

Better and Stronger Together



Annual Report 2022 Highlights

One year on – where are we now?

On 1 December last year, Riverside and One Housing Group officially joined forces, forming a partnership which we believe will make us better and stronger together.

Since then, we've been working together to form one fully merged organisation as well as working to deliver on six key pledges we made.

One of those key pledges was to keep our promises and be accountable to you, publishing an annual report on our progress.

So, this report is us, delivering on that pledge.

Read on to find out what we've done this year, how we're delivering against our five other pledges and what we'll be doing for the rest of the year as we continue our journey towards the creation of a fully merged organisation.



2021

2022

Our pledges and our progress

So what are our pledges? And what have we done so far to meet them? Check out our progress below.

<p>We will make sure there is a louder customer voice, with residents able to take part in our Boards and committees, and better able to hold us to account.</p>	<p>We created a dedicated Task and Finish Group comprising 12 customers from One Housing Group and Riverside, from a range of different property types and backgrounds. They have contributed enormously to the work we have done so far. Check out page 3 for their summary of their work.</p>
<p>We will invest nearly £1 billion in improving and repairing homes over the next five years, with a focus on fire and building safety, warmer homes and regeneration. We will also build more new affordable homes.</p>	<p>We are investing £9m over the next three years to improve customers homes where there are problems with damp, mould or condensation. We're using this to improve how we identify the root cause of these issues and make homes more comfortable to live in. We continue to focus on enhancing how we deliver repairs, planned works and make our buildings safer. We are seeing small increases in customer satisfaction, despite the challenges around material supply and increasing costs. On top of that, this year alone we will take handover of over 750 new build homes for affordable rent, shared ownership and rent to buy.</p>
<p>We will improve care and support services for older people, those with complex needs and people who are homeless.</p>	<p>Riverside and One Housing Group colleagues are already working together to identify how we can learn from each other. We are currently working together to identify which systems we jointly need to be able to provide the best possible support. for our customers, through one single shared system.</p>
<p>We will improve the livelihoods of customers and build stronger communities, providing better opportunities by investing in employment support and money advice.</p>	<p>Through the Riverside Foundation, we are investing £2.5m this year alone to provide increased support for the cost-of-living crisis including through our Helping Hand Fund, which provides funding for customers in need and our Community Fund which funds community projects. Both are now open for bids and making a real difference to communities and individuals already.</p>
<p>We will keep our promises and make sure you can hold us to account, publishing a report each year on how we are delivering these pledges.</p>	<p>We have published this report – and communicated with you proactively every two months – on our progress as well as well as working with the Task and Finish Group (see page 3).</p>

We will deliver better services for customers, protecting rents and tenancy rights

We have worked with the Task and Finish Group to co-produce clear guiding customer service principles which will be used to shape the delivery of customer services in the future. Consultation on the principles with wider customers has been completed and the final customer service principles are shown on the right, with more information on our website.

Our customer service principles

- ✓ We will get things right first time
- ✓ We will provide services our customers need and want
- ✓ We will learn from our mistakes
- ✓ We will make sure our employees have the knowledge, capability and resources to do the job



Customers at the forefront

Throughout the process, a team of 12 customers from One Housing Group and Riverside have played a vital role, making sure your voice is heard. But don't take it just from us. Read their thoughts here...

The Task and Finish Group was set up to ensure the newly merged association kept to the pledges it made to customers. We focused on three areas, these being improving the customer offer, improving the quality of homes and increasing the amount of support we gave to customers through the Riverside Foundation. We successfully established a new set of simple to understand customer service principles (see page 2) aimed at tackling some of the challenges customers face. More importantly they will help in holding all parts of the group to account and making sure customers know what they can expect from the service they receive.

Matthew Waterfall, chair of the Task and Finish Group

In recent months, we've seen a range of media stories about landlords failing to deal with outbreaks of mould arising from damp and condensation in homes. Riverside has acted upon that by creating a new policy specifically dedicated to improving how they deal with the issue. Much of my work involves the private rental sector and I can say first hand that mould and condensation is a very common problem. I am glad to see that the policy encourages customers to be mindful of what they can do to prevent or at least lessen condensation.

Damp issues can often arise from the way the building has been constructed and sometimes even measures which look to make things better such as improving insulation can cause damp spots which in turn lead to the growth of black mould. Therefore, it is good to see Riverside promise to undertake a full property inspection when a customer reports an issue relating to damp, mould and condensation. I was a little concerned at first that an operative casually looking around a property would be expected to correctly diagnose the cause of a problem as these things are not always that simple. However, the extra time they have now committed to spend on investigating the issue will make it more likely that the problem can be solved first time which in the long run saves money and makes life better for the customer. It's hard to measure the impact of the new policy just yet, however, it would certainly be a lot poorer without customer input.

Julian Watkins, Task and Finish Group member

Working with my fellow residents on the Task and Finish Group has been a very positive experience. We were tasked with ensuring the residents' voice was heard throughout the merger of the two associations. We did this by making sure the pledges which were made during the merger were built into how the new association worked with its customers. Part of this work included drafting the customer service principles, which will guide the quality of services all customers should receive. We also drew up the criteria for the Helping Hand and Community Fund, hopefully making it easier for people to access financial help during this very difficult time. The discussions and considerations around the decision-making have been fair, transparent and proactive, and there has been a real effort from the now bigger housing association to listen to our opinions and use them in a way that hopefully makes a positive difference to our communities and the services we need.

Glenn Garrett, Riverside Foundation member

What happens next?

Riverside and One Housing Group are working to create one, fully merged organisation. So, what are we doing in 2023 to make that happen?

Our teams

Teams from Riverside and One Housing Group are now working together to decide what their parts of the business will look like once a full merger is completed.

That doesn't necessarily mean that there will only be one way of doing things straight away.



Your services

As well as working together, our teams are looking at what services could look like when we form one organisation.

For example, we are looking at how we deliver repairs, what one single website would look like and how we merge key systems.

It may take some years for all our systems and processes to come together and, as a result, there will still be some differences in the way services are delivered to Riverside customers and former One Housing Group customers at the point the organisations fully come together. However, we will be working to a common set of standards to achieve as much consistency as possible.



Involving customers every step of the way

There will be opportunities during this year for you to contribute feedback and input on the way our new services look.

If you're particularly keen to get involved, why not take a look at how you can do that:

Riverside customers can visit www.riverside.org.uk/getinvolved

One Housing Group customers can visit www.onehousing.co.uk/getting-involved



Important update for One Housing customers

We will soon be writing to One Housing Group customers to seek views on a proposal to bring our two organisations together as one single housing association. This is known as a "transfer of engagements". This is the legal term for the way we bring our two organisations together as one single housing association. As we said in the original consultation last year, we had planned for this to happen in April 2024. However, the financial challenges impacting both businesses due to the cost of living crisis, rising inflation and interest rates mean that doing it sooner makes good sense, both for Riverside and One Housing Group, ensuring we can make the most of our financial strength and keep our promises to customers. We will explain what this means for customers soon, however it will not affect your rights as customers or the way we deliver services to you, which we will continue to plan in consultation with customers as we have promised.