



Transforming lives since 1928

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 Riverside

Annual Report to Customers 2018



Welcome to our Annual Report to Customers for 2018

This annual report sets out how we have performed over the last year, as we continually work to ensure we are providing good value for money.

This has been an important year for Riverside. As well as it being our 90th birthday, we have launched a new plan which sets out our ambition to improve services to customers, regenerate some of our more challenging neighbourhoods and build more affordable homes than ever. We believe we are making progress and this report shows you how:

- your satisfaction with value for money is increasing but we still have further to go
- our costs are coming down
- many of you are paying less, as average rents continue to fall.

Last year we told you that we are transforming the way we deliver services: by increasing the number of staff working in neighbourhoods; investing in better technology; and rolling out new ways to serve you online. This has led to some teething problems as we get used to new ways of working. You can see this in the small drop in performance in some of the things we measure, such as answering calls and keeping appointments. I apologise for this, but we are confident that the changes we are making will improve the way we serve you in the longer term.

Doing things more cost effectively means that we have more money to invest – both in improving your homes and building new ones to help solve the nation’s housing crisis. Last year we spent more than £35m on home improvements and broke our record by building 845 new homes for rent, shared ownership and sale.

On the opposite page, you can see how we spend the rent we receive and your views about value for money. The rest of the report looks at our performance in more detail, using the standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

I hope you find this report useful and informative.

Max Steinberg CBE, Riverside Group Chair

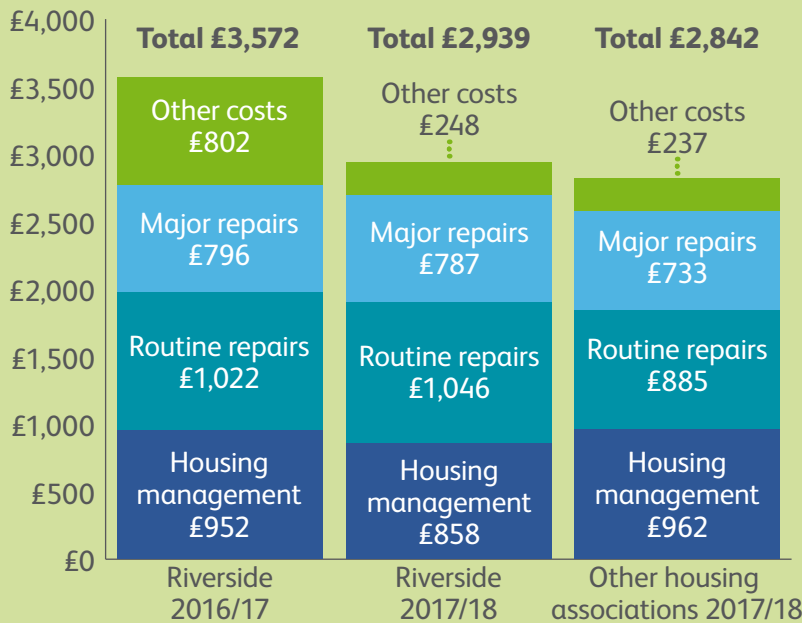


To help us compare how we are doing, we share information about our performance with a group of 62 housing associations of a similar type and size. We compare ourselves to the lowest, average and highest performers. We use the latest available published information.

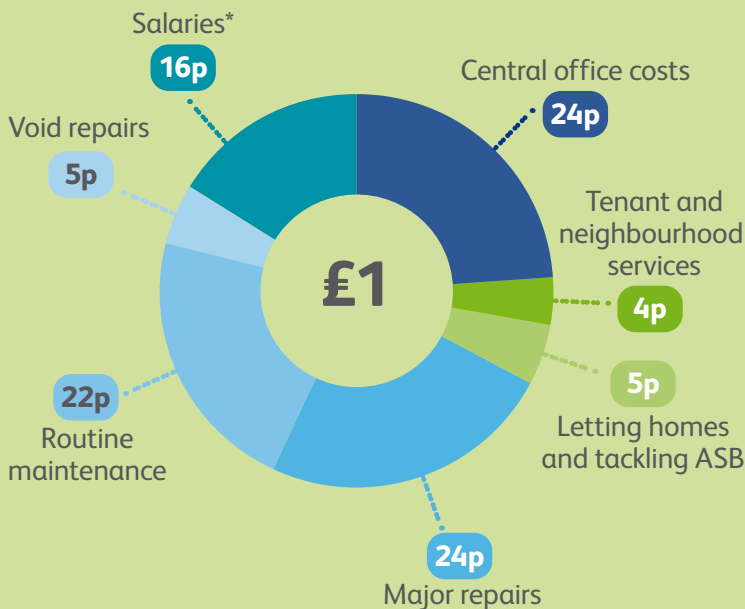
How we spend your rent

Thanks to our transformation programme, our housing management cost per property has continued to fall – by more than 10% compared to the previous year. To help comparison, we have taken out service charges which are distorted by high costs in some of our Care and Support schemes.

Average costs of managing your home



How every £1 of rent is spent



These figures exclude service charges, non-cash items and interest costs.
*Includes costs linked to functions such as repairs and managing ASB

£85.46

was our average weekly rent for general needs homes in 2017/18.

Reduced by 77p from 2016/17

88%

of you think your rent provides value for money

↑ 1% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

| Best | Average | Worst |
|------|---------|-------|
| 95% | 85.8% | 78.1% |



79%

of you think that service charges are value for money

↑ 5% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

| Best | Average | Worst |
|-------|---------|-------|
| 93.5% | 74.4% | 64.7% |



Our service to you

It's important that we communicate well with you, listen to you and involve you in what we do. We value your feedback, positive and negative, as it can help us to improve our service. Find out more about how you can get involved and have your say on pages 10 and 11.

We received 3,873 complaints between April 2017 and March 2018.

We resolved **over nine out of 10 (3,602)** complaints at the first stage of our process. **Nearly half (1,657)** of your complaints were upheld and another 540 were partially upheld.

We resolved all other complaints (271) at the second stage of our process. **Nearly half (117) were upheld** and another 60 were partially upheld.

Just over half (2,053) of the complaints we received were about our repairs service, one in five (813) were about customer care and one in 20 (194) were about gas servicing.

In 2017/18 **we responded to over eight out of 10 complaints** within our target response times of five days for stage one and 20 days for stage two, significantly improving our performance compared to the previous year.

We aim to learn from complaints to improve our service. Some examples of improvements are:



- In Liverpool City Region, Evolve staff are now able to spend more time at a tenant's home to carry out a repair, to ensure it is completed in one visit. This means they will be able to complete more repairs at their first visit.
- We now inform Royal Mail in advance about changes to communal door access codes, so that residents' mail service is not disrupted.
- When we install lifeline alarms we now send letters with a complete breakdown of costs so that customers are fully informed.

81%

of you are satisfied overall

■ No change from 2017



Compared to others:

Best 99.3%

Average 87.6%

Worst 64.2%

75%

think that we listen to your views and act upon them

▲ 1% compared with 2017



Compared to others:

Best 96.8%

Average 73.5%

Worst 55.2%

89%

of calls to our Customer Service Centre (CSC) were answered

▼ 6% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

Best 98.7%

Average 92.3%

Worst 67.4%

We are disappointed that we haven't been as effective at answering your calls as we would have liked. This was due to a short term problem regarding an unexpected high number of calls due to the severe weather coupled with staff shortages.

41%

of complainants were satisfied with how we handled their complaint

▼ 2% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

Best 100%

Average 63.7%

Worst 27.5%

We are taking this poor performance extremely seriously and understand that we need to improve how we handle complaints. We have introduced a Complaints Compliance team to ensure that staff receive the necessary training to handle complaints better. The team will also seek out good practice about how complaints are handled in other organisations and implement new ways of working if it will improve our performance.

Your home

We're continuing to invest in homes, and almost nine in 10 of you are satisfied with the quality of yours. Keeping you safe in your home remains a fundamental priority.

76%

of you were satisfied with our repairs service

↑ 1% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

| Best | Average | Worst |
|-------|---------|-------|
| 96.2% | 82% | 65% |

86.8%

of repairs were fixed at the first attempt

↓ 1.9% compared with 2017

There has been a slight fall in performance because we have changed the way we calculate this figure to tighten up what is accepted as a repair being fixed during the first appointment.



87%

of repairs appointments were kept

↓ 5% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

| Best | Average | Worst |
|------|---------|-------|
| 100% | 97.2% | 87.2% |

We are concerned about the drop in our performance; however we believe it is mainly due to changes we have made to how we measure performance. We will continue to monitor closely how well we are doing at keeping appointments.

Keeping you safe

Following the devastating events of Grenfell in June 2017, we have further reviewed our approach to assessing fire risk in our buildings. We have introduced a new programme for fire risk assessments and continued to invest in upgrading fire safety standards nationally in line with best practice, spending over £16.5m on compliance related activity in 2017/18.



We are also improving customer information, not just for fire risk but for all risks associated with buildings. We have developed the Safety and Support section of our website with further information on key risks associated with buildings, including publication of summarised Fire Risk Assessments for all our tall buildings and a facility to request them for all communal areas in our buildings. Find out more at www.riverside.org.uk/you-your-home/safety-support. We are planning to publish summary fire risk assessments for all of our high-risk buildings such as large supported housing schemes.



Improving our repair services

We launched Riverside Direct in July 2018. This means Riverside is now working in partnership with a single supplier to provide our responsive repairs, empty homes and planned maintenance services to approximately 6,500 homes in our South & Central region. This will enable us to improve and enhance the way we diagnose, deliver and quality check repairs to your home. We will be changing the way we deliver the repairs service, to match this model, across all our areas by December 2018. We expect to see significant improvements in the service delivered to our customers with increased satisfaction and reduced costs.

Improving homes

In 2017/18 we spent £35.8 million improving homes, including replacing

**1,233 bathrooms,
1,043 kitchens and
1,420 boilers.**

We also installed just under 500 adaptations to make homes more suitable for customers with specific needs.



Your tenancy and neighbourhood

We recognise that how well we manage your tenancy and neighbourhood is important to you and we are taking action to address our decline in performance in 2017/18. We are also continuing to work with local communities and agencies to help tackle and prevent issues related to nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

Tackling anti-social behaviour

We are committed to ensuring our communities are safe for tenants and other residents. We support our customers to raise complaints about anti-social behaviour, and have a 24 hour reporting system in place.

We have a dedicated anti-social behaviour team, with officers located across the country. The team takes a proactive approach which means the majority of cases are resolved at the earliest stage. Where a resolution cannot be easily found, Riverside will take action against perpetrators, including formal legal action.

Part of Riverside's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is working alongside other local organisations. This ensures the most co-ordinated and effective working arrangements locally.

Our partnership working was recognised this year with one of our Community Safety Officers winning the Outstanding Contribution to Enhancing Community Safety award. This award was for his work in the Sefton area of Liverpool, where he worked closely with the police to provide a multi-agency approach to tackle anti-social behaviour such as neighbourhood disputes, serious threat assessment, firearms discharges and organised crime groups.

Chris Hemlin – our award winning Community Safety Officer



85%

of you are satisfied with your neighbourhood

↓ 1% compared with 2017

Compared to others:

Best 94.3% Average 85.3% Worst 76%

Our new way of working, with more housing officers working in neighbourhoods, will mean that they have more time to spend working with you, community groups and others to address the local issues that matter where you live.



27.2 days

average time taken to re-let our empty properties

↓ 7.5 days longer than 2017

Compared to others:

Best 11.8 Average 23.6 Worst 47.9

Our average time taken to re-let homes has increased this year as we have invested in repairing a large number of homes that had been empty for long periods. To help improve re-let times we have changed the way we manage our allocations process, with dedicated staff focused on advertising and letting properties, and we are making further improvements to the way we manage our empty home repairs process.

94.2%

of new tenants were visited within our four week target time

↓ 4.9% compared with 2017

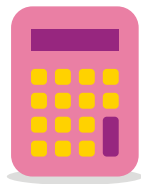


In 2018 we have changed our process for carrying out first visits, moving away from a prescriptive four week window. From the point of signing up for a new tenancy, Housing Officers will liaise with customers to ensure that payments are being made, support is provided for any Universal Credit claims and that there are no repairs or other settling in issues at the property. While we expect that a home visit will be carried out within eight weeks, this is scheduled as appropriate and at a convenient time, to maximise the value to the customer and Riverside.

4.5%

Rent arrears as a percentage of total rent due

↓ 0.7% higher than 2017



Compared to others:

Best 0.5% Average 3.5% Worst 5.5%

We have established an improvement programme to tackle the decline in performance. This will include looking at ways that we can maximise the efficiency of our teams, by maximising the benefits of our new housing management IT system and improving performance management. With the roll-out of Universal Credit we are analysing our data to help us predict which customers may most be affected, so that we can offer better support to them. For example, we offer a Money Advice Service which can advise customers on welfare benefits.

Supporting tenants through Riverside Foundation

Our Riverside Foundation charity provides practical support to customers to help maintain their tenancies. It engaged with 3,380 people or households in 2017/18.

We helped 393 people into employment through our training advice and guidance project. 112 people received grants to support them in gaining employment

We had 3,872 referrals to our money advice service and created £2.2m cash gains for people through, for example, benefits and trust funds.

Our affordable warmth advice service had 880 referrals and generated £183,067 cash gains for people through, for example, trust funds and supplier switching.

215 households in crisis were helped with energy top ups.

143 people have been supported through our Intensive Intervention Service, of which 105 have sustained their tenancy.

50 households benefitted from support with essential furniture



Care and support

We continue to develop innovative services to help and support people live independently, in a home of their own. In 2017/18 we supported around 14,000 individuals with diverse care and support needs.

Influencing Government policy

Riverside was instrumental in persuading the Government to end the threat of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) caps for supported and social housing. Working in coalition with several other organisations including St Mungo's, Housing and Care 21, Hanover and Home Group, we persuaded the Government to rethink its proposals. Over almost three years, Riverside lobbied for a more sustainable funding solution and worked in partnership with the National Housing Federation to highlight the devastating impact that the LHA cap would have had on hundreds of thousands of people all over the country. We engaged with numerous MPs, civil servants and ministers over the issue through face-to-face meetings, roundtable events, parliamentary evidence sessions and consultation responses. We are delighted that the Government has now confirmed that the housing costs of tenants living in supported housing will be met through housing benefit without a capping mechanism.

Active Customer Engagement

Across Riverside Care and Support we offer various types of support to our customers including a range of group activities. We call this ACE – Active Customer Engagement. Since the start of 2018 we have run over 5,000 group sessions including breakfast clubs, exercise sessions, music and performance activities, cooking, budgeting, and substance misuse recovery sessions. The sessions are run by Riverside staff, volunteers, partner agencies and/or our own customers.

We have created a range of training packages for our staff to deliver for customers. There are currently nine modules available covering:

- confidence and resilience
- healthy relationships
- money management
- nutrition and wellbeing
- resettlement
- political awareness
- employment and training
- getting online
- mindfulness.

Modernising Retirement Living

Our five-year Retirement Living Investment Programme (RLIP) aims to modernise and future proof our schemes, making them places in which current and future tenants would choose to live. In 2017/18 we modernised seven schemes, including refurbishment and redecoration of communal areas, with a modern, dementia-friendly approach to design.





97.8%

of customer needs
and risk assessments
delivered on time

▲ 0.6% compared with 2017

90.8%

Positive customer
outcomes

▼ 4.3% compared with 2017



Many of our customers have complex support needs. We're proud to be an organisation that is committed to providing support to those who need it most, even if this sometimes doesn't immediately result in positive outcomes. We learn from what has and hasn't worked for people, to improve our offer of support.

Independent Living in Hull

In 2017 we opened three innovative extra care schemes in Hull, providing 316 new apartments.

Traditionally extra care housing schemes have been aimed at older people. Our schemes are for both older and working age people with disabilities, including those with mental health conditions and people with dementia. The environments foster inclusive and friendly communities which support people's health and wellbeing.

Customers live independently in a modern, vibrant environment, while having the security and access to care and support 24/7. Apartments are designed to be easily adaptable so that people can continue to live within their communities as their needs change over time. Each site contains a range of communal facilities including restaurant, community lounges and a health and wellbeing suite and as a true 'community hub' these resources are also available for use by local people.

Working with you

A new approach to customer involvement

2017/18 has been a year of transformation for customer involvement at Riverside. Our new approach covers all of Riverside, with all staff having a part to play in making sure that our customers can make the most of opportunities to be involved.

We have a new and bold Customer Voice Executive – a team of tenants who champion the views of customers across our Riverside services.

The Customer Voice Executive is looking for new members and you can express your interest by using our online expression of interest form at www.riverside.org.uk/your-neighbourhood/get-involved/customer-voice

The Customer Voice Executive has planned an event with Riverside's Board and Committees in March 2019 and this will be open to customers to attend. This is an opportunity to work together with Riverside and hold us to account about what matters most to you as a customer.

From autumn 2018, customers can book on to a series of free training courses online. You will be able to choose the course that will best improve your skills and/or knowledge. We hope this will give you the confidence to have a voice about what matters to you most when opportunities to be involved arise.

For more information on customer involvement and how you can be included in our exciting involvement plans please contact us on 0345 111 0000, email involvement@riverside.org.uk or go online at www.riverside.org.uk/your-neighbourhood/get-involved



Short of time but still want to make your views heard?

Our new online Customer Panel gives you the opportunity to respond to short surveys that do not take a lot of time to complete. Find out more at www.riverside.org.uk/your-neighbourhood/get-involved/count-me-in





Winning the lottery of customer involvement

I'm Victor Andrews and I became Chair of the new Customer Voice Executive in April 2018. The Executive is a group of 18 elected members who serve for three years and represent the views of customers across Riverside. One member also sits on the Group Board.

My personal journey as an involved customer began in 2016, and it's been a very interesting and rewarding experience. We don't all have the time to get involved in panels and go to meetings, but you can still help to shape services and improve the communities where you live. This is what we've been doing to reach out to more of you:

1. We've reviewed and improved our constitution. It's now regarded by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) as a template for good practice for other tenant-led organisations.
2. The online customer panel is live and any tenant or leaseholder can sign up online. You can have your say by answering a short survey.
3. We've been working with the Riverside customer involvement team to improve our social media presence – on Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. We hope this will encourage more young people to get involved.
4. We've been helping Riverside set up training courses for customers that help build confidence while teaching new skills.

Our work

Over the last few months, the Executive has given its feedback on various Riverside policies and we're currently preparing our response to the Government's Social Housing Green Paper.

By far the largest project is our plan to establish regular meetings for Customer Voice members across the country, from Carlisle to Dover. This is a huge undertaking but one we have already begun and are determined to put in place.

I feel privileged to have this opportunity to make a difference. You could also win the customer involvement lottery. Why not make a start by registering for the online customer panel? And keep a look out for the new Regional Framework meetings that will be appearing. Go on – give it a try.

Victor Andrews, Chair, Riverside Customer Voice Executive

Customer Voice 0344 279 4142
WWW.MACDONALDHOTELS.CO.UK/MEETINGSOPINIONS

Did we get it right?

We'd love to know what you think about this Annual Report. Please go to www.riverside.org.uk/annualreport to complete our short questionnaire, with a chance to win £100 in shopping vouchers.



If you need this information in another format, please contact us ☎ **0345 111 0000**

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The Riverside Group Limited

Registered office:
2 Estuary Boulevard,
Estuary Commerce Park,
Liverpool L24 8RF

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All facts and figures in this report are correct at the time of publication and relate to the financial year ending 31st March 2018. They do not include Home Ownership data.

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