



2024

**Environmental, Social  
& Governance Report**

# Contents

Introduction	<b>Page 3 &gt;</b>
Climate Change	<b>Page 4 &gt;</b>
Ecology	<b>Page 7 &gt;</b>
Resource Management	<b>Page 9 &gt;</b>
Affordability and Security	<b>Page 11 &gt;</b>
Building Safety and Quality	<b>Page 14 &gt;</b>
Resident Voice	<b>Page 17 &gt;</b>
Resident Support	<b>Page 20 &gt;</b>
Placemaking	<b>Page 21 &gt;</b>
Structure and Governance	<b>Page 23 &gt;</b>
Board and Trustees	<b>Page 25 &gt;</b>
Staff Wellbeing	<b>Page 28 &gt;</b>
Social Value	<b>Page 31 &gt;</b>



# We are Cobalt Housing

**Cobalt is a community-based housing association that owns and manages 5,769 homes in Fazakerley and Sparrow Hall, Croxteth, and Norris Green.**

**We understand the importance of community and place and are ambitious and determined to ensure the success of our significant investment and commitment to our neighbourhoods.**

Our customers, communities and colleagues are at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make.

We are delivering our 2023 to 2028 corporate plan and four key priorities to:

- **Provide excellent customer services**
- **Invest in quality homes**
- **Support communities to thrive**
- **Develop positive people**

## **Our Purpose**

Everyone deserves somewhere to call home, a place to make their own, feel safe and secure, and set down firm foundations. The right home will help people to live well, realise their potential and achieve the things that are important to them.

## **Our Mission**

By providing quality places to live, and support to those who need it, we play our part in developing thriving communities where people are proud to live and can be their best.



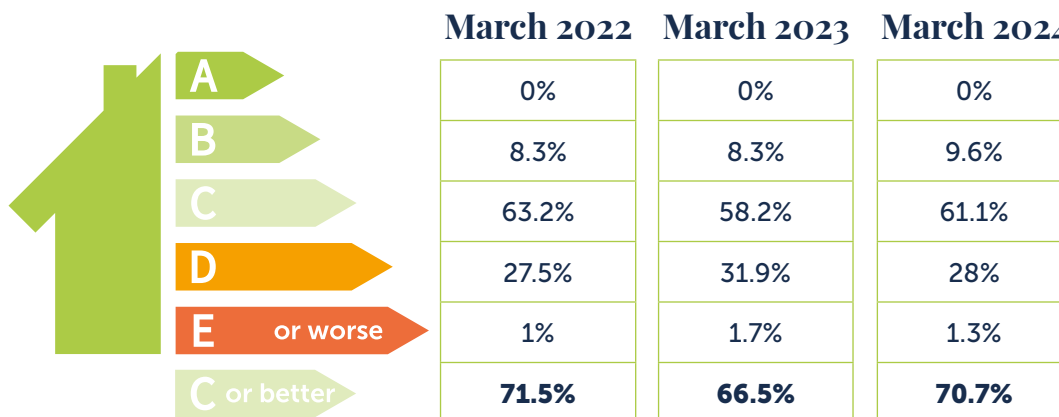
# 1.

# Climate change

We are committed to playing our part in achieving the national target for net carbon zero by 2050. Improving the energy efficiency of our homes will reduce climate impact and fuel poverty at a time when many are struggling with the cost of energy.

## C1

### Distribution of EPC ratings of our existing homes.



### Target:

We aim to achieve net carbon zero by 2050 with all homes reaching EPC band C by 2028. We will further invest in housing analytical software to model various energy efficiency improvement scenarios and measures required to improve the performance of our stock.

C2

**Distribution of EPC ratings of new homes completed in the last financial year.**

We did not complete any new build homes in 2023/24.

C3

**Do we have a Net Zero target and strategy?**

Yes

**If so, what is it and when do we intend to be Net Zero by?**

2050

C4

**What retrofit activities have we undertaken in the last 12 months in relation to our housing stock?**

**How do these activities align with, and contribute towards, performance against our Net Zero strategy and target?**

We carried out retrofit works to bring 120 homes to EPC C or above, as part of the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund programme. Energy efficiency measures included cavity wall extraction and insulation, solar PV, upgraded loft insulation and ventilation to PAS2035 standards.

This aligns with Cobalt's long-term Net Zero strategy and medium-term target to get all homes to EPC C by 2028.

**Target:**

We have committed to improving all our properties currently at EPC D or below to EPC C by April 2028, taking advantage of Warm Homes Social Housing Fund Wave 3 funding to carry out the work. Measures will include solar PV, loft insulation, and Cavity Wall Insulation (virgin cavity install and extraction/refill).

## C5

### Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Green House Gas emissions per home

We will undertake an annual assessment of our Green House Gas emissions so we can track progress against our baseline levels. This will allow us to benchmark against other registered providers. The assessment will also produce a report in line with corporate governance Streamlined Energy Carbon Reporting (SECR).

**The table below shows Cobalt's baseline emissions for 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023.**

<b>Scope 1</b>	Kg CO2 equivalent	65,220
<b>Scope 2</b>	Kg CO2 equivalent	42,760
<b>Scope 3</b>	Kg CO2 equivalent	13,187,020
<b>Scope 1, 2 &amp; 3</b>	Total Kg CO2 equivalent	13,295,000
<b>Scope 1</b>	Kg CO2 equivalent/home	11.31
<b>Scope 2</b>	Kg CO2 equivalent/home	7.42
<b>Scope 3</b>	Kg CO2 equivalent/home	2,287.03
<b>Scope 1, 2 &amp; 3</b>	Total Kg CO2 equivalent/home	2,294.45

## C6

### How have we mapped and assessed the climate risks to our homes and supply chain, such as increased flood, drought and overheating risks?

#### How are we mitigating these risks?

##### Flood risk

Flood risk assessments are carried out for all new developments as part of the new build requirements. The overall flood risk to Cobalt's existing housing stock is low.

##### Overheating

All new build properties comply with part O of the building regulations relating to overheating. All retrofit properties completed under the SHDF programme meet PAS2035 standards for whole house ventilation.



## 2. Ecology

We continue to support community projects that deliver a positive environmental impact and promote sustainability.

Karonga Gardens provides green space for Fazakerley community to come together to grow plants and create habitats for insects and animals. In 2023/24, we provided £4,600 in funding for Forest Schools at Norris Green and Karonga Gardens, enhancing green spaces. This generated £739,783 in social value activity.

The creation of open green spaces, linear parks and areas of rewilding are incorporated into new housing developments and we continue to manage and monitor the wider ecological impact of our activities.

C7

### **Do we have a strategy to enhance green space and promote biodiversity on or near homes?**

#### **If no, is the housing provider planning on producing one in the next 12 months?**

All new developments contain ecological and environmental assessments aimed at promoting bio-diversity and enhanced green spaces as part of the planning approval process.

Our Sustainability Strategy will provide guidance on how we can achieve similar outputs within our existing neighbourhoods linked to our Neighbourhood plan process.

C8

### **Do we have a strategy to identify, manage and reduce pollutants that could cause material harm?**

#### **If so, how does the housing provider target and measure performance?**

Reducing pollutants is a priority within our Sustainability Strategy.

The UKHSA has published reports containing radon affected area maps. Cobalt's properties are not in affected areas.

As Cobalt develops its property portfolio through its development programme, this will be continually checked.

In relation to asbestos, we ensure that CAR 2012 is adhered to including:

- 1.** Regulation 16: the duty to prevent or reduce the spread of ACMs. This is managed through our processes for work, enclosures where needed, decontamination and bagging and labeling waste.
- 2.** Regulation 17: the duty to ensure work areas and equipment are kept clean to prevent the spread of ACMs outside contained area
- 3.** Regulation 24: this requires an employer to ensure that raw asbestos and asbestos waste is properly packaged, labelled, stored and transported. We use removal contractors with the required permits under the Carriage of Dangerous Goods and Use of Transportable Pressure Equipment Regulations 2009. We manage this through our asbestos register, ensuring all removal certification and appropriate waste transfer documentation is received and checked.

Each new build site has a dedicated construction, environmental and waste management plan in operation to ensure that the impact of waste and pollutants is minimised. These are monitored throughout the construction process.





# 3.

# Resource Management

We're aware that resource management is an area we need to develop further. We have a Sustainability Strategy that sets out our priorities moving forward, but policies, delivery plans and targets for resource management have not yet been developed.



## **Do we have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building and repairs works?**

Our new developments, refurbishments and repair works will respond to the impacts of climate change by integrating sustainable solutions, site management and waste reduction principles in support of our Sustainability Strategy. These are due to be finalised in the next 6 months.

C10

**Do we have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials?**

While there is no strategy currently in place, we recently reprocured our waste contract. As part of this, we set up a programme of reporting to help with enhanced recording and monitoring of recycling data and set a benchmark for target setting in future projects. All of our current contractors are required to adhere to relevant regulations around the handling and disposal of waste. This ranges from the application of the Separation of Waste Act (2024) for our office recycling to the Environmental Protection Act (1990) (as amended by the Environment Act (2021)) for our commercial and building waste.

Each new build site has a dedicated construction, environmental and waste management plan in operation to ensure that the impact of waste is minimised. This also stipulates how the storage and flow of materials on site is adhered to through site management processes. This is typically monitored via the Principal Designer in accordance with Construction Design Management Legislation.

C11

**Does the housing provider have a strategy for water management?**

Water management is a priority within our Sustainability Strategy and while we are developing policies, procedures, delivery plans and targets, we have fitted water saving devices to homes as part of our improvement works, including:

- Kitchen taps are water saving and have a flow restrictor to restrict water wastage.
- Bath and basin taps are water-saving with an eco flow regulator.
- WC pan has a water saving cistern.

All new build properties comply with requirements set out in part G2, Regulation 36 of the Building Regulations regarding water efficiency, including the installation of fittings and maximum consumption values.

Flood risk and an appropriate drainage strategy are considered as part of each new development. These are designed to support the longer term maintenance of homes and environmental sustainability.



# 4.

## Affordability and Security

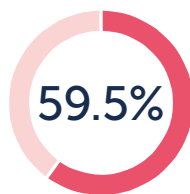
Everyone deserves somewhere to call home, a place to make their own, feel safe and secure, and set down firm foundations. The right home will help people to live well, realise their potential and achieve the things that are important to them.

Security of tenure makes a huge difference to people's lives and their ability to find work, access support and build family lives.

**C12**

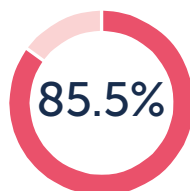
**For properties that are subject to the rent regulation regime, report against one or more Affordability Metric:**

**1) Rent compared to median private rental sector (PRS) rent across the relevant Local Authority**



**2024**  
Private rented sector

**2) Rent compared to the relevant Local Housing Allowance (LHA)**

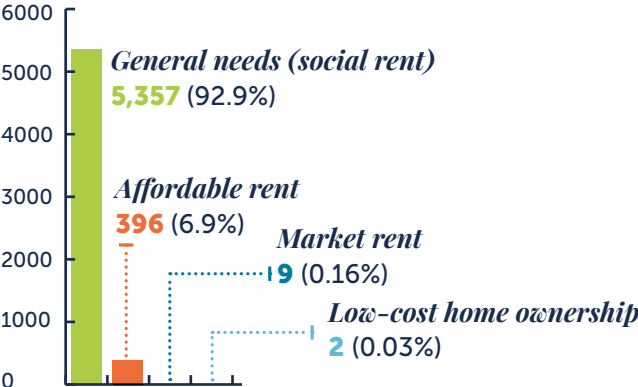


**2024**  
Local housing allowance

C13

**Number, and share, of existing homes (owned and/or managed and completed before the last financial year) allocated to:**

**2024**



C14

**Number, and share, of new homes (owned and/or managed, and completed in the last financial year), allocated to:**

No new homes were completed in 2023/24.

**C15**

**How are we trying to reduce the effect of high energy costs on our residents?**

We are reducing the effect of high energy costs on our residents through a two-step approach:

1. Carrying out retrofit works to homes to improve their overall energy efficiency and performance.
2. Working in partnership with Energy Projects Plus, who provide a referral frontline energy advice service.

**Target:**

Where feasible, we will carry out energy efficiency works to homes to improve housing stock to a minimum of EPC C, by 2028, ahead of the Government's target of 2030.

**C16**

**How do we provide security of tenure for our residents?**

Starter tenancies convert to assured tenancies after 12 months. A Section 21 will only be used for serious tenancy breaches during starter tenancies. A Section 21 notice is the first step in eviction proceedings. We do not allocate homes on flexible terms, leases or licenses. Customers who moved into a Cobalt home during stock transfer have protected rights. These rights follow them should they transfer internally to another property, with no loss of rights to them or a person succeeding their tenancy.





# 5. Building Safety and Quality

The safety of our customers is our number one priority.

**C17**

**Describe the condition of our portfolio, with reference to:**

<p><b>99.8%</b></p>	<p>% of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.</p>	<p>Twelve properties were overdue for inspection due to customers not allowing access into their homes. We are taking appropriate legal action to ensure that these checks can be carried out.</p>
<p><b>100%</b></p>	<p>% of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.</p>	
<p><b>99.7%</b></p>	<p>% of homes for which all required electrical safety checks have been carried out.</p>	<p>Fifteen properties were overdue for inspection due to customers not allowing access into their homes. We are taking appropriate legal action to ensure that these checks can be carried out.</p>

C18

**What % of our homes meet the national housing quality standard?**

99.7%

**Of those which fail, what are we doing to address these failings?**

There were nineteen homes that failed the standard at the end of March 2024. Works to remedy the failings have been identified and programmed in.

C19

**How do we manage and mitigate the risk of damp and mould for our residents?**

We have a comprehensive and proactive approach to managing and mitigating the risks associated with damp and mould in our customers' homes through our damp and mould policy.

We have a dedicated team of surveyors who are specifically trained to identify and assess damp and mould issues. Our surveyors use specialist equipment to conduct thorough assessments and provide timely interventions, reducing the long-term impact of damp and mould on our housing stock and, more importantly, our customers health and wellbeing.

Customers can report damp and mould through various channels, including telephone and email. We also use virtual assistance for preliminary risk assessments, helping to prioritise cases based on the severity of the reported issue. This system ensures that we can respond quickly and efficiently, especially in high-risk situations.

C19

**To ensure a holistic approach to damp and mould management, we have several collaborative internal groups:**

• **Healthy Homes Group:**

This team meets weekly to review and address emerging health-related housing issues, including damp and mould.

• **Complex Cases Review Group:**

This monthly meeting focuses on particularly challenging or recurring cases, enabling the team to develop tailored solutions that address underlying causes, not just symptoms.

• **Tenancy Welfare Initiatives:**

We prioritise residents' well-being, ensuring that vulnerable customers are given extra support where necessary, including welfare checks and additional follow-up services.

In cases where a property is deemed uninhabitable due to severe damp or mould, we will arrange for temporary accommodation (decant) to ensure the safety and comfort of residents while remedial work is carried out. Additionally, we conduct post inspections to verify the effectiveness of completed works and ensure that the issues have been fully resolved.

Our commitment to continuous improvement includes providing annual training for all staff. This training focuses on raising awareness of the early signs of damp and mould, equipping colleagues with the knowledge they need to identify issues proactively.

Our planned maintenance and energy efficiency programmes are targeted on the worst performing homes and we have a fully priced plan to achieve a minimum standard of EPC C to all homes by 2028.





# 6. Resident Voice

The customer voice is key to delivering services that meet our customers' needs, and shaping service improvements



**What are the results of our most recent tenant satisfaction survey?**

% of residents satisfied | **60%**

**How have we acted on these results?**

Further analysis is being carried out by neighbourhood, type of property and customer characteristics to inform priority action plans.

## C21

**What arrangements are in place to enable residents to hold management to account for the provision of services?**

Our approach to tenant engagement and customer voice is embedded within our Governance structure, and we value the importance of hearing the customer voice to improve our services.

Performance information is published on our website, including agreed targets. In addition, our Homes and Neighbourhood Committee (HNC) and Tenant Consultative Panel (TCP) review operational performance, as well as providing 'spotlights' on key workstreams aimed at improving the services we offer to customers. We have proactively established key forums around projects including Improving our Repairs and complaints to seek further representation from customers from a cross section of our neighbourhoods.

We actively promote further communication via our website and our online engagement platform (My Voice Matters) allows feedback on policies, strategies and services to be submitted online.

Cobalt meets the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) requirements in its delivery, collection and reporting of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, ensuring that we collect data directly from customers and use this to inform our overall business offer, improving services where required.

C22

**In the last 12 months, in how many complaints has the national Ombudsman determined that maladministration took place?**

**% of complaints upheld | 6%**

**How have these complaints (or others) resulted in change of practice within the housing provider?**

The Housing Ombudsman made six findings of maladministration in 2023/24. The main theme in five out of six cases related to the amount of compensation paid. As a result of this, we have worked with our Complaints Forum to review and adjust the amount of compensation we pay.

We carried out a thorough review of our complaints process in 2023/24 and established a dedicated team who have the authority to provide discretionary compensation to effectively address complaints and acknowledge service failures. This has improved the timescales associated with resolving complaints.

In 2023/24, around 60% of all complaints received related to our repairs service. As a result of this, Cobalt Board agreed to plans to bring our repair service in-house and in August 2024, phase 1 of our Improving our Repair project launched. This saw repairs brought in-house for a third of our homes, with the remaining two thirds covered by two new external contractor partners. We plan to bring all repairs in-house in 2025. We developed performance standards and a code of conduct in conjunction with customers and colleagues.



# 7.

## Resident Support

We are committed to building strong partnerships with local organisations to maximise the impact of everything we do.

We offer tailored support to customers to help them sustain their tenancy and access support from partner organisations, including the NHS.

### C23

#### **What are the key support services that we offer to our residents?**

As an anchor organisation in North Liverpool, we provide a variety of services including on-site welfare benefit and housing options support, as well as advice around budget management, tenancy sustainment and health and wellbeing.

Our Welfare Benefit team secured £1million in additional benefits for Cobalt customers in 2023/24, and we expect this to have increased to £1.5million in 2024/25.

We have dedicated Tenancy Wellbeing and Community Safety teams who support our more vulnerable customers, making referrals into the NHS and other specialist services for people who are struggling and need additional help.

We host a regular diary of events, drop ins and surgeries at our Head Office and out in our communities to triage specific issues that our customers may be faced with. We aim to promote inclusivity and reduce social isolation through the activities we undertake, which have been proven to improve outcomes for our residents.

Further details of the support provided, including complex sustainability cases and outcomes, can be found in our Community Impact Report 2023/24

<https://cobalthousing.org.uk/about-us/performance/our-community-impact-report/>



# 8. Placemaking

Our ambitions for our neighbourhoods go beyond statutory responsibilities. We seek to bring about lasting positive change in partnership with the people who live there and other stakeholders.

C24

**Describe our investment activities, and how we are contributing to positive neighbourhood outcomes for the communities in which our homes are located.**

**Provide examples or case studies of where we have been engaged in placemaking or placeshaping activities.**

### **Community Investment Activities**

We provide funding to support the delivery of a range of activities and programmes aimed at supporting social, environmental and economic investment of our neighbourhoods. Our approach is to:

- Invest in the delivery of community-led programmes, projects and facilities that address the aspirations of our customers.
- Work in partnership to develop the capacity of communities to deliver and manage community-led projects.
- Build strong partnerships and support the third sector to grow capacity and to deliver services in our communities.
- Provide intensive tenancy support for identified customers with support needs

**Further details can be found in our Community Impact Report 2023/24.**

**<https://cobalthousing.org.uk/about-us/performance/our-community-impact-report/>**

### Placemaking/Placeshaping

We plan to grow our property asset base over the next 10 years, with a clear target to deliver 1,000 new homes by 2033.

As part of this ambition, we will build new homes within our core neighbourhoods and across adjoining local authorities within the Liverpool City Region.

Placemaking is an essential requirement of our growth plan, and we are progressing a number of schemes that clearly demonstrate how placemaking is central to our development and regeneration activities and how we invest our resources into new growth opportunities that contribute to sustainable development and placemaking principles.

### Halsnead Garden Village

We recently partnered with Vistry Group, a national construction and housebuilder, to jointly deliver over 100 new homes in Knowsley, Merseyside. The scheme is a key phase of the prestigious Halsnead Garden Village development, the largest combined housing and employment site in the Liverpool City Region. The scheme is described as a beautiful sanctuary for housing, employment opportunities and breathtaking green space for the whole community to enjoy. Halsnead Garden Village in its totality will be made up of 1,600 new, high-quality homes, 33 hectares of new greenspaces and a new, 28-hectare country park. New and enhanced community facilities will also be delivered and accessible to everyone.

### Stonedale Estate Regeneration project

We are currently undertaking the widescale regeneration of the Stonedale Estate, which is one of our core neighbourhoods in Croxteth, Liverpool. This project includes significant improvements to public realm, street scene and landscaped areas. We are building new, safe and secure homes, paying particular attention to the requirement for smaller properties to support customers who are under occupying and require smaller more manageable homes.

We are also refurbishing a number of properties to upgrade components and improve energy efficiency and building performance. We have worked with local partners and the community to secure planning approval and public funding to support the delivery of new homes on Stonedale Crescent in 2025, which includes a variety of house types for single people, couples and larger families.

The scheme will be located at the heart of the community, occupying a prominent site close to shops and amenities and will include quality internal communal areas to encourage social interaction and wellbeing.

### Design & Performance Standard

We are currently updating our Design Guide and Technical Specification for new build schemes, which will clearly set out our expectations in terms of location, design, materials and components, ensuring that our partners and suppliers have a clear understanding of what we require.



# 9. Structure and Governance

Cobalt is a Community Benefit Society and a not-for-profit housing provider, regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. Strong and effective governance is key to our long-term success.

**C25**

**Are we registered with the national regulator of social housing?**

Yes

**C26**

**What is our most recent regulatory grading/status?**

G1/V2/C2

**C27**

**Which Code of Governance do we follow, if any?**

National Housing Federation Code of Governance 2020

**C28**

**Are we a Not-For-Profit?**

Yes

**C29**

**How does our Board manage ESG risks?**

Identified ESG risks are managed through our risk registers, monitored by Senior Management Team and reported to Audit & Risk Committee and Board.

**Are ESG risks incorporated into our provider's risk register?**

Yes

**C30**

**Have we been subject to any adverse regulatory findings in the last 12 months (data protection breaches, bribery, money laundering, HSE breaches etc.) - that resulted in enforcement or other equivalent action?**

No





# 10. Board and Trustees

Our ambitions for our neighbourhoods go far beyond our statutory responsibilities. We seek to bring about lasting positive change in our neighbourhoods, in partnership with the people who live there and other stakeholders.

**C31**

## **How do we ensure we get input from a diverse range of people into our governance processes?**

The Board remains committed to having diversity at the heart of its recruitment processes. The principles of Cobalt's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy extends to all recruitment.

Do we consider resident voice at the Board and senior management level?

Do we have policies that incorporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) into the recruitment and selection of Board members and senior management?

Our Board representation	2023	2024	Our customers
% of Board that are women	50%	45%	52%
% of Board that are BAME	8%	9%	5%
% of Board that are residents	9%	9%	N/A
% of Board that have a disability	23%	9%	24%
Average age of Board members	56.7 years	55 years	21% (aged 0-15 years) 63% (aged 16-64 years) 16% (aged 65+ years)
Average Board tenure	4.7 years	3 years	N/A

C32

What % of our Board has turned over in the last two years?

45%

What % of our Senior Management Team has turned over in the last two years?

50%

C33

Number of Board members on our Audit Committee with recent and relevant financial experience.

50%

These Board members have extensive experience as employees in senior finance roles in a range of other organisations.

**C34****What % of our Board are non-executive directors?**

100%

**C35****Has a succession plan been provided to Board in the last 12 months?**

Yes

**C36****For how many years has our current external audit partner been responsible for auditing the accounts?**

6 years

**C37****When was our last independently-run Board-effectiveness review?**

01/11/2022

**C38****How do we handle conflicts of interest at Board?**

Declarations of Interest is a standing item on the agenda of all Board and committee meetings and the Chair, with advice from the Company Secretary, will determine whether a declared interest may represent a real or perceived conflict for the Board member and if the Board member declaring the interest should exclude themselves from all voting and/or discussions on that matter. Any such declarations are recorded in the minutes of the meeting along with the Chair's decision and rationale.

All staff sign up to a Code of Conduct and in line with this, they must declare any relevant interests for consideration by the Company Secretary.



# 11.

## Staff Wellbeing

Our staff are our most important asset. Without them, we cannot achieve our mission to provide quality places to live, and support to those who need it.

We invest in a wide range of wellbeing initiatives to help our employees.

**C39**

**Do we pay the Real Living Wage?**

Yes

**C40**

**What is our median gender pay gap?**

8.3%

**C41**

**What is our CEO: median-worker pay ratio?**

4:6

C42

## How do we ensure equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is promoted across our staff?

EDI training is mandatory for all staff. We have updated our EDI Strategy and a formal launch took place in November 2024, along with in-person training which will include unconscious bias. The EDI Strategy implementation plan sets out our agreed actions for the next three years from both a customer and colleague perspective. We secured a place on the first wave of the 'digital inclusion initiative'. This is an industry-led programme, designed to tackle digital exclusion and support economic growth. Funded by Lloyds Bank, Vodafone and Assurant, the initiative provides thousands of free tablets, with six months of connectivity and in-person digital skills training, to residents across the Liverpool City Region. We are currently applying to Phase 2 of this initiative.

We launched a new website in October 2024. This new site has been built with EDI at the forefront, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of our customer base. To ensure readability across all literacy ages within our communities, we have adopted a Flesch-Kincaid Reading Score data analysis approach.

Our current People Strategy has a focus on diversifying our workforce and a particular emphasis on inclusive recruitment processes with a number of projects underway. To date, we have piloted sharing interview questions in advance, introduced new selection tasks, and targeted specific groups of people for roles. Support is provided for line managers by the HR Team in providing reasonable adjustments for all staff. We have begun to introduce personal user playbooks, helping our staff to understand each other and their working preferences.

C43

### How do we support the physical and mental health of our staff?

All staff have access to our Employee Assistance Programme. Ten staff are trained mental health first aiders (MHFAs), equipped to support colleagues and provide signposting. We make good use of Occupational Health and talking therapies where appropriate. Hybrid and flexible working is promoted across the organisation. Line managers are supported by our HR Team to make reasonable adjustments to support staff in managing their wellbeing and physical and mental health. A calendar of regular wellbeing events is in place, with events held throughout the year. This includes Fibro scans/liver health screening in October.

We support the physical and mental health of our staff by:

- Running regular 'tea and teach' sessions focusing on wellbeing
- Occupational health referrals
- NHS has visited our offices to complete a number of liver scans for colleagues
- An Employee Assistance Programme
- Flexible working
- Phased returns with alternative duties.
- Contribution towards healthy activities, such as a gym membership or yoga sessions.

C44

### How do we support the professional development of our staff?

There is a dedicated budget for professional development that all staff are invited to apply for. A comprehensive Leadership Development programme has been provided for our Executive Team and is now being rolled out to our Senior Leadership Team. We are currently supporting staff to achieve the following professional qualifications:

- Chartered Institute of Housing
- Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
- Chartered Institute of Public Relations
- Domestic Energy Assessor Qualification
- Association of Accounting Technicians
- Safety Schemes in Procurement
- HNC Building Surveying
- Chartered Governance Institute.

We also pay for subscription fees to professional bodies.



# 12.

## Social Value

In 2023, we subscribed to the HACT Social Value Insight Tool to measure the social impact of the work we do and the projects we fund. This provides us with a standardised framework to show the effectiveness of projects we fund, enhancing our decision making and helping us to deliver the services that make an impact on our communities.

**C45**

### **How is social value creation considered when we procure goods and services?**

#### **What measures are in place to monitor the delivery of this social value?**

Wherever practical and appropriate, we engage with suppliers and contractors at an early stage in the procurement process to develop a bespoke social value plan in line with our Corporate Objectives and Community Action Plan. We have developed a standard Social Value Contract Management Template to allow us to approach each contract in the same way.

Social value delivery is monitored via a third party system called HACT. This allows us to track outcomes from projects and provides us with detailed insight into the type of social value we are targeting as an organisation, as well as displaying a range of metrics achieved on individual contracts and as a whole.

C46

## How is sustainability considered when we procure goods and services?

### What measures are in place to monitor the sustainability of the supply chain when procuring goods and services?

We request sustainability statements from each organisation involved in procurement activity with us. We acknowledge that not all suppliers or contractors will be in a position to produce a formal statement, and are currently developing an approach to this that will require suppliers to sign up to our sustainability standards.

We acknowledge that there is currently a gap in the way sustainability is monitored in our supply chain during the life of a contract. Our specification documents are developed as part of the procurement process for relevant contracts to ensure quality materials are used during the life of the contract.

We have procured a new construction waste contract, which will include detailed information on the recycling and reuse of waste materials produced as a result of works undertaken internally.





