



Unlocking potential

Corporate plan 2020-23

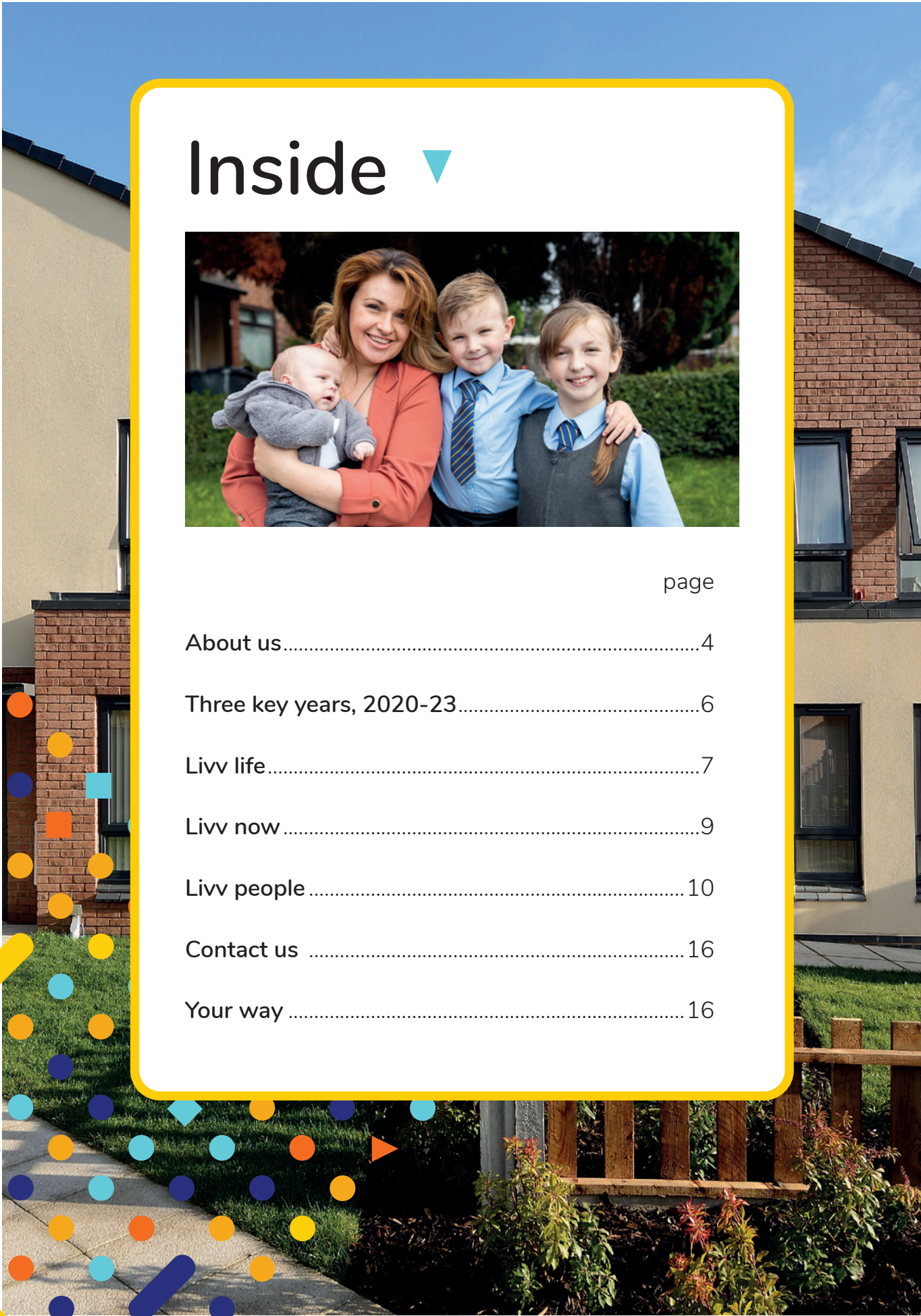


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About us

We enter the 2020s with a different name, a fresh look and a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

From 1 April 2020, First Ark Group transforms into Livv Housing Group – a business dedicated to providing great homes whilst achieving positive impact and flourishing communities.

This plan’s title, unlocking potential, distils our ambition to bring people and neighbourhoods together to create better opportunities to grow, develop and thrive. Our prime objective is to work alongside our customers and local, regional and national partners to be the provider of choice for great homes and much more. This means being willing and able to help people tackle tough issues like unemployment, poverty, domestic violence, poor mental health and anti-social behaviour.

In the prevailing economic, social and political climate, these are not easy challenges, but we’re determined to do this well and keep things simple. We believe that focusing hard on what matters most to customers and making our business basics as straightforward as possible are the keys to success. We’re happy to be judged on our ability to deliver the style and standard of services needed to get things done properly and right first time.



Livving our values

Livv stands for an unwavering commitment to serving local communities, by forging strong partnerships, pioneering new ways of working and building a highly skilled, steadfast team to deliver ambitious strategies.

We’re here for the long term to help people live happy, successful and fulfilled lives in diverse, welcoming places where they want to stay. Our mission is to provide homes and opportunities for everyone - young or old, family, couple or single person. The values that motivate and drive us to do this are:



Making a difference every day
Investing in our people, customers and a fairer society



Being positively open
Welcoming feedback to help us provide first-class homes and experiences



Forging the right way
Creating an inspiring road for others to follow



Together as one
Every team and person working cohesively to deliver better outcomes

We generate social value – using our resources wisely to achieve lasting, beneficial change and be an attractive organisation to work for and with. This means really knowing and understanding both customers and communities and directing our investment to the areas and groups that need it most.

Three key years, 2020-23

The first three years of the decade are our chance to make an even greater mark on the lives and prospects of people in the North West of England.

Building more homes

The UK’s deepening crisis of housing supply, affordability and homelessness means that it’s never been more important to build more homes. So we’re open for development business – focusing our plan mainly on providing further new affordable homes for rent, to take account of existing customers who choose to buy their homes through the Right to Buy and Right to Acquire.

This will lay the foundations for future growth and greater diversification into shared ownership and building for rent-to-buy, and sale, with our programme increasing to at least 300 new homes per year by 2022-23. We’ll provide a broader range of housing options to cater for both younger people and an ageing population, including extra care schemes and other provision for later life.



Strategic, smart, safe

Our new name and identity signal a determined effort to modernise and upgrade the way we work. We’ll embrace insight, technology and innovation to know our customers, communities and assets better and target our resources more effectively. We don’t just hope and expect to make good decisions, we’ll be able to prove it through industry-leading measurement of our social investment. A pioneering, multi-tiered approach enables us to evidence and pinpoint exactly how and where we achieve most impact and value. This analysis feeds into our strong links with communities to inform local investment decisions.

This evidence-driven approach will help us to assess and manage key business risks including home standards and condition, sales exposure, rents and further welfare reforms. Livv’s annual investment plan combines accurate property information with detailed local demographic and economic data to support aspiration and deliver better outcomes. Over the three years of the corporate plan, we’ll invest over £70 million in existing homes to provide high-quality new heating, bathrooms, kitchens and external decorations. In all of this, safety is paramount, so we’ll work closely with both customers and suppliers to choose the materials and systems that offer protection against fire, flood and other risks.

Livv life

As a community-based social business that plays an active part in the alliance of housing associations working in the Liverpool City Region, we’re about much more than building and managing homes. We aim to be a friendly force for good in all aspects of people’s lives.

Livv together

We’ll work right alongside our customers and other community stakeholders – drawing on their first-hand knowledge of what the issues are and their ideas about how we can best match our offer to local needs. Support for education, skills, employability, health, equality, financial independence and digital inclusion are all vital parts of our core business – every bit as important as the work we do to build, maintain and improve homes. We’re particularly keen to offer young people alternatives to standard education and training – focusing on what they do best to release capabilities and build motivation.

We rely upon our dedicated, determined staff to make it all happen, so will continue to develop an employment package that attracts and retains the best talent. We’ll remain committed to offering competitive pay, good terms and conditions and maintaining our status as a Living Wage employer.

To build on our strong reputation for training and development, we’ll devote at least five per cent of our total workforce to apprenticeships and we’ll provide a safe comfortable business environment that promotes a healthy work/life balance. It only takes one person to have a great idea, so we’ll encourage feedback from all customers, colleagues and partners to support innovation.

Through the Knowsley Better Together partnership with business, health, education and emergency providers, we’ll expand the range and reach of local services. We’ll remain open to potential strategic alliances or mergers that can enhance Livv’s future work and ambition.



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Livv well

Our future success relies upon sound finances and managing homes efficiently. We’ll improve our credit strength and achieve an operating margin of at least 25 per cent each year, underpinned by robust procurement and control systems to maximise value for money. Our governing board will uphold high standards of governance and risk management, and we’ll appraise all properties with a negative net present value to identify how we can either increase their financial performance or consider alternatives. We’ll also take account

of the social impact of our spending – constantly seeking new ways to enrich communities through our activity.

Through a new and improved home offer, we’ll enable people to make the most of their homes and stake in local community; working with us to promote safety, healthy living, well-being and fairness. We want customers to feel happy, settled and independent in their homes, and to play an active part in their communities.

People and partners

We'll recruit the best colleagues, board members and volunteers to reflect the profile of the communities where we work, and will invest in their wellbeing and development through training and initiatives to promote healthy minds and bodies.

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Our priorities are closely aligned to support the Knowsley 2030 partnership strategy and its objectives to make the borough a place:

- with a thriving, inclusive economy, with opportunities for people and business
- with welcoming, vibrant neighbourhoods and town centres
- where people are active and healthy, and have access to the support they need
- where people of all ages are confident and can achieve their full potential
- where safe and strong communities can shape their future.

Working with the public and voluntary sectors and other partners, we'll develop a strong, universal offer for the areas in which we operate. These will be based on multi-disciplinary teams who are able to triage and signpost customers across seamless, local services.



Livv local

The areas in which we work are strong-spirited and well-connected places on the up. We'll provide jobs and training opportunities in neighbourhoods, and will use local labour, suppliers and products to boost the region's economy and build resilience. Young people's learning, education and skills are top priorities – investing up-front in the potential of future generations.

Livv green

Homes are a major contributor to carbon emissions, so we'll play our part in reducing energy consumption and working towards the eradication of fuel poverty. With our contractor partners, we'll make sure that the designs, specifications, materials and methods we use in our new building and improvement programmes make it easier to reduce, reuse and recycle more.



Livv now

We welcome input and support from anyone who shares our ambition and values.

If you'd like to work with us as a community or business partner, join us as a colleague or as part of our governance, or put your weight and resources behind our mission in any way, please get in touch.

Beyond 2023

We'll keep on adapting to meet customers' changing expectations and new challenges or conditions in the local markets where we compete. Things are developing and moving fast in the North West of England, so we'll issue a fresh, five-year corporate plan to guide our work from 2023/24.

Livv people

These stories demonstrate the positive impact we have for individuals and our success in helping communities to flourish.

Financial support

Elaine is a Welfare and Income Advisor and visited a customer who was in rent arrears of more than £2000. We had struggled to contact the customer to offer support and during the home visit we discovered that the customer was suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and was in a very dark place. Housing benefit had stopped, no evident income for many months or engagement with any public services or her family and friends. Evidence suggests that there is a clear link between mental health and debt so Elaine took action not only to positively impact the customers financial position but to address the mental health and wellbeing too.

What Elaine did....

- Developed a personal action plan and completed a new claim for the appropriate benefits that was backdated by several months.
- By developing an action plan this prevented the customer from being evicted from their home.
- Arranged for council tax debt deductions from future benefit payments.
- Arranged appointments with the customer's GP and make them aware that support is needed with mental health.
- Processed claims for additional benefit payments to improve the customer financial situation.

The customer is now **£10,562** better off per year.

"This customer was in a very dark place when I first met her, the support I was were able to offer improved this customers wellbeing and outlook on life. I'm delighted that I was able to impact this customers life in such a positive way and the support has helped her to sustain her tenancy in the long term and improve her finances. The impact I have on customers lives makes my job worthwhile and gives me great satisfaction to know I have changed someone's life for the better."

The outcome has prevented impending homelessness, reduced the need for additional support services and minimised the impact on local social care services and NHS.



Social enterprise

Terry, catering assistant

Terry from Knowsley works with Soul Fillers – a mobile catering enterprise that offers training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It's one of the many social impact projects Livv supports, which promotes healthy eating and shows people how to cook fresh, nutritious food on a budget through individual and group sessions. The initiative also helps to raise awareness of social and corporate responsibility and change the attitudes of businesses about employing disabled people.

The programme gives 1:1 support through a personal mentor, with intensive training on hospitality and catering and hands-on work experience at Soul Fillers events.

"Before I joined Soul Fillers, I was stuck in a day centre with no real plans for the future. Now I've learnt how to cook (including Chinese food which I particularly like), delivered disability awareness training in London and New York and catered for events with almost 200 guests," said Terry.



I live independently and feel part of a family at Soul Fillers. I've been involved in so many amazing opportunities.



Regeneration through care

Peter Durgan, resident at The Watchfactory

The Watchfactory is an award-winning extra-care scheme for older people in Knowsley.

Like many extra care schemes it offers an on-site bistro, salon and therapy room as well as services to support customers with complex needs. But what makes it different is the history of the building and our commitment to regeneration that preserves and protects its heritage. We understand how important this building is to the people in the surrounding communities so we took on the challenge and carefully restored the Grade II listed building. We have created an aspirational living solution for our customers, delivering a variety of extra care facilities in a unique community environment that is sympathetic to the history and legacy of the Watchfactory.

"I was one of the first people to move into The Watchfactory. It's a great community in itself – an excellent place that's opened up a whole new life for me," said Peter.



I'm doing a lot of things that I never thought I'd do again.



The apprentice

Bethany Edge, independent living advisor

Twenty-year-old Bethany from Kirkby joined Livv (then First Ark) as a Human Resources apprentice in September 2018. Alongside placements in different teams across the business, she completed a one-year, Level 2 Business and Administration course, which led to a full-time, permanent job as an independent living advisor helping our older customers with additional needs to live independently in their homes.

“Meeting all the managers and working with the different teams has given my confidence a massive boost,” she said. “It’s good to work in a business that benefits local people – I feel like I’m helping those who are nearby, in my own community.”

We offer high-quality work experience, training and qualifications, while earning a decent wage with individual support from a personal mentor. Our apprentice programme generated £235,992 of social value in 2018/19 and we will continue to do more.

Over the corporate plan period, we’ll work with businesses and schools across Knowsley and the Liverpool City Region to expand ‘on the job’ learning, mentoring programmes and vocational qualifications that offer alternative routes into secure employment.



Being an apprentice is not just like being in a classroom, it’s real-life experience. It’s good to work in a business that benefits local people.



Returning to work

David Forrest, post and provisions assistant

David from Huyton had been out of work for 18 months before he got the chance to join our team through Knowsley Council’s Empower Job Carving Programme. This innovative scheme involves carefully extracting tasks from existing job roles and packaging them together to suit someone with a learning disability. It offers experience and a steady income for people who might otherwise find it hard to get work, while allowing staff to concentrate on the more complicated or skilled parts of their jobs.

“This role has really helped build up my confidence and I’ve picked up lots of new skills. It’s been a great opportunity for me,” said David.

The role began with a part-time, initial placement for six months, which thanks to David’s commitment and personality has now converted to a permanent position.

Our employment support programme is delivered in partnership with Knowsley Works. It offers a range of practical and financial support to people seeking to get back into employment, including job search, CV development, interview techniques, travel expenses, workwear and mentoring.

The project aims to help 100 customers get into or back into work. In its first three months, 91 people found secure employment. It shows what difference a genuine commitment to providing real opportunities can make to communities.



I’m really enjoying being part of a team – the people here are so welcoming and friendly. My job gives me a real sense of purpose again.



Community action

Shirley, resident in Roby

Many organisations deliver community improvement activities - but it is our strength in partnerships that means we can achieve so much more when we work together.

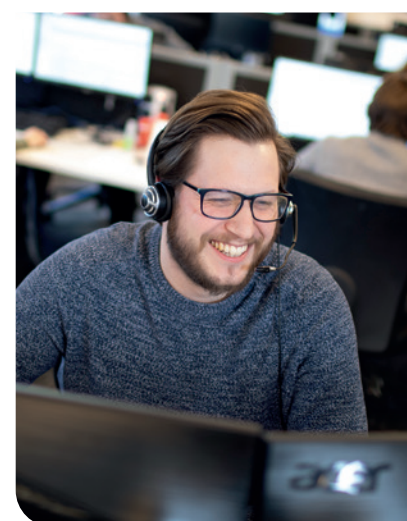
The Knowsley Community Action Day in September 2019 saw 22 volunteers from Livv, Housing Group, Knowsley Council and partners join local people at Roby Playing Fields, Roby Hub and Swanside Community Centre to give these community facilities a much needed lift. They spent the day painting, tiling, cutting grass, replacing gutters, trimming trees and hedgerow and clearing litter.

The team worked together to give the area a new lease of life, bringing the facilities back to a condition that's safe and useful for local families, schools and sports groups to use.

Roby Councillor, Cllr Margaret Harvey, said: "We were overwhelmed with the response in terms of the number of employees and the gifts of materials. This is a wonderful example of collaborating and working better together for communities."



It's just fantastic that we can use the centre and the fields again – this is such an important space for our community.



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Your way

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