould and disrepair to help customers identify potential issues and resolve these as soon as possible.

Throughout 2021/22 we continued to assess our buildings and carry out works in line with evolving changes to building safety legislation. Recent changes have included defining properties deemed to be higher risk. We've identified these in our portfolio and have committed to carry out intrusive surveys and complete all necessary remedial works as soon as possible after inspection.

We continue to invest in building safety as part of our improvements, routine testing and inspection programmes. During the year, we carried out invasive surveys at 12 of the 35 buildings deemed higher risk. Where recommendations for improvements were made, we set up improvement works programmes to deliver the necessary changes.

Our main programmes included:

- Fire door replacement.
- Structural works to fire compartments and fire stopping.
- Upgrades to electrical installations, and communal alarm systems.
- Upgrades to internal alarms within apartments.

We are starting a fire door inspection regime, to assess all apartment entrance doors and fire doors to high-rise blocks on a three-month cycle. This will require access into apartments and allow us to review alarms within the apartment.

Theme 3 – resident voice

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

We value the views and feedback of our customers and our Customer Voice Strategy 2021/24 sets out how the customer voice will be captured and listened to. We will use this to learn lessons and implement service improvements based on customer feedback. This strategy builds on the previous Customer Voice Strategy and continues to develop our approach of listening to the voice of the many, not the few. It will provide opportunities for customers to scrutinise services and get involved in their communities. It includes creating a flexible approach to customer engagement, reaching both those customers who aren't in contact with Great Places, as well as those who've already challenged the quality of our homes and services.

A key part of our Customer Voice Strategy is Insight, our volunteer scrutiny group that consists of six core members. We have an ongoing recruitment drive to attract new members to and to increase the diversity of group members. Insight acts as a critical friend to our Group Board, who they report scrutiny findings and evidence based recommendations to. Insight's role is to scrutinise up to three services a year reporting on "what works well and what may need to improve to increase satisfaction of customers' experience." Management implements action plans in response to recommendations, developed with Insight and reported on every six months until these are completed.

The choice of services to scrutinise is based on feedback data, including satisfaction data and compliments and complaints, which provide a measure and indication of services from a customer perspective. Using the feedback, Insight scrutinises the areas they deem to be of most value to customers. A timetable of future services to review is agreed with Great Places management teams to enable future planning to inform reviews and improve efficiency.

Scrutiny allows customers to hold Great Places to account for performance, challenging and influencing the development of future services that matter most to them.

Over the past year, key customer engagement initiatives have captured customer views and informed service design and change. Insight, for example, reviewed Great Places' Service Delivery Framework and caretaker/cleaner service supported by additional customer input. The recommendations have led to improvements to the latest version of the Service Delivery Framework and caretaking/cleaning service standards.

These have included:

- How we deliver the Grounds Maintenance Service, leading to the service being brought in house in November 2021.
- Development of our Aids and Adaptations Policy to reflect what our customers need in the future.
- Investment activity, including a £4m refurbishment project now completed at Bowland House in Blackburn.
- The security service procurement – with our Executive Team conducting customer surveys face-to-face with colleagues at schemes during National Customer Services Week.
- The procurement of compliance contracts (electrical inspections, fire safety, Asbestos surveys).
- The lettings process and void standard.
- A proactive campaign around damp, mould and disrepair to identify and resolve issues for our customers.
- A regular email which keeps customers informed on how their feedback has influenced service delivery.

Satisfaction has been one of our corporate Critical Success Factors every year since they were introduced in 2014. The customer voice and satisfaction are central in our Corporate Plan and improvements are one of our 10-year ambitions.

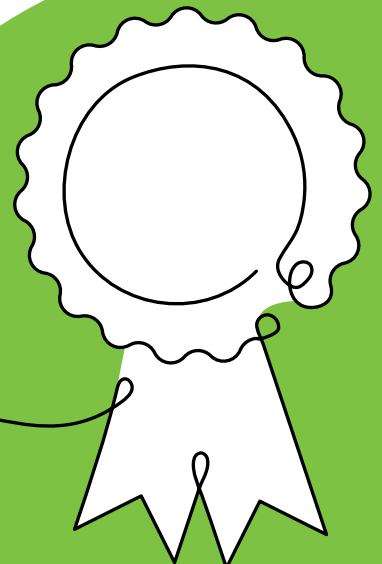
Customer Satisfaction is collected regularly and is linked to a recent transaction such as a repair or a phone conversation with the hub. Customers who have contacted Great Places are sent an SMS message, asking them to rate Great Places' overall services, allowing us to drive improvements across all service areas, all of our geography and to all customer groups. The data allows us to analyse common themes and track the impact of changes made to address poor satisfaction.

Great Places are members of both the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) and Housemark, and through our memberships we benchmark our performance within housing and across different sectors. We benefit from a survey that the ICS provides on our behalf providing external assurance around our satisfaction levels. Both ICS and Housemark have published reports identifying that there has been a sector-wide decrease in satisfaction levels since the pandemic and Great Places has also seen this trend.

The annual target for customer satisfaction for 2021/22 was set at 7.3 out of 10. This was based on previous performance and is comparable to peer organisations in our sector. Our year-end performance was 7.0, decreasing slightly from 7.3 for 2020/21.

As well as our headline satisfaction measure, we also measure customer satisfaction with our repairs service, new build homes, sales process, ease of contact and the service received from key contractors.

In 2022/23 we've been trialling a Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) survey with our customers, aimed at finding what we do well and where we can do better. This is following the Social Housing Regulator's announcement of the planned introduction of new TSMs in 2023/24 designed to hold all housing providers to account. All of our current work will enable us to go live with the survey across all our customers in line with the Regulator's planned launch date.



CASE STUDY – BOWLAND HOUSE

OUR FLAGSHIP IMPROVEMENT WORK ON BOWLAND HOUSE, CLOSE TO BLACKBURN TOWN CENTRE, COMPLETED IN MARCH 2022.

The £4 million renovation of the 14-storey high-rise that has dominated the skyline since the mid-1960s has enhanced the building’s safety and significantly updated customers’ homes, breathing new life into them and making them more energy efficient in the process. The design was influenced by our customers, who were consulted at regular points during the refurbishment. While the works took place there was significant disruption for our customers and the positive two-way communication during this period helped the project be successful.

The year-long project was carried out in collaboration with partners including Casey Construction and Blackburn with Darwen Council. Works included:

- Improving the insulation of the external walls.
- The installation of a sprinkler system to all apartments and communal areas and the installation of an innovative evacuation system, which allows the Fire and Rescue Service to evacuate a single floor or any multiples of floors.
- Putting in new hot water cylinders, electric showers and communal lighting systems.
- Replacing the existing problematic roof coverings.
- Replaced external balcony areas with enclosed “winter gardens”.
- Installing new floor coverings and the redecoration of communal areas; and
- 5G broadband as part of a pilot project that will provide customers with free Wi-Fi services.

Alongside the improvement works, the project team also enlisted the help of Blackburn College students and customers to add some artistic flair by creating murals for each floor depicting landmarks and images associated with the town.



C11. Customer Complaints

In May 2021 we introduced a new Customer Feedback Policy, following customer and colleague consultation.

This was as a result of customer feedback that Great Places needed a new approach to make giving feedback more accessible. It also needed to ensure we met the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Code.

We will continue to strive to provide an effective complaint handling process that puts the customer at the centre. We are committed to learning and improving our services where we are not getting it right.

Out of the eight determinations received from the Ombudsman, five identified service failures in relation to repairs and not offering enough compensation for the delays experienced by the customers; three were not upheld.

The learning that has been identified following these judgements include:

- Tighter policies around complaint handling especially in the early stages
- A stronger communication procedure with customers when complaints are logged
- Tighter process around complaint timescales and responses in-line with the policy and Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Code
- The pending implementation of the Complaints Community (our new Customer Complaints Group that hold Great Places to account) to support with customer feedback and act as an assurance group to measure our performance against the Regulator and HOS Complaint handling Code
- Implementation of a new housing management system which allows us to accurately record notes and customer transactions

The Customer Feedback team delivered training across all front-line teams to promote the new Customer Feedback policy, processes and the importance of good record keeping.

Whilst the increase in complaints for Great Places reflects national trends, and in part is due to the challenging external environment the sector has faced in the last two years, significant organisational change as a result of the merger with Equity Housing has also been a major contributory factor. Some internal issues have also led to disruption for customers and are reflected in the

increase. In addition, changes made in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service requirements to simplify and better promote our complaints procedure for customers, and the creation of central resource to handle customer complaints has also resulted in an increased number being captured.

Headline Customer Feedback statistics from April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Complaints Logged

- 434 complaints logged
- 63% to repairs
- 19% to Neighbourhoods
- 19 Housing Ombudsman Cases logged

Complaints Resolved

- 403 complaints resolved
- 36% had the outcome of Service Failure
- Average resolution time of 10.8 days
- 8 Housing Ombudsman determinations received

Compliments

- 280 compliments received
- 35 were for contractors
- 73 related to repairs
- 72 related to Neighbourhoods with 100 more for various areas within the group



Theme 4 – resident support

C12. Support Services offered to Residents.

Headline Figures



In addition to our financial resilience offer (discussed in Theme 1 Criteria 4), Great Places offers multiple support services to our customers and neighbourhoods under the banner of the Greater Together Foundation.

Employability Team

Great Places has an extensive employment and skills support offer for customers, designed to help customers in to work, training and volunteering opportunities. In 2021-22, we helped over 800 people to achieve one of these outcomes, while a further 321 people (76% of which were Great Places customers) were provided with advice, guidance and signposting.

Our dedicated team of Employability Coaches, spread across our neighbourhoods, offers intensive support to customers to improve their employability skills and access to opportunities e.g. work placements, volunteering and training. The Coaches work with local partners such as community centres or colleges to make opportunities available to the local community. Customers are also supported with interview clothes, travel expenses and work tools or equipment. Where necessary those who secure employment, are offered support to adjust to working life.

Our internal Apprenticeship and Graduate Programmes are made available to our customers, alongside the enterprise programme, Boss It. The programme supports customers by providing training and financial support so they can turn their business idea into reality. Over a third of our Apprentices are social housing residents.

Tenancy sustainment

The Tenancy Coach Service supports our most complex and vulnerable general needs customers living in our communities. We support our customers holistically using a trauma-informed approach. Using customer-led support plans to encourage personal progression, the service builds upon a customer's strengths and interests, creating confidence, independence, wellbeing and motivation.

Support is extended to our neighbourhood colleagues to provide them with the skills needed to support those with more complex needs.

The House to Home Fund is aimed at customers considered to be especially vulnerable or at risk of tenancy failure. It provides home furnishings and white goods to support the sustainment of tenancies. The fund also provides additional support to those who fall short of the eligibility criteria of grants or charities, usually those living alone or in employment.

Community Investment

Great Places has invested in nine community centres across our neighbourhoods to offer key services to our customers. These services aim to support customers health and wellbeing, financial hardship encouraging social inclusion and enabling our customers to access a range of courses to gain new skills.

We work closely with local community organisations to deliver impactful services and we identify funding to further support services available to customers.

CASE STUDY

DASH BEAUTY AND TRAINING ACADEMY

One example of this work is our Community Investment Team working with Oldham’s DASH Beauty and Training Academy to offer training and courses for customers looking to get into the industry.

Katy West opened her business a week before Christmas 2020 but then had to close until April 2021 due to Coronavirus restrictions. Katy only got into the industry four years earlier after facing a very difficult time personally. However, after completing a beauty therapy course, she has turned her life around for the better with DASH offering treatments and courses for everyone, whatever their age or experience.

Katy explained:

“Doing the beauty therapy course got me out of what was a tough situation at the time. I’m passionate about helping people and it is great to be working with Great Places to do just that and give people a chance to get some experience to get into the industry.”

Our partnerships manager, Rebecca Cremin, added, “Great Places is delighted to be working in partnership with DASH to provide opportunities for our customers

to train at DASH, which will give them the skills to establish a career in the beauty industry.

“We will also provide additional support from our employability team to ensure they receive the help they need to succeed.”



Theme 5 – placemaking

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

Placemaking is an important part of our history and the commitment continues in our anchor neighbourhoods and seven community centres.

We have published 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 Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Our fundraising service builds the capacity of our VCSE partners to draw down external funding. Last year more than £500k of funding was secured for organisations 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 £100k has been invested so far, together with our supply chain partners who have generated £430k of social impact for our communities.

CASE STUDY

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF NORTHMOOR

Northmoor is one of our anchor neighbourhoods and an area we have remained heavily involved in over the past 25 years. We have invested significantly in the area over that time, including developing new homes for rent and shared ownership and helping update Northmoor into a vibrant and diverse neighbourhood.

One key project has been the transition of the former Northmoor Community Launderette into a Community Hub to deliver Next Step projects, including customer advice on benefits, employment and computer and job skills training.

Alongside the work at the Community Hub, Great Places has offered recently renovated retail units in the Beswick Co-operative Building to small local organisations looking to set up local enterprises that would benefit the community, at subsidised rents. Proforma a non-profit visual art organisation, one of the successful applicants has set up Longsight Art Space in one of the units creating a venue to present artwork, and stage events and exhibitions created with the local community. The group also plans to run free creative workshops, engaging with local groups to deliver a range of transferable skills and cultural activities. The new retail unit spaces will provide valuable resources for the local community and help shape the future infrastructure of the local area, complementing our existing offer in Northmoor.

Another recent project in Northmoor, supported as part of our placemaking and regeneration work was partnering with local performance group Quarantine to create a neighbourhood audio tour. The tour took listeners through the neighbourhood, past local landmarks while listening to the invisible thoughts and stories of the people who live there. The 'people of' tour was also supported by local translator Rafia Batool who conducted interviews in Urdu to ensure that everyone could be involved in this cultural journey through Northmoor.



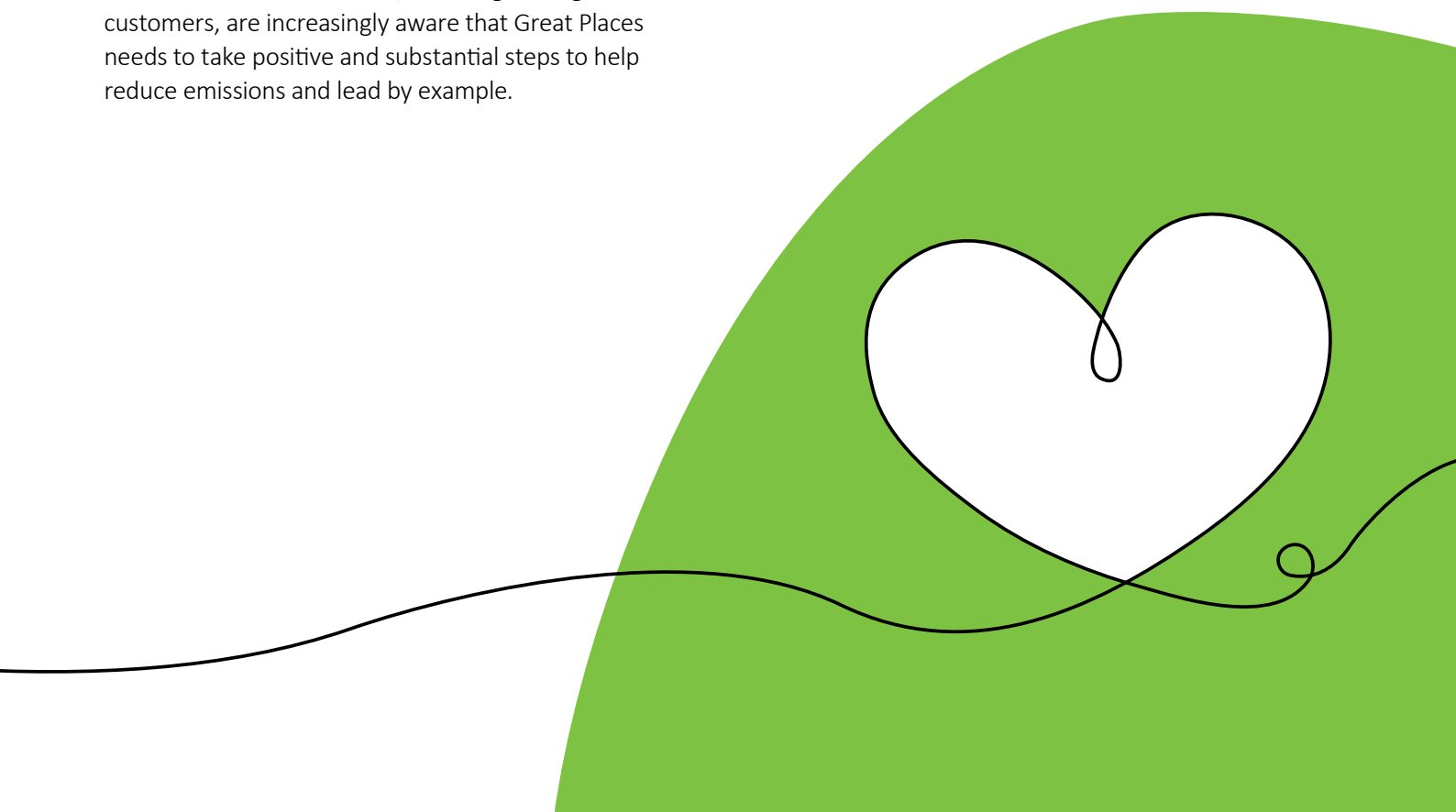
4. Environment

Great Places works hard to reduce the impact of its communities and day-to-day operations on the environment. It has a Carbon Management Strategy to reduce the environmental impact across the business, and focusses on the following key areas where our emissions are the greatest:

- **Development**
- **Assets and investment**
- **Operations**
- **Customers and colleagues**
- **Natural Capital**
- **Waste**

Extreme weather events, an outcome of climate change and the burning of fossil fuels, are already impacting on our customers, colleagues and stakeholders. Great Places is looking to play its part in minimising energy usage across the business and our homes. Only by leading by example and taking bold and radical positive action will Great Places reduce its carbon emissions and 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.

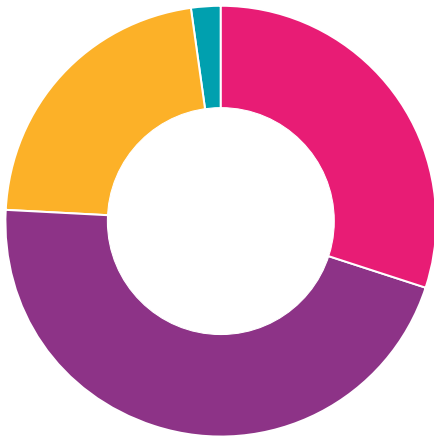


Theme 6 – climate change

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. This is happening alongside our zero carbon work which is already being worked into our development plan. We collaborate with other housing associations in Greater Manchester by participating in the Low Carbon Asset Managers group. Our newly developed homes have a minimum of EPC rating of B.

EPC ratings for our homes



- 0.5% of homes rated A
- 31.4% of homes rated B
- 47.5% of homes rated C
- 18.9% of homes rated D
- 1.7% of homes rated E or worse

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

To establish the carbon footprint for the financial year 2021/22, Great Places adopted the Carbon Workbook calculator and methodology developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. This differs from the previous year’s calculation methodology and now includes all three scopes defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol.

For 2021/22, the first year of calculation using this workbook, the Scope 3 emissions include the existing housing stock, new-build houses and the transmission and distribution of electricity and third party district heating. In future years, Great Places will further develop its methodology and calculation method to capture additional relevant Scope 3 emissions.

Table 1

Great Places Housing Group Carbon Emissions 2021/22

Scope	Source	Carbon Emissions (tCO2e)
Scope 1	Great Places directly used gas consumption, Fleet Consumption, Fugitive Emissions	2,760.56
Scope 2	Electricity, 3rd Party District Heating	1,335.30
Scope 3	Existing Stock, New Build, Grey Fleet, Electricity Transmission & Distribution, 3rd Party District Heating Distribution	89,390.35
Total		93,486.21



In order to provide a better emissions trend analysis in future years, carbon intensity metrics have been calculated. These determine the emissions per full time employee (FTE), per £ turnover and per home owned by Great Places and are summarised in the table below.

Table 2
Great Places Carbon Intensity Metrics 2021/22

Carbon Intensity Metrics	Carbon Emissions (tCO2e)
per FTE	115.99 tCO2e pp
per £ Turnover	0.00059 tCO2e/ £
per home	4.781 tCO2e per home

We think creatively in the way we can reduce our impact on the planet in many different ways, like where we invest cash deposits. During the year we deposited up to £10m at times, in a Barclays “Green Deposit fund”. 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.

C17. Energy Efficiency actions in the last 12 months

Great Places is working to ensure all our properties have Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) data, and we are on track to achieve this target by March 2023. This data has also been used to develop a retrofit improvement programme of works. The plan will be refined during 2022 in readiness to pursue potential external funding opportunities and to prepare for delivery. During this period, we have improved the rating of 177 properties to an EPC rating of C or above.

A further strategic objective was to plant a tree for every property in our portfolio that did not achieve the EPC C rating. During 2021/22 through our partnership with Tree Nation we planted over 4,000 trees, exceeding our target.

An optimisation study of one of our district heating networks has also been completed during the period. More have been commissioned to cover similar

networks, covering 23% of Great Places’ total corporate gas and electricity consumptions. Energy surveys of three of our offices have also been completed and budget allocated to implement a number of the recommendations made in the coming year.

To continue to reduce our emissions we have introduced a Dynamic Resource Scheduler. This will help coordinate and manage the work of the repairs and maintenance team and ensure the most effective planning for repair appointments, while also reducing travelling. We are also in the process of introducing hybrid vans into our fleet in order to continue to reduce emissions.

We have cultivated a low-carbon culture across Greater Manchester, delivering training to organisations serving local communities, including Transport for Greater Manchester and BBC North West. The team has provided input around the creation of the Local Authorities Carbon Literacy Toolkit, as well as supporting the delivery of Carbon Literacy training for the United Nations in Germany. We are also the first registered social landlord to be awarded platinum Carbon Literate Organisation status, a recognition that 80% of colleagues and the Board have successfully completed Carbon Literacy training and also the business’ commitment to reduce its carbon footprint.

Our partners National Energy Action help us upskill customers to use renewable energy in their homes. Support is provided to give a practical understanding of how to decarbonise homes, using simple and affordable techniques that can be implemented straight away.

Our offices are on a green fuel tariff.



CASE STUDY

EPCs AND PLANTING TREES

As part of our commitments to become a zero-carbon business by 2038, Great Places has set a target to plant 4,000 trees each year. This means a tree for every new home that we build and one for every existing home below an EPC C. We will be engaging with local organisations such as Manchester’s Tiny Forest and City of Trees meet our own future tree planting targets

whilst contributing to tree planting and woodland restoration projects across Greater Manchester. We will continue to look for opportunities on future sites to improve the biodiversity in the surrounding areas for our customers and the local community. We will continue to organise corporate away days and donations to support tree-planting to meet our carbon off-setting commitments, and we donate to Tree-Nation, a non-profit organisation that allows citizens and companies to plant trees to offset their CO2 emissions.

C18. Mitigating Climate Risk

Our sustainability measures follow a fabric first approach. We aim to ensure our homes deliver on reduced energy consumption and carbon footprint, whilst future proofing for changes in environmental factors, energy delivery models and customer requirements.

Development sites address climate risk through the use of robust and resilient construction materials

to provide structural stability, durability, and weather protection, ensuring that homes mitigate the effects of a rapidly changing climate, both now and in the future.

Mitigating increased flood risk – All our new homes are built to limit risk to flooding to the least severe category of flood zone 1. Where development sites have areas of increased risk to flooding in flood zones 2 or 3 our homes are designed and constructed to reduce the flood risk to the least severe category of flood zone 1. This is achieved by raising the floor level of homes or leaving areas of site with increased flood risk as public open space.

Mitigating increased overheating risk – All homes are designed and constructed to mitigate excessive or unwanted increases in room temperature. This is achieved through appropriate design and construction for each home’s orientation, glazing extents and site constraints. Development sites utilise solar shading, improved glass specification, and ventilation strategies, which do not adversely impact safety, security and wellbeing. Other design considerations made for each site’s specific requirements are noise levels at night, pollution, and protection from falling.

Mechanical cooling is only adopted where mitigation of overheating cannot be achieved via air circulation and extraction. Overheating risk mitigation is demonstrated in accordance with the methods defined in Building Regulations Approved Document Part O 2021.

C19. Environmental information available to Residents

All of our new customers receive a Home User Guide (HUG). This is currently available in a hard copy with a digital online version in development. The pack includes information on how to operate a range of home appliances including mechanical ventilation and the heating and how to naturally ventilate the home.

Our website includes advice, tips and guidance for customers on saving energy. During 2022, we expanded our Carbon Literacy offer to include some of our customers, supporting our drive to reduce emissions and ultimately home energy consumption and costs.

Theme 7 – Ecology

C20. Increasing Green Space and Promoting Bio-Diversity.

Great Places support the Environmental Bill 2022, and all development sites deliver at least a 10% net biodiversity gain. We work with our in-house grounds maintenance team to deliver high quality landscaping in a cost effective manner, with plant species which are native to site, attractive, robust, easy to maintain and mature at the point of planting.

C21. Reducing Pollutants.

To ensure our environmental impact is reduced we have worked to tackle pollution within the following key areas:

- Great Places’ new homes developments comply with pollution legislation and no reportable pollution incidents have occurred at any of our schemes in the last year.
- Great Places has undertaken significant work to minimise emissions, especially those associated with travel. We are currently in the process of introducing hybrid vans across our Repairs Team fleet with an EV charging point installed at one of our offices. We’re also developing a charging policy to reflect the increased use of electric vehicles within our fleet.
- We operate a hybrid working model using virtual meeting technology. We continue to encourage colleagues to commute to work via active travel with welfare facilities including bike stores, showers and lockers provided to support this.
- Our building services systems are serviced and maintained in accordance with manufacturer recommendations to ensure they are performing effectively and efficiently.

Theme 8 – resource management

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

We work with consultants and contractors to ensure specifications meet the sustainable materials requirements as previously required by the Code for Sustainable Homes. All timber used on our developments is legal and sustainable with FSC or PEFC certification. We have plans to develop a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for development, refurbishment, and replacement of assets, with materials currently specified for robustness and longevity to mitigate the effects of weather, wear, and reduce frequency of replacement and waste.

The design team work from project inception to identify possible sources of waste at the construction site, to ensure the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) hierarchy is followed. Development contractors implement, monitor, and manage construction waste with a site waste management plan (SWMP). The SWMP is monitored regularly to ensure that construction waste is re-used, repurposed, and recycled, ensuring waste to landfill generated is less than 5%.

Development managers work with consultants and contractors to provide and maintain KPI reporting data for waste going to landfill from each site. The development team review material specification to deliver a minimum of 10% of construction material from reused and recycled content and work with site construction teams to target a zero waste to landfill outcome.

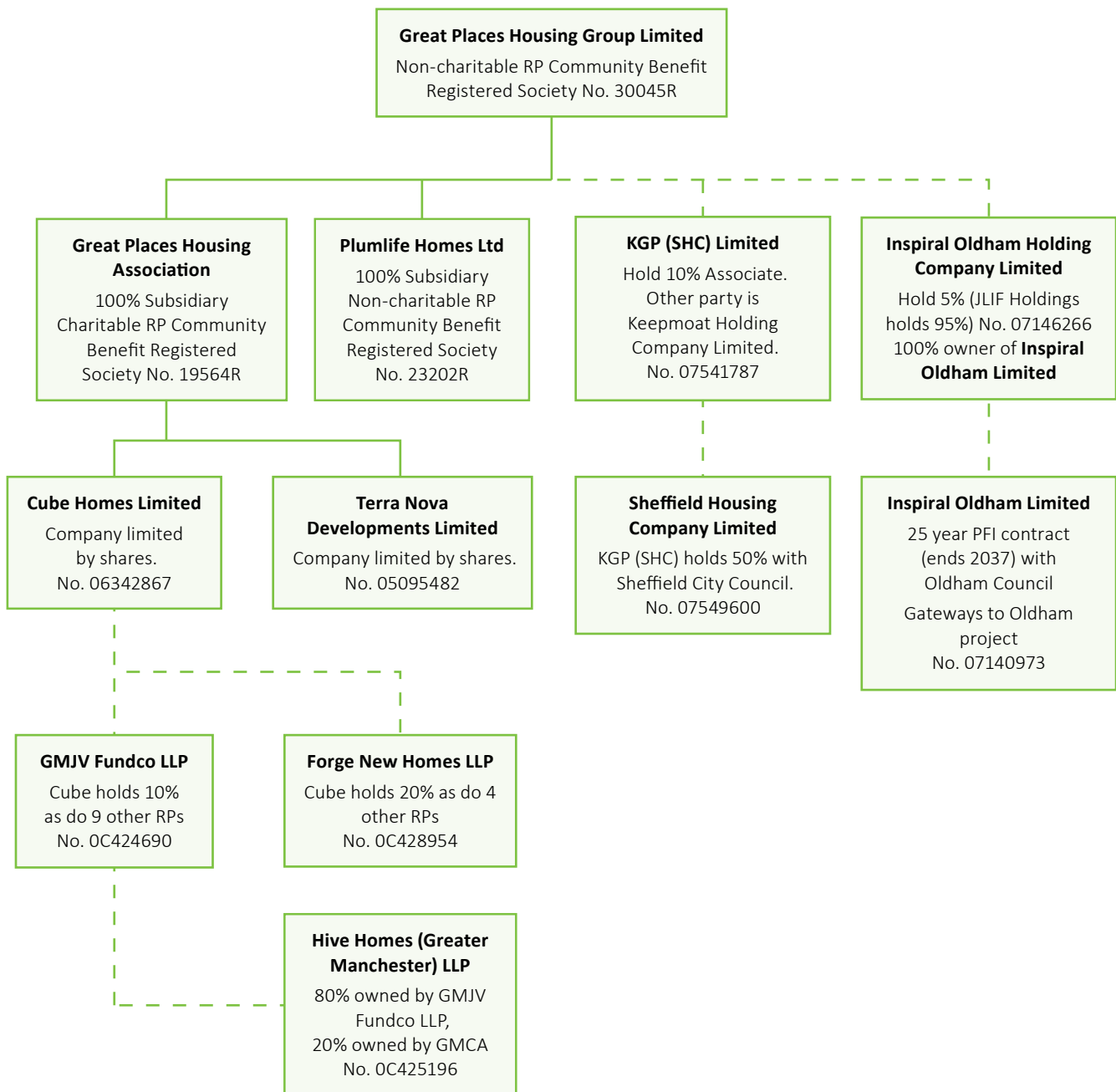
We have a Carbon Management Strategy which is regularly reviewed and developed. We plan to include a strategy for good water management, and for the reduction of domestic water use and demand to new homes.

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 the parent company of two other registered housing providers – Great Places Housing Association and Plumlife Homes Limited.



Great Places Housing Group and Great Places Housing Group, Great Places Housing Association, Plumlife, Terra Nova and Cube Homes are “Profit for Purpose” organisations. This means surpluses we generate are reinvested into new homes, existing assets and existing services.

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 business. Our Code of Governance gives the Board 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 reflect this duty – linking closely to the internal and external audit provision, and the assurance provided by external specialists as required. The Board is responsible for setting our Risk and Assurance Strategy and our risk appetite, and ensuring that all decisions are made 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. 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. This 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.

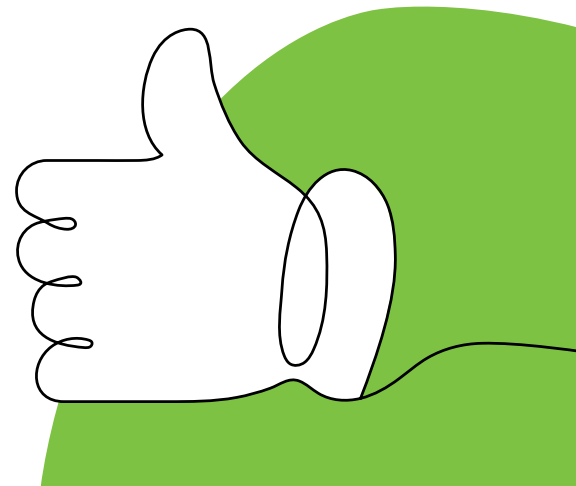
C30. Has the housing provider been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (e.g. data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches or notices) that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?

Great Places hasn’t been subject to any regulatory enforcement action over the last 12 months. We have self-reported one data breach to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) during the financial year following a phishing attack which resulted in no further action from the Regulator.

C26 and C27 Outcome of the Regulators In Depth Assessment (IDA). Code of Governance

The Group Board has adopted a bespoke Code of Governance for the Group, which fully incorporates the requirements of the NHF Code of Governance whilst going further in some areas to add additional detail and clarity. Great Places carried out an assessment against the new NHF Code of Governance 2020 and formally adopted this in its entirety in March 2022. A robust self-assessment process is in place with compliance reported annually to the Audit and Assurance Committee. An Internal Audit of Governance undertaken in 2022, supports this.

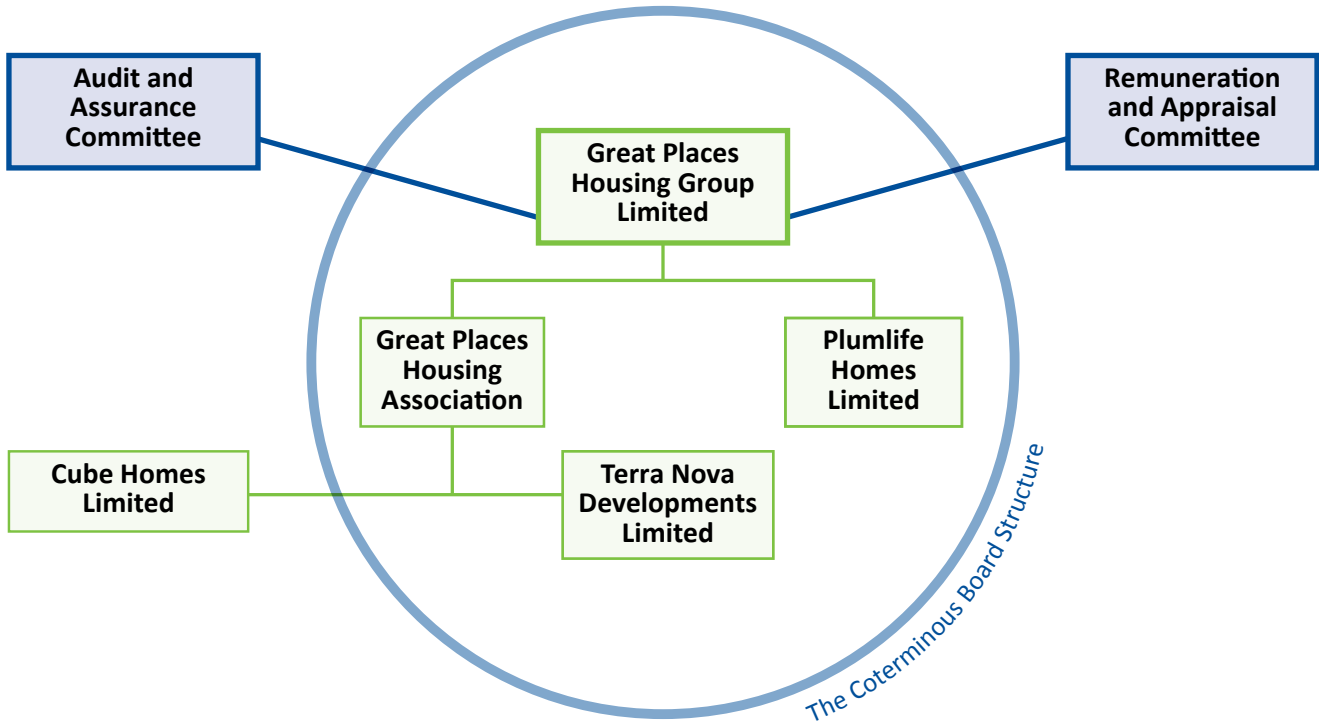
Great Places undertakes an independent triennial Governance review. The last review in 2021 confirmed that the Group is fully compliant with the Code of Governance. In July 2021, the Regulator of Social Housing (“RSH”) carried out an in-depth assessment of regulatory compliance and confirmed that the Group continues to have the highest G1 Governance assessment. At this time the RSH also graded the Group’s viability assessment at V1. The Group along with many other RPs was regraded to G1/V2 in December 2022.



Theme 10 – board and trustees

C31, C33 and C34. Board Demographics, Tenure and Director Status

Our Board and committee structure is outlined below:



The Board and Director Status: At 31 March 2022, the Great Places Housing Group Board was made up of 10 members – nine of whom were Non-Executive Directors (90%). The Board also includes our CEO Matthew Harrison as the only Executive Board Member.

Tenure: Each Board term is three years long with Board Members normally serving two terms, and then by exception, up to three single-year extensions to a maximum of 9 years. At 31 March 2022, the average tenure of the nine Non-Executive Group Board Members was 3 years and 10 months; with tenure ranging from 6 months for the newer Members, to eight and a half years for the longer-serving Members.

Demographics: The information below shows the make up of Great Places’ Board and combined boards (including our commercial subsidiary board of Cube Homes):

Great Places Board

- 30% female
- 20% from ethnic minority backgrounds
- 20% declared disability
- Average age 60

Combined Boards (Including Cube Homes)

- 31% female
- 23% from ethnic minority backgrounds
- 15% declared disability
- Average age 57

C32. Board Turnover

In the financial year 2021-22; three Board Members stood down (having reached the end of their tenures), and were replaced by three new Non-Executive Directors – therefore the turnover for Group Board was 30%. An additional Non-Executive Director was also appointed to the Cube Board as part of this recruitment exercise.

The Executive Team saw the creation of an additional role of Executive Director of Growth. This new role was created to reflect our corporate ambitions in this area and to help us deliver the aspirations in our successful Homes England strategic partnership bid. It also allows for enhanced executive focus on property condition, building safety, zero carbon and investment in our existing stock. Our governance arrangements continue to be strong, including our approach to Board succession and appraisal and we retain our G1 rating.

The Board was chaired during 2021/22 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 and Appraisal Committee at Great Places.

C39. When was the last independently-run board effectiveness review?

The last independent board effectiveness review was conducted between November 2020 and January 2021 by David Tolson Partnership Ltd. in line with the requirements of the Code of Governance with a brief to:

- Consider governance arrangements over the previous 3 years and the associated levels of compliance.
- Consider the effectiveness of the current governance arrangements taking into account, best practice, regulatory expectations, Board and Committee effectiveness, and value for money.
- Review the appropriateness of the Board size, composition, skills and competencies.
- Review the Committee structures.

The outcome of this review concluded that: “the governance structure of Great Places is appropriate for the needs of the business and to support the delivery of the corporate strategy. The coterminous Group Board

provides for a sound, holistic oversight of each of the entities within the business. There is a good balance of social purpose and commerciality within the governance culture, skills and competency of the Board. Whilst the structure appears complex, there is a strong and clear level of oversight of risk flows, intra-group financial relationships and decision-making parameters. We consider that delegations and accountabilities work well to provide for the right level of controls and the ability to deliver agreed actions.”

C41. Conflicts of Interest.

Declarations of interest are made at the start of all Board meetings and a register of interests is maintained and published on the website in line with our Code of Governance obligations. 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 standing Committees report into Board, one of which is the Audit and Assurance Committee which at 31 March 2022 has four Non-Executive Board Members.

The Audit and Assurance Committee includes two qualified accountants as well as two vastly experienced senior housing professionals.

Our new external auditors, Beever and Struthers, were appointed following a retendering exercise and have been in place since November 2021, with Sue Hutchinson acting as our Lead Audit Partner. 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.

The Group’s internal audit function is outsourced. BDO will take over as internal auditors from April 2023, replacing PWC who have provided that service for 7 years.

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. We also publish a Compliance Statement on our Code of Governance which is on our website.

Great Places has a succession plan in place which identifies the tenure of all Board members and ensures that adequate provisions are in place to ensure that Non-Executive Directors are replaced with individuals with the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience. This plan commenced with the three appointments made in the last year, resulting in increased diversity of the Board. The plan is now looking to recruit three new members over the next twelve months and 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.

Information is fed back from both Committees to the Board to ensure they are aware of issues relating to recruitment and succession.

C40. Role of CEO and Chair of the Board.

The roles of Chair of the Board and CEO are held by Tony Davison and Matt Harrison respectively.

Theme 11 – staff wellbeing

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

Staff wellbeing has always been a key priority in the Great People element of our vision. The group has a number of key targets including the reduction of staff sickness.

Last year, our staff sickness was 9.9 days per employee. To help manage staff sickness 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. These have included exercise classes, yoga and colleague sessions covering mental health and wellbeing issues. Some of the sessions covered building resilience and webinars that were developed to support colleagues who may be experiencing poor mental health. Other activities included:

- A variety of ‘Space to Talk’ sessions to provide open and honest feedback, and discussions in a confidential environment.
- A biannual engagement survey with 6 monthly pulse surveys. This directs the change peer support forum.
- Menopause champion at work, delivering awareness workshops, with a menopause support process in place.
- Financial Resilience support for colleagues in financial hardship including advice and emergency contributions.
- Delivered workshops to manage stress, anxiety, excessive worry, other negative emotions and help build resilience.
- A ‘Powering our People’ campaign, designed to empower colleagues to look after their well-being and for managers and colleagues to make positive changes to the way they work.
- A ‘Time to Talk’ session focused on mental wellbeing.
- Two physical wellbeing initiatives to raise money for our corporate charities.
- An eight week body transformation programme started in January 2022 and was attended by over 100 colleagues.
- Podcasts and information on wellbeing topics are available to all colleagues via The Study.

We know learning is one of the NHS's Five Ways to Wellbeing. It is a key theme in our People Strategy and we promote core training and personal development through our Academy of Greatness and the Study, our in-house Learning Experience Platform.

The Study also provides access to easy-to-use tools and techniques to manage stress, anxiety and excessive worry that people may be experiencing as we transition to new, hybrid ways of working.

The story of one colleague who benefitted from the support we provide can be access here:

https://youtu.be/TyQK3-_sitw {permission}

CASE STUDY

CONNECTING WITH AND KEEPING COLLEAGUES ENGAGED IN A HYBRID-WORKING WORLD.

In July 2021, we launched hybrid working, with the aim of empowering colleagues to find the right balance in terms of where they spend their time so they are working efficiently, delivering great customer service and achieving a good work-life balance.

We call this approach Greater Working. There are three vital ingredients to getting this right as we Adapt, Collaborate and Trust ("ACT"). In our December 2021 Pulse survey 89% of colleagues agreed that Great Places allows them to work flexibly and 83% reported that they can strike a good balance between their home and working life.

As we adapted to the post-pandemic world and hybrid working, we were faced with a new challenge - How do we engage all our colleagues whether they are front line, office based and increasingly, remote workers?

This prompted our Communications Team to research company podcasts (and vodcasts) and create an in-house studio in what was a chair storage cupboard at our head office, on a small budget.

We are now producing two podcasts a month – one hosted by our CEO and one that is colleague led. Analytics show that this new platform is landing very well. The team will continue to analyse the data and build on the early progress that has been made to date.

GREATER WORKING



CASE STUDY

COMMUNICATIONS STUDIO

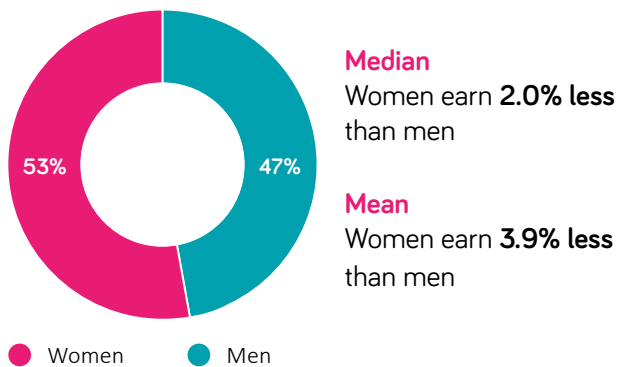
The pandemic forced us to rethink our colleague events. Our Leaders’ and Managers’ conference was due to take place in January 2022 face-to-face. However, with new work from home guidance being issued we decided to host the event ourselves completely in-house using our new equipment, the new studio and a specially created set in our Eatery at Head Office.

The event was a mix of live and pre-recorded content which was live mixed on the day by the Communications Team with support from our wider events group. It was a great success, with overwhelmingly positive feedback and almost 100% viewership throughout. We also managed to save our organisation a substantial amount of money from producing in house. Going forward, we will provide a mix of virtual and face-to-face events to meet the diverse needs of our colleagues, customers and stakeholders.

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

Great Places is an accredited Living Wage employer. The real Living Wage is set by the Living Wage Foundation each November.

Our gender pay gap report from April 2022 shows the following:



The median is the middle value and is calculated by organising all of the hourly rates of pay in order and selecting the middle number. The mean is our average pay and is calculated by adding up all of our hourly rates of pay and dividing by the number of colleagues.

Great Places is committed to closing the pay gap between men and women. We take equality, diversity and inclusion seriously, with a strategy to embrace the value of our differences, creating a culture of inclusion and ensuring fairness for all of our people. Aligned to our People Strategy, we will continue to create an environment that provides equal opportunities for all colleagues, irrespective of gender, to reach their career progression potential.

We will:

- Continue to monitor pay in regard to gender, ethnicity and disability, including ensuring equity in the provision of any corporate bonus payments.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion into ‘business as usual’.
- Tailor training to individual needs and career aspirations with a development plan for every colleague, agreed between colleague, manager and the People Team.
- Equip our leaders and managers to nurture and grow talent and careers according to individual needs, capability and aspirations through the re-energising of our 1-2-1 process to focus on performance development through high-quality conversations.
- Refresh the recruitment areas on our website and our advertising of vacancies to ensure our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is clear and encourages applications from males and females for all roles.
- Review our recruitment and selection processes to ensure fair and equal access to vacancies, both in the external market and for internal promotions.
- Use our apprenticeship and graduate programmes to grow future talent, positively promote a balanced and inclusive workforce and to invest in future leaders
- Review our working environments and facilities to ensure appropriate wellbeing support for all.
- Review our learning opportunities and career pathways to support growth and skill development so that everyone can fulfil their ambitions.

The CEO salary to median pay for colleague ratio is 7:1.

Theme 12 – supply chain

C47. Social Value.

Great Places is an organisation rooted in social purpose. Our social value programme is key to realising our ambitions to support customers and communities by working with organisations across our supply chain.

When we tender our various workstreams, we place significant emphasis on social value. All of our procurement exercises above £25,000 consider social value, and we use a variety of techniques to identify contractors who can bring additional value to our neighbourhoods as a result of our spend.

Our Innovation Chain North (ICN) development framework set up for registered provider clients to deliver high quality, sustainable homes, involved social value as a key aspect, and included the requirement that all organisations bidding to become part of the framework pledge to deliver Social Value as a result of work received. Since the current ICN Framework began in 2020, almost £17m of Social Value has been pledged as a result of call offs by Housing Providers.

Responsible Business

The Responsible Business evaluation tool is primarily used in low value tenders or where SME / VCSE bids are expected. Using government and Great Places targets, potential providers are scored upon the ethical practices within their operations. This model champions potential providers whose practices add value to society, looking at themes such as the make-up of their supply chain, treatment of staff and environmental practices.

Spending locally with SMEs / VCSEs

Where suitable, procurement exercises are developed to be accessible to local SMEs / VCSEs. Larger contracts are divided into smaller lots, so they are of a size that is accessible to a larger market.

Pre-market engagement is carried out to inform Great Places' approach to an exercise. This method ensures the process is well developed and accessible to all potential bidders.

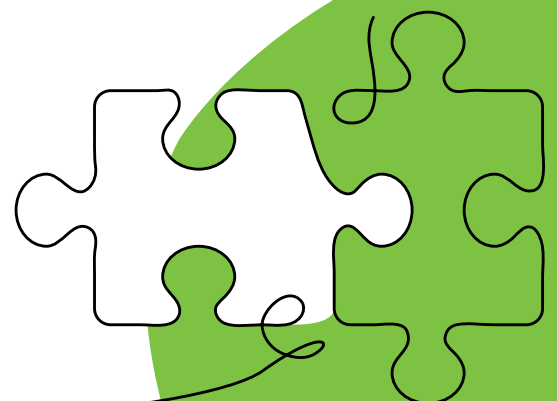
Social Value pledges

In 2021/22

- £150k of Social Value was delivered by Great Places contractors.
- £109k of donations were allocated to community projects, supporting 48 projects, attributed to 16 supply chain partners.
- £3.3m in social value pledged as a result of call offs to the ICN framework. In 2021/2 £30,000 of Social Value was delivered via ICN within Great Places communities, including graduate roles and work placements and training.

20 contractors were involved in 26 Social Value projects, creating over £40k of social impact. This included:

- A donation of £9k to a food pantry in one of our neighbourhoods to expand their services.
- 18 customers being supported with a gardening initiative for Housing First.
- The development of a digital space at a community space to support 40 individuals for six months.
- Financial support for Jubilee Projects across our neighbourhoods including 24 different events.
- The delivery of 15 weeks of work experience to local construction apprentices.
- One contractor providing their whole organisation with carbon literacy training to raise awareness of their environmental impact.
- £13k worth of support being given to 19 Christmas community projects across Great Places' neighbourhoods, delivering support for 1,444 customers.
- Over £600k of Social Value commitments were pledged over the lifetime of future contracts procured during the year.



C48. Environmental Impact.

As part of Great Places target to become net zero by 2038, reducing our scope 3 emissions will be key. Varying methods are used across tenders to reduce the environmental impact of the delivery of contract.

Specifications are developed to require operations that will produce a lower carbon footprint. This approach directly influences the carbon footprint produced by our supply chain, making clear the importance placed on reducing our Scope 3 emissions.

Environmental quality questions may be asked to evaluate contractors capabilities to reduce their carbon footprint. These are particularly important on contracts that produce a large proportion of our emissions or where Great Places can heavily influence the contracts environmental impact. For example within our recently procured furniture contract, bidders were asked what processes they have in place to recycle and reuse waste furniture.

Our responsible business model includes considerations towards a bidders organisational environmental impact. It is an opportunity to influence contractors to encourage best practice throughout contract delivery. These questions look at environmental practices such as carbon footprint tracking, corporate travel schemes and if they have implemented a green energy tariff.

New methods to reduce the emissions produced by Great Places' contractors are always being considered and trialled within procurement exercises as the tools to influence continue to evolve.



6. Summary

Great Places is committed to ensuring that it has a positive impact on our customers, stakeholders and the environment. The indicators within this report show that we continue to perform well and set ourselves challenging targets in these areas. We are particularly proud of the affordability, quality and safety of our homes. Our rents are significantly below private rents while also delivering high quality homes.

Great Places is in the early stages of elements of sustainability reporting. We need to ensure 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 ensure we can maintain them in the future. This will 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 increase our impact and see some quick gains by improving our homes EPC performance and ensuring all new stock meets the energy efficiency targets for the Group. 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 controlled or reduce due to the efficiency of their homes.



7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Summary of performance against many criteria

Theme	Criteria	Indicator	Outcome
Affordability	C1	Average rents as a proportion of average market rent	69%
Affordability	C1	Average rents as a proportion of average Local Housing Allowance	81%
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	99.9%
Building Quality	C8	Proportion of homes that met the Decent Homes Standard	100%
Residents Voice	C10	Customer satisfaction (out of 10)	7.0
Residents Voice	C11	Complaints upheld by the Housing Ombudsman for 2021/22	5
Climate Change	C14	EPC ratings of C and above – start of year	79.4%**
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)	1 / 1
Staff Wellbeing	C43	Gender pay gap (mean basis)	3.9%
Staff Wellbeing	C46	Average number of sick days per employee	9.9

* this is based on all of our owned Social rented homes.

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

*** G1/V2 from December 2022.

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

Appendix 2

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 greenhouse 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
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
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

Appendix 3

Housing provider specific “Affordability” indicator

Local Authority	No. of Homes	Average of LHA	Average private sector rent	Average of current weekly rent	Rent as % of LHA	Rent as a % of Market rent
Barnsley	207	£9965	£114.46	£91.72	92%	80%
Blackburn with Darwen	993	£113.94	£129.62	£94.78	83%	73%
Blackpool	845	£112.81	£121.31	£93.18	83%	77%
Bolton	652	£125.92	£150.12	£100.15	80%	67%
Bradford	30	£125.44	£112.50	£87.76	70%	78%
Burnley	115	£107.08	£126.92	£97.52	91%	77%
Bury	519	£114.21	£147.05	£94.54	83%	64%
Cheshire East	687	£145.91	£161.49	£102.81	70%	64%
Cheshire West and Chester	173	£129.99	£156.54	£105.25	81%	67%
Chesterfield	19	£109.62	£138.77	£103.43	94%	75%
Derbyshire Dales	19	£124.44	£152.06	£99.25	80%	65%
Fylde	166	£113.17	£136.27	£105.19	93%	77%
High Peak	246	£123.79	£148.88	£100.43	81%	67%
Hyndburn	171	£110.67	£117.81	£100.75	91%	86%
Lancaster	297	£123.55	£139.02	£93.44	76%	67%
Manchester	2,050	£152.95	£210.22	£94.02	61%	45%
Oldham	1,008	£115.13	£153.15	£95.53	83%	62%
Pendle	194	£102.32	£123.92	£94.68	93%	76%
Preston	203	£129.25	£140.74	£98.95	77%	70%
Ribble Valley	140	£104.15	£152.71	£101.19	97%	66%
Rochdale	627	£129.70	£147.67	£99.24	77%	67%
Rossendale	43	£115.55	£143.16	£102.29	89%	71%
Rotherham	273	£98.66	£110.57	£87.19	88%	79%
Salford	2,053	£166.93	£189.72	£99.91	60%	53%
Sefton	91	£110.30	£121.47	£87.41	79%	72%
Sheffield	2,014	£123.11	£146.77	£89.62	73%	61%
South Ribble	76	£116.80	£135.00	£102.77	88%	76%
Stockport	737	£140.35	£156.84	£88.75	63%	57%
Stoke on Trent	79	£117.65	£132.84	£92.41	79%	70%
Tameside	48	£132.69	£168.27	£99.75	75%	59%
Trafford	429	£147.58	£201.31	£100.49	68%	50%
Wigan	164	£110.19	£127.78	£102.83	93%	80%
Wyre	284	£112.35	£132.08	£94.22	84%	71%
Grand Total	15,652	£115.68	£143.85	£97.01	81%	69%

