

Environmental, Social and Governance Report

2022/23



great
places
HOUSING GROUP

Introduction

by Matthew Harrison - Chief Executive



Welcome to our ESG report for 2022/23. The last year continued to see a challenging economic and operating environment for the sector, and Great Places was no exception. The effects of Brexit and the Covid Pandemic on our supply chains, followed by the war in Ukraine and the significant increases in inflation, including spiralling energy costs, created a cost-of-living crisis and ongoing uncertainty. The below inflation cap on rents, effective from April 2023, adds to the many challenges that we continue to face.

Despite these challenges our Corporate Plan 2021-2023 set out plans and targets in line with our 10-year ambitions, and we remained focussed on realising our ambitions. We are playing our part in tackling the housing crisis, providing the right homes in the right places, supporting our customers and helping our communities to thrive. We've seen a significant increase in demand for our services, partly driven by the heightened customer and regulatory focus on damp and mould issues. This increased demand feeds through in increased costs for surveys and remediation works as well as increases in disrepair cases and complaints.

Great Places continues to take its Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) commitments very seriously, and 2022/23 has seen us make considerable progress in terms of realising our ambitions in these areas.

Our Carbon Management Strategy outlines how we'll progress our aim of being a net zero-carbon business over the next two decades, with an early target of all our homes being EPC C or better by 2028. This year saw us successfully secure £1.4m from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which will be match funded by Great Places. We plan to use this funding to upgrade the energy efficiency of 396 of our homes in Greater Manchester and Sheffield through the installation of

measures such as exterior wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and solar panels. This will put us well on the way to delivering out retrofit ambitions. In addition, following a successful Heat Network Efficiency Scheme (HNES) Demonstrator-funded optimisation study pilot, we have recently secured £1.6 million of funding from the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero towards making the necessary improvements to our Richmond Park development heat network, which serves 299 residents. Drawing on the recommendations from the study, the funding will pay towards measures needed to remedy high heat loss issues, bad insulation and old equipment. Our investment in this area and across the organisation in general over the next five years and beyond will be substantial.

We also continue to invest heavily in our building safety programme, spending £2.2m during 2022/23, assessing our buildings and carrying out works to meet building safety legislation. We remain committed to complete all remaining intrusive surveys on our properties considered to be of a higher risk and will swiftly put in place any short-term mitigation measures to ensure customer safety, in partnership with local fire services. At the same time, we will continue to develop our plans to deliver remediation works in a managed programme.

In addition, our development and regeneration activities are focused on delivering energy-efficient homes that are cost effective for our customers to run and that will help us realise our ambitions to become a net-zero-carbon business in the next 15 years. Earlier this year, I was delighted to host Shadow Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, in Manchester on a tour of our New Islington and Ancoats homes to hear about our first low-carbon development and the work we are doing to help realise Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA's) commitment to build 30,000 zero-carbon social rented homes by 2038.

Our sector continues to see the rising importance of the need to listen to the voice of customers to help us shape plans and services. In response to the rapidly-changing external operating environment, we continue to develop our plans to address the requirements of the Social Housing White Paper "The Charter for Social Housing Residents", and the new consumer regulation framework that will follow the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill. In line with the requirements of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, we are now collecting data against the 22 key metrics and, following the involvement of our Insight customer scrutiny group, look forward to publishing the results in an accessible and meaningful way to allow customers and stakeholders to challenge our performance. In addition, we have looked to develop our Customer Commitments, a set of standards that ensures we meet the needs of our customers, providing safe homes and reliable services that help our communities to grow and thrive.

As an organisation rooted in social purpose, we remain committed to the health and wellbeing of our customers, and to helping them navigate the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Alongside our existing support services, we have allocated almost £400k from our Hardship and Community Resilience Funds to individual customers and community partner organisations to help tackle the consequences of poverty and austerity. Affordability concerns for customers will remain a key issue for our Board as the cost-of-living crisis continues, whilst also considering the impact of the Government-imposed rent cap on our income.

People will be a key focus of our investment over the next period in a competitive labour market. We will continue to

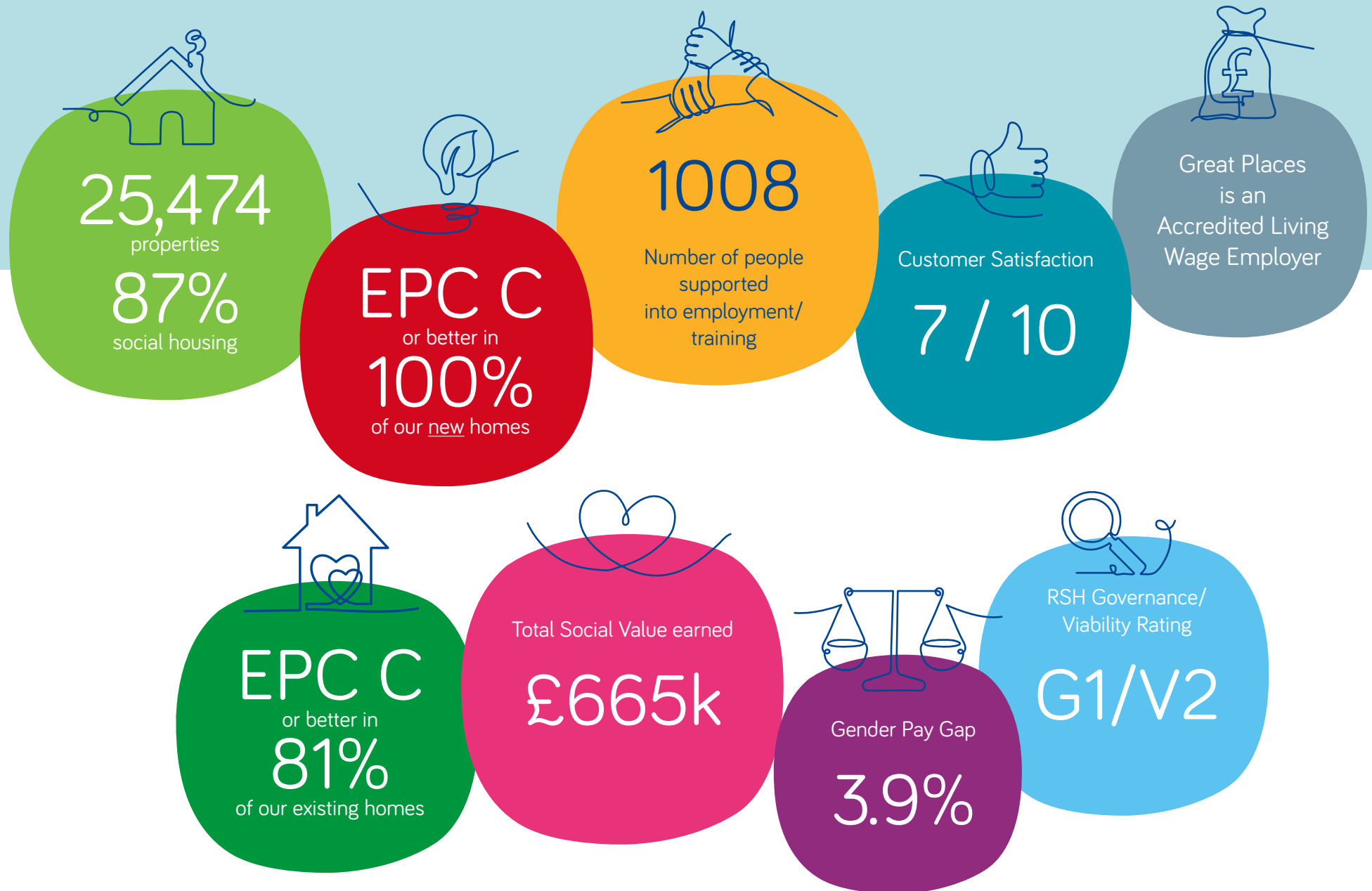
focus on "Growing Greatness", investing time and resources in developing our existing talent. In addition, we continue to look at ways in which we can enhance our wellbeing offer to attract, recruit, retain, develop and engage colleagues.

Our people are key to us achieving our goals. We continue to look at how we can enhance our reputation as an employer of choice that champions diversity and inclusion in our recruitment and workforce, and continuing to reduce our gender pay gap.

In 2021 we became early adopters of the Sustainability Reporting Standard and produced our first ever ESG report under that standard. Looking through our achievements in the past 12 months I'm delighted to see the progress we've made and share our latest report with customers, colleagues, partners and stakeholders.



ESG at Great Places: some headline figures



Our Report Structure

'The UN Sustainability Reporting Standard is a set of common goals that demand investors, governments, businesses and society do more to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure people enjoy peace and prosperity.' (UN Transforming our world the 2030 agenda for sustainable development September 2013).

As part of our commitments under the Sustainability Reporting Standard for social housing providers to produce an annual update, the three high-level areas of this report, 'Environmental, Social and Governance', each include information taken from a set of themes aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



ESG Area	Theme	Alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goal	Page Reference
Social	Affordability and security	No poverty Reduced inequalities	7
	Building safety and quality	Sustainable cities and communities	8
	Resident voice	Sustainable cities and communities	9
	Resident support	Sustainable cities and communities	14
	Placemaking	Sustainable cities and communities	18
Environmental	Climate change	Climate action	21
	Ecology	Life on land	26
	Resource management	Sustainable cities and communities	27
Governance	Structure and governance	Peace, justice and strong institutions	29
	Board and trustees	Peace, justice and strong institutions	31
	Staff wellbeing	Decent work and economic growth	32
	Supply chain management	Responsible production and consumption	35



Social

Affordability and Security

This theme looks at the extent to which the housing provider provides long-term homes that are genuinely affordable for people on low incomes.

	At March 31 2023	New Homes completed in 2022/23
Social rent	10,763	19
Affordable rent	5,883	361
Supported housing	1,395	6
Supported - housing for older people	478	0
LCHO (low-cost home ownership)	3,328	263
Intermediate rent	315	0
Non-social rented	307	0
Social leased	1,364	0
Non-social leased	1,641	0
Total	25,474	649



The number of properties that Great Places owns and or manages is **25,474** in the year ending March 31, 2023, of which **87%** are social housing.

65%

of Great Places' general needs and affordable homes have rents that are significantly lower than the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and private market rents in the areas we operate in.



Assured tenancy agreements:
We are committed to making sure that all of our customers feel secure in their tenancies.
We provide peace of mind through offering the security of assured tenancy agreements.

On average we charge rents at 76.2% of LHA and only 66.1% of private rents. The table below shows analysis for the 5 local authority areas where we have the most rented homes:

Local Authority	Number of homes	Average current weekly rent	Rent as % of LHA	Rent as % of market rent
Salford	2,016	£104.07	65.9%	61.9%
Manchester	2,051	£98.25	63.2%	58.1%
Sheffield	2,011	£93.64	76.0%	66.2%
Blackpool	1,011	£98.84	86.7%	74.6%
Oldham	1,034	£99.70	86.5%	70.5%

Building Safety and Quality



This theme looks to assess how effective the housing provider is at meeting its legal responsibilities to protect customers and keep buildings safe.

The safety of our customers is of key importance and at the heart of our customer commitments. Customer satisfaction that Great Places provides a home that is safe is also one of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing. We will be reporting on this from 2024 and it will be a critical success factor for 2023/24.

This is reflected in the following key headlines:

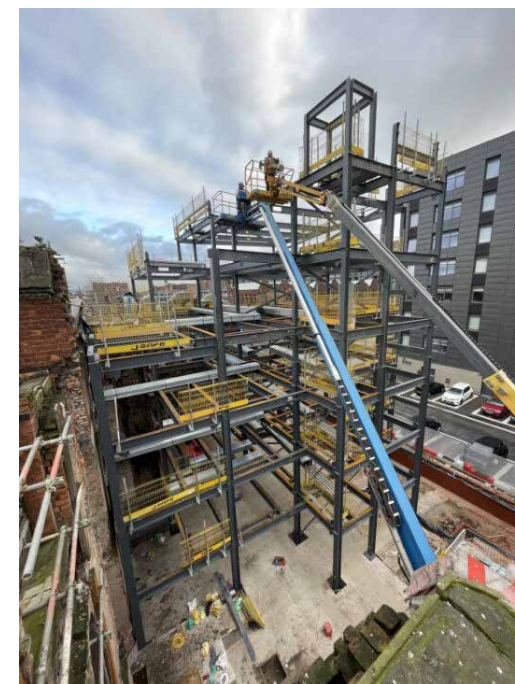
- **100% (2021/22 – 99.9%) of our homes have an up-to-date gas inspection and service certificate.**
- **100% of fire risk assessments completed (2021/22 99.7%).**
- **100% of our homes meet Decent Homes Standard (DHS).**

100%

We continue to assess our buildings and conduct works to meet building safety legislation, spending £2.2m during 2022/23 on fire and building safety measures including replacement flat entrance doors, smoke and fire detection systems in communal areas and other fire safety measures highlighted following detailed inspections. We are committed to undertaking intrusive wall surveys on our properties considered to be of a higher risk and will address any short-term mitigation measures to ensure customer safety in partnership with the local fire service.

Since September 2022 we have fitted 4,256 carbon monoxide alarms to rooms which include fixed combustion appliances, such as a gas boiler or gas fire which will be checked as part of the annual gas inspection in compliance with recent changes in safety legislation. At March 2023 we were 100% gas compliant.

In the past year we have also been ensuring we are ready to meet the new legislative requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 for all high-rise residential buildings 18 metres tall or higher, or at least seven storeys tall, with two or more residential units. These must be registered with the Building Safety Regulator by 1 October 2023. Our building safety team has continued to oversee the programme of intrusive fire safety surveys to identify any concerns, and the remedial action we will need to take to ensure we comply with the changes in legislation. This work will continue to be of paramount importance and will see similar significant investment over the next two years.



Customer Voice



This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at listening to and empowering its customers.

Our customers play an essential role in helping us improve the services we provide, so we are committed to ensuring that their voices are heard. By providing feedback, our customers help to transform our services and the experience they have with us. We know that listening to our customers through general feedback, as well as complaints and compliments, and understanding what matters to them, helps us to improve our services and create better places to live.

Our 'Insight' customer scrutiny group was formed in April 2014. It meets on a regular basis to gather feedback and review Great Places' services. Insight has completed reviews for a range of areas across the business over the years, including recent reviews of the complaints handling process and communications. Insight carries out in-depth reviews into our services and engages with customers and colleagues, organising surveys, workshops and calls to customers. The group has a dedicated page on the Great Places website and reports back its findings to customers through video presentations published on the page. Insight also updates customers through Great Places' regular monthly e-newsletters and our bi-annual customer magazine, My Great Place. As an organisation we take on board the findings of Insight reviews and make changes to help develop and improve services.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, Insight reviewed the following services:

- **Customer feedback** – complaints handling August 2022
- **Meaningful information** – The Social Housing White Paper / Tenant Satisfaction Measures December 2022
- **Customer experience of new-build properties** March 2023

Great Places engages with customers on a variety of topics using a co-design approach that ensures we understand what is important to customers. Recent examples of review topics include our Grounds Maintenance service, compensation policy review, and anti-social behaviour. Customer feedback is then used to review services and make improvements. A pilot tenant satisfaction survey last year highlighted repairs, with 71% of residents expressing satisfaction with the service. In March 2023, we introduced an upgraded appointment scheduling system to improve integration with our CRM system.

We listen to our customers' feedback and as a result we have aimed to improve communication for customer appointments. We have also designed a new move-in survey based on feedback from customers. This is now used to measure the

satisfaction and quality of any homes our customers move in to. Their feedback is reported and monitored by the Allocation Service Excellence group who respond to any dis-satisfaction. It is important to ensure the start of a customer's journey meets expectations.

In March 2023, Great Places launched its new digital engagement platform, Our Voice. This new platform enables customers to engage with Great Places on a variety of topics that can be general or more specific about their local area. It provides opportunities for customers to co-design services and help us to continue to listen, act on and respond to customer feedback. Some of the campaigns we have run include:

- How customers would like to be celebrated and recognised.
- Customers' views on our damp, mould and condensation information.
- What's important to customers if they need support from Great Places.
- Future planning in our anchor neighbourhoods.



We aim to promote the platform and create customer communities within it. We are excited to see this tool develop during 2023/24.

"I feel my small contributions are really valued. Since retiring from work, I've often thought all the knowledge and experience I had accumulated over many years was going to waste. Having some participation in Insight enables me to feel useful. It gives me great satisfaction that my contribution will help improve the quality of the service provided by Great Places."

Ruth - INSIGHT committee member

"Since joining the scrutiny group it has been great, I have learnt how things work around Great Places and they actually do listen to what we are saying and how things can be better. I can see the difference we are making in people's lives."

Lisa - INSIGHT committee member

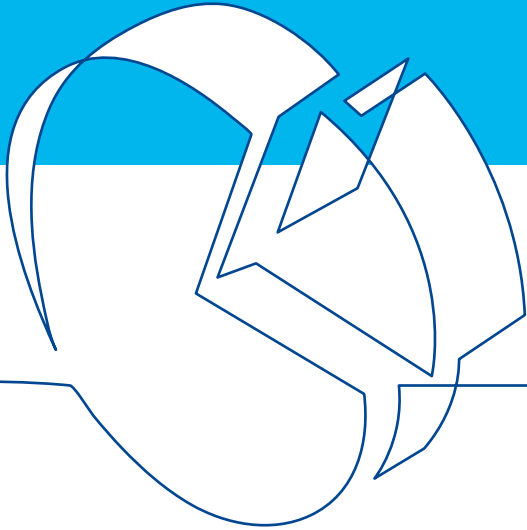
"The best thing about being a member of Great Places' Insight Group is being part of an active and passionate team of customer colleagues who offer their experience, knowledge and skills to review a range of Great Places' service areas, contributing to their development and improvement. These reviews are then presented by our team to the Great Places Board, who value our hard work and input towards the improvement of service delivery for all customers."

Sylvia - INSIGHT committee member

"Being involved with scrutiny has afforded me the privilege of getting to understand Great Places from a different perspective, while representing my fellow customers in improving services for us all."

Bev - INSIGHT committee member

Measuring Satisfaction



Customer satisfaction remains an important and high-profile performance measure at Great Places and has been one of our Critical Success Factors since these were introduced in 2014. As a member of the Institute of Customer Service (ICS), up until March 2022 we measured satisfaction on an ongoing basis using the ICS methodology. Customers who contact us were sent an SMS asking them to rate Great Places' overall services on a scale from 1-10 (1 being poor and 10 being good). The same questions were asked across 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 as well as allowing us to benchmark our performance with other housing providers, ICS members and other organisations outside the sector. The satisfaction scores for the previous two years were 7.3 in 2021/22 and 7.2 in 2020/21.

In 2022/23, considering the upcoming Tenant Satisfaction measures proposed by the RSH, we took the decision to move away from the transactional ICS survey and to introduce the perception-based survey that will become a regulatory requirement in 2023/24. The pilot saw us partner with research agency TLF, surveying over 1000 customers in the year. The result of the pilot saw Overall Satisfaction with the services Great Places provide at 69%.

As well as our headline satisfaction measure, we are also measuring customer satisfaction in several key areas including moving in and repairs-related satisfaction.

Great Places' Board has also set a target of achieving 70% in the Tenant Satisfaction Measure concerning overall satisfaction with the services we provide.

Handling Customer Complaints

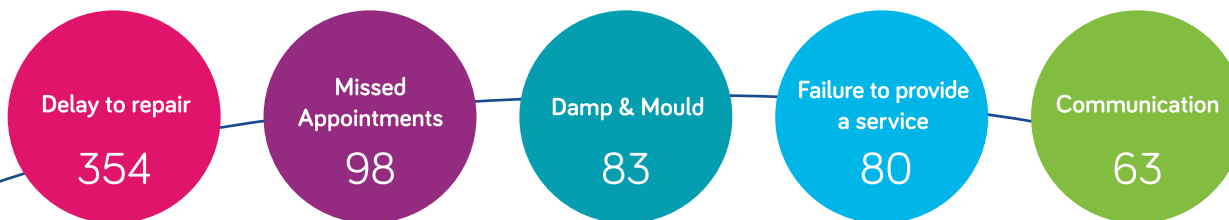


Our Customer Feedback Team has a robust complaints handling process that looks at what lessons can be learnt from complaints and compliments, sharing best practice around our services.

We always want to be accountable and honest about where we could have done better, so we publish data on complaints in our magazines, digital bulletins and on the website. Over the 2022/23 period, we saw an increase in complaints. We have faced some tough challenges throughout the 2022/23 financial year, with added pressure on our repairs service, issues with supply chains and challenges around recruitment, but we are working harder than ever to ensure that we deliver the services our customers expect.

Total complaints from 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023 were 921 (this includes stage 1 & 2) compared with 434 for the same period the previous year.

The Top 5 areas we received the most complaints around, from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, were:



	Number of Housing Ombudsman Service referrals	% of total complaints	Service failures upheld	Maladministration upheld
2022/23	17	1.8%	5	4
2021/22	6	4.1%	9	1

Of the 921 complaints the majority (96.3%) were dealt with at the first stage of our complaints process with only 41 (3.7%) being progressed to Stage 2.

We want to make it as easy as possible for customers to share their feedback with us and feel confident in doing so. To make the process easier for customers, we have created a new animation resource which explains how to share feedback via our complaints process.

Between April 2022 to March 2023, Great Places received seventeen Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) cases. Fourteen cases were closed during this period although some of these cases dated back to 2020/21.

As a result of customer feedback from complaints Great Places has reviewed communication for reporting repairs. This has resulted in an upgrade to our scheduling system and improved integration with our new CRM system to improve appointment planning for customers. We provided additional training on neuro-diversity to support colleagues and customers to ensure we tailor our customers' experiences.

As a result of negative determinations we have reviewed our Compensation Policy. We have also recommended a review of our decant policy following a number of cases involving complex repairs. The repair service has also introduced a repair project team to manage the more complex cases, ensuring the customer has a single point of contact to keep them updated throughout their experience. In addition, we have started recruitment to a customer complaints group who will support Great Places to review future determinations and our compliance with the HOS code.

CASE STUDY - Spotlight on Repairs

We know the speed and quality of our repairs service is important to our customers, with our Repairs Team receiving the highest number of customer compliments. Our Tenant Satisfaction Measure pilot survey undertaken in February 2022/23 also told us that 71% of customers asked are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with our service. However, we know we don't always get things right first time.

Complaints in this area are generally around the time taken to complete a repair, which is usually due to additional work and appointments that are required to complete the work we need to do in the home to fix the problem. We have faced several challenges over the last financial year, however we are committed to working with customers to put things right if they are unhappy with the service they receive.



Why have we seen an increase in complaints in this area?

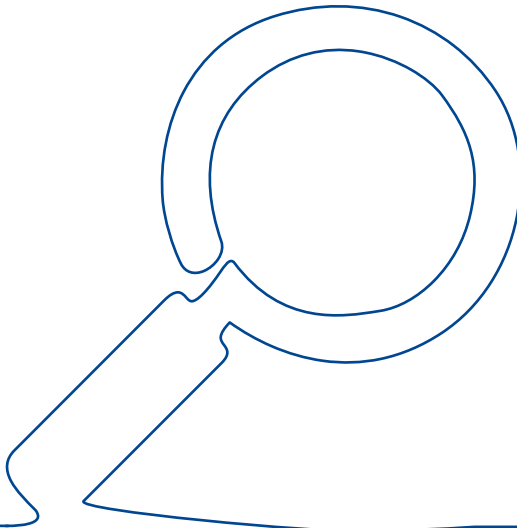
The increase in complaints has been due to a number of factors including:

- Increased demand for damp and mould inspections following a customer campaign to report existing issues, and a greater focus and scrutiny on the issue across the housing sector. This has seen us experience a 550% increase in damp and mould inspection requests since September 2022.
- Challenges of the current labour market in recruiting the numbers of experienced and skilled colleagues to deliver services to cope with increased demand.
- Delays in materials supply.
- Sub contractor capacity.
- The introduction of our new internal systems, which will result in a better service offer to customers but will take time to embed.

What are we doing about it?

In response we have put a plan in place to improve satisfaction with our repairs offer. This includes:

- Recruiting new colleagues to Great Places so we can attend more repairs appointments within our agreed timescales.
- Having dedicated Property Services Managers who can provide technical guidance and support to ensure repairs are completed efficiently and to a high standard.
- Being clear with customers about our timescales for repairs, attending emergency repairs within 24 hours and more routine repairs within 20 working days; we have recently published our customer commitments which make clear to customers how long services will take to deliver.
- Enhancing our targets for attendance for requests around damp and mould. Customers should now expect an appointment within a maximum of ten working days of reporting.
- Reviewing our customer satisfaction feedback and learning from this to continue to improve our service.



Customer Support



This theme seeks to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives that a housing provider runs to support individual customers.

Great Places is more than just a social landlord. Through our profit-for-purpose model, we are committed to investing in our communities and helping our customers to live well. We work with partners to tackle homelessness through initiatives such as Greater Manchester Housing First and the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme, as well as delivering a range of commissioned support services and our own Tenancy Coach service.

We're committed to investing money and resources into our communities to enhance skills. Our dedicated Community Investment Team provides a range of support – from supporting customers to enhance their skills, build aspirations and/or gain employment to assisting to better manage their finances and help them increase their income. Through a combination of directly delivered services and working with a range of organisations we support customers into employment, training and volunteering opportunities, recognising the importance of decent, stable employment in creating resilient households and neighbourhoods.

From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023:

Supported over 1000 people into employment, training and volunteering

70 customers supported through our Boss-It-self-employment programme

Launched a Training Academy providing free courses to customers

Established a be-friending service for our vulnerable and isolated customers

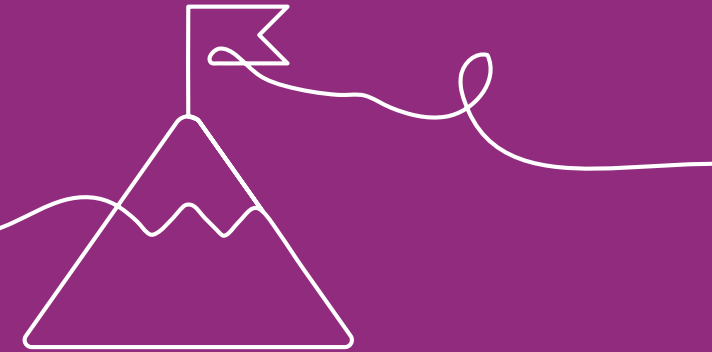
CASE STUDY - Tierra's Story

Our Employability Team started supporting Tierra at our Olivia Lodge scheme, in late 2021. Olivia Lodge provides accommodation and support for young women aged between 16-25, who are either pregnant or have children aged five and under and looks to support them to settle into their own homes and provide them with the necessary skills and support to sustain a tenancy. At the time, Tierra had a little boy who was a year old and was keen to look at getting a part time job and start thinking about college applications. She had thoughts of health and social care courses.

Gill Rimmer from our Employability Team met with Tierra a few times, and she discussed various options including apprenticeships. Tierra was keen to have a career long-term and provide for her son. Gill helped her update her CV and referred her to One Manchester who had a 'green job' initiative which was mostly part-time. In the end Tierra got a part-time job in a hotel, and Great Places was also able to support her by putting some money towards driving lessons.

Tierra met Gill again in February 2023 as she was keen to talk about her college aspirations again and explore pathways into finance. Gill was able to support her to apply for a college course in accounts, and she encouraged her to explore this career pathway by signing up for a work placement in Great Places' finance department.

Tierra has now completed her level one accounts course at college, gaining 90% in her exam, and completed a work placement, one day a week, with the Finance Team at Great Places. Tierra's placement went well, and she is moving on to her level 2 accounts course in autumn 2023.



Supporting customers through tough times

The financial impact of Covid and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis have had a detrimental impact on our customers, and we continue to make significant efforts to support them through this extremely challenging period.

The Tenancy Coach Support Service empowers our customers so that they can sustain their tenancies and become more independent and resilient, allowing them to thrive within our communities. We support and encourage customers to work with local services and partners who can provide their specialist knowledge and expertise. The service supports our most vulnerable customers including those with complex needs, mental and physical health needs, substance addictions and those experiencing financial hardship or facing poverty.

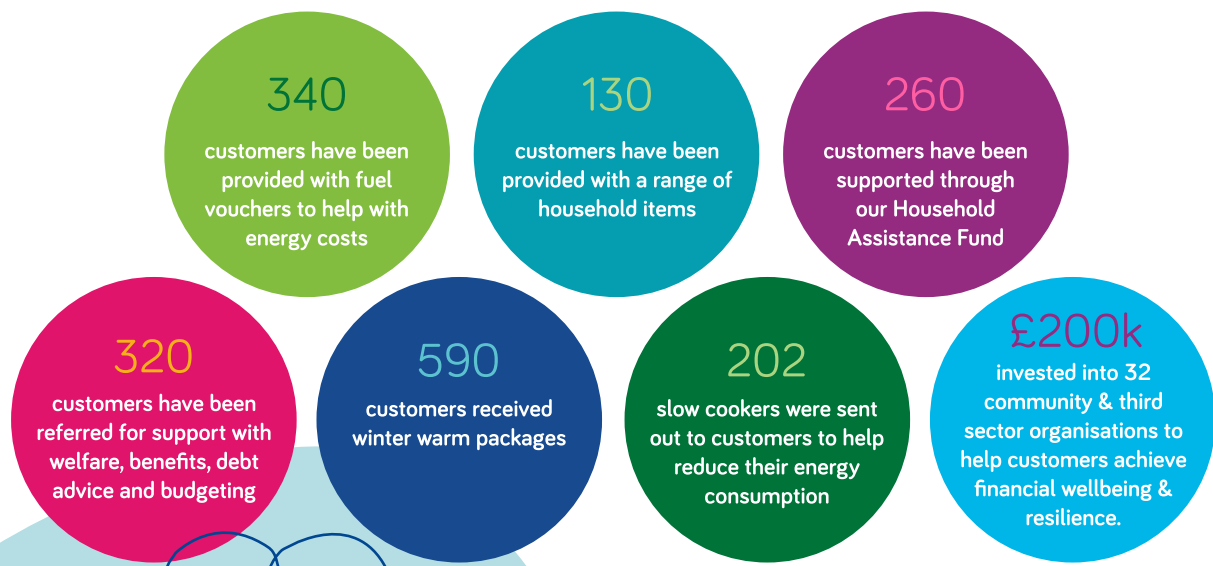
In the last year the service:

- Received 515 referrals
- Achieved a 97% average sustainment rate for customers who exited the service six months previously
- Ensured an 84% average tenancy sustainment rate for customers who exited the service 12 months previously
- Secured over £88k in financial returns for our customers
- Generated over £606k in social value
- Supported 95 customers with complex needs

Alongside our Tenancy Coach Support Service, our Financial Resilience Team supports customers to maximise their income, reduce their outgoings and manage their finances, enabling them to feed their families and heat their homes. With heavy promotion of customer support our Financial Resilience Team continues to support and empower our customers, giving them advice and guidance to help manage and maintain their finances through challenging times.



From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023:



From April 2022 to March 2023 the team obtained £57k in additional income for customers and supported them with £50k of emergency financial support for costs such as fuel, food, white goods and school uniforms through our Household Assistance Fund.

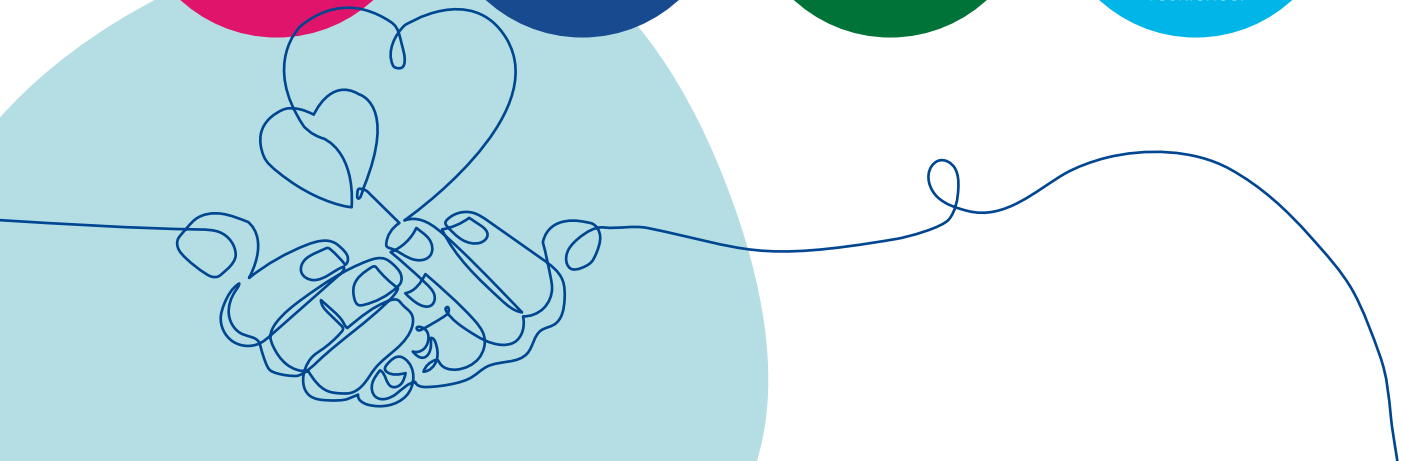
In addition, we invested £100k to help new customers sustain their tenancies with household essentials.

In the same period our Greater Together Fund, established initially in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, has provided over £200k of support (and funding from partners) to 32 community-based projects and initiatives, providing a lifeline to customers and making a significant difference to their lives.

Our support for customers in, or close to fuel poverty has also continued to grow over the last year. Programmes in place to increase the physical efficiency of homes continue to look to protect customers against cold homes and high energy bill costs.

We continue to support customers who may need advice and support (or look to signpost to partners that can provide support).

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



CASE STUDIES

GREAT PLACES SCORE A HIT WITH EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMME

Great Places has teamed up with Burnley FC and UK Youth to help vulnerable young people into work via the Hatch programme. Hatch is an employability programme, run in partnership with KFC, which provides workshops and paid work experience placements for young people aged 16-25 who are not in education employment or training, or are at risk of being so.

Great Places has provided £15,000 to fund the programme in 2023 and will provide further support via More Positive Together to those who sign up to the programme. The first group of youngsters who recently completed the six-week course went into work with KFC and other local employers such as fashion house Boohoo.

Claire Knight, from Burnley FC in the Community, said that the programme had been a success so far after the first group of young people had completed the initial phase of the programme. She said: "We have a long relationship with Great Places with our employability work for which we are grateful. The first cohort has done extremely well, and we recently held a celebration event at Turf Moor to toast their achievements. The programme has been so crucial in helping young people who were struggling to find a way into work, and we are so proud to see people get into work and start to build a career."

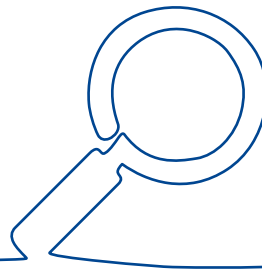


GREAT PLACES BACKS THE COMMUNITY LOCKER PROJECT IN BOLTON

Great Places has donated £3,500 to a Bolton-based Community Locker project that serves as a hub for struggling families to buy school essentials for their children without breaking the bank. The community shop offers reduced or free school supplies. Items sold include most of what children need at school, including uniforms, shoes, coats, trainers, PE kits, maths sets and calculators, stationery, lunch boxes, water bottles and backpacks.

The Community Locker in Brightmet is run by two mums. They started the group when the cost-of-living crisis began to grow.

This service ensures that families most in need receive the support free of charge and any self-referrals can access the items at minimal cost. For example, a full pre-loved uniform including shoes, coat and socks can be purchased for under £3. It will help to alleviate some of the pressure and ensure children can attend school feeling comfortable, clean, and confident with the items they have.



GREAT PLACES' HELPS MEROSWORLD FOUNDATION SECURE £7,700 TO COMBAT KNIFE CRIME

Great Places' Community Investment Team has helped a local knife crime charity secure much-needed funds to support its work in tackling knife crime in Greater Manchester. With the support of Great Places, the Merosworld Foundation a charity created by the family of schoolboy Rhamero West, the victim of a fatal stabbing in Trafford in September 2021, secured a total of £7,700. £5,000 from Manchester City Council's Youth and Play Investment Fund will support a youth hub running from The Place in Fallowfield every Friday night. The Hub offers kids and teenagers somewhere to relax, play and socialise with others in a safe environment. The remaining £2,700, from The Greater Manchester High Sheriff's Police Trust, will be used to instal more emergency bleed safety cabinets in locations around Manchester.

These cabinets can be used to provide knife crime victims with life-saving support while waiting for emergency response teams and can be accessed using a code from 999 operators. The funding support is part of Great Places' ongoing work to combat knife crime, which included commissioning a schools documentary highlighting the impact of knife crime created by young people from Salford.



Placemaking



This theme seeks to highlight the wider set of activities that housing providers undertake to create well-designed homes and places that meet local needs and provide great places for people to live and enjoy.

We continue to take a holistic approach to neighbourhood planning. In 2022/23 we appointed a Regeneration Project Director to lead on the organisation's regeneration activity and focus on the delivery of future masterplans for our anchor neighbourhoods, areas where we have the greatest density of homes. The business-wide role complements the work colleagues are already delivering. We will look to build in a regeneration approach to our way of working, with a roadmap to guide us in delivering real, measurable outcomes for customers, communities and our organisation. The plans, which are currently being updated in consultation with customers and stakeholders, will set out our objectives and commitments to these neighbourhoods across our community investment, development, assets and housing management services.

Our Community Investment Team's dedicated Place and Regeneration Team continues to work across our communities to connect customers to local opportunities and develop partnerships with the VCSE sector. Its work is supported by a dedicated fundraising service which looks to build the capacity of our VCSE partners by drawing down external funding.

In 2022/23 we secured £1.1 million of funding for organisations to deliver support services. Our fundraising work continues to be complemented by our Resilience Fund launched in 2020. To date £200,000 has been invested, together with our supply partners who have contributed more than 300 hours of support-in-kind to our communities, as well as creating 16 apprenticeships and 62 weeks of work experience for residents.



CASE STUDIES

YOUTH ELEMENTS OPEN THEIR FIRST ONE DROP YOUTH STOP IN NORTHMOOR

Manchester-based social enterprise, Youth Elements CIC, recently celebrated the opening of its first youth hub at the Cooperative building in our Northmoor Anchor Neighbourhood. Youth Elements CIC was set up by Amina Waldron in 2011 to help young people aged 12 to 24 make the most of their potential. It successfully secured its new Longsight base following a campaign by Great Places and Northmoor customers to find occupants for our two newly refurbished retail units at the centre on Northmoor Road. The idea was to identify organisations that could offer something different to the community, and Youth Elements was selected, following a shortlisting, presentation with panel and consultation with the residents.

The new space is the team of youth workers' first fixed base. The One Stop Youth Drop will provide a vital community hub to run and host accredited training, a variety of informal education groups and after school structured personal development workshops to help improve confidence, social skills, physical and mental health and employment prospects of young people in the local area. Other sessions will include karate, boxing and media workshops.

Commenting on the launch of its new base, Amina Waldron, Founder and CEO of Youth Elements, said: "We are filled with excitement. I know the next few years ahead working with the young people of Longsight will empower, inspire and encourage them to be the best version of themselves."

Rosie Longden, Head of Community Investment at Great Places, added: "We're delighted to welcome Youth Elements to their new home. Our customers in Northmoor were keen to see additional facilities for younger members of the community. Amina and the Youth Elements team will be a welcome addition, providing a versatile youth space for a range of activities and training to help young people in the area develop valuable skills and confidence."



BUDDING YOUNG SCIENTISTS TREATED TO SUBLIME SCIENCE AT THE WELCOME CAFÉ

Future scientific whizz kids from our Longridge and Shaw Heath Anchor Neighbourhood were recently treated to a fun afternoon of discovery experiments at a Sublime Science session organised by our Community Investment Team. The holiday activity session at The Welcome Café in Longridge saw children getting stuck into a variety of scientific activities, from making slime to making their own sweets. They also had the chance to watch their host, Jurassic Joe, perform a range of fun experiments including smoky bubbles and fizzing potions.

The Sublime Science session is part of a wider project called Transformers which has been piloted in partnership with The Welcome. The programme looks to provide a variety of activities designed to complement, enrich and broaden the local education offer, giving children in the neighbourhood the chance to explore the subjects of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) in a fun way for free.

Other Transformers activities have included a coding workshop, junk robot making and a trip to The National Children's Museum, Eureka.

Commenting on the session, Rebecca Banks from our Community Investment Team said: "Low aspiration amongst young people in our community has been identified by partners as a barrier to accessing further education and skilled employment. We hope these experiences will ignite a spark of interest in children, encouraging them to have fun whilst learning. "The Transformers project gives children the chance to think about STEM-related careers, raising their aspirations and challenging their perceptions about what is available to them."

The programme is free and open to any children aged 6 to 12 years who live in the Longridge and Shaw Heath neighbourhood.





Environmental

Climate Change



This theme seeks to assess how the activities of the housing provider are impacting on climate change and how they are mitigating the physical risks of climate change.

Great Places works hard to reduce the impact of its communities and day-to-day operations on the environment. We have a Carbon Management Strategy in place to reduce the environmental impact across the business and focus on the key areas where our emissions are the greatest to realise our corporate commitment to become a carbon-neutral business by 2038.

Extreme weather events, an outcome of climate change and the burning of fossil fuels, are already impacting on our customers, colleagues and stakeholders. We continue to look at how we can play our part in minimising energy usage across the business and our homes, taking positive and substantial steps to reduce emissions and lead by example.

The following information shows our EPC ratings for our existing homes.

EPC ratings for our existing homes
(As at 31/3/23)

A- 80
B- 4661
C- 7965
D- 3113
E- 273

All our new homes for the last financial year (2022/23) have achieved a minimum EPC rating of B.

Our retrofit programme remains an important part of Great Places' work to meet the environmental commitments outlined in our Corporate Plan. Great Places has targeted 3,500 homes that fall below an EPC C rating and is committed to getting these to this standard by 2028. The team remains focused on improving the energy performance ratings to an C across all our homes. In the past 12 months this has seen us reduce the number of homes with a rating below C from 3446 to 3386. True to our commitment to look to how we can take advantage of Government funding to improve energy efficiency in people's homes, we also successfully secured £1.4 million in funding from Wave 2.1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which will allow us to fund a range of works to get an additional 396 homes in Greater Manchester and Sheffield to a C rating in the next two years.

Heat Networks are also set to become a key focus for social landlords. Ahead of the Ofgem regulation we appointed Chirpy Heat, a specialist consultancy, to look at our policies, billing, administration and procedures and produce reports on their findings with recommended actions. From this review an action plan is being developed and a Heat Network Manager and a Metering & Billing Co-ordinator will be recruited.

In 2021/22 Great Places secured funding to carry out an optimisation study of the Richmond Park Heat Networks, 9 communal boilers serving 299 customers in Sheffield. During the 2022/23 financial year we have built on this and specialist consultancy Fairheat has produced studies for the implementation of the recommendations, which will improve efficiency and lower costs for customers, as well as presenting potential decarbonisation options. The total cost of these works is estimated to exceed £3 million and we have successfully secured 50% funding for these improvements from the Department of Energy Security & Net Zero. Drawing on the recommendations from their HNES Demonstrator funded optimisation study, the £1.6 million will be used to remedy high heat loss issues, bad insulation and old equipment. A further heat network optimisation study is to take place at Elk View Court in Blackpool, funded by Government. Another bid for funding for a study for Hutton Lodge in Manchester has also been made and we await a decision.

Scope 1, 2 and 3 Greenhouse Gas emissions

Great Places uses the Carbon Workbook calculator and methodology developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to establish its carbon footprint for the financial year.

Great Places Housing Group Carbon Emissions 2022/23

Scope	Source	Carbon Emissions (CO2e)
Scope 1	Great Places directly used gas consumption, Fleet Consumption, Fugitive Emissions	2,688.26
Scope 2	Electricity, 3rd Party District Heating	1,135.62
Scope 3	Existing Stock, New Build, Grey Fleet, Electricity Transmission & Distribution, 3rd Party District Heating Distribution	89,602.46
	Total emissions	93,426.33





What energy efficiency actions has Great Places undertaken in the last 12 months?

In the past year we've undertaken the following:

- We have continued to look to realise our ongoing strategic objective to plant a tree for every property in our portfolio that has not yet been upgraded to achieve a minimum EPC C rating. During 2022/23 through our partnership with Tree Nation we planted 3,400 trees in the following projects:

- Community Tree Planting, UK
- Forest Garden Program, Senegal
- Plant to Stop Poverty, Tanzania
- Wildfire Recovery, California, USA
- Community Forest Sowing, Guinea

- Our Affordable Development Team has reviewed our energy-efficiency baseline specifications for new homes to exceed the requirements of Building Regulations Parts F L O and S and commence our step change to ensure Great Places' future Development Programme is ready to meet the Future Homes Standard and delivery of net-zero-carbon homes. Through engagement with contractors and other housing professionals we have also developed a baseline specification which includes typical standard details for thermal junctions and elemental build-ups. To limit the need to incorporate excess renewables or introduce increasing build complexity it is key to limit thermal bridging through design details which must be delivered on site.
- Build-ups are based on readily available materials and construction methods and consider the requirements of increasing thermal performance and airtightness whilst limiting increased wall thicknesses and associated land take. Although based on timber frame construction the specification sets performance requirements which can be met by any construction typology.

Mitigating climate risks

As the climate changes, mitigating risks of overheating and flooding across our housing and land portfolio is an integral part of Great Places' sustainability plan. We are committed to meeting this challenge, providing solutions to alleviate these risks.

When designing new developments, flood risk and overheating are key considerations in our housing and estate design.

All of 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.

Surface water is discharged from site via routes and discharge rates as agreed with the local flood authority and statutory water authority; where required, discharge rates are attenuated using oversized pipes, crates, swales or balancing ponds/basins.

To reduce surface water run off we have used permeable paving tarmac. Green roofs are being reviewed as an opportunity to reduce discharge rates through natural attenuation of rain water, whilst also contributing to a reduction in overheating risk and an increase in bio-diversity net gain.

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.

Our Employers Requirements call for the use of dynamic modelling which involves building the development in a 3D space through a software called IES, and which allows much more data to be assigned to the file to assess the risk of overheating. We have established that this is the best route to assess each home on each site to ensure the data and mitigation measures are as accurate as possible.

Talking to customers about ventilation, heating, and recycling

Our customers play a vital role in helping us realise our aspiration to become a more environmentally sustainable and responsible organisation.

Our frontline colleagues and website look to provide our customers with advice and guidance on reducing energy use and using it as efficiently as possible. Along with guides on energy saving in the home, the website also has links for customers to access to find out how to best operate their heating systems and any new technology installed. Our website also includes a dedicated damp and mould page which includes information on how to reduce damp and condensation in homes.

When customers move into our new-build properties they receive a home user guide (HUG), available in a hard copy and digital versions. The HUG provides details of the features of the home including information on how to operate the mechanical ventilation and heating and information on waste disposal. All new customers receive a home demonstration which runs through the ways to operate and manage the home and the internal environment effectively.

This is followed up by further contact from the Development Team two weeks later once residents have had time to settle into their new home. Supplemental guides include information on boiler care and repairs reporting information and lawn care. A guide to drainage also encourages customers not to block drains by flushing inappropriate products down drains, affecting water usage and potentially causing blockages and damp.

CASE STUDY - Downley Drive

In October 2022 Great Places hosted Shadow Chancellor, Rachel Reeves on a tour of New Islington and Ancoats in Manchester, as part of a visit to the region to hear about Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA's) commitment to build 30,000 zero-carbon social rented homes by 2038.

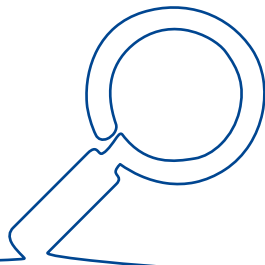
Our Chief Executive, Matthew Harrison and Executive Director of Growth, Helen Spencer hosted the Shadow Chancellor on a walking tour of our new developments at Downley Drive, New Islington, and The Ancoats Dispensary. They were joined by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, Manchester Central MP Lucy Powell, and Manchester City Council Leader Bev Craig.

During the tour, the senior team shared our plans for the new developments at the Ancoats Dispensary, which is now on site and will deliver 39 apartments for affordable rent, and our first low-carbon development of 68 homes for social rent and shared ownership at Downley Drive.

Downley Drive will consist of 23 two and three-bedroom houses available for shared ownership, and 45 one and two-bedroom apartments available for social rent. The site was acquired from Manchester City Council and is part-funded by Homes England through Great Places' latest Homes England Strategic Partnership.

Working with contractors Rowlinson Constructions Ltd, the development looks to combine high-quality design with low carbon sustainability.

Key features include air source heat pumps, enhanced insulation, mechanical heat recovery and a solar panel array on the apartments. The development will also include parking with electric vehicle charging points and cycle stores. The first homes are to be completed from Autumn 2023.



Ecology



This theme seeks to assess how the housing provider is protecting the local environment and ecology.

Biodiversity net gain, flood management and carbon neutrality are integral parts of our environmental sustainability planning.

Space and promoting biodiversity on or near our homes

The profile of green spaces and biodiversity continues to increase, and Great Places continues to work to ensure our communities have green spaces and that we enhance the biodiversity in these areas.

This has been highlighted in new developments such as our profit-for-purpose company Cube Homes' Shire Hill development in Glossop where, working with Great Places, the team is looking to deliver biodiversity net gain on the site that includes 13 acres of farmland. The objective is to improve the biodiversity and develop the farmland into combined grazing pastures and a meadow which can be enjoyed by residents and the local community. The team is working with ecologists to review the current ecological value and to develop proposals for suitable uplift.

We look to deliver increased biodiversity through the following hierarchy:

1. Avoiding biodiversity loss
2. Minimisation of impact
3. Restoration of habitat delivered on site
4. Delivering in the immediate community
5. Offsetting through Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Bank/ offsite contributions as last resort

A preliminary ecological appraisal and a subsequent BNG assessment are undertaken for each development site to establish the extent of biodiversity impact because of developing the land.

When considering the investment, required maintenance and any associated payments are factored in. Landscaping is specified in conjunction with our in-house grounds maintenance team to provide native species which will suit locations and context.

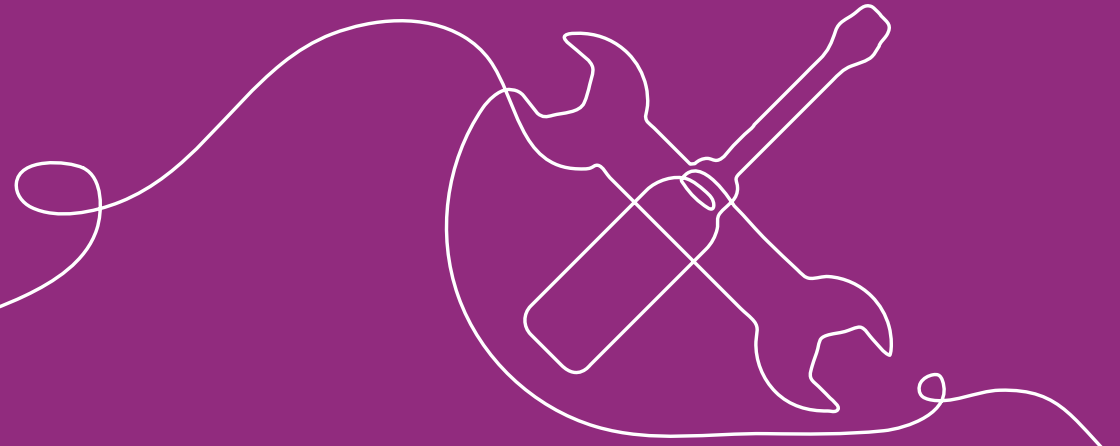
Physical interventions on or near homes are included where suitable and appropriate such as bee or swift bricks, hedgehog runs, bat boxes, sustainable drainage systems, habitat, clover or moss lawns instead of lawn grasses.

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.
- All parking areas linked to sustainable drainage systems are designed with fuel and oil separators to prevent contamination of water courses.
- Our building services systems are serviced and maintained in accordance with manufacturer recommendations to ensure they are performing effectively and efficiently.
- We have carried out extensive conditions surveys over the last year to ensure internal environment conditions within our customers' homes are effectively managed to limit the likelihood of damp and mould formation.

Resource Management



This theme looks to establish the extent to which the housing provider has a sustainable approach to materials in both the construction and management of properties.

Sustainability in the supply chain

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 and wear, and reduce frequency of replacement and waste. The Development Team reviews material specifications for all sites to deliver a minimum of 10% of construction material from reused and recycled content.

Waste Management

The Design Team works from project inception to identify 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. We work with site construction teams to target a zero-waste-to-landfill outcome.



Water Management

We are developing the strategy for good water management, to reduce domestic water use and demand to our homes.

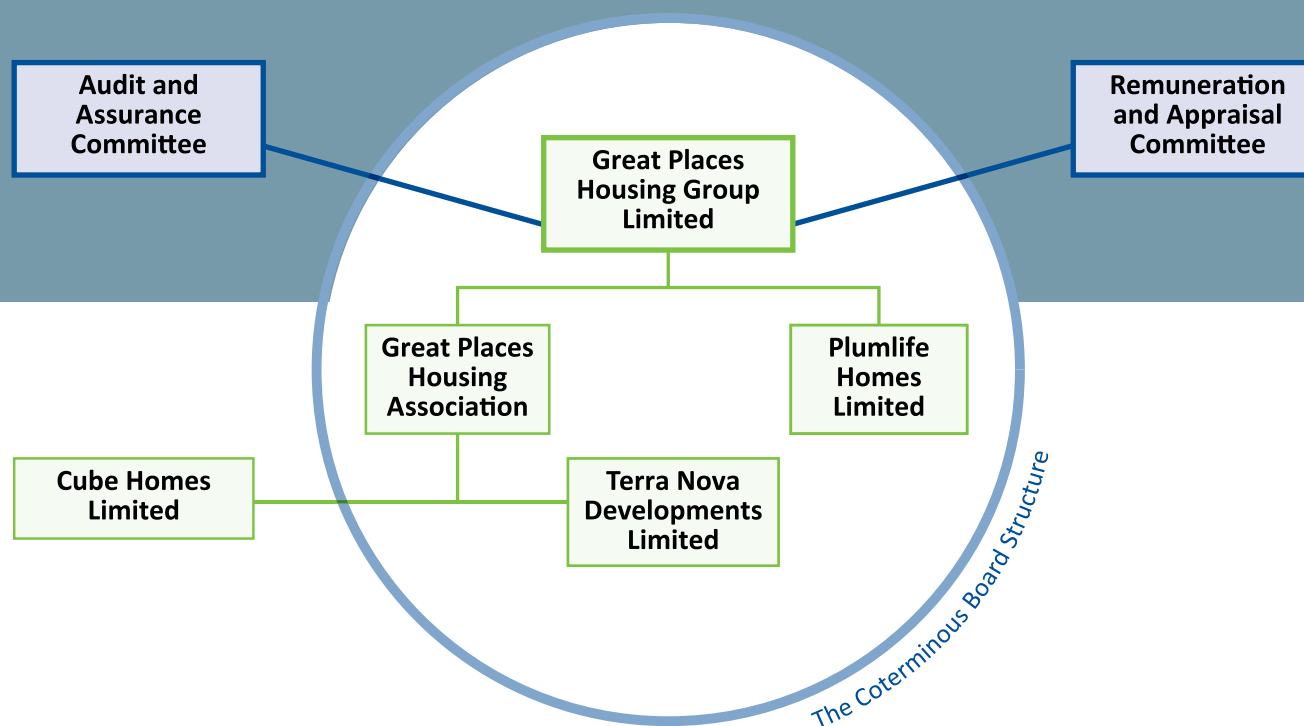
We have trialled leak detection sensors combined with automatic shut-off valves to reduce the impact of catastrophic escape of water within homes, with a view to incorporating this technology in new homes for the coming year. We are planning to do this for stock in operation and we already seek to reduce water demand for new build-homes as follows:

- **Showers** – water-efficient showerheads can save more than a third of water, and the energy to heat it.
- **Toilets** – dual-flush toilets should have a maximum flush of six litres to comply with the Water Fittings Regulations.
- **Appliances** – where installed we specify energy and water-efficient washing machines and dishwashers.
- **Taps** – aerators add air into the water, reducing water use by 30%
- **Gardens** – we promote the specification of drought-resistant plants and mulch within our ERs
- **Total consumption** – we target 110L of water used per person per day, with 125L maximum.



Governance

Structure and Governance



This theme seeks to assess the housing providers overall structure and approach to governance.

Great Places Housing Group Limited is a registered housing provider. Great Places Housing Group is also parent company to two other registered housing providers, Great Places Housing Association which is a not-for-profit registered provider, with charitable status, 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 that surpluses we generate are reinvested into new homes, and existing homes and services.

In December 2022, the Regulator for Social Housing regraded Great Places as part of a recent review cycle that saw around 50 other Registered Providers similarly regraded. We retain the highest possible Governance rating G1, and this is now accompanied by a compliant Financial Viability V2 rating. The economic environment in which the sector is operating has become significantly more challenging in recent months with rising inflation, rising interest rates, a cost-of-living crisis facing our customers and colleagues, as well as an uncertain housing market and supply chain challenges for our development, investment, and maintenance programmes. Despite this regrade, we remain financially robust. We will continue to balance our investment in new homes to tackle the housing crisis with the need to invest in existing properties to ensure our customers live in high-quality homes.

The regrade to V2 for so many in the sector reflects that riskier environment, however retaining our G1 grade demonstrates our strong Governance and Financial Management arrangements that allow those increased risks to be effectively managed. Great Places has adopted and is compliant with the National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020.

Great Places has not been subject to any regulatory enforcement action over the past 12 months.

Risk Management



At Great Places, we recognise that risk management – whether this relates to positive (opportunity) or negative (threat) risks – is not only a regulatory requirement but is an integral 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. This involves approval of our Risk and Assurance Strategy and our Risk Appetite and ensuring that all decisions are made in line with this statement. 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 internal and external specialists as required.

Risk management and assurance are complimentary processes linked to the effective governance of the organisation. Risk management provides assurance to the Board that all material threats to the business have been identified, evaluated and mitigated. Mitigations may involve treating the risk to lessen the likelihood or impact, tolerating the risk as an unavoidable matter, transferring the risk to a third-party specialist, or terminating that activity that triggers the risk. Assurance sources provide confidence that controls are adequate and effective, and that mitigation plans are proportionate and offer good value for money. 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 assurance model and pulled together via our Assurance Map. Our risk management process is framed around three key stages: risk identification, risk assessment and risk mitigation.

The financial threats to the organisation brought about by the current operating and political environment require a sound, strategic approach to risk management. 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”, using control measures and mitigating activities to address these. Board is pivotal to these discussions and the determinations made around financial mitigation strategies.



Board and Trustees



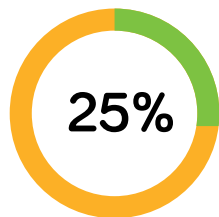
This theme seeks to assess the quality, suitability and performance of the board and trustees.



3/8 Great Places Housing Group Board members are female



2/6 Executive Team members are female



25% of Great Places' Board members have a disability



61 is the average age of Great Places Housing Group Board



53 is the average age of the Executive Team



2/8 of the Great Places' Board members identify as multicultural

The Group Board has eight non-executive directors (90% of the Board are non-executive) and one executive director (the Chief Executive). The roles of the Chairman of the Board and the Chief Executive are held by two different people.

Since adopting the NHF 2020 Code of Conduct and in line with best practice, all new non-executive directors are appointed for a maximum of two three-year terms. The Chair and the Cube Chair (Tony Davison and David Robinson) both exceeded the nine-year maximum limit as of September 2022. Whilst plans had been in place to ensure the recruitment of new Chairs into both of these roles well ahead of the September 2022 deadline, Great Places was at the time in early discussions regarding the merger with Mossclare St Vincent's, and it was agreed that it would be preferable for both Chairs to continue until the merger process was more advanced or completed. This would also enable consideration to be given to the skills of the new merged Board.

Declarations of interest are a standing agenda item at the start of every Board and committee meeting and a register of interests is maintained. If an interest is declared, the Board member may be asked to not participate in any vote on a given item and not contribute to any discussion on that item.

Two committees report to the board. These are the Audit and Assurance Committee and the Remuneration and Appraisal Committee; these comprise of three and four non-executive Board members respectively. The Audit and Assurance Committee includes a qualified accountant within its membership as well as significantly experienced senior housing professionals.

Our external auditors, Beever and Struthers, have been in place since November 2021, with Sue Hutchinson as our Lead Audit Partner. A policy regarding the independence of the external auditors is reviewed annually.

The Remuneration and Appraisal Committee has a wide range of responsibilities, including Board succession.

Staff Wellbeing



This theme seeks to assess how staff are supported and how their wellbeing is considered.

Our people are our biggest asset, and we consistently innovate our approach to attract, recruit, retain, develop, and engage colleagues. Staff wellbeing has always been a key priority for the group, with Great People a key element of our vision. We are committed to the health, wellbeing and engagement of colleagues, and we achieve this via streams from our people strategy and extensive colleague offer.

The group continues to have a number of targets around colleague wellbeing to mitigate the impact of a tough working environment and create a culture and working environment in which people want to stay and thrive.

To help achieve this we continue to have an ongoing programme focused on health and wellbeing initiatives and activities. We take a collaborative approach working with our colleagues to empower, educate and enable everyone to work towards making Great Places an even healthier place to work. In the past 12 months we've continued to look at how we can enhance our colleague wellbeing offer with a range of easy access support, initiatives and activities.

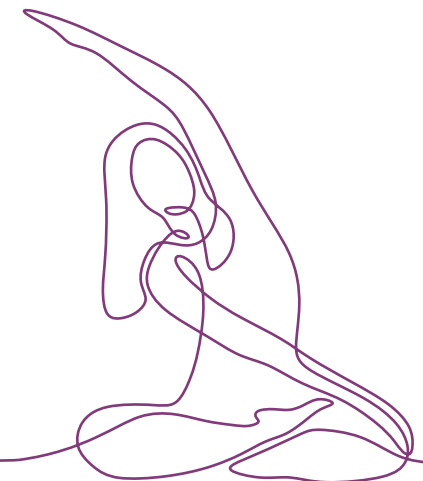
These include:

Marketplace and Wellbeing Hub

Our internal wellbeing hub on our 'Marketplace' platform allows colleagues to engage with the wide range of benefits we have on offer and save money with hundreds of retailers. This includes the wellbeing centre, colleague rewards and recognition, cycle to work scheme and smart tech.

WPA healthcare cash plan

Our WPA healthcare cash plan is paid for by Great Places for all permanent colleagues. This benefit allows colleagues to be reimbursed for money spent on dental treatment, eye tests, complimentary therapies and value-added discounts. Cover can also be increased to include family members for an additional monthly premium. WPA membership also gives colleagues access to a range of counselling services including a confidential helpline providing 24-hour, seven-days-a week support for medical, health and wellbeing advice, plus telephone counselling and 24 hour GP appointments via video call.



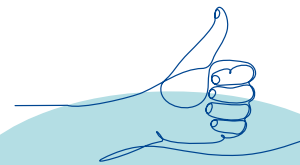
Wellbeing events programme



Our Learning and Development Team has built a comprehensive annual programme of events specifically focused on supporting colleagues' physical and mental wellbeing. The 2022/23 programme included:

- Colleague wellbeing walks at locations close to our offices in Manchester, Blackpool and Sheffield
- Yoga sessions
- Activities to coincide with National Houseplant Week – highlighting the positive effect of plants in the home
- Time to Talk day events on 2 February to encourage colleagues to reflect on the importance of having honest and open discussions on mental health
- Sessions on a range of health-related topics including anxiety, cancer awareness and work-life balance
- Six weeks of wellbeing – a workshop programme focusing on self-care and covering a range of subjects including building confidence and self-esteem, handling stress and burnout and building resilience
- A colleague 100 miles in March activity challenge competition

- The launch of an organisation-wide Wellbeing Champions network, to help support colleagues' wellbeing through raising awareness of wellbeing activities, promoting healthy lifestyles and positive mental health
- Rockfit fitness classes
- Wellbeing toolbox talks – a series of wellbeing sessions specifically designed and delivered to and by members of our field-based Repairs Teams
- A team of 30 colleagues (including our CEO) running the Manchester 10k, raising a total of £8,000 for the Trussell Trust



In our latest all-colleague survey

96% of colleagues strongly agreed or agreed that Great Places is dedicated to diversity and creates an inclusive environment

89% of colleagues stated they would recommend Great Places as an employer to their family, friends or network

Financial fitness

As an employer, we understand that many people, including our colleagues, are feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. In response, we ran a six-week campaign to support individuals across the business in building their resilience and becoming more financially fit. Sessions were focused around budgeting, savvy spending, pensions, energy and utilities, wellbeing, better banking, food shopping and cooking tips.

Reward and recognition

As a business, we know it's our colleagues who help us achieve great things. To recognise those who have gone above and beyond, and who live our values in their everyday work, we introduced a YouCount Rewards scheme. Under the scheme, colleagues who go the extra mile received £25 via Marketplace, our employee benefits scheme, and our '5 for 5' initiative in which colleagues receive a £5 Marketplace reward if they get a five-star review from a customer on the independent review platform Trustpilot.

Colleague voice groups

We have a diverse group of colleague voice networks which help to inform and shape our wellbeing offer. These include One Voice, Prism, Carers Count, Race and Religion Counts, Supporting the Change, and the Disability Network.

Great Places' approach to pay

Great Places is an accredited Living Wage Employer and pays a Real Living Wage to all colleagues, including Apprentices.

Our apprentices are paid the Real Living Wage **£10.90 per hour**

We're accredited with the following:



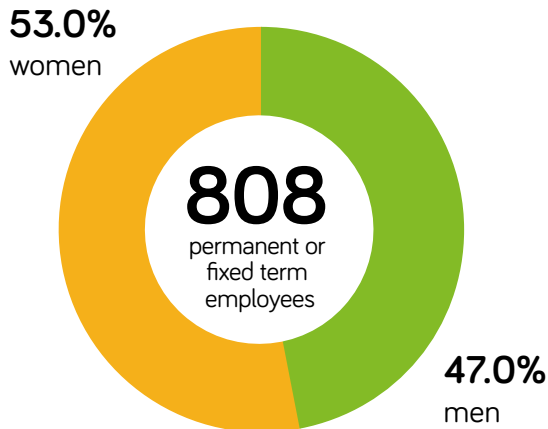
Gender pay gap

As at March 2023

Median: Women earn **2.0% less** than men

Mean: Women earn **3.9% less** than men

UK median gender pay gap (2022): women earn **8.3%** less than men



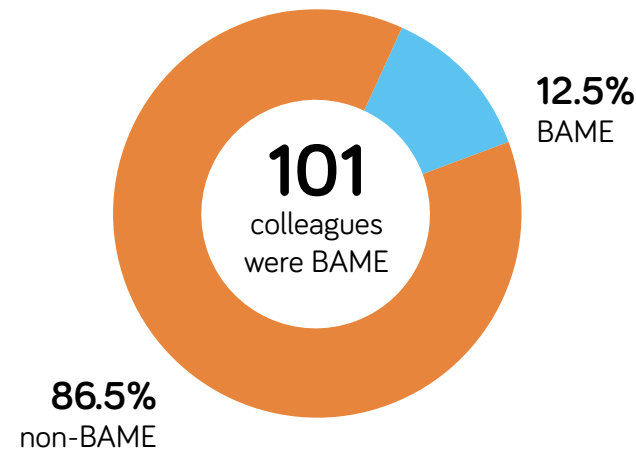
Ethnicity pay gap

As at March 2023

Median: BAME colleagues earn **18.0% less** than non-BAME colleagues

Mean: BAME colleagues earn **21.5% less** than non-BAME colleagues

UK baseline (January 2023): BAME colleagues earn **31.9%** less than non-BAME colleagues



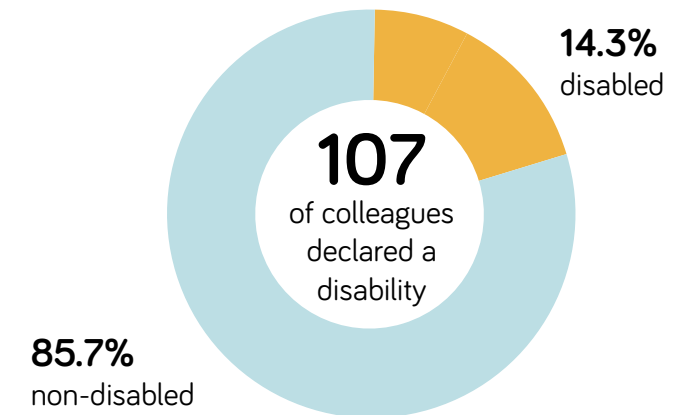
Disability pay gap

As at March 2023

Median: Disabled colleagues earn **7.6% less** than non-disabled colleagues

Mean: Disabled colleagues earn **9.0% less** than non-disabled colleagues

UK Baseline (2022): **17.2%** mean pay gap



CEO worker pay ratio

6.2:1 (2021/22*: 6.3:1) *Reported in 2021/22 as 7.0:1

Supply Chain Management



This theme seeks to assess if the housing provider procures responsibly.

Delivering a pioneering approach to social value remains a key priority for Great Places. Social value is fully considered in our contracts, influencing how we spend our money and how services are delivered.

Through social value we are:

- Developing community wealth through supply chain specialist support, volunteering and donations
- Utilising supply chain employment support and opportunities for Great Places' customers
- Working with local organisations that incorporate ethical and responsible practice to further the social impact of Great Places' spend
- Considering environmental impact when procuring goods and services, influencing the supply chain to transition to becoming net zero

Having specialist social value resource has allowed us to develop a tailored approach to each contract, so that the outcomes delivered are relevant and meaningful.

The last year has continued to be a challenging time for many of our customers and we have sought to provide a range of support for some of the most vulnerable customers and support organisations across our communities in the past 12 months. Much of this continues to be possible with the generous help of our valued suppliers.

This included:



CASE STUDY - Greater Together Foundation

In 2022/23 Our Greater Together Foundation provided £200,000 of funding for 32 projects across Great Places neighbourhoods in response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis.

Grants from £1k to £25K were made available to organisations that can support to alleviate poverty and improve employment skills for those facing financial hardship. The £200,000 is made up of contributions by seven suppliers from Great Places' Legal and Investment Framework.

A huge influx of applications were received, providing the opportunity to build relationships with new community partners. The support of Great Places goes further than just the money; Community Partnership Managers can advise on how to get the most impact out of a service and can identify other routes of funding.

Projects supported this year included:

£11,000 – Billy Project's Community Fridge, Blackburn

This project provides food, healthy eating tips and budgeting advice to vulnerable and disadvantaged women. Alongside this offer the centre provides women with a safe space to exercise and access other services around health, wellbeing and more specialised trauma-informed support.

£5,000 – Mancunian Way, Salford

Mancunian Way looks to engage disenfranchised young people who are at risk of becoming involved in crime, anti-social behaviour and putting themselves at risk by making poor choices. The funding supports to deliver detached youth work on the streets of Salford. The service operates from two vans equipped with Wi-Fi, media and food and drinks offering flexible support, responding to need. There is a promotion of personal responsibility for the benefit of the whole community.

£11,000 – Women's CHAI Project, Oldham

This project runs across Oldham from seven different venues, with the aim to empower and support women's wellbeing, ensuring mothers are better equipped to make a difference to their children, themselves and the community. The funding has supported the development of a digital project to bridge the digital divide, assisting with digital poverty and allowing women to be more independent. This will support women to access essential services with ease, such as benefit information, employment support and medical records while utilising digital skills to reduce social isolation.



Socially responsible resourcing

Further examples of considering social responsibility in the way we procure are:

- Living Wage – we commit to ensuring that all roles directly on our contracts are compliant with the Living Wage, including those in the supply chain
- Equality, diversity and inclusion – we require those working with us, or supplying services to us, to share our values and commitments, and to work to the same equality, diversity and inclusion principles as Great Places.

We also recognise the benefits that engaging with SME businesses can bring to both our organisation and the local economy. As such we look to make Great Places accessible to SME organisations. Examples of how we do this include:

- Proactively structuring our contract opportunities so that where appropriate contracts are split into lots to make them more accessible to SMEs
- Attending SME Meet the Buyer events
- Delivering sessions for SMEs on how to access our opportunities and how to be successful through our procurement processes

While we continue to face many challenges, we remain committed to delivering for our customers and communities, and keeping the promises outlined in our Customer Commitments.

We hope you found our report interesting and that it demonstrates our commitment to improving our ESG performance and reporting on this transparently.

If you are an investor and have any questions or feedback, please get in touch with treasury@greatplaces.org.uk. If you are a customer, please contact communications@greatplaces.org.uk

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Great Places Housing Group includes three registered Housing providers:

Great Places Housing Group:
Co-operative and Community Benefit Society
(FCA) No 30045R
Regulator of Social Housing No L4465

Great Places Housing Association:
Co-operative and Community Benefit Society
(FCA) No 19564R
Regulator of Social Housing No L1230

Plumlife Homes Limited:
Co-operative and Community Benefit Society
(FCA) No 23202R
Regulator of Social Housing No SL3224

Registered Address for the Group:
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great
places
HOUSING GROUP

