



livin

Environmental,
Social and
Governance Report
September 2023



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Introduction

We are very pleased to share our third Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Report. We are a not-for-profit housing association based in County Durham. We're here to improve lives through the provision of safe, affordable, sustainable homes, and support resilient communities where people are proud to live, work and play.

We work hard to make sure those homes are high quality, sustainable and adaptable, while meeting our tenants current and future aspirations. We offer support that helps people into work and training and increases their financial confidence and stability.

In the last year, we have seen significant changes in the housing sector, including soaring inflation which resulted in a cost-of-living crisis and the prioritisation of identifying and rectifying dampness and mould in homes.

We understand the continuing challenges our communities are facing and we are committed to delivering energy efficient improvements to our homes to reduce the cost of heating homes.

Our customers have never needed us as much as they do now and we look to continue our support through these difficult economic times.

Our business strategy, Plan A, is flexible and able to respond to emerging issues. It continues to provide strategic focus through six priorities. These focus on helping tenants who are most in need to make the most of their money; growing our stock of affordable, well-designed homes; creating stronger, sustainable and thriving places and addressing areas most in need of improvement; upgrading our properties to make them more energy efficient and reduce carbon consumption; and providing support for older and vulnerable tenants so they can maintain their independence.

During the year we secured new funding with sustainability targets, further enhancing our focus on sustainability.

Our report is presented in line with the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing (SRS).

Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing

The Sustainability Reporting Standard was developed to enable social housing organisations to report their Environmental, Social and Governance performance in a transparent, consistent and comparable way.

This allows investors to consider ESG performance as part of their credit process.

Our strength in sustainability is key to us as attracting new investors who will deliver new finance and therefore help deliver our strategic objectives, particularly building and acquiring sustainable homes and providing quality sustainable homes.

Affordable housing is recognised as a major contributor to communities and helps in delivering Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

UN Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) were adopted by all UN member states in 2015 and provide common goals that are recognised as necessary for Investors, Governments, businesses and general society to do more to end poverty and protect the planet. Supporting our customers and communities is embedded in our strategy and links to several of the SDG's below:



Social housing contributes to several of these SDG's in particular:



Source: The Good Economy



Report Structure

Our report is aligned to the different themes contained within the SRS for Social Housing. These themes, and their link to SDG's are;

ESG Area	Theme No.	Theme Name	Description	UNSDG
Social	T1	Affordability & Security	This theme seeks to assess the extent to which the housing provider provides long term homes that are genuinely affordable to those on low incomes. The theme is made up of five criteria including the tenure mix of new and existing properties, the security of tenure and fuel poverty.	1, 10, 11
	T2	Building Safety & Quality	This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at meeting its legal responsibilities to protect residents and keep buildings safe. The theme is made up of three criteria; disclosing gas safety checks, fire risk assessments and meeting Decent Homes Standards.	11
	T3	Resident Voice	This theme seeks to assess how effective the housing provider is at listening to and empowering residents. The theme is made up of three themes that cover board scrutiny, complaint handling and resident satisfaction.	11
	T4	Resident Support	This theme seeks to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives that the housing provider runs to support individual residents. The theme is made up of two criteria that cover what support is provided and how successful it is.	11
	T5	Placemaking	This theme seeks to highlight the wider set of activities that housing providers undertake to create well-designed homes and places that meet local needs and provide great places for people to live and enjoy. The theme is made up of one criterion; a space for the housing provider to give examples of their placemaking or placeshaping work.	11

ESG Area	Theme No.	Theme Name	Description	UNSDG
Environmental	T6	Climate Change	This theme seeks to assess how the activities of the housing provider are impacting on climate change and how they are mitigating the physical risks of climate change. This theme considers current practice, as well as the changes being made to improve performance in the future. This theme is made up of six criteria, including the distribution of Energy Performance Certificate ratings, emissions data, climate risk mitigation plan and environmental strategy.	7, 9, 13
	T7	Ecology	This theme seeks to assess how the housing provider is protecting the local environment and ecology. The theme is made up of two criteria around managing pollutants and increasing biodiversity.	15
	T8	Resource Management	This theme seeks to identify the extent to which the housing provider has a sustainable approach to materials in both the construction and management of properties. The theme is made up of three themes that cover sourcing materials, water management and waste management.	11, 13
Governance	T9	Structure & Governance	This theme seeks to assess the housing provider's overall structure and approach to governance. The theme is made up of six criteria covering the regulator, code of governance, risk management and ownership.	16
	T10	Board & Trustees	This theme seeks to assess the quality, suitability and performance of the board and trustees. The theme is made up of eleven criteria including demographics of the board and the experience and independence of the board.	16
	T11	Staff Wellbeing	This theme seeks to assess how staff are supported and how their wellbeing is considered. The theme is made up of five criteria including salary information, additional support for staff and average sick days.	8, 16
	T12	Supply Chain Management	This theme seeks to assess if the housing provider procures responsibly. The theme is made up of two criteria assessing how social value and environmental impact are considered.	11, 13



Social

AFFORDABILITY AND SECURITY

C1 – Affordability and Security

We compare our average social and affordable rents to private rental market data. Our average rents are disclosed to The Regulator of Social Housing in our annual Statistical Data Return (at 31 March 2023) and the market rent data is obtained from The Office for National Statistics Private Rental Market Summary Statistics in England (April 2022 to March 2023 dataset).

Local Authority Area	No. of Houses	Livin's Median Rent	Median Market Rent	% of Market Rent
County Durham	8,580	£82.66	£116.40	71%
Darlington	59	£106.63	£121.46	88%
Stockton on Tees	16	£113.75	£137.48	83%

Our main area of operations is County Durham where our rents are on average 71% of the median market rent. In Darlington and Stockton on Tees the properties we own are mostly new build houses with an affordable rent set at 80% of the market rent at the time of letting. As these homes are new build properties the rent set is closer to the median market rent shown above. This is because that median rent includes older privately rented homes with lower market rents.

C2 – Share of homes (by tenure)

Affordability is a major part of the key objective of supporting sustainable tenancies. Our tenancies are mostly let at social and affordable rents as shown below:

Tenancy Type	2023		2022	
	No. of Units	%	No. of Units	%
General needs (social rent)	6,988	80.60%	7,032	81.38%
Affordable rent	1,630	18.80%	1,570	18.17%
Intermediate rent	37	0.43%	24	0.28%
Shared ownership	15	0.17%	15	0.17%
Total	8,670	100%	8,641	100%

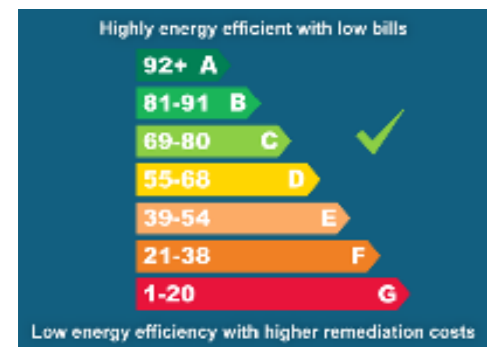
C3 – Share of new homes (by tenure)

Building and Acquiring Sustainable Homes is a fundamental part of Plan A. The number of homes developed was less than expected due to delays on site with the completion of 51 units being pushed back to after the year end. Our development contractor entered administration during the year and despite this we were able to move quickly to appoint a new contractor without a significant rise in costs. We invested £17.020m in new properties including homes under construction at the financial year end.

Tenancy Type	No. of Units	%
Intermediate rent (rent to buy)	13	13.1%
Affordable rent	86	86.9%

C4 – How are we trying to reduce the impact of fuel poverty on residents?

Our target is to achieve an average SAP rating of 73.5 for our homes by 2025 with 97% of properties at a minimum band C by March 2025. At March 2023 we had 71.04% (2022 66.49%) of our housing stock already at, or above, EPC band C and an average SAP score of 71.2 (2022 70.6) across our homes.



We were successful in obtaining grant under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (wave 1) and have undertaken works to our properties to make them more energy efficient. This included heating upgrades, loft insulation, double glazing window replacement, adding external wall insulation thereby reducing heating costs for customers.

We obtained funding through Durham County Council to install solar panels (with battery backup) to 61 properties.

We were successful in securing further grant under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (wave 2) which will enable us to install solar panels and smart airbricks, which insulate suspended ground floors in properties, to 349 homes. This additional grant will assist us in continuing our “fabric first” approach to energy efficiency for two more years.

We have a specialist financial inclusion team which provides appropriate, personalised support to tenants in need where fuel poverty is identified. Crisis support is available through the provision of fuel vouchers delivered through Charis, a national trusted administrator of essential funds and grants. We have a strategic partnership with Managing Money Better in Durham who deliver fuel poverty advice around more appropriate tariffs, debt support and solutions. They will also engage suppliers to remove pre-payment meters. We also refer into the Citizens Advice Bureau’s fuel redress scheme and have accessible information on reducing fuel use on our website.

We have developed a programme of property improvements to bring 97% of our properties up to a minimum of SAP band C by 31st March 2025. Programme being delivered through our capital works programme, part funded through grant funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme.

C5 – Percentage of Homes with a 3 year fixed term tenancy or longer

At 31 March 2023 0.2% or 17 tenancies (2022 0.7%, 57 tenancies) were on a fixed term tenancy with less than 3 years remaining. We now only offer assured (lifetime) tenancies and are engaging with our existing customers to move anyone currently on a fixed term tenancy onto an assured tenancy; this will give customers added tenancy security.

BUILDING AND SAFETY QUALITY

C6 – Percentage of homes with an in date accredited gas safety check.

The safety of our customers in their homes is a top priority and we take our regulatory obligations very seriously. We use approved contractors to perform repairs and servicing with compliance reported to Board quarterly.

We had 100% (2022 99.93%) of properties with a valid certificate at the year end. We obtained funding through Durham County Council to install solar panels (with battery backup) to 61 properties.

C7 – What percentage of buildings have an in-date fire risk assessment?

100% (2022 100%) of relevant buildings had an in-date fire risk assessment, which are completed annually.

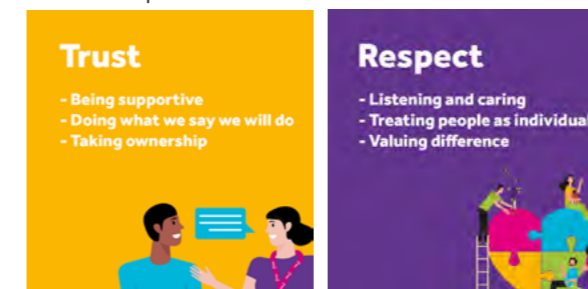
C8 - What percentage of homes meet Decent Homes Standard?

100% (2022 100%) of our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard.

RESIDENT VOICE

C9 - What arrangements are in place to enable residents to hold management to account?

Our values include trust and respect, which helps us build relationships with our customers.



We adopt the “Together with Tenants Charter”, “Charter of Social Housing Residents” and “National Housing Federation Code of Governance”, all of which advocate accountability, transparency and demonstrates our commitment to listening to the voice of our customers and acting on it.

We provide an accessible service enabling us to listen to customers’ views and resolve issues quickly. We make sure our customers voices are heard and constantly analyse transactional data to identify customer led service improvements. This includes reviewing trends in service use, complaints and satisfaction surveys.

We operate an amplified approach to explore service improvements, policy reviews, strategic key objectives and Plan A actions by applying a targeted approach to customers with specific surveys and deliver focus groups with our volunteer bank.

Our volunteer bank helped us to shape over 70% of the activities in our customer voice forward plan 2022/23 and helped us to introduce 60 service improvements. Sessions are held with service managers and tenants to discuss service improvements. We also involved our tenants in the delivery of 13 key objectives as part of the delivery of the customer voice plan.

Customers are able to provide us with feedback as a result of satisfaction surveys or direct through our contact us or feedback processes and raise a complaint if they feel we have not met their expectations.

Our Annual Report has been co-designed with customers to include the performance data they wish to see and is agreed by customers and published on our website. This report demonstrates customer involvement and the role tenants have played to help shape service delivery.

Customer voice is embedded in our governance framework and we involve customers in decisions that affect housing related services. The outcomes of any customer voice activities are included in our reporting framework to Board to demonstrate how their voice has been used to influence decisions.

C10 – How do we measure resident satisfaction and how has resident satisfaction changed over the last 3 years?

We measure resident satisfaction through a number of performance measures that are reported to Board. These include:

Tenancy Type	2023	2022	2021
Percentage of complainants satisfied with the way their complaint is handled	96%	95%	98%
Percentage of tenants satisfied that their views are being listened to and acted upon	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of customers satisfied with the overall customer experience	92%	92%	92%
Net promoter score (how likely customers are to recommend us)	54	52	55

We continue to listen to our customers to improve customer satisfaction. The four measures above continue to achieve target as they have done for the past three years.

We have developed a series of additional customer satisfaction measures which will be reported alongside the new tenant satisfaction measures from April 2023. This will enable us to directly compare the perception measures and the transactional measures and will enhance customer insight to inform service improvements as part of our improved approach to customer engagement.

Our Annual Report to Tenants, which is available on our website, shows our achievements and areas for improvement in satisfaction.

C11 – In the last 12 months how many complaints have been upheld by the Ombudsman?

We had no complaints upheld by the Ombudsman between April 2022 and March 2023.

RESIDENT SUPPORT

C12 – What support do we offer to residents?

We offer a variety of support to our residents following our Community Investment strategy which is aligned to our “Plan A.” Support is identified through community plans (housing and community data) and customer voice. Key areas of support include financial wellbeing, health and wellbeing and carbon reduction through Greener Living.

We offer a specialised benefits advice service to help customers increase their income. We set ourselves ambitious targets to maximise welfare benefit income and support tenants into work to help with the ongoing cost of living challenges. During the year we helped 788 customers to claim an extra £1.55m in benefits.

We operate our own employability programme (Livin Futures) to support residents into employment. Livin Futures helps to remove barriers to employment and supports customers in their search for work. We deliver an annual jobs fair, carry out personal development sessions including mock interviews within local secondary schools and support residents to apply for jobs online. Residents are supported to undertake vocational training in areas such as HGV licenses, dump truck training and to gain construction skills certification scheme (CSCS) cards. During the year to March 2023 we achieved:

- 971 residents supported
- 230 jobs secured
- 154 undertook vocational training
- £3.6m social value created

We operate a community grant funding scheme which our communities and partners can access to tackle issues specific to those communities.

We use a targeted approach to support residents to sustain tenancies, mitigating the risk of tenancy failure and enabling older and vulnerable tenants to live independently.

During 2022/23 we installed adaptations to 609 homes to support vulnerable tenants with independent living.

PLACEMAKING

C13 – Examples of our engagement in placemaking or placeshaping activities.

Our current Plan A 2022/25 highlights the need to create beautiful, sustainable, thriving places that meet the aspirations and needs of the community whilst nurturing a sense of pride and belonging.

We recognise that physical regeneration is only one factor for placemaking and that it cannot be sustained without socio-economic and environmental considerations. Essential to this is customer and stakeholder engagement and ownership. We put residents at the centre of this work so that they strengthen their connection to their community through ownership and pride.

We provide more than just a home and are proud to help our customers and communities. We have many examples of our successes on our website: <https://www.livin.co.uk/your-support/money-support/ways-were-helping-you/>

The Courts, Shildon, County Durham

This is a regeneration scheme that commenced in March 2022 and is now due to be completed in December 2023. Shildon was identified in various reports (2021 report [No Place Left Behind](#) and an earlier report by the Local Trust called [Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge](#)) as an area of deprivation. The Courts, a housing estate of Radburn design, was identified as requiring placeshaping interventions to ensure its future sustainability.

The main areas for improvement were identified through engagement with the local community and included increasing the housing mix, improving energy efficiency and changing the estate layout.

Working with our construction partner Mears plc we have:

- converted difficult to let flats into popular 3 and 4 bedroomed houses
- created a demonstrator home where energy-saving and sustainability tips can be seen
- used rendering and cladding to reduce carbon emissions
- used solar PV, batteries, triple glazing and insulation top up improve energy efficiency
- provided employment opportunities for local residents on the regeneration scheme

The scheme is ongoing with remodelling of roads and paths and the introduction of in-curtilage parking, green garden space and biodiversity yet to be completed. Some of our successes to date can be seen [here](#).

Western Estate, Newton Aycliffe

The Western Estate is another area identified as a [Left behind community](#) and includes 514 homes of which 281 are for social rent. The estate has consistently performed below the corporate average in a number of key areas, including anti-social behaviour, unemployment, rent arrears, and property turnover, despite significant investment in social and economic interventions in the community. A review of physical regeneration options in 2018 demonstrated a lack of a majority support for large scale regeneration at that time and resulted in efforts being focused on delivering community initiatives in partnership with residents and local stakeholders.

We worked with the town and county councils to provide mobile CCTV on the estate which has resulted in a 39% reduction in antisocial behaviour.

We work in partnership with Junction 7, a registered charity to assist in reducing poverty, who provide a foodbank, clothes bank and credit union to estate residents and the wider Newton Aycliffe community. They also deliver “food and fun summer school holiday activities” for up to 40 vulnerable families including sports and crafts sessions.

We engaged with 20% of the estate through a “community conversation” to shape the action plan for the estate for the next three years.



Environmental

CLIMATE CHANGE

C14 – Distribution of EPC (existing homes)

EPC rating for existing homes is as follows:

EPC Rating	2023		2022	
	%	No. of Homes	%	No. of Homes
% Homes rated A	0.02%	2	0%	0
% Homes rated B	9.33%	809	8.2%	710
% Homes rated C	61.69%	5,348	58.3%	5,035
% Homes rated D	28.90%	2,506	33.4%	2,889
% Homes rated E or worse	0.06%	5	0.1%	7

C15 – Distribution of EPC ratings (new homes)

EPC Rating	%	No. of Homes
% Homes rated B	100	99

C16 – Scope 1,2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions

We chose to share our energy performance and carbon emissions data in our financial statements for the year ending 31 March 2023. We monitor progress against our targets each year and produce a report covering our operations, buildings, processes and travel. We use “SmartCarbon” software to calculate our emissions data and through this we have developed a new carbon reporting methodology aligned to Green House Gas Protocol and Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting requirements.

- Scope 1 emissions 116.55 tonnes of CO2
- Scope 2 emissions 85.87 tonnes of CO2

C17 – What energy efficiency actions have we taken in the last 12 months?

We performed a variety of energy efficiency works in 2022/23 including:

- Insulated cladding and double glazing installed to 54 homes
- Loft insulation top up to 116 homes
- Installation of energy efficient LED bulbs to 551 homes
- Under floor insulation to 5 homes

Funding has been accessed through the Local Authority Delivery scheme which will allow us to install Solar panels (with battery backup) to 61 properties improving their SAP banding from D to C and in some cases even up to a B rating.

We were successful in our bid for grant through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (wave 2) which will enable us to perform energy efficiency upgrades to 349 homes including:

- PV panels
- Smart Airbricks to insulate suspended ground floors

The works will take place over the next two years and will increase the average SAP score for these properties from D to C.

C18 – How are we mitigating against risks (i.e. flood risk and risk of homes overheating)?

The majority of our homes (97.39%) are located in low risk flood areas and 98.0% of our homes are protected from overheating.

Our Planet A strategy includes commitments to ensure our homes and properties are fit for the future. We aim to create climate resilient places and natural environments that include wide biodiversity plans to enhance nature and provide resilience to extreme weather events.

We are investing in solutions to ensure new and existing homes are fit for the future and reduce the risk of overheating.



ECOLOGY

C19 – Do we give residents information about correct ventilation, heating and recycling etc?

Every new tenant receives a new homes demonstration visit which includes advice on ventilation, use of heating systems including bleeding radiators, use of thermostatic radiator valves, boiler controls and boiler pressure.

An objective of our “Planet A” strategy is to support tenants to live more efficiently, we publish a guide on our website on greener living, giving advice on the steps tenants can take towards living more sustainably in their home. To support this, we have improved our tenant onboarding information to include “Greener Living” content.

The new information covers a range of topics, including Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), saving water, waste and recycling, saving energy, energy efficient appliances, outdoor spaces, air quality and ventilation. We also publish advice on our website on how to keep homes free from damp and mould. We are currently proactively inspecting all our properties over 2-year period to identify any issues with damp or mould growth. All customers who have had any issue with damp or mould receive a follow up visit to ensure that any remedial measures we have put in place have successfully resolved the problem to their satisfaction.

C20 – How are we increasing green space and promoting biodiversity?

We have approximately 45 hectares of greenspace.

Through our Planet A objective of “Create climate resilient places and natural environments” we will shape how sustainability is embedded in place-based projects, maximising impact and guide the delivery of a range of learning and training opportunities to enhance residents’ knowledge of climate change. We will support the enhancement of biodiversity across our open spaces and identify areas that will allow rewilding.

Planning is underway to ensure our new development sites will align with the Environment Act 2021 and feature 10% biodiversity net gain targets. Three development sites have received planning approvals with construction underway. Biodiversity net gain surveys were completed which allowed for the development of biodiversity recommendations for each site with a net gain improvement of 1,750%

C21 – Do we have a strategy to actively manage and reduce pollutants?

We currently adhere to all required HSE and environmental legislation with processes in place to ensure our contractors and partners adhere to these requirements.

We have developed an Environmental Management System (EMS). As part of our carbon reporting, we measure pollutants and have set targets to reduce these. The EMS Action Plan will help us to understand our wider environmental impact through our tenant activities, maintenance and repairs, retrofit and development activities. We have developed key resource use targets; these are embedded in Planet A and our CO2 and waste reduction plan.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

C22 – Do we have a strategy to use or increase the use of responsibly sourced materials for all building works?

We currently ensure responsibly sourced materials are used where legislation requires and for timber in new build homes and repairs and maintenance work. We are aligning the resourcing of materials with our Planet A strategy, which will enable us to increase the volume of sustainably sourced materials we use in all our building works.

C23 – Do we have a strategy for waste management incorporating building materials?

We have an internal waste management procedure which outlines the priorities for dealing with waste for the benefit of sustainability and environmental protection. The procedure is underpinned by a commitment to the Waste Hierarchy Principles and aligns with requirements set out in the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Our main contractor for repairs and maintenance, and by far the greatest source of our waste generation, is Mears plc who are ISO14001 accredited. They have strong waste management systems in place and work to ensure there is a high level of recycling.

We undertake an annual waste audit on our HQ office and are measuring performance against a 10% reduction target in overall waste for the year.

C24 – Do we have strategy for good water management?

This is an area on which we need to improve as there is currently no policy around good water management.

All our new build housing developments are designed with sustainable drainage systems (SUD’s) to manage any potential flood risk in association with the Lead Local Flood Authority. These systems include the use of SUDs basins, swales and attenuation tanks. During the year we have completed four new housing schemes incorporating sustainable drainage designs.

We have recently fitted dual boiling/chiller taps at our headquarters. They are designed to be more sustainable by reducing water usage.

One of our Planet A objectives relates to adapting our day-to-day operations to reduce their environmental impact and this includes good water management. Resource monitoring and management is required in order to carry out emissions reporting. Continuous improvement through the delivery of our EMS requires targets and actions to reduce resource use, including water (scope 3) across our sites. We set annual targets for reduction, these are monitored through our performance framework and the use of SmartCarbon for CO2 calculations.

Structure and Governance

C25 – Are we registered with the Regulator of Social Housing?

Yes

C26 – What is our most recent viability and governance rating?

The Regulator of Social Housing reviewed our grading in November 2022 and concluded we were compliant with a G1 V2 judgement.

C27 – Which Code of Governance do we follow?

NHF Code of Governance: promoting excellence in Governance (2020 edition)

C28 – Are we Not for Profit?

Yes

C29 – How do we manage organisational risks?

Our Board retains ultimate responsibility for ensuring an effective risk management framework is in place. Strategic risks are considered quarterly by our Audit & Risk Committee before Board receives an update on the risk register, including additional information on a strategic risk selected by the committee.

C30 – Have we been subject to adverse regulatory findings in last 12 months

No, However due to the economic environment and current levels of high inflation we were one of many providers that were regraded from V1 to V2 in November 2022.



BOARD AND TRUSTEES

C31 – What are the demographics of the Board compared to our customers

The demographics of our Board compared to our customers (lead and joint tenants) is:

Board Diversity	Customer profile 2023	2023	2022
Gender (% female)	60%	33%	33%
Ethnicity (% BAME)	1%	0%	0%
Average Tenure	N/A	5 years 2 months	4 years 4 months

C32 - What percentage of Board and management team have turned over in the last 2 years

Four board members retired in the last two years to 31 March 2023 and the former chief executive retired in September 2021.

C33 – Is there a maximum tenure for a Board member? (what is it)

As an adopter of the 2020 Code, Livin has now moved to a maximum six-year term for all new Board members. Transitional rules were previously approved allowing Board members who were already in their final three-year term to serve their full final three years taking them up to nine years where it is in the best interests of Livin.

During the year one Board member was granted a short exceptional extension to office to allow for the phasing of changes to Board composition. This extension took their tenure over nine years and was necessary to ensure the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience was retained whilst recruiting a replacement. They subsequently retired on 31 March 2023.

C34 – What percentage of Board are non-executive directors?

As at 31 March 2023, 78% of the Board were made up of non-executive directors.

C35 – Number of Board members on Audit & Risk Committee with relevant financial experience

Our Audit & Risk Committee has 4 members all of whom are also Board members. They draw on a broad range of skills from local government, the private and third sector. The Chair of the Committee is a qualified accountant with over 25 years' experience of running a successful management consultancy business. They stood down as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee in May 2023 and retired from the Board in September 2023.

In May 2023 Livin appointed a new board member as chair of Audit and Risk Committee. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience in audit and risk with a career spanning 30 years working with organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors, Home Office and Local Government.

C36 – Are any current executives on the Remuneration Committee?

No.

C37 – Has a succession plan been provided to Board?

Yes – A three-year rolling succession plan is approved annually by Board.

C38 – How many years has our external audit partner been responsible for our audit?

Beever and Struthers have been responsible for external audit for six years.

C39 – When was the last independently run board effectiveness review?

An independent review of board and committee effectiveness was completed in December 2022 by external consultants.

C40 – Are the roles of chair of the Board and CEO held by 2 different people?

Yes

C41 – How do we handle conflicts of interest at board level?

Board members are required to complete an annual declaration of interest and inform Livin if there are any changes to their interests during the year in line with the Code of Conduct. In line with our Probity Policy, all meeting participants are required to declare any conflicts of interest at the start of the meeting and are required to declare any further interests that become apparent during discussions. The presumption is that the conflicted individual will withdraw from the meeting for the conflicted item. However, at the discretion of the Board, and depending on the nature and severity of the identified conflict, conflicted parties may be invited to remain in the meeting but not participate/vote on decision.

In the event of a fundamental or ongoing material conflict being proven, the Board may consider whether the person concerned should continue to be a Board member.

STAFF WELLBEING

C42 – Do we pay the Real Living Wage?

Yes, we have been doing this since 2016

C43 – What is the gender pay gap?

Our gender pay gap was 3.8% (2022 6.9%). We continue to work to support female employees and ensure that diversity and inclusion is embedded in our organisation.

C44 – What is the CEO – worker pay ratio

Using the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy methodology our CEO to median worker pay ratio is 4.0 : 1 (2022 4.6 : 1)

C45 – How do we support the physical and mental health of our staff

We know that employees are key to successfully delivering Plan A and we adopt a “work together” ethos to ensure we all pull in the same direction.

Physical, mental and financial wellbeing are pro-actively maintained through a number of key support services. An employee assistance programme is available 24/7 helping employees deal with personal problems that might adversely impact their health and wellbeing. This service offers both practical and emotional support as well as access to a confidential support counsellor and financial wellbeing guidance. Occupational Health and extensive counselling services providing both physical and mental health support. An In-House resource library exists, signposting employees through a ‘HR Health and Wellbeing Hub’ to available services.

Partnerships are in place to promote wellbeing and

physical activities (Durham Sports Active Friends) and mental health and resilience training (HQN). Access to mental health support activities, products and resources through a national network of retail outlets offer lifestyle savings to assist with the cost of living.

Livin supports “Mental Health Awareness Week” annually and encourages a ‘time to talk’ ethos.

The cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme is available to all employees along with access to a weight management programme and discounted gym memberships to support health and wellbeing.

C46 – Average number of sick days per employee

For 2022/23 the average was 6.5 days (2022 6.4 days).

SUPPLY CHAIN

C47 – How is social value creation considered when we procure goods and services?

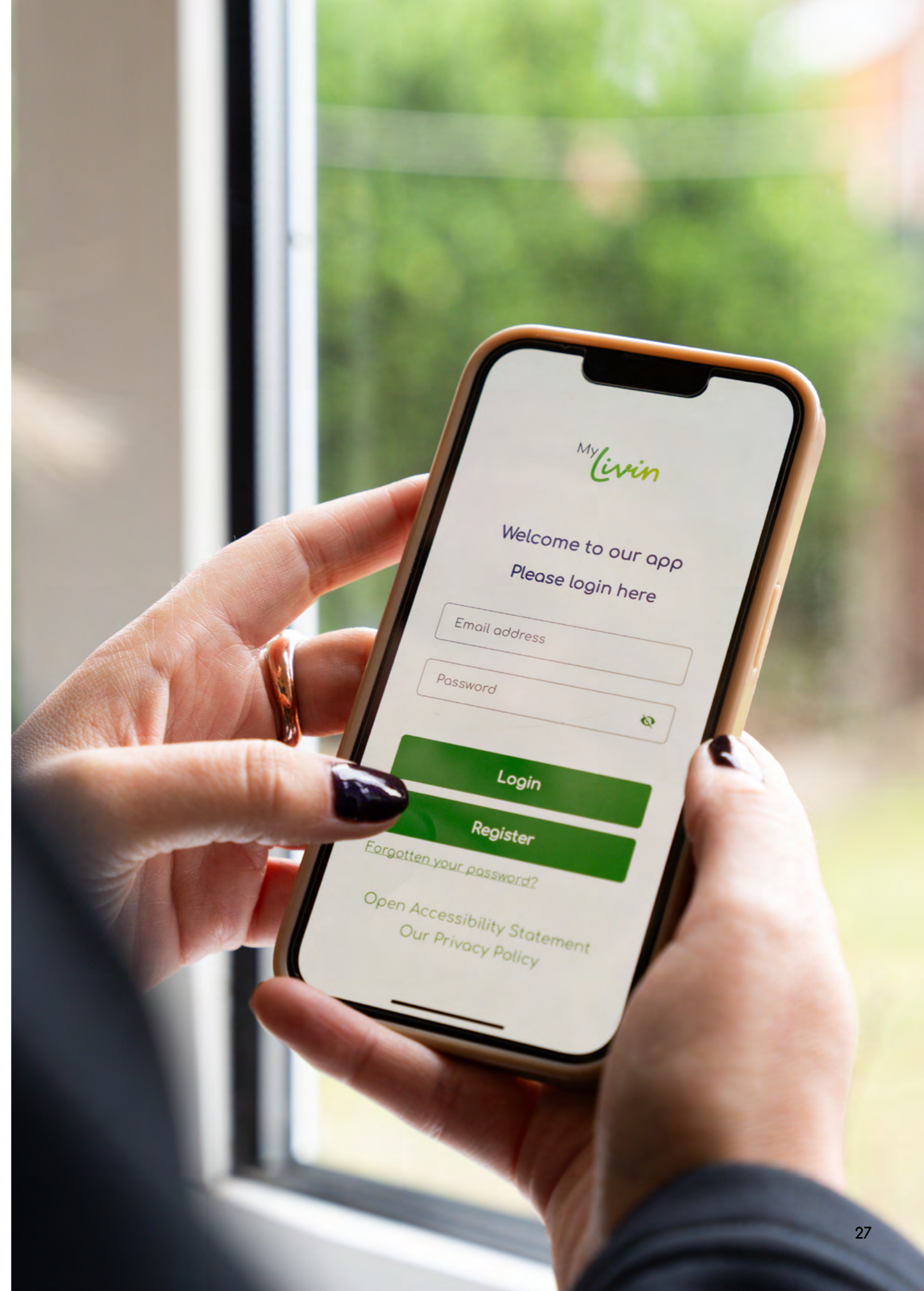
As part of our procurement process we ask several due diligence questions to ensure we appoint a supplier that aligns to our needs. This includes questions on health and safety arrangements, equality and diversity, modern slavery and people trafficking.

We are founder members of the County Durham Pound project, a new initiative to increase social value in County Durham through procurement. We now use the project’s agreed TOMS (Themes, Outcomes, Measure’s) framework to assess social value in tenders.

C48 – How is environmental impact considered when procuring goods and services?

As part of our procurement process we also perform due diligence on suppliers’ environmental obligations.

The County Durham Pound project’s TOMS framework also includes social value created by decarbonisation and safeguarding our world. This includes reducing carbon emissions, air pollution and resource efficiency (recycling).



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