

Housing 21 Strategic Commitments

Putting residents at the heart
of quality, service and growth





Why we exist

Our core purpose and commitment is to provide high quality housing with support or care for older people of modest means, enabling them to live well with dignity and autonomy.

Our vision is to ensure that older people who most need it can access high quality housing with support or care, whilst being involved and empowered to ensure the services provided meet their individual needs and preferences now and in the future.





Who we serve

Older people most in need of our services

We are living longer and recognise that older people deserve to live as independently as possible in a quality home with the right support, when needed.

We will prioritise those over state pension age, currently 66 and due to increase to 67. Our previous focus on those over 55 now feels outdated, as those in their 50s no longer seem so old and are less likely to require care or support.

In England

Our focus is on serving older people living across the whole of England*. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate regulatory and funding regimes so are not seen as immediate areas for growth. Similarly, we do not plan to develop our services outside the United Kingdom.

Of modest means

The term 'modest means' reminds us that Housing 21 was established to help people in financial need. We are still committed to doing so; our focus will not shift.

'Modest means' is deliberately vague. It is not intended to create financial eligibility criteria. Instead it will ensure we recognise those people who might not be eligible for state support due to their financial means, but who may still have housing and care needs.

Our focus is on those older people who are seeking somewhere to live as a place of safety or security and who need care, support or companionship they cannot otherwise obtain.



Our commitment

- **We will give priority to the immediate needs and circumstances of the individual**, shifting away from making allocation decisions on a 'first come first served' basis.
- **We will ensure shared ownership properties are sold to those who need them most** and not those just in search of a property at a bargain price. We will review local need, demand and the eligibility criteria and extent of controls available to ensure this happens.
- **We will ensure our accommodation is attractive, affordable and available to people who are homeless or destitute**, ensuring we provide an inclusive offer and helping to remove barriers and overcome prejudices.

*We have a development in Guernsey and manage a Retirement Living leasehold development in Wales.



We are accountable to current and potential residents — putting residents at the heart of what we do

Residents are our key stakeholders; we believe they should be involved and have an input into the key decisions we make. This will require a change of mindset and a shift in our ways of working as we give them a say and the opportunity to influence the direction of the organisation, the services we provide and how we deliver them.



Our commitment

- **We will build on and enhance the local engagement already in place** to ensure all residents have a say, including those who do not always speak up in open forums and those with minority points of view.
- **We will maximise the scope for residents to live their own lives**, applying limitations only when justified and agreed either because of the nature of community living or because of legal and policy-based need for compliance and assurance.
- **We will commit to being an open organisation**, providing access to information and opportunities for feedback on our performance as an organisation; our performance at a local level; the safety of our buildings; and the impact resident engagement has had on our actions.
- **We will have two Board places available for residents** and provide scope to appoint resident members of Board Committees. All committees will identify how they are taking account of resident perspectives in their decision making.
- **We will involve residents in the recruitment processes** for all resident facing roles as well as senior, Executive and Board positions.





We respect the diversity and distinctiveness of older people — ensuring inclusion happens by design

We are committed to providing the best possible experience for older people and recognise that engaging with and listening to diverse perspectives will be the key to our success.

Our population is changing, and we must recognise that all older people are not the same, respecting their diversity and differences and challenging any assumptions that they necessarily have the same perspectives, priorities, and experiences.

Understanding our residents is a vital first step in considering how we can better serve the needs and interests of diverse communities. In addition to targeting our provision into areas with the greatest need and diversity, we need to ensure our services are attractive to, and meet the needs of, people from different communities without access to alternative opportunities.



Our commitment

- **We will adopt a charter which sets out expectations of inclusive behaviour** from everyone who lives, works, and interacts with us, demonstrating our commitment and helping us to challenge and address inappropriate actions or behaviours.
- **We will introduce engagement plans for each scheme** to identify the steps we are intending to take to promote diversity and enhance the respect and inclusion experience.
- **We will ensure we have accurate and complete data for residents as well as employees**, in respect of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. We will use this to identify areas of potential bias and under-representation in particular areas or roles, better target our services into areas of under-provision and assess levels of performance, engagement, and satisfaction through different lenses of diversity.
- **We will target development activity into areas of higher deprivation and diverse ethnicity** to address historic under provision for these communities and ensure that existing developments and schemes reflect the profile of the local population in terms of the characteristics of the residents we house and support.
- **We will continue to pioneer the development of cohousing projects** in areas of high ethnicity and work with different communities to understand ways in which the design, specification and operation of these projects can be tailored to their needs and preferences.





What we do

Housing with support and / or care — Retirement Living and Extra Care

There are many different approaches to the provision of housing, support and care. Services which have the same name or label may vary across providers, as can the terminology used to describe them. We describe our core services as Retirement Living and Extra Care. We do not provide general needs housing for families or young people and have only one care home, (The Watermill in Walsall, which provides an 'Outstanding' service).





Our commitment

- We will ensure Retirement Living properties are modern, safe and accessible.
- We will maintain the focus on improving the quality, scope, and professionalism of our in-person services.
- We will ensure we engage, empower, and listen to residents.

Retirement Living

Retirement Living offers residents the opportunity to live independently within their own properties with their own front door and their own private space. However outside of that door we offer an on-site Court Manager service and opportunities to be part of a wider community.

This is a unique housing service with residents' wellbeing at its heart. As well as providing high quality, comfortable and safe housing, residents are afforded the peace of mind that comes from a personal service relationship that offers support as and when needed.

Housing 21 is proud of our Court Manager service and sees this as the essence of our Retirement Living offer. Some providers rely on call centres or visiting support teams, but we have maintained dedicated Court Managers who not only provide key management services, but also offer support when needed. They facilitate opportunities for residents to be active and involved with each other, the wider community and of course, with Housing 21, to shape our decisions for the future.

We put the wellbeing of residents at the core of our decisions and encourage all schemes to facilitate activities to enhance their health, happiness, and skills. We are committed to ensuring residents can live in their properties for as long as possible, and offer help, advice, and guidance on ways to maximise income, access benefits and other funding as well as addressing wider issues or concerns.

14,742 properties including **1,429 managed properties** in Oldham
494 schemes including **44 leasehold**

Our vision for Retirement Living is to make it an exceptional place to live where we listen to residents, invest in their homes and provide consistently high standards of service to create a strong sense of safety and community, whilst still treating everyone as an individual.



Our commitment

- **We will ensure Extra Care provides people with a safe, desirable property** where they can live independently, are happy to call home and from which they do not need to move on as their care needs increase.
- **We will maintain the focus on improving the quality and scope of services** and seek to win and retain care contracts to support the delivery of integrated care services of the highest standards.
- **We will listen to and engage with residents**, including those living with dementia or other conditions, to enable them to continue to live the life they want and without requiring them to move to receive care services.

Extra Care

Extra Care is a place where older people can live independently in their own apartment within a welcoming community setting with the added peace of mind that comes from knowing there is a professional care service on site and available 24/7 to meet any planned or emergency care and support needs. Extra Care schemes offer a range of on-site facilities which typically include a café / bistro, hair salon, communal lounge and communal gardens as well as a range of social activities available for people to take part in if they wish. Many communal areas are open to the public, meaning residents can enjoy time with friends and family on their doorstep.

Extra Care seeks to provide an alternative to residential care that enables residents to maintain their independence and autonomy but still have access to high quality care, meals and social interaction on their own terms. We engage with each resident as an individual, respect their opinions and preferences and ensure they are listened to and able to have a say regarding the way services are delivered and developed.

Whenever possible Housing 21 will seek to be the care provider as well as the landlord and manager of Extra Care schemes. If this is not possible, we will work collaboratively and in partnership with third party care providers to ensure that residents receive the best possible care, support and service.

145 schemes 7,461 properties c. 38,000hrs / week of social care

90% Good or outstanding

CQC ratings (85% sector average) with **six Extra Care services rated Outstanding** *as of 31 March 2022



Commitment to quality

The delivery of high-quality services in Retirement Living and Extra Care is at the heart of our purpose and commitment and must never be compromised. This requires a culture of continuous improvement, striving to do better and never being satisfied with a service that is 'adequate' or 'good enough'.



Our commitment

- **We will proactively seek to identify and address service concerns or weaknesses** including undertaking and commissioning our own audits and quality checks, to learn lessons and improve resident experiences.
- **We will seek to achieve at least 95 percent resident satisfaction** across all services and avoid any instances of service failure / having any care services being classed as 'requiring improvement'.
- **We will ensure residents have a voice and are able influence the services they receive** both locally and nationally.
- **We will develop tools and leadership capabilities to deliver outstanding services**, measuring them against a range of quality indicators.
- **We will compare performance and satisfaction across our services** to identify any issues and allow others to learn from best practice across the organisation.

Quality properties

We have already invested significantly in our properties and will continue to do so to achieve the positive standards we have set for renewal of kitchens and bathrooms, refreshing communal areas and achieving Energy Performance Certificate Level C whilst working to transition to digital call systems by 2025.



Property Standards as at 31 March 2022 (for rented schemes)

99% Individual bathrooms no more than **20 years old**

98% Individual kitchens no more than **20 years old**

98% All communal areas have had a design-led makeover

99% of dwellings achieved **EPC C** or above



Our commitment

- **We will continue to maintain properties at contemporary standards** and will never compromise on the safety of our buildings or services.
- **We will regularly assess the condition of properties** and ensure we are investing sufficiently and appropriately to meet our property standards.
- **We will seek to achieve a zero non-compliance position** for all aspects of property safety, including gas, electrical, water, lifts, asbestos and fire risks.





Quality people

Our employees are essential to our success. Every employee plays a vital part, but particularly those in frontline roles who interact directly with residents.

We continue to invest in developing our people and achieved Investors in People Platinum as well as 92 percent overall employee satisfaction in 2021. But we will never be complacent; we recognise we remain on a journey to be an excellent employer, anticipating change and continually striving to do more and better.

The motivation, commitment and satisfaction of our employees is key to their engagement, performance and behaviour at work and is critical to our success in providing quality homes and services to residents.

The Covid-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on people’s working patterns and expectations and we recognise the need to be flexible, adaptable and continually ensure our offer is good enough to attract and retain the talent we require.



Our commitment

- **We will seek to establish a strong and clear employer brand and reputation** that excites people to want to join and develop with us.
- **We will continue to adapt and modernise our approach to employee engagement**, reward and wellbeing to respond to the increasingly challenging external market.
- **We will develop our leaders and managers and encourage all employees to learn and develop** to increase their skills and fulfil their potential.
- **We will seek to create diverse teams where people feel comfortable being themselves** show respect to others and where different perspectives and approaches can lead to better outcomes.



96% of employees share Housing 21’s values



Care Workers paid at least **10% more** than the National Living Wage



Occupational Sickness Plan extended to Care Workers in 2020/21



Our commitment

- **We will seek to pay Care Workers and other professional frontline employees more** than the legal minimum or market median levels of pay in order to retain a skilled and stable care workforce as this has a direct impact on the quality of service that residents receive.
- **We will professionalise our frontline services** and support employees to gain qualifications or accreditations to demonstrate and recognise their skills and experience.
- **We will invest in developing strong and capable local managers** who inspire and lead people and teams to be the best they can be.

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We invest in people Platinum

We are passionate about people and believe that happy employees mean happy residents. We want to do the right thing by our employees and invest in our people, valuing their opinion.

We recognise the importance of having a compelling and competitive reward offer which is complementary to attractive rates of pay. However, whilst wider rewards and benefits are important, it is ultimately the salary which is of most value to our employees, particularly for those in lower paid roles. As a result, we have chosen to differentiate ourselves from the pay levels offered by other providers, recognising that the National Living Wage is not sufficient to attract and retain skilled employees, particularly Care Workers and Scheme Managers, with a professional outlook and strong care ethos.





Doing more

Our desire is for Housing 21 to fulfil its purpose by being ubiquitous and providing more services in more places, working with our local authority partners and others to meet the social challenges and demographic demand. We seek to do this not for the sake of growth alone, but to ensure that those who most need it can more easily get access to high quality housing with support or care.

In total, 75 percent of demand for new homes is projected to come from households headed by someone over retirement age which creates huge demand for housing for older people. Solutions are required for those in need of some form of support or seeking a connection with a community of other older people. This will become increasingly important as the proportion of people entering old age as homeowners declines and private sector renting becomes increasingly unaffordable for those living on a pension.

Whilst we want to do more, growth will never be pursued at the expense of our commitment to quality.

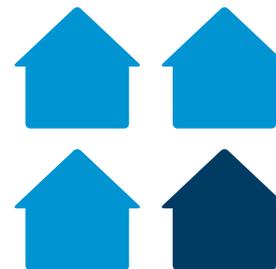


Development pipeline to deliver up to
800
affordable properties per annum



At least **20%** of properties developed after 2022 will be Retirement Living.

New Retirement Living properties to involve consideration of new service models, innovative design and delivery arrangements



Development targets:
75% Rent
25% Shared ownership



Our commitment

- **We will seek to develop up to 800 properties per year** with a mix of Retirement Living and Extra Care and will continue to evolve and develop the design and specification of our developments to respond to changing and alternative lifestyles and situations.
- **We will focus development in areas with higher demographic and socio / economic need** with at least 10 percent of developments in localities with high ethnic diversity.
- **We will seek to develop 10 cohousing schemes in urban areas of high ethnicity** to better serve such communities and avoid making assumptions about the type of provision that would work best for them.
- **We will seek to match our direct development ambitions with properties acquired** or added through merger or management arrangements but recognise that how and when such additional provision will be achieved cannot easily be predicted. It is dependent upon other providers being willing to work with us to provide more and better services.



Our commitment

- **We will work with residents, employees and other stakeholders to increase environmental understanding** and awareness throughout Housing 21 and beyond.
- **We will make environmental impacts and commitments a key part of local agreements** and plans and ensure this is central to national strategies.
- **We will move to more formal and data based Environmental, Social, Governance reporting standards** to improve transparency and accountability not only for directly produced carbon but also the (scope 3) carbon produced by others linked to us.

Doing better

We never want to become complacent or content with services that are just good enough and hence we strive to do better and to improve. We listen to and learn from complaints and feedback from our current residents but also consider what future residents may want and expect.

We have ambitions to improve our awareness and provision to help make our services more sustainable, dementia-friendly and digitally accessible.

Sustainability

Thinking about the impact and consequences of our actions on the environment and sustainability needs to be integral to all decisions and actions. We want to become a net zero carbon organisation and may consider offsetting all or part of our carbon footprint until we have fully transitioned to a nil emissions position.



Dementia-friendly

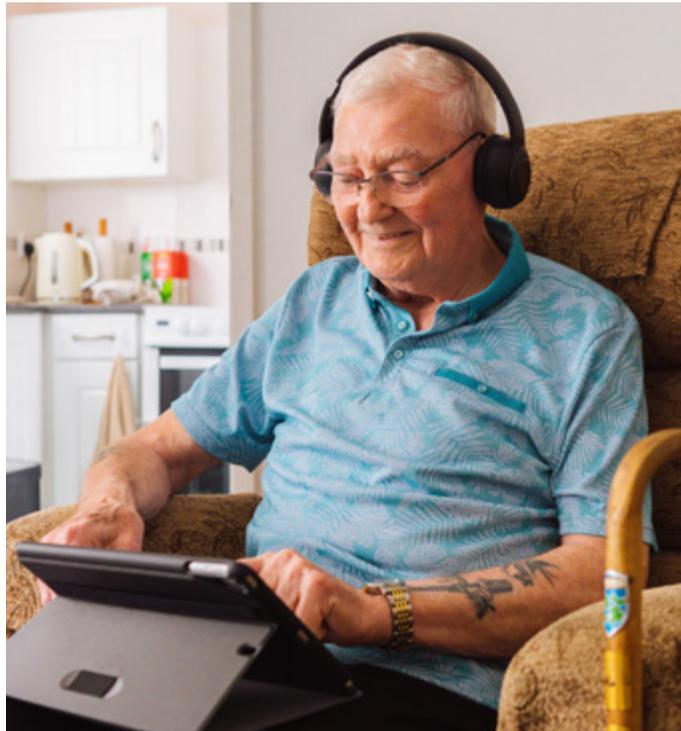
Ensuring that all employees, and as many of our residents and other stakeholders as possible, are dementia aware is not only important because a significant number of residents are living with dementia, but it also helps to break down the prejudices and misinformation about the disease.

We have worked with the Alzheimer's Society to develop a Dementia-Friendly Housing Charter and sought to apply its principles into our outlook and approach. A key component of Dementia Awareness is ensuring we see the person, not just the label or the diagnosis, and avoiding making assumptions about the effects of the disease. These principles are just as important for avoiding stereotyping and making assumptions about what residents want.

Digital connectivity

We are committed to addressing the digital divide experienced by many older people, and those with limited means, by helping residents to become more digitally connected and aware of the potential this can provide. We want to provide access to Wi-Fi, devices and assistance to build an understanding of the associated benefits and opportunities.

There are social, as well as financial, advantages that can come from being online and digital connectivity will become a pre-requisite for any home environment just as we expect connectivity to other core utility services.



Our commitment

- **We will seek to ensure that residents with or without a dementia diagnosis are supported to remain in their home** in Retirement Living or Extra Care, for as long as possible and only need to move to another form of care setting in exceptional cases as a last resort.



Our commitment

- **We will seek to close the digital divide** by aiming to provide access to Wi-Fi, at least in communal areas, for all our schemes.
- **We will upskill our employees** to talk confidently and knowledgeably about the potential benefits of digital connectivity and to provide guidance and support to residents seeking to get connected.



How we do it

We empower our people – with devolved services and decision making

We want residents to enjoy as much choice, control and independence as possible, so will not seek to impose rules and requirements or make decisions on their behalf unless necessary for legal, regulatory or safety reasons, or if it is considered a fundamental principle and part of the service we offer. We also want to engage with residents in helping them reach a consensus on local issues that require collective decision making at each scheme.

To maintain this approach and ensure decisions are being taken in conjunction with residents, we seek to devolve many responsibilities to the frontline managers at each scheme, making best use of local management as well as reducing reliance on central support services.



Our commitment

- **We will seek to support and equip our frontline employees with the technology, equipment and systems** to effectively deliver a devolved and personal service to residents.



Transform 21

We are investing in our people, processes and systems as part of our ambitious Transform 21 Strategy, which will make Housing 21 more effective, productive and easier to engage with so residents and employees are better connected, informed and can fulfil their potential. We want to create great customer experiences, be locally responsive, reliable, and reassuring by being easy to do business with and understanding the different needs and preferences of residents.

Transform 21 is seeking to bring about a change and evolution in ways of working to make Housing 21 more efficient, save costs, improve service quality and provide greater assurance and capacity to support future operations and development, taking advantage of the latest systems and technology to support what must remain a personal service.

Residents will remain at the heart of what we do and our transformation activities will seek to keep us locally reliable and responsive, whilst staying nationally connected through simplified processes and intuitive systems with reliable and accessible data. Our approach will always be to put people first, then simplify and improve our processes and ways of working through investment in new systems and technology.



Our commitment

- **We will ensure each element of the Transform 21 Strategy is backed up by a clear business case** that sets out the improvements and benefits and recognises the resource requirements, dependencies and implications of the changes.

We recognise the importance of data for understanding our impact and as a basis for comparisons of performance, analysis and benchmarking, both internally and externally. It also enables us to identify scope for improvement, outliers and areas requiring attention, early warning signals, alerts of potential fraud or value for money concerns.
- **We will ensure we collect, manage, and govern our data safely**, and in doing so harness the power of data to make more informed decisions.
- **We will develop our data and improve its accessibility and usability** as a basis for assurance and advancement.
- **We will make data and information about our performance and operations available and accessible** for residents and other stakeholders so they can hold us to account and to demonstrate we are performing well and operating with integrity. We welcome challenge if we fail to perform to the standards expected.



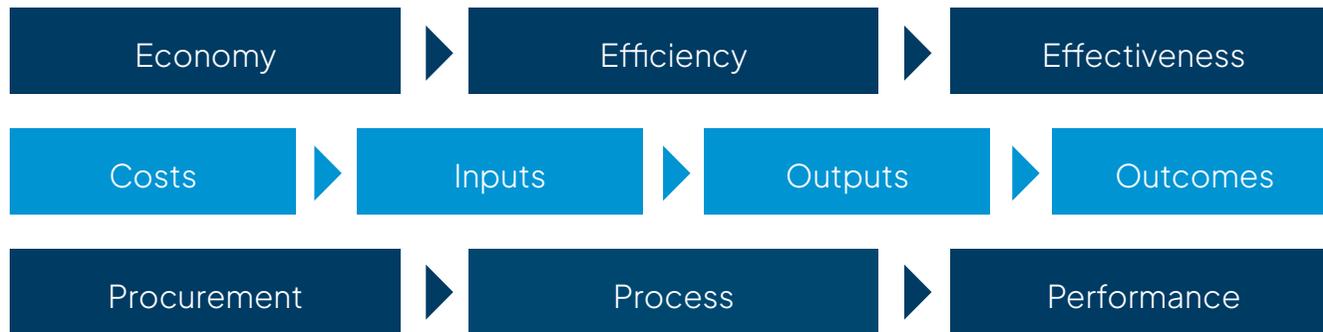
Our commitment

- **We will set out at least annually what we plan to achieve in the year ahead** in terms of value for money targets and measures, including those specified by the Regulator of Social Housing.
- **We will report on the historical levels of performance against previous targets** and undertake comparisons with the performance of other providers to drive a process of continual improvement and ongoing commitment to progress.

We ensure value for money

The drive to achieve value for money is a fundamental consideration in all we do. We aim to spend wisely, work productively, do what we say we will and do it with integrity. As a not-for-profit organisation any funds we generate are reinvested in our homes and services, helping to maintain our high-quality standards.

Value for money connects the drive for the most economic, most efficient, and most effective way of doing things looking at costs, inputs, outputs and outcomes.



A key aspect of achieving value for money will come from being open and accountable about what we are seeking to achieve and whether we have been successful. We will also make comparisons with the performance of other providers of similar services.





We will do the right thing — assured governance

Good governance is essential for a strong and successful organisation. We have a skilled, experienced, and diverse Board working in collaboration with an expanded and committed Executive Team. We recognise our governance needs to be continually developed, monitored, refined, and reviewed to ensure it is performing as required.

We recognise that we live and operate in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world in which it is essential to identify, assess, mitigate or manage the risks we face. Risks are not always financial or economic but can also be associated with ensuring the personal safety of residents, employees and others, or damage to reputation from service failures or non-compliance with standards as well as failure to achieve the potential and goals set out in our strategic ambitions.



Our commitment

- **We will avoid unnecessary complexity and provide visibility** and clarity of purpose, plans and performance, ensuring they are open to scrutiny.
- **We will embed our commitment to providing and demonstrating assurance into our culture** and ways of working to not only ensure we maintain regulatory compliance but also as a prompt for improvement and review.
- **We will stress and scenario test our business plans** to take account of possible risks and ensure our finances are being properly managed and controlled and are sufficient to meet future needs and commitments.





Values and ambition

We want Housing 21 to be seen as the leading organisation providing housing with support or care for older people. Our focus will always be ensuring services are directed to those most in need, those with fewer options and alternatives because of their modest means. We will not be complacent; we will always look ahead and reach for the stars whilst keeping our feet firmly on the ground.

Strong values are crucial in achieving this and we will always be guided by our social purpose as well as putting quality, and our residents, at the heart of our actions and decisions.

Our behaviours and approach are guided by the principles of:

21 – providing a contemporary forward-thinking 21st century service

Better – focused on continuous improvement and innovation to achieve excellent services and value for money

Experience – achieving high levels of resident satisfaction and a positive experience for the people we serve

These principles of '21', 'better' and 'experience' have always served as an important guide in our decision making and shaping how we operate and will continue to do so, alongside our desire to always 'do the right thing' and our aim to be better than just good enough.

The commitments set out in this Strategic Framework provide a 'golden thread' that serves to connect and link all the roles and activities we perform back to the achievement of our core purpose; to provide high quality housing with support or care for older people of modest means, enabling them to live well with dignity and autonomy.



Strong values are crucial in achieving this and we will always be guided by our social purpose as well as putting quality, and our residents, at the heart of our actions and decisions.



Housing

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