

Annual Report for customers

2023

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report for customers.

The Annual Report focuses on how we have performed in the last year and covers all aspects of customer service. Here you will find information about how we have delivered our service along with feedback from customer surveys showing how we have performed against your expectations.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, please email strategy.planning@riverside.org.uk

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Welcome

Terrie Alafat CBE, Group Board Chair, introduces the Annual Report for Customers

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this year's Annual Report for Customers. This review of the past 12 months gives us a chance to reflect on our group performance, where we need to improve and of course celebrate our achievements. I am always so pleased to see the examples of the excellent services colleagues deliver and know everyone at Riverside puts customers at the heart of everything they do. I would like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues for their hard work, and know this gratitude is echoed by my fellow Board members.



Investing in our homes, particularly tackling damp and mould, has been a top priority at Riverside this past year. We have committed to investing £3m annually to keep our customers safe; to fix existing problems, and upgrade ventilation. We have a new Damp and Mould Policy and all colleagues now complete training on damp and mould, so they know how to identify, report and act upon it.



I am happy to report our customer satisfaction with building safety has increased this year. We have continued a programme to improve safety within customers' homes and good progress is also being made with fire safety remediation. [We have a Long-Term Financial Plan and delivery programme in place for the remediation of cladding on our buildings.](#)

I know many of our customers and communities are still facing financial challenges through the cost-of-living crisis caused by the highest inflation rates in a generation, and rising interest rates. I am pleased that our new annual investment into the Riverside Foundation of £2.5m (which will increase with inflation each year) is having an immediate impact. We have been able to help over 2000 customers through expanded tenancy sustainment services, such as Money Advice and Helping Hands (a grants offer to help customers facing the most challenging circumstances.). The new money is also being utilised by our communities who are developing their own, local responses to the cost-of-living crisis, such as Can Cook, an innovative food project which gives people essential cooking skills as well as providing low cost, nutritional food.



As in every Annual Report, I am always hugely impressed by the life-changing services provided by Care and Support. I am always so pleased to see the development of new services and was delighted to see the launch of Op Fortitude, a new service to support veterans facing homelessness.

This year, I am disappointed to say that we have again seen a decline in customer satisfaction levels across a few service areas. We recognise the need for improvement and intend to achieve this change through a new ambitious 3-year Corporate Plan and associated strategies. This includes the new Customer Experience Strategy, which has been developed alongside our valued customers. I am already seeing the impact of this work, with a new dedicated team looking at complaints to ensure more customers are satisfied with our

process and outcomes, and to enable more effective learning from the feedback we receive from customers. Over the next 12 months, I expect to see even more improvements to benefit our customers, including an enhanced digital offer, and more localised services.

I do hope you enjoy reading this report.

All Riverside performance figures in this report relate to the financial year ending 31 March 2023. They do not include Home Ownership data.

Our service to you

We are disappointed to see that customer satisfaction levels have decreased from last year. We are committed to improving customer satisfaction through the implementation of our new Customer Experience Strategy. We have built this strategy with significant input from our customers and so are confident that it focuses on those areas that matter most to them and uses language that is meaningful to them. This strategy will continue to drive improvement through a dedicated Customer Experience action plan.



To make it easier for our customers to access our services we introduced a new telephony system into our Customer Service Centre which enables us to direct calls to the people best able to deal with their enquiries. We have also made some significant progress in enhancing our digital services to customers; launching a Riverside app and live chat in response to customer demand and building a new digital strategy with our customers that will deliver further improvements over the next 3 years.

Here are some examples of the way we have changed digital services with your input during 2022/23.

Our digital offer

- 36,000 customers are now registered on our self-service digital services, and new customers can now complete their application and tenancy digitally through My Riverside.
- We've added the ability for Riverside colleagues, including Customer Service Advisors to log and appoint repairs on behalf of customers fully within Salesforce; removing the need to use complex housing applications and reducing call times for new repairs by 50%. This provides better and more efficient customer service and frees up valuable advisor time to spend with more customers

- Our colleagues can now also use Salesforce to log shared space repairs on behalf of customers and later this year customers will be able to report repairs themselves through the portal and app without the need to call or email us
- We have also added business processes for Riverside colleagues to record and fully manage Safeguarding and Anti Social Behaviour within Salesforce enabling improved and safer services to customers
- The next year will see greater focus on digital services for customers and will include reviewing payment options and servicing a wider range of enquiries and requests through My Riverside.

71%
of you are satisfied overall
↓ 2% compared with 2022



57%
**think that we listen to your views
and act upon them**
↓ 1% compared with 2022



Complaints

We continue to focus on how we deal with complaints to ensure a consistent and effective approach. Following a self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code, which has been produced by the Housing Ombudsman (the sector body that has an overview of complaints) we have identified further actions that will improve our approach.



These actions will include:

- Developing an agreed approach to how RCVE members support us in identifying improvements around complaint management
- Reviewing our Customer Feedback Procedure.
- Introducing a revised Complaints Policy.

6,633

complaints were received
between April 2022
and March 2023



5,951

complaints were resolved
by local teams at the
first stage of our process (90%)



55%

of complaints were
about repairs



670

complaints were resolved
at the second stage of our process



9%

of complaints were about
tenancy management



37

complaints were considered by the
Housing Ombudsman Service*



8%

of complaints were
about staff behaviour



* The Housing Ombudsman Service is a Government body that can look independently at a complaint when a landlord and customer have not been able to agree on the outcome. They found that we had acted reasonably on 12 of the complaints, there had been failings in our service on 23 complaints (for example, not responding in time, not providing a full response). There was one successful mediation and one that was considered, after review, to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman.

Learning from complaints

Last Financial year 2022/2023 there have been 23 Determinations where there has been a finding of service failure or maladministration by Riverside.

These complaints have resulted in the following improvements.

- Recruitment of additional colleagues.
- Rechargeable repairs working group is represented by all business areas to understand barriers and challenges, and review customers communications.
- Creation of a complaints team to deal with all building safety complaints.
- Building Complaints Governance Team carry out random Quality Assurance of complaints responses and share findings across the complaints community.
- Review of letters to avoid jargon and respond clearly and concisely in Asset Strategy, Delivery, and Evolve.
- Complaint Surgeries have been embedded to specifically review complaint progress and quality of responses to customers.
- Customer videos produced following trend analysis of complaints to educate our customers better in relation to defects.
- Stronger partnership working across Housing Services for complaint handling to ensure complaint responses are thorough and robust.
- Lessons Learnt Forum implemented to understand reasons for complaints and learning we can adopt and share across the group.

- Complaint Handling refresher training delivered to frontline colleagues.
- With the removal of the demographic filter our RCVE panel no longer review or hear complaints. Their role is to scrutinise complaint satisfaction and lessons learnt and to help drive improvements.

Your Home

Responsive Repairs

Last year, we experienced an increase in the number of repairs being reported by customers. To help meet this demand we employed additional operatives and sub-contractors which meant we were able to complete more repairs than the previous year. This coupled with problems accessing materials and parts meant some repairs took longer to complete than we would like.

This increasing demand has affected our efforts to improve how we deliver repairs. We will continue to focus our efforts next year on how we can diagnose repairs more accurately and reduce the time taken to complete repairs from start to finish.



Damp and mould

At the start of the year, we committed to investing £3m to tackle damp and mould in homes to keep customers safe. We used this to fix leaks and prevent water entering properties and to upgrade ventilation to help manage humidity in homes.

We now have a new Damp and Mould Policy which sets out how we will support customers to minimise the risk of damp and mould occurring and make sure we meet our regulatory responsibilities. Everyone who works at Riverside now completes training on damp and mould, how to spot it, report it and act.

New customer information is available on our website and in our 'Ready for Winter' information leaflet and we've made it easier for customers to request inspections or report a damp and mould repair through My Riverside.

Empty Homes

After completing a pilot for a new Care & Support Empty Homes Standard, we launched it in May 2022 completing more than 3000 properties during the year. Customers tell us they are happy with this improvement.

We've also changed how we survey homes when they are empty, introducing new checklists to ensure we deliver a consistent standard across all properties. Another important change is the introduction of a Damp Survey Checklist so we can map any signs of water ingress and fix it before the next customer moves in.



Planned Maintenance and Investment

During 2022 – 23 we spent £75.57 million improving homes.

This included carrying out an upgrade programme to bedrooms in short term supported housing, a programme called SHIPS. The programme modernised and improved 2,184 bedrooms for short term accommodation across 90 schemes, costing just over £4m. We also invested over £6m through our Residential Living Improvement Programme to upgrade communal areas.

We replaced 925 bathrooms, 1,347 kitchens, 1,362 windows and 2,624 boilers as part of our planned maintenance programme to improve customers' homes. We also installed 354 major adaptations and 1051 minor adaptations to make homes more suitable for customers with specific needs, for example walk in showers, specialist baths, stairlifts and grab rails.

Fire Safety continues to be a top priority and we invested £9.76m to ensure our residents are safe in their homes.



Sustainability

We were successful in securing £12.7m of funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, along with match funding from Riverside this means we are investing £25m to retrofit 1100 homes over the next 18 months. This will improve the thermal efficiency of these properties making them warmer and more cost effective to heat. Planning for this significant project has started and we've appointed experienced contractors and consultants to help us deliver it.

We are continuing to use technology to tell us how homes are performing. Over the last year, we have installed an additional 1000 Switchee devices and this information has been very useful. When a property has been at high risk of developing damp and mould, we've been able to ask for more information and fix it at an earlier stage. We've also been able to identify customers in fuel poverty and provide support to assess and agree how to tackle it.

Building Safety

We are focused on improving the customer experience and undertook a survey to understand how customers feel about the safety of their shared space. The first survey in 2021 tells us what it was like before we implemented new Building Safety inspections and Building Safety Manager roles in our high-rise buildings.

Overall satisfaction



2021

61%
Satisfied

2023

70%
Satisfied

Have awareness of what to do in the event of a fire



2021

77%
Agree

2023

80%
Agree

Know how to raise a concern about building safety



2021

78%
Satisfied

2023

83%
Satisfied

Customers satisfied with the safety information they receive for their building



2021

57%
Satisfied

2023

59%
Satisfied

We've assessed properties against the criteria under the Building Safety Act 2022, registered our buildings with the Building Safety Regulator and started a range of intrusive fire investigations including external wall surveys.

We improved how we manage the risk of fire within shared spaces, including inspecting flat entrance doors and communal fire doors in buildings over 11m/5 storeys. We've also introduced an annual communication on fire safety to all customers living in blocks of flats.

We have started a programme to improve safety within customers' homes ensuring at least one smoke alarm is installed on each floor of a home, and there is a carbon monoxide alarm in any room used as living accommodation which contains a fixed combustion appliance.

Good progress is being made with fire safety remediation, and we have a Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) and delivery programme in place for remediation of cladding.

65%

of you were satisfied with our repairs service

↓ 2% compared with last year



89.4%

appointments made and kept as at 31 March 2022

↓ 1.5% compared with last year



66%

of you were satisfied that Riverside provides a home that is well-maintained



82%

of repairs were fixed at the first attempt

↓ 0.9% compared with last year



84.1%

of you in 2022/23 were satisfied with your most recent repair carried out

↓ 1.3% compared with last year



Your tenancy and neighbourhood

Collecting rent

We continue to support customers through the cost-of-living crisis and our “Let’s Talk Rent” Campaign is enabling this. Between November 2022 and the end of March 2023 we sent out just over 24k text messages to customers, which helped us to collect over £1.5m of income. We also set up almost 4k new direct debits with customers and over 7k affordable payment arrangements.



The Income Collection team’s focus has moved to prevention and early support. The Money Advice team now sit in the Income Management team along with the Affordable Warmth team to help to identify customers with rent payment issues and support them to meet their priority bills of rent and utilities to sustain their tenancies. We are continuing to support customers during the cost-of-living crisis and providing the advice needed to sustain tenancies and avoid evictions.

The Riverside Foundation

We are committed to investing in added-value activities for individuals and broader communities, whilst delivering measurable positive outcomes. We are inherently committed to being an ethical and social landlord through the Riverside Foundation to deliver a range of initiatives and outcomes which ultimately improve the lives of our customers.

In 2022, The Riverside Group made a £2.5m contribution to the Riverside Foundation, which was one of the pledges made as part of the merger with One Housing Group. This £2.5m will be an annual donation, which will increase with inflation.

This new investment has enabled the Foundation to continue to deliver established services, whilst rapidly scaling up its support for communities, and seeking new ways to help people tackle the cost of living crisis.



During 2022/ 23, Riverside Foundation funding enabled Riverside to deliver projects which:

- Supported 497 people towards employment, delivering 115 people into jobs.
- Delivered £2.5m in cash gains/ savings to people through welfare benefits advice, and £73,119 through affordable warmth advice.
- Helped 126 vulnerable households sustain their tenancies.

The new funding also enabled the development of new partnerships. including:

- Can Cook providing 50 households with affordable ingredients and help to learn how to cook from scratch.
- Tutors United delivering tuition to 156 children in educationally disadvantaged areas.
- Street Doctors facilitating innovative educational sessions with children on knife crime.
- One Academy supplying coaching and vocational training to assist people into employment.

The new funding has also expanded our Helping Hands fund, providing £595,000 in small grants to 2,067 customers in need. This has enabled one-off purchases such as replacing a cooker, providing fuel top-up vouchers, or interview clothing.

We have also been able to introduce a new Community Fund, which has provided over £120,000 to local community groups, providing activities such as food banks, warm hubs, environmental projects and community events.

We work with our supply chain to support social value and responsible business. Our Group Procurement

Policy commits to the creation of economic, social and environmental benefits for local communities. Our procurement activities are in line with the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. We encourage our supply chain to provide employment opportunities, work experience, training, volunteering and apprenticeship programmes. We also welcome contributions to the Riverside Foundation.

62%
of you are satisfied that
Riverside makes a positive
contribution to your neighbourhood



83.1 days
Average time taken to
re-let our empty properties



↑ 31.3 days higher compared to 2022

2.7%
Empty homes



5.6%
Rent arrears as a percentage
of total rent due



↑ 1.4% higher compared to 2022

↓ 0.7% lower than in 2022

Care and Support

Our Care and Support team provide over 300 accommodation, support and outreach services across England. We supported over 12,000 people in 2022-23.

Coronation events across the country

Earlier this year we celebrated the King's coronation in style as 121 of our Retirement Living and Supported Housing services from Cumbria to Kent and everywhere in between, held parties and events to celebrate. The events ranged from older people coming together to create a King's Coronation grand buffet based on dishes created for the 2023 Coronation and the 1953 Coronation, through to a service in London holding a BBQ and disco on the evening of the Coronation itself.



Some events were just for residents in the service itself, while others opened their doors for the local community get involved. This included one event in Hull where nearly 70 people came together for a whole day event starting with watching the Coronation on TV through to an afternoon tea, followed by a party with karaoke.

Across the country Riverside colleagues supported events by using their Volunteering days to help make the day event more special for our customers.

In total over 2,200 people attended events creating happy memories and a real sense of community on what was a unique day for the whole country.

NHF Research highlighted the supported housing sector's impact on homelessness prevention, health and wellbeing

As a leading provider of supported housing for people affected by homelessness in July 2023 we published [a](#)

[brand-new piece of research](#) into the supported housing sector's impact on homelessness prevention, health and wellbeing. The findings form this landmark piece of research which was published in conjunction with partner providers and the National Housing Federation, demonstrated clearly how supported housing specifically impacts homelessness, health and wellbeing as well as the challenges that it faces and the ways in which it supports and interacts with the NHS, social care, the justice system and other public services.



It revealed that revealed that without Supported Housing there would be...

- 41,000 more rough sleepers
- 30,000 more at risk of repeat homelessness
- 2,000 more in prison
- 14,000 more using psychiatric care

As well as a national media and social media campaign we staged an online event that brought together 120 key sector voices to hear about and debate this essential piece of research.

Op Fortitude – supporting veterans affected by homelessness

In July Riverside were delighted to launch [Op FORTITUDE](#) – a brand new service that is aimed at ending veteran homelessness.

Funded by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund, the Op FORTITUDE team works with individual veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness, supporting them either into suitable accommodation, or supporting them to maintain their current home.

Since launching the team have already helped hundreds of veterans affected by homelessness.

Street Engagement Hubs

In Greater Manchester we have set up two Street Engagement Hubs. These specialist services are centrally located places where multiple organisations work together under the same roof to offer a variety of practical services and advice to people who beg and those who are homeless or sleep rough.



These services in Manchester and Wigan are helping people through *engagement* rather than enforcement and look to break the cycle of homelessness through enabling individuals to access multiple services and address different needs at the same time.

Working closely with local police, the DWP, NHS and local charities we are able to support individuals to address the underlying causes of their homelessness, such as addiction or debt, in a matter of hours, by removing barriers and appointment wait times, which can often leave people who are begging or rough sleeping feeling like they have no other option.

Keswick Gardens Extra Care, Greater Manchester

Opening its doors in late 2023 and situated in Keswick Close, Middleton, Greater Manchester [Keswick Gardens is the latest Extra Care scheme](#) developed by Riverside for people aged 55 and over with or without care and support needs.

This brand-new purpose-built Extra Care service offers tenants the chance to live independently in their own home with access to innovative, high-quality accommodation and other communal onsite facilities.

The 23 one-bedroom and 65 two-bedroom properties at Keswick Gardens have been designed with maintaining the independence, safety and security of all residents in mind.



GROW employment programme

Our GROW (Giving Real Opportunities for Work) programme continues to provide employment opportunities to people with lived experience which includes but is not limited to homelessness, the criminal justice system, mental ill-health and substance misuse.

Following the full review of the GROW offer in 2021/22, the offer was relaunched across Care & Support in January 2023. The new offer includes additional support including access to Mentors, a Peer Network and a personal Roadmap to help GROW colleagues gain the confidence and skills they need to help secure permanent employment.

The new offer has been positively received by colleagues across Care and Support with 6 new roles being created in the first 3 months. The offer is also proving popular with customers and applicants without the required experience for other entry-level positions.

By replacing long-term vacancies with GROW roles, services can overcome recruitment issues and attract a wider range of applicants with valuable lived experience.

Work is taking place with colleagues across Care & Support to promote the benefits of the new GROW offer with an aim of creating a minimum of three roles in each of our six regions by the end of 2023/24.

.....

98.03%

of customer needs and risk assessments delivered on time



.....

85.71%

of people moved on from our short stay supported accommodation and floating support services in a positive way



.....

76.17%

people moved on from our short stay supported accommodation in a planned way



Working with you

Following on from last year's consultation with customers during the Summer of 2022 Riverside compiled the findings to establish a new Customer Involvement and Engagement strategy. This three-year strategy commenced in April 2023 and has five main themes, Local, Digital, Communications, Diversity and strong customer voice. Our consultation with customers last year identified that they wished to have local involvement and have more face-to-face contact locally, also many people now wish to engage more digitally in a post pandemic environment. We are setting out a framework to encourage more local involvement with our customers and we are working on improving our digital offer.



Riverside Customer Voice Executive (RCVE)

The RCVE continues to represent customers' views and scrutinises our performance. They joined with colleagues in visiting customers across the country during 2022 as part of our consultation for our new engagement strategy. They also formed a joint working group with customers from One Housing Group to help establish the customer pledges and agree some service principles for the newly merged organisation. The RCVE were consulted on Riverside's Shared ownership and tenants sales policy and the new corporate plan and Riverside values, as well as helping to shape its Tenant Satisfaction Measures. The RCVE continued to meet regularly via face-to-face meetings and via Teams.

Scrutiny Panel

The Customer Voice Scrutiny Panel completed its long-term project into Riverside's approach to anti-social behaviour in early 2023. Their recommendations are currently being implemented via an ongoing action plan.

Customer Complaints Panel

The panel have handled eight customer complaints.

Customer Inspectors

Our Customer Inspectors completed 13 joint inspections last year on retirement living schemes the first since the pandemic. They also held two face-to-face meetings with colleagues.

iCommunity

The iCommunity was consulted on Riverside's complaints process and customer service principles. It has over 1,300 members.



Care & Support

Riverside Care and Support services continue to offer a menu of local, inclusive and accessible opportunities to customers to be involved in the design and delivery of the service.

These include opportunities such as; involvement in the recruitment and selection of new colleagues and volunteers; service quality audits; local sign up processes and resources, and policy and procedure reviews. Almost all (94%) of services now hold Service Involvement Commitments – pledges made between customers and colleagues in each service around what involvement opportunities are offered, what support (if any) is needed to get involved, and how customers would like to receive feedback on what has happened as a result.

The Co-production Officer has continued to deliver virtual Co-production training sessions and face-to-face workshops to over 300 customers and colleagues across C&S. More than half (65%) of services are now regularly submitting entries to our “Customer Engagement Tracker”. This is used to log engagement events, social activities, instances of consultation, involvement, and co-production. The most popular involvement options are planning the local health and wellbeing offer in Retirement Living, planning service activities in C&S services, tenant/resident associations and/ or house meetings.



Co-production Gurus (otherwise known as COGs) are a network of colleagues and customers across the business who champion Co-production in their area. This year they have been critical in contributing to several projects taking place in the Group. Customers from a diverse range of C&S services were supported to attend virtual meetings around the C&S Strategy 2023-26, Service Charge Statement Design (part of the Group’s Service Charge Customer Mapping Exercise), and Homes For Cathy commitments. The COGs have also co-produced the “menu of involvement” (a guide to various opportunities within local service design and delivery to be involved with) and are currently working on the re-launch of the national C&S newsletter.

How we spend your rent

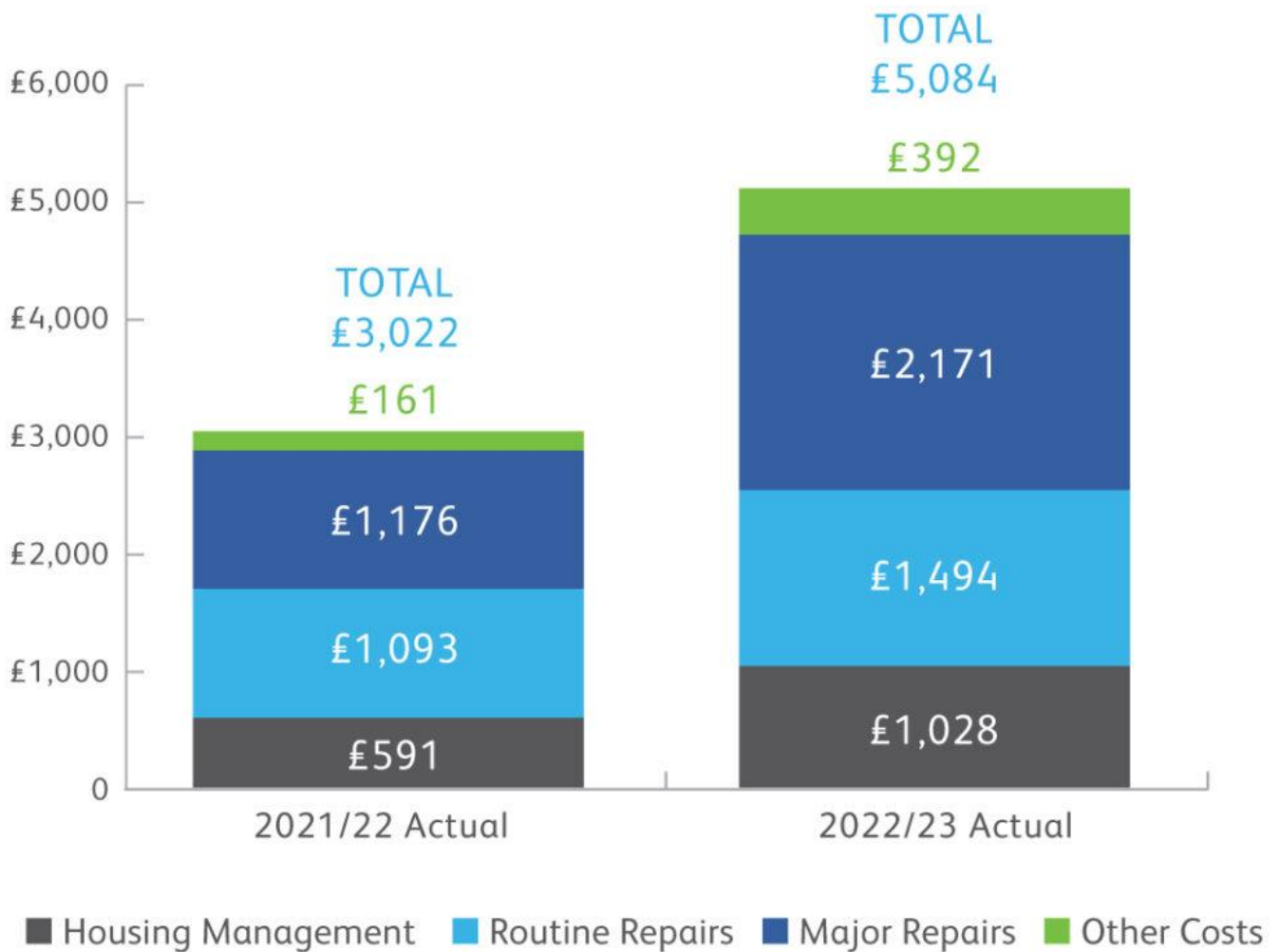
Riverside uses the surpluses we generate to re-invest in new and improve existing homes. Riverside's headline social housing cost per home has increased significantly in 2022/23 due to a few factors. Firstly, the result includes full year costs for One Housing Group (OHG), whereas the previous year only included the final four months of the financial year. In addition, the challenging external economic environment has driven increases in cost particularly expenditure on materials and energy.



The overall repair cost includes significant fire safety expenditure on tall buildings within the OHG stock portfolio. Excluding OHG, Fire Safety cost reduces cost per home by £720.

All categories of social housing costs have increased. The biggest increases have been in major repairs, £68.1m, which is the equivalent of £995 per home, management costs £29.9m, which is the equivalent of £436 per home, and maintenance, inclusive of planned maintenance, £27.4m, which is the equivalent of £401 per home.

Average cost of managing your home per year

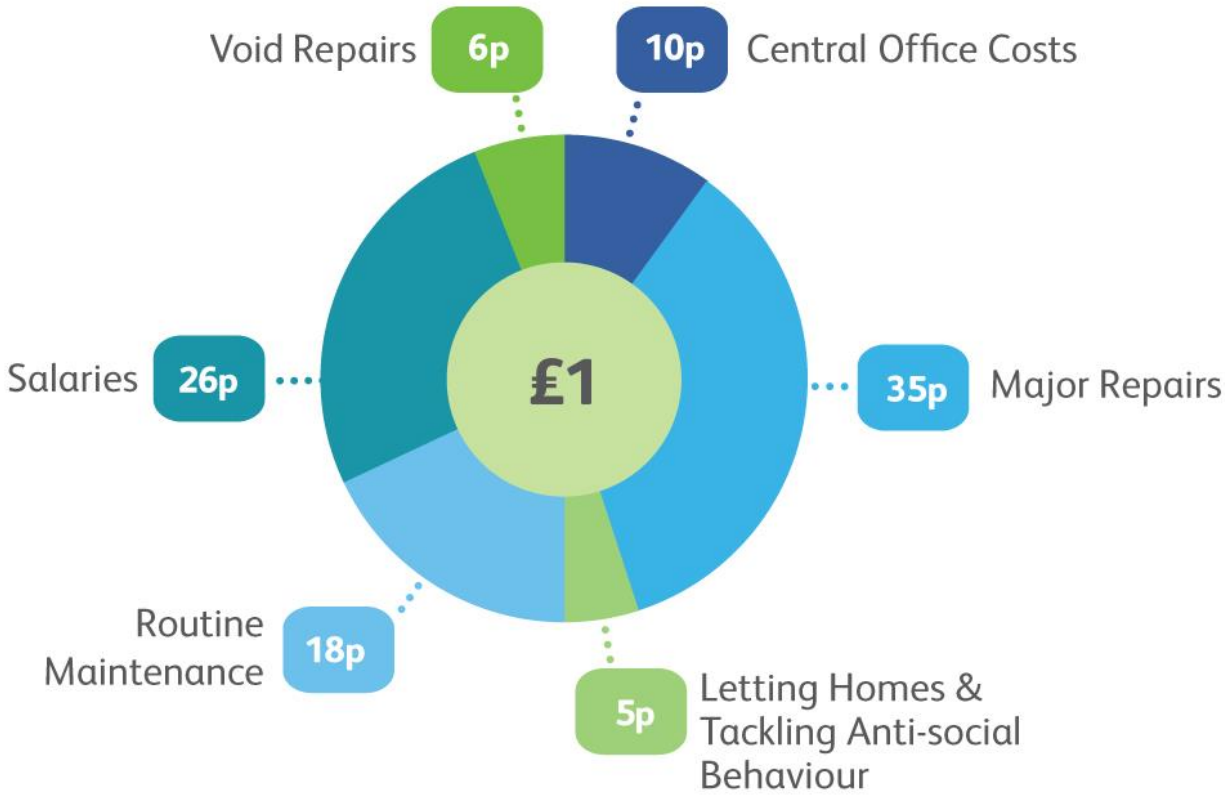


It is anticipated that there will be an increase in cost per home in 2023/24 due to a planned increase in major repairs including fire safety work, demonstrating our commitment to investing money in our housing stock for the benefit of current and future customers.

The figures quoted exclude service charge costs as it is difficult to benchmark Riverside’s cost per home inclusive of service charge cost as there are very few providers with a similar proportion of supported housing and housing for older people.

Riverside is committed to delivering further efficiency by a systematic approach to integration following the merger with OHG and will continue to drive down costs through better working practices and effective procurement without compromising on service standards or quality.

How every £1 of rent is spent



74%

of you think your rent provides value for money

↓ 4% compared with 2022



58%

of you think that service charges are value for money



What we've been doing in your area



Although Riverside is a nationwide housing association, we know that we need to keep in touch with what is happening locally, and tailor the services we provide in different neighbourhoods. We have talked to customers about local priorities to develop neighbourhood plans. You can find our Local Offers below and read a summary of actions we carried out in 2022/23 in our three regional updates:

Local Offers

- Raffles, Carlisle [Download](#)
- Morton, Carlisle [Download](#)
- Salterbeck, Workington [Download](#)
- Peel Road, Sefton [Download](#)
- North Liverpool [Download](#)
- Murdishaw, Runcorn [Download](#)
- Colshaw Farm, Wilmslow [Download](#)
- Stoke Moss Green, Stoke-on-Trent [Download](#)
- Thanet, Kent [Download](#)

Regional updates

- What's been happening in Liverpool City Region [Download](#)
- What's been happening in North Region [Download](#)
- What's been happening in South and Central Region [Download](#)