

Better and Stronger Together

Partnership update – what happens now?

On 1 December 2021 One Housing Group became part of The Riverside Group. But what happens now? In this feature, we'll look at the road ahead and the immediate benefits of the partnership as well as our pledges for the future.

What's happening?

Both organisations, Riverside and One Housing Group, continue to operate in the same way – there is no immediate change for customers.

That said, Riverside and One Housing teams are beginning to meet to discuss how they can potentially work together in the future to improve services for customers, as part of a journey to full integration by December 2023.

Richard Hill, Chief Executive of One Housing Group, is leading on co-ordinating that work.

Are customers involved?

Of course. Customers were involved throughout the consultation on the partnership and will continue to be a vital part of the process.

During the consultation, a team of 12 customers from a variety of areas across both organisations teamed up to contribute to every aspect of decision making. They had a say in how the

consultation was designed, the questions we asked, the way we communicated with you and much more.

Going forward we have formed a Customer Pledges Task and Finish group who will continue to work with us and contribute to discussions on how our organisations can work together more closely. This group is formed by individuals who are members of Riverside and One Housing Group customer engagement forums. We'll update you on their meetings and activities throughout the process at www.riverside.org.uk/together.

Are there any immediate benefits?

Yes, thanks to the increased financial resilience we've created through the partnership, we've committed to investing an additional £2.5m in support services to customers straight away to improve the livelihoods of customers and build stronger communities.

Customers who wish to move homes will also soon have the opportunity to register for an internal transfer for a new home with both Riverside and One Housing. This means customers will be able to apply for a move in any area where we own homes except where the local authority has specific local connection requirements. In some areas housing is in very short supply so waiting times may vary.

This will be shared across both Riverside and One Housing Group.

Find us on Facebook and Twitter

You can talk to us and keep up to date by joining us on social media. Search for One Housing on Facebook and @AskOneHousing on Twitter.



Our pledges

- 1 We will deliver better services for customers,** protecting rents and tenancy rights.
- 2 We will make sure there is a louder customer voice,** with residents able to take part in our Boards and committees, and better able to hold us to account.
- 3 We will invest nearly £1 billion in improving and repairing homes over the next 5 years,** with a focus on fire and building safety, warmer homes and regeneration. We will also build more new affordable homes.
- 4 We will improve care and support services for older people,** those with complex needs and people who are homeless.
- 5 We will improve the livelihoods of customers and build stronger communities,** providing better opportunities by investing in employment support and money advice.
- 6 We will keep our promises and make sure you can hold us to account,** publishing a report each year on how we are delivering these pledges.



One Voice

Welcome to the latest news round up for our residents

More services available online

We've been working hard to improve MyOneHousing, our safe and secure self-service portal, to enhance your experience and increase the number of things you can ask us for.

We're pleased to announce that you can now see real time notifications of payments, apply for a mutual exchange, request a change to a joint tenancy agreement or terminate your tenancy online.

From Monday 28 February 2022, you will also be able to submit a transfer application to move to another home. Once your application has been approved, you will be able to bid through the Home Connections website for any properties that your application has been approved for.

To register for a MyOneHousing account, please go to <https://myonehousing.co.uk>. You'll need to be the named person on your lease or tenancy agreement. If you're a joint tenant or homeowner, you can each register separately with your own email address for full access to your account online.



Changes to your rent and service charges for 2022/23

Every April we review our social housing rents in line with the rules set by the government. This year rents will be increasing in line with inflation. As a not-for profit organisation, we'll use the money to improve our homes, support our planned investment in critical fire safety works and invest in local communities. Our costs are also increasing due to the current level of inflation.

If you are a tenant, rents will increase by last September's Consumer Price Index – CPI – 3.1% plus 1%. This means that from April 2022 your rent will be increasing by a maximum of 4.1%.

If you are a shared owner, rents will increase in line with the inflation measure as shown in your individual lease.

Booklets detailing your individual charges will be sent out to you at the end of February 2022.

We have reviewed service charges for the coming year and have worked hard to ensure value for money for all the services that we offer. Unfortunately, inflation is higher than it has been in previous years and our costs have therefore increased. In addition, we have seen higher than usual utility costs, in line with the position nationally, with fuel costs increasing by higher than the rate of inflation.

We know that many of our residents are facing a range of financial pressures at the moment, including an increase in energy and food costs, other household bills and the removal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift.

We know the rent increase will present another financial challenge for many of you.

We have a friendly and dedicated team of Welfare Benefits Advisors who can provide support and advise

whether you might be eligible for various benefits. We have also put together tips and resources on our website to help you if you're struggling to meet the rising costs of running your home.

If you have difficulties paying your rent or service charge, please call us on **0300 123 9966** or email ask@onehousing.co.uk as soon as you can so we can work with you to find a solution. We can also signpost you to other experts and sources of advice.

In addition, our Employment and Training Advisors are on hand to help you get into employment or gain new skills to land a better job.

If your Housing Benefit is paid direct to us, we'll confirm your new charges with the local authority Housing Benefit Office.

If your Housing Benefit or Universal Credit is paid direct to you, it's your responsibility to make sure Housing Benefit, or for Universal Credit, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), know your new charges and make any relevant changes.

Please remember, if you're on Universal Credit do not update your claim until 4 April 2022 – it could cause issues with your claim.

New Resident Engagement Strategy is coming soon

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in our Resident Engagement Strategy consultation and shared with us your views on how you would like to be engaged and help to improve our services. The consultation closed on Monday 14 February 2022 and we received 1345 responses to the survey and spoke to nearly 200 residents face to face or virtually.

Listening to our residents and ensuring your voice is at the heart of decision-making is very important to us. As part of the Riverside and One Housing merger, we pledged to give our residents a louder voice and we will now use your feedback to shape the opportunities for you to use that voice. Our new Resident Engagement Strategy will now be co-designed with our Resident Panels and will be launched in Spring 2022. It will set out ways for you to feedback on the issues that matter to you the most and how we can improve communication, so we can work together to deliver better services.

Rent text reminders are live

As part of our digital transformation journey to improve the experience of our customers, we're committed to providing straightforward transactions.

We'll now be texting you when we don't receive your direct debit, so you never miss your rent payment. If you need to make any changes to your direct debit mandate, please contact us on **0300 123 9966** and your account advisor can do it for you over the phone.

If you need to update your contact details, please log into your MyOneHousing account.



Preparing for gas and electrical safety inspections

Many of our homes rely on gas for heating and hot water. If left unchecked, the pipework and gas appliances, such as boilers, meters and gas fires can become faulty and unsafe.

As a landlord, we make sure a gas safety check is undertaken every 12 months. We'll contact you two months before the service is due to arrange the visit. It's essential that you let us into your home to carry out these checks.

After the service, you'll receive a certificate called a Landlord's Gas Safety Record that confirms the results of the check.

In addition, we carry out an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) every five years to our tenanted properties or whenever there is a change of occupancy.

The EICR involves inspecting and testing the fixed electrical wiring and accessories, including consumer unit and sockets within the property to determine if they need repairing or upgrading.

If the appointment you've been given for a gas or electrical safety inspection is inconvenient, please call us on **0300 123 9966** or email ask@onehousing.co.uk to re-arrange it.



Working with you to improve our services

We continue to deliver our Customer Experience Strategy to ensure that our residents are at the heart of everything we do. Getting our services right is our top priority – we're currently achieving 79.74% first time resolution and will review our services to understand your views about us, what we're doing well and where we can improve.

Since our last newsletter we have:



Scored 4.4 out of 5 for satisfaction with last repair

Resolved 79.74%
queries at first point contact

Achieved a 83.64%
First Time Fix rate for repairs

12

cladding remediation projects underway covering 21 buildings



Achieved 4.3 out of 5 average estate satisfaction score

Achieved 80%
satisfaction with ASB case handling



Issued 97 compliant EWS1 certificates for buildings, helping those that have been unable to sell, now do so



Responded to 84.3% of Stage 1 complaints in 10 working days

We're still working on improving call handling waiting times when there is high demand for our services, giving you feedback about follow on works and complex repairs and responding to enquiries passed to our specialist teams when the Customer Service Centre cannot answer your query at the time you call.

“You Said, We Did”

Here are the improvements we implemented thanks to your feedback from November 2021 to January 2022.

Improve the property management service and quality of grounds upkeep

- We've implemented monthly "Drop into Property Management Sessions" for residents based on estates so you can meet with Property Managers and discuss any concerns you have with the development.
- We've introduced an initiative called "Bounce back Saturdays" to improve developments which saw increased wear and tear to communal areas during lockdowns. The team carried out a number of tasks, including deep cleaning and gardening works, which had an immediate positive impact in the community. None of these costs were re-charged to residents.

Rectify failures to fully resolve complaints within Property Services

- We've reviewed our existing structure and introduced Customer Experience Champions within Property Services who work with residents

to ensure that all issues are followed through to customer satisfaction.

Improve services delivered by the Home Purchase Team

- Our Home Purchase Team received additional external training so they can provide first-time professional advice and information.
- We're developing new Home Purchasing policies and procedures to improve the quality of information available and ensure processes are more transparent.

Please do keep giving us feedback via the surveys we send you as it really helps us change what we do.

Would you like to receive our newsletter by email? Please email us via residentengagements@onehousing.co.uk to be added to the mailing list.