



Abri

Creating communities,
empowering lives

Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Report

April 2021-March 2022

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1. Foreword

We are pleased to present our second annual environmental, social and governance (ESG) report.

Much has happened since we last reported against our ESG commitments. While we appear to be through the worst of the global pandemic, we are left with a cost of living crisis that has been threatening to engulf the country for some time. The scale of the housing and affordability crisis in this country shows no sign of abating. And the need to address climate change is more urgent than ever.

Our response is to double down on our core purpose - to create inclusive, thriving communities that empower lives. We have a responsibility to help address climate change by becoming a truly sustainable business, and to promoting equal opportunities for our people and our customers.

At the heart of our purpose is investing in new and existing homes. We have increased our pipeline to 12,500 new sustainable-homes by 2030 and will invest £161m over the next four years improving our existing homes, reducing carbon emissions, and improving energy efficiency.

But a decent home is just the starting point to enabling real change, through wider community investment, employment opportunities, levelling up and community empowerment.

This is what sustainable communities means to us. And by working in partnership with our customers, listening to their ideas, needs, and feedback, we can shape a safe and sustainable future for more people.

ESG runs to the heart of all of this. It provides us with a set of standards that anchor and guide us and provide a constant source of accountability and consistency for our environmental, social and governance priorities. It can also shine a light on where we need to place more focus as an organisation, and where we can do better by our customers.



I'm proud to say we have made great strides in our sustainability journey in the last year – in both what we are doing and how we are demonstrating it.

This includes the launch of our new Environment and Climate Strategy 2022-26, which provides a robust roadmap to net zero. It includes an approach that embraces international reporting standards around climate risk and biodiversity. We have kickstarted retrofit pilot programmes across our local authority areas and are working collaboratively with our peers to deliver sector-wide solutions through the Greener Futures Partnership.

ESG is also an opportunity to demonstrate where we are going as a business. We are pleased to share some of our forward-looking commitments and priorities in this year's report.

All of these commitments are aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and demonstrate our role in helping to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. We continue to report against the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing, promoting consistency and transparency across our sector. And we will also shortly be publishing our Sustainable Finance Framework, which will ensure the funding we source is invested in the right places and is delivering outcomes for our customers and communities.

These are the frameworks that underpin our ESG reporting approach and through which our customers, colleagues, funders, and partners can ensure we are meeting our ambitions to become a truly sustainable business.

Most important of all, we hope this report shows our customers that their voice matters and what they say directly drives our social purpose.



Gary Orr

Group Chief Executive Officer

2. About Abri

Abri is one of the South of England's largest not-for-profit housing providers, with 40,000 homes and assets, and serving 100,000 customers across the region. We exist to create thriving, sustainable communities with more opportunity for all.

We're passionate about tackling the housing crisis and we're committed to building at least 12,500 new homes by 2030. Between 2020 and 2025, we're investing £15 million in communities to increase employment, improve health and wellbeing, and empower people to take the lead where they live.

We work with 37 local authorities and 56 different parliamentary constituencies. As we grow, we want to re-establish our strong local presence, deepening our connection with our customers and communities.

The three Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strands are embedded in our [corporate strategy](#) and are part of everything we stand for: creating a sustainable future; empowering lives and creating thriving, inclusive communities; and managing our business to the highest standards.

Everything we do is driven by three core beliefs and eight strategic priorities that shape our thinking, our actions, and our identity:

1. build more homes
2. invest in our homes
3. get really good at customer service
4. create thriving communities
5. make all of our communities more inclusive
6. create a great place to work
7. manage our business to the highest standards
8. climate crisis: creating a sustainable future

3. Our ESG approach

Our ESG report helps demonstrate how we bring our purpose as a housing provider to life.

A central driver of our ESG reporting is greater transparency and accountability to our stakeholders – including our customers, colleagues, investors, and partners. It can help us communicate our performance, progress, and our impact, while showing how we are identifying and managing material risks to the business.

Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing

We have developed our ESG reporting approach in year two, having become an early adopter of the Sustainability Reporting Standard (SRS) for Social Housing during 2021. The SRS framework is designed to drive transparency, comparability, and consistency across our sector by helping housing providers to report on their ESG performance against 12 themes and 48 relevant criteria.

The SRS has been designed to align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), further cementing our alignment with the 2030 goals.

We have also reviewed our performance against the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) framework to assess our readiness to address climate opportunities, risks, and implement TCFD reporting during 2023.

While TCFD requirements do not apply to our sector directly, they are now mandatory for the largest companies and investors in the UK, requiring the disclosure of climate-related financial information and ensuring they consider the risks and opportunities they face as a result of climate change.

Sustainable Finance Framework

Our sustainability priorities have informed the development of our Sustainable Finance Framework which will enable us to align our finance strategy with our ESG ambitions, through the issuance of sustainable finance directly aligned with the UN's SDG's.

Our sustainable finance framework provides investors and stakeholders with assurance that the funds they provide will be allocated to environmentally and socially sustainable purposes. The framework will enable Abri to formally link debt instruments to sustainability, aligned to industry standards, in a way recognised and understood by investors.

From next year our ESG report will include the key metrics from our sustainable finance framework and provide investors with further insight regarding our sustainability activities.



UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were created by the United Nations to help achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.

They are a call to action to countries, businesses, NGOs, and other stakeholders to work together towards 17 interlinked goals that shine a spotlight on some of the world's biggest issues including eradicating poverty and hunger, tackling climate change, and reducing inequality.

At Abri, we recognise the contribution we can make towards the SDGs through our positive impact on communities, by how we run our organisation, and in how we influence others.

We are reporting against thirteen goals that we believe are most closely related to our business and where we feel we can make the most impact. The table below sets out how Abri has contributed to each SDG during the past year.

Abri's Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG	2021/22 Outcomes
 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare and Benefits team worked with customers to secure an additional £3.2m in income Pledged £15,000 to Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) Energy Hardship Fund Launched a pilot with Cenergist to offer water-saving devices to around 4,000 customers Helped 2,500 people into sustainable employment
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenancy Sustainment team supported 160 customers at risk of losing their tenancy Prevented £155,000 of appliance poverty, supporting families with mattresses, bedding, furniture, and white goods We support our customers through community initiatives such as the Round About Café providing locally sourced food and drink at affordable prices Over the past 12 months we ran 43 sessions through our Good Grub Club with 1,262 people attending. The sessions focus on learning about food, sharing food together, low-cost meal ideas using items from foodbanks that taste great and provide the nutrition they need



- £5m of social value generated through our supply chain and procurement
- We provide staff and customers with facilities that enhance physical and mental wellbeing e.g. wildflower labyrinth to increase biodiversity and support customers' mental health



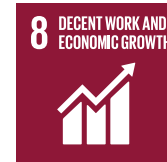
- Supported 500 people into sustainable employment during the past year
- 1,161 customers referred for training and support
- Partnerships secured with 10 employers across our community investment zones
- 13 Abri Work Academies delivered. This has enabled 127 people to undertake training, with 78 securing employment with the employers, 19 securing work elsewhere, and 8 securing volunteer roles.



- Reduction of our median gender pay gap during 2021/22 from 16.5% to 9.8%
- People and Culture Committee reviewed the diversity and tenure of our Group Board members – future proofing the board and succession planning



- Invested £1.8m improving the energy efficiency of 410 existing homes whilst targeting fuel poverty reduction
- On our corporate and communal buildings, 5% of our total energy consumption was generated from PV installs and 13.5% was purchased from a Green Energy Tariff.



- Launched our Elephant in the Room campaign, a series of conversations focused on traditionally 'off limit' topics
- Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) includes access to a personalised mental wellbeing app
- Real Living Wage of £9.90 per hour as a minimum



- Launched our first Inclusion and Belonging report aimed at helping to reduce inequalities
- Begun the process of collecting EDI data from our customers so we can improve and adjust our services to meet customer needs



- Launching our Environment and Climate Strategy 2022-26
- We will invest £55.6m over the next four years improving the energy efficiency of existing homes



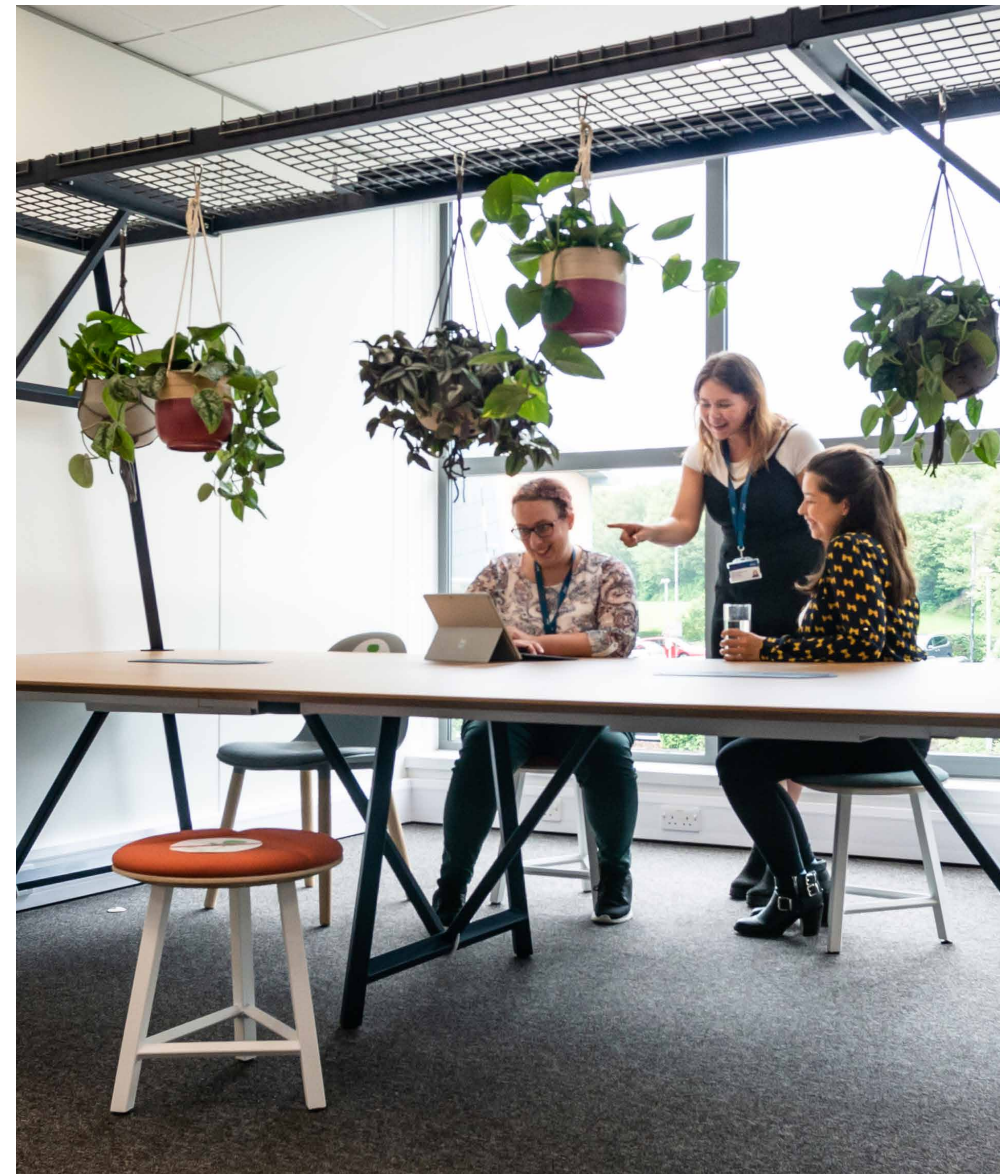
- We delivered 89 homes using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) during the past year
- Part of the Building Better national consortium, a National Housing Federation-backed strategic alliance of 29 housing providers and local authorities, driving forwards MMC solutions



- Our major suppliers have pledged social value commitments, with contractual obligations to source more sustainable materials
- Initiated work with our wider supply chain to embed circular economy principles



- Adopting the Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) framework which supports businesses to report and act on nature-related risks
- Developing a new biodiversity action plan, setting out specific actions to further promote and protect biodiversity



4. Environmental

Key highlights:

- Launched our Environment and Climate Strategy 2022-26
- Developed our carbon academy, with carbon literacy training being rolled out to all colleagues
- Developed our approach to carbon accounting and published our scope 3 emissions
- Adopted the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) framework to assess how we can sophisticate our approach to assessing climate risks and opportunities
- Increased the number of existing homes achieving EPC Band C to 75% of existing homes
- Utilised our Greener Futures Partnership to deliver major research programmes which support our net zero ambitions.

Key highlights:

SRS Theme	Priority metric	Our commitments
Climate Change	Energy Efficiency of existing homes	All homes to reach EPC Band C by 2028 where possible.
	Energy Efficiency of new homes	All new homes built are a minimum of EPC Band B. Where possible Abri will adopt the future homes standard ahead of 2025.
	Scope 1,2,3 emissions	14% reduction in Scope 1,2,3 emissions achieved by 2025, relative to our 2020/21 baseline. Net zero by 2030 on our operations. Net zero by 2050 on our homes and supply chain.
Mitigating climate risks	Initial climate risk review undertaken during 2022. Climate scenario analysis implemented during 2023. TCFD reporting implemented during 2023.	





SRS Theme	Priority metric	Our commitments
Ecology	Increasing green space and promoting biodiversity on or near homes.	Company wide biodiversity action plan implemented during 2022.
Resource Management	Strategy for responsibly sourced materials, waste management and water management.	<p>Waste management strategy implemented during 2023.</p> <p>Assessment of water usage across corporate, communal areas and existing homes undertaken during 2022/23 and incorporated within Abri's carbon accounting.</p> <p>Collaborate with our key suppliers to begin embedding circular economy principles during 2022.</p>

Theme name: Climate Change

Climate change is one of Abri's eight strategic priorities and central to our values and purpose as an organisation. We're committed to playing our part in achieving the Government's 2050 net zero target and recognise the huge impact the social housing sector can make in both cutting carbon emissions and embedding the behavioural shifts that support long term change.

Our new Environment and Climate Strategy 2022-26 provides a [robust roadmap](#) to decarbonise our homes and transition our business to a net zero economy.

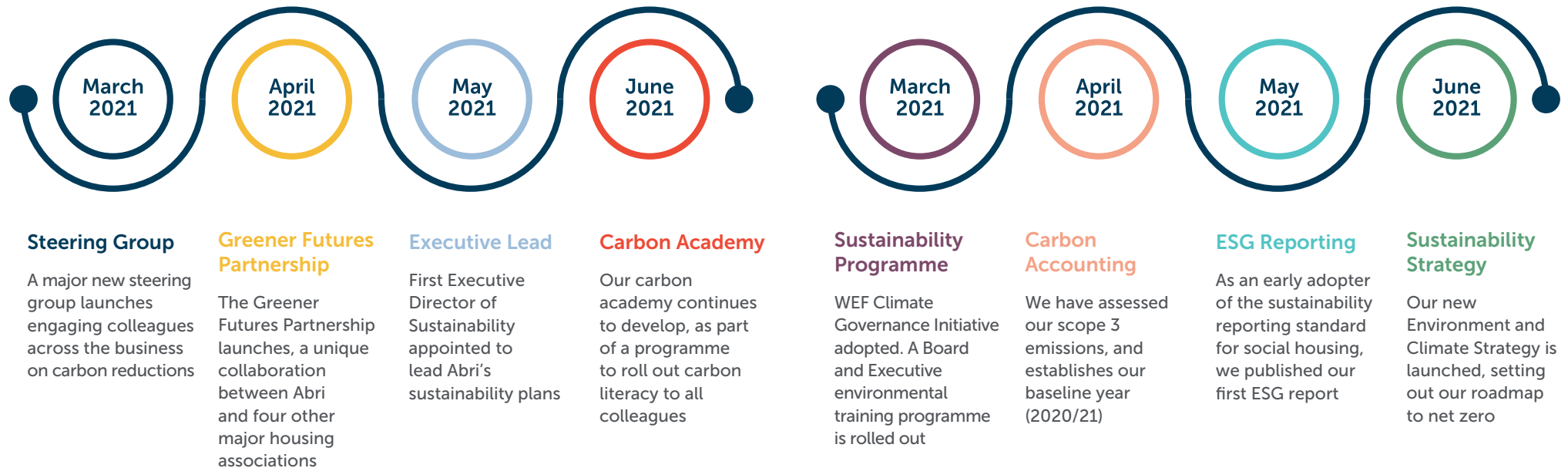
Our ambition is to achieve net zero on our operations by 2030, and net zero on our homes and supply chain by 2050. We recognise that we can't deliver our climate ambitions in isolation, so we are working closely with our supply chain partners and driving innovation through our Greener Futures Partnership in order to realise our ambitions.

We're creating a culture of low carbon thinking at Abri, engaging, and empowering our colleagues, customers, and communities to make positive steps to reduce our shared carbon footprint.



Our approach

Abri's progress during the past 12 months:



The past 12 months have seen a huge step forward in our journey to net zero, earning us the number four position in Housing Digitals Top 30 Sustainable Housing Providers list in June 2021.

We have developed a clear roadmap for reaching net zero by 2030 on our operations and net zero on our homes and supply chain by 2050. In May 2022 we launched our new Environment and Climate Strategy, setting out the actions we will take in order to reduce our environmental impact and drive a positive step change for left behind communities.

The Greener Futures Partnership, a major collaboration between Abri, Anchor, Home Group, Hyde and Sanctuary, has become a leading voice in the sector on sustainability, raising awareness on the issues facing the sector as we transition to net zero, as well as commissioning major research strands assessing retrofit solutions and the wider social impact of improving the energy efficiency of existing homes.

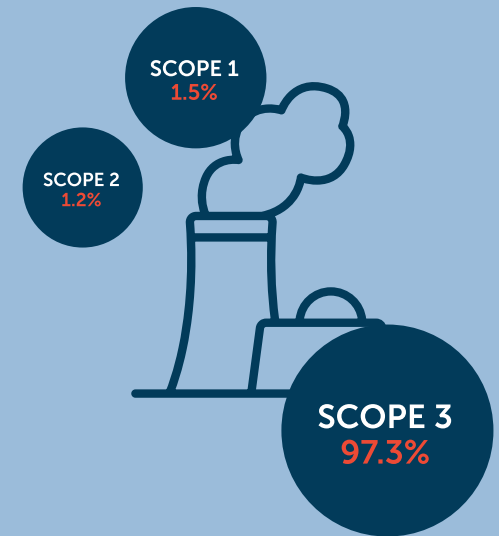
The partnership is dedicated to improving the energy efficiency of 300,000 homes for more than 600,000 customers, as well as creating new standards for sustainability across the sector.

Our environmental impact

Understanding Abri’s environmental performance is at the heart of our approach to climate action. Through carbon accounting, we’ve calculated the amount of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) we produce, both directly and indirectly, to give us a thorough understanding of our carbon footprint.

We’ve developed our understanding of our scope 3 emissions - which covers our indirect emissions from our housing and supply chain - and what we can do to start reducing them. During 2022, we’ll enhance our baseline and include current exclusions as we further develop our approach to carbon accounting.

Our carbon footprint 2020/21 by scope:



Scope 3 emissions by category:



Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR)

Our SECR data shows our scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions generated by energy use from our offices, depots, and operation of our vehicle fleet.

This is our third year of reporting under SECR. The current gross emissions compared to the base year (1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020) have increased by 3,637 tonnes of CO₂e.

Our emissions have increased as we have opted in the current year to include the electricity and gas consumption in the communal areas of our blocks and schemes. It's really important that we're transparent and accurate in our reporting, and we'll use our new baseline for future comparisons.

	kWh Energy Consumed YTD				tCO ₂ e Emitted YTD				Intensity ratio
	Electricity	Natural gas	Transport	Total	Scope 1	Scope 2	Scope 3	Scope 1+2+3	
2021-2022	9,384,870	13,277,640	7,465,105	30,127,614	3,923.4	1,780.9	444.7	6,148.9	4.28
2020-2021	1,413,506	19,373	5,684,360	7,117,239	1,394.6	361	-	1,755.6	1.2
2019-2020	1,461,013	22,747	7,023,005	8,506,765	2,139.0	373	-	2,512	2.0

Scope 1: Carbon emissions from natural gas and company owned transport

Scope 2: Carbon emissions from electricity

Scope 3: Electric transmission and distribution losses and private transport for business purposes

Our stock by EPC Banding

Currently, 75% of our homes are EPC band C or above. Tackling fuel poverty is a key priority for us, which is why we're committed to bringing all homes up EPC band C by 2028 where possible.

2021/22

EPC A	0.4%
EPC B	25.1%
EPC C	48.2%
EPC D	22.4%
EPC E	3.3%
EPC F	0.6%

We delivered 849 new homes during 2021/22, all of which were EPC band B or above.

Improving our energy efficiency

Where possible, we've aligned our pathways to reaching net zero with the Climate Change Committee's pathways and adopted science-based targets to help us achieve zero emissions in our operations by 2030 and net zero across our supply chain and homes by 2050.

Reducing the environmental impact of our workplaces and operations

During the last year, we've undertaken the following steps to reduce our environmental impact:

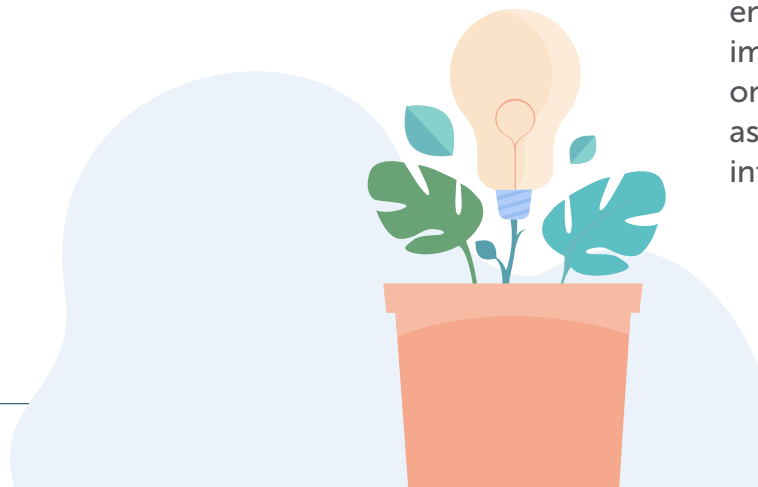
- **Installing electric vehicle charging points at our main offices**
- **Developing an electric vehicle pilot which will support our transition to a fully electric fleet by 2030.**
- **Decommissioning over 120 virtual servers in our main data centre, reducing power requirements**
- **Piloting a hybrid mail solution driving more efficient bulk printing processes.**
- **Promoted the use of DocuSign to avoid printing and posting documents that require signatures.**

Improving the energy efficiency of our existing homes

We've developed a high-level roadmap for achieving net zero on all of our homes by 2050. During the next decade we will prioritise a fabric first approach and where appropriate install low carbon heating systems. From 2030 onwards we will prioritise the decarbonisation of heat, scaling up delivery as supply chains mature.

During 2021/22 we successfully secured funding through Wave 1 of the Governments Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), to support our retrofit projects. In total Abri will invest £8.8 million over the next 12 months delivering energy efficiency works to 1,560 homes.

Customer engagement will be key to the successful delivery of our climate goals and retrofit programmes. Our ambition is to engage our customers not only on the implications that climate change will have on their home, but also the wider benefits associated with sustainable living, using our influence to drive further carbon reductions.



In March 2022, we launched [Living Well](#), a research-based campaign that aims to make positive climate action accessible to everyone. To make sure we were providing the most relevant support, we commissioned a [bespoke piece of research](#) with YouGov and surveyed over 2,000 UK adults to explore the nation's attitudes, opinions and behaviours towards climate change.

The research helped us to understand how we can empower our customers, communities and colleagues to tackle climate change by taking simple but achievable everyday steps to lower their carbon footprint, starting with climate-friendly ways to eat sustainably on a budget.

Partnering with well-known eco chef, Tom Hunt, we launched a media and social media campaign supported by a range of tangible materials for our customers, colleagues, and communities. This included a podcast, cook along video, online Q&A, and a customer guide packed with recipes and tips to eat in a climate-friendly way and save money, which has been vital in the face of the cost-of-living crisis.

Through our Greener Futures Partnership we are in the process of launching an innovative digital customer engagement platform, which will support us to gauge customer views and concerns regarding retrofit works. We will also roll out a series of climate assemblies with our customers over the coming months, in order to develop a truly customer led engagement strategy for retrofit works.

Improving energy efficiency and sustainability of new build homes

We've continued to push forward with Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) to meet the demands of both the housing and climate crises, delivering 89 homes during 2021/22 utilising MMC.

We're part of the Building Better national consortium, a National Housing Federation-backed strategic alliance of 29 housing providers and local authorities. The framework helps us to achieve more benefits from the use of MMC, increasing demand, influencing design, sharing technology and data insights, and upholding best practice.

Case study: **Chatham Street, Reading.**

We're building 54 affordable, sustainable homes at Chatham Street, Reading, heated solely by air source heat pumps. The new development features 100 % affordable homes, with 42 homes available to buy through Shared Ownership and 12 homes for rent.

By moving away from gas heating, we're helping more customers to live in a sustainable home that utilises renewable energy. The homes are being built by our inhouse construction team, helping us make sure the homes are of the very best quality and following responsible, sustainable building practices.

Tackling Climate related risks and opportunities

During the last year, we adopted the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) framework to assess our readiness to address climate opportunities and risks.

The assessment found that, through the development of our new Environment and Climate Strategy, we've made good progress in reporting and setting business-wide targets across our operations, portfolio of homes, transport activities, and supply chain.

We will build on this progress by undertaking climate scenario analysis in order to understand how our business could be impacted by future climate outcomes, and the actions we can take to mitigate this.

In summer 2021, we started working through a new design brief toolkit that underpins our commitment to placemaking, health and well-being, sustainability, quality and skills. We want to make sure our new developments are exemplars of great design and placemaking that works for all people by creating safe, comfortable and beautiful homes and sustainable neighbourhoods and communities.

The toolkit avoids sites within floodplains and requires schemes to follow the four pillars of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to uphold water quality, water quantity, amenity and biodiversity.



Theme: Ecology

Increasing green space and biodiversity

As a housing provider and developer, we have a direct impact on nature and a responsibility to make sure we protect it. That includes being transparent around our actions and reporting.

We have committed to adopting the Task Force on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) framework which will support businesses to report and act on nature-related risks. To get us ready for the framework and to support our own environmental goals, we undertook an extensive exercise in 2021 to establish best practice in relation to biodiversity, water resources, and pollution.

Building on our research to date, we are developing a company-wide Biodiversity Action Plan over the coming year. We'll maximise 'nature-based solutions' to protect and enhance biodiversity through our own land use but also recognising the dependencies on biodiversity throughout our supply chain. This will support us to develop our understanding of biodiversity risks and opportunities.

The Environment Act 2021 requires biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission in England on new developments. We've proactively prepared for this new legislation by building Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments into all new developments ahead of full implementation of this legislation during 2023. Promoting biodiversity and green spaces is also an integral part of our design brief toolkit.

In our communities, we've engaged with our customers on a range of regional initiatives over the past 12 months to support health, wellbeing and encourage biodiversity. These have included launching community gardens, orchards, and installing swift boxes.

During 2022 we will develop our approach to assessing and reducing pollutants as a result of our business activities.



Theme: Resource Management

Building materials: responsibly sourcing and waste management

We aim for all our goods and services to come from responsible sources and that any waste generated is dealt with conscientiously. We always seek to work with like-minded suppliers that can support us to reduce our environmental impact and carbon footprint through our procurement processes.

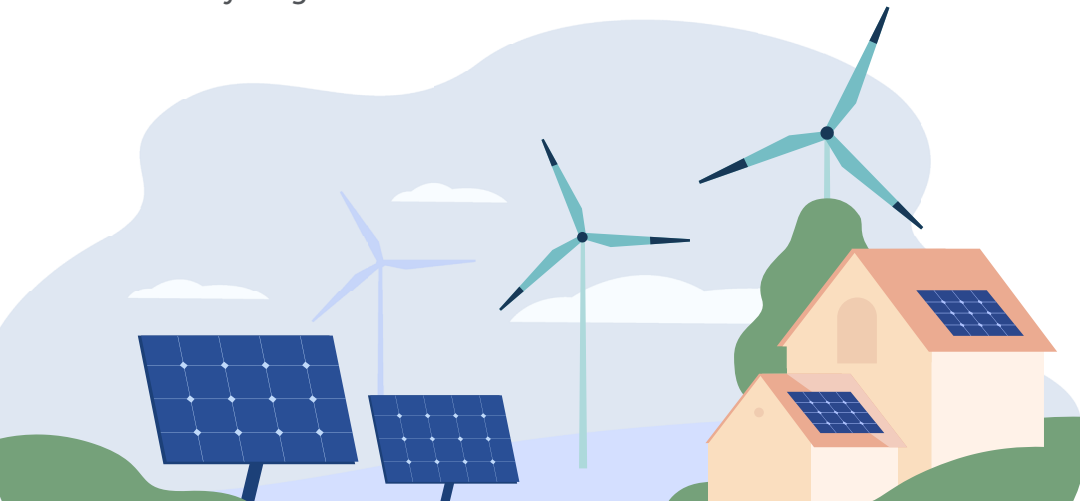
In the last 12 months, we've completed a joint materials tender involving our repairs and maintenance team to exclusively source materials. Our successful suppliers have pledged social value commitments of £280k and each has contractual obligations to source more sustainable materials. Enhancing our relationships with our suppliers will mean we can build long-term strategic partnerships and ensure the sustainability of our supply chain.

In the coming year, we'll work with our wider supply chain to embed circular economy principles, where possible eliminating waste by encouraging reuse, repurposing, and recycling.



Water management

We've launched a pilot with Cenergist to offer water-saving devices to around 4,000 customers' homes in the Southern Water area. The devices are installed free of charge into existing pipework and help our customers to reduce their water usage, save on bills, and reduce environmental impacts. We'll closely monitor the outcome of the pilot and use the insights to shape future retrofit programmes.



5. Social

Key highlights:

- Social Value generated: £5 million
- 500 people into employment or better jobs
- 97% of customers living in housing for older people supported to live independently
- £3.2m income secured by our Welfare and Benefits teams for our customers
- 98% success rate for first 12-month tenancy sustainment
- £65,000 of community grant funding to 47 organisations
- £590,000 Partnership Funding for local projects

Our Priorities:

SRS Theme	Priority metric	Our commitments
Affordability and Security	Provision of affordable housing	12,500 new homes delivered by 2030.
	Reduction in fuel poverty	All homes to reach EPC band C by 2028 where possible.
Resident voice	Measuring resident satisfaction	By 2025 Top Ten by Customer Satisfaction: Top ten amongst immediate peers Top ten decile in the housing sector Top ten as measured by the regulators tenant satisfaction measured
Resident Support	Employment generation	2,500 people supported into work by 2025.
	Tenancy Sustainment	Less than 40 evictions during 2022
	Financial Inclusion	Supporting customers to claim £250,000 of additional benefit during 2022
	Community Investment	£15m invested in our communities by 2025

Theme: Affordability and security

Our homes

As of 31 March 2022, we owned and managed housing properties across 56 local authorities:

Housing Properties owned and/or managed - Social	33,012
General Needs	23,403
General Needs – Managed for others	1,277
Supported/Housing for older people	3,253
Affordable Home Ownership	3,471
Care Homes	112
Other Social Housing	1,496
Housing Properties owned and/or managed – Non-Social	407
Market Rent	407
Housing Properties – Other	2,433
Leased Housing	1,628
HomeBuy Loans	805
Non-Housing Properties	4,458
Garages, Allotments, Shops, Other	4,458
Total	40,310

A secure tenancy means people are more likely to find and keep stable employment, access local support networks and services, and thrive in their community. For this reason, we stopped issuing seven-year, fixed-term tenancies in April 2021, and now offer life-time tenancies as part of our commitment to providing security of tenure.

We remain committed to building more affordable homes of all tenures and helping to tackle the housing crisis.

During 2021/22, we completed 850 new homes of which 700 were for affordable rent or shared ownership and secured plots for a further 1,087 new homes for our development pipeline. During 2020/21 we completed 801 new homes of which 442 homes were for affordable rent or shared ownership, the remainder were for open market sale.

We will build 12,500 new affordable homes by 2030 with a total investment of £2.6 billion. This is being achieved through our Strategic Partnership with Homes England, a move towards land-led opportunities, and regeneration of existing estates.

Tackling fuel poverty and helping with the cost of living

We know that many of our customers are facing a challenge to keep up with their household bills, especially due to rising inflation and the higher cap on energy prices brought in earlier in the year. As a housing provider, it's important that we continue to protect customers who are vulnerable to the effects of fuel poverty and other rising living costs, by offering practical support and signposting to useful resources. In 2021/22, our Welfare and Benefits teams worked with our customers to secure an additional £3.2 million in income.

Our tenancy support services signposts customers to access additional support around money management. This year, we have supported 840 new customers in the first year of tenancy, achieving a 98% success rate for first 12-month sustainment. They've also helped 161 customers at risk of losing their tenancy. We supported families with items such as mattresses and bedding, furniture and white goods, and food and fuel vouchers, preventing £155,000 of appliance poverty.

In November 2021, we also pledged £15,000 to HACT's Energy Hardship Fund to help tackle fuel poverty. HACT aims to distribute £1 million in energy vouchers to over 16,000 homes in the UK through a network of over 160 housing providers.

Theme: Building safety and quality

Our customers' and colleagues' safety and well-being will always be our priority, and this is reflected in our commitment to building safety and quality standards. This year, we have achieved:

Investing in our homes is one of our eight strategic priorities, and we'll never compromise on our purpose to provide warm, safe, and decent homes.

This year, we've formed a fire safety steering group and been proactive in preparing for the changes associated with the Building Safety Bill, Fire Safety Act, Social Housing White Paper and the Grenfell enquiry. This has led to a dedicated Building Safety Strategy, and we have implemented a specialist Building Safety team. Over the next four years, we'll invest £45 million in building safety including cladding remediation and wider safety enhancements across our blocks of flats and schemes.



Theme: Customer voice

Customers are the experts on where they live, so it's essential that we engage, listen and act on their views and preferences.

In July 2021, we simplified our Voice of the Customer (VOC) framework with three committees – Thriving Communities, Safer Lives and Know your Customer. Thriving Communities consists of five residents, who have steered development of plans for each Community Investment Zone and regularly visit customers and organisations to understand and monitor progress against the Community Investment Plan (CIP) for the area. They have approved £65,000 of community grant funding to community groups in the financial year 2021-2022.

This year, we also launched our Housing Services Strategy, Customers First. This was directly shaped by eight listening workshops held with our customers as well as large-scale consultations with our Independent Living customers to really understand what our customers think of our service.

This has shaped a new housing management approach that cements accountability and ownership for individual customers and their homes and puts our frontline colleagues at the centre of our organisation.

Over the past 12 months, we've engaged with over 3,000 involved customers. While this is a good achievement, we can always do more. In February 2022, we started a review of our Resident Involvement offer, led by IFF Research – a specialist independent market research agency - and the Resident Involvement Review Group to find out what our customers want us to continue and stop doing.

We have lots of other ways in which we currently engage with our customers and use their ideas, feedback, and decisions to shape Abri:

- **Resident Scrutiny Group**
- **Customer Complaints Panel**
- **Voice of the Customer panels (Know Our Customer, Safer Lives Panel, Thriving Communities)**

- **Your Voice**
- **Residents' Associations**
- **Online consultations**
- **Coffee and chat sessions**

Abri's Resident Scrutiny Group (RSG) is made up of 18 customers and run by the independent Chair, Kevin Williamson. The group provides constructive criticism on the services we provide and is responsible for holding us to account for our decisions and actions.



Customer satisfaction

Getting really good at customer service is one of our strategic priorities and we're committed to being Top 10 in our sector for customer satisfaction.

It's important that we get the foundations right, and in turn increase customer satisfaction. Our [Customer Annual Report](#) details how we're doing on customer service and tracks our performance against the Regulator's five proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

In addition, we're gearing up for the Regulator's new national satisfaction survey regime in April 2023.

Effective complaints handling

How we handle complaints has been flagged as a top priority by our customers and it's a large part of getting really good at customer service. Our performance is regulated by the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code which sets out good practice for landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

During 2021/22, we were able to increase the number of complaints closed at the first point of contact throughout the year.

In February 2022, we launched an automated digital survey solution pilot. We now only ask about the handling of the complaint in a one-question approach, and make sure every customer is given the opportunity to feedback on their complaint experience by using an automated survey solution.

We also created a Customer Complaints Panel, our 'Know Our Customer' panel listens to our customers' feedback and involves them to identify key areas for improvement by using customer satisfaction data. An action plan is now under review to improve our services and our customers' journey with us.



Theme: Customer support

Employment support

Our dedicated employment team has:

- helped 500 people into employment or better jobs
- referred 1,161 customers for training and support
- developed partnerships with 10 employers across our community investment zones; and delivered 13 Abri Work Academies. This has enabled 127 people to undertake training, with 78 securing employment with the employers, 19 securing work elsewhere, and 8 securing volunteer roles.

By prioritising our employment service, focusing on supporting our customers to access better employment opportunities, gain new skills and explore their full potential, we've helped customers gain better financial security for their future as well as improve their confidence.



Safer communities

Our specialist teams support customers with community safety matters and dealt with 886 new anti-social behaviour cases over the past year. They also responded to and supported 402 new reports of domestic abuse.

We responded to the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls call for evidence, in relation to the work we do to support customers who are experiencing or at-risk of domestic abuse. We also launched our Safer Streets action plan, which sets out to improve the level of safety among both our colleagues and customers.

Further to this, we conducted a bespoke piece of research into women's safety which led our community safety and tenancy compliance teams - who support our customers experiencing domestic abuse - to complete additional specialist training to help keep people safe at home.

Inclusive communities

Inclusion and belonging are a top priority for Abri. While we've made some good progress, we can and will do more starting with our first annual [Inclusion and Belonging report](#), published in March 2022. In 2022/23, we'll be collecting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) data from our customers so that we can better understand where we need to improve or adjust our services.

Community Investment

We're two years into our five-year £15 million community investment strategy, which focuses on employment, empowerment, and health and wellbeing activities in our most deprived areas. It has positively promoted community cohesion during an exceptional public health crisis and economic downturn.

Consistent with our stated aim to 'go where the need is greatest', we've defined eight Community Investment Zones (which contain 13 neighbourhoods). These zones reflect the communities where many of our customers face some of today's most challenging issues. We've created bespoke Community Investment Plans (CIPs) with a flexible response to emerging needs for those neighbourhoods. We deliver services in our communities based on feedback from customers.

Over the last year, the Community team delivered 26 Community Empowerment interventions, engaging 912 people, and 85 health and wellbeing interventions engaging a total of 3,264 people.



Theme name: Placemaking

Partnership funding

We awarded £590,000 Partnership Funding to 27 organisations across seven of our eight community investment zones. This funding is for our partner organisations to deliver projects that will support our core priorities: health and wellbeing, employment or empowering the community.

This year, projects have included improving green spaces and neighbourhoods, provision for youth activities, emotional and practical support and guidance for families and individuals, improving work ready digital skills and connecting community resources.

To support the delivery of our community investment plans, 25 partnership consortiums are now established across all eight Community Investment Zones.

Case study:

Round About Café and pantry

In 2013, we launched the Round About Café, a not-for-profit community café in Mansbridge, Southampton.

The bustling café is at the heart of the local community and serves locally sourced food and drink at affordable prices, as well as providing valuable initiatives such as volunteering opportunities, training, employment support, and projects to reduce social isolation.

The Café also provides free wi-fi, free access to laptops and printing, and support from staff to get online, set-up emails and search for jobs.

In December 2021, the café was refurbished to include a community pantry to support the local community. It has helped customers facing rising costs of living to access food for a fraction of the cost of supermarkets and reduce local food waste.

The pantry is a membership-based scheme, with an annual £1 fee. Once someone has joined, they can access food and some household goods once a week, with 10 items costing just £3.50 or 15 items for £5. We work with different providers like FareShare and local supermarkets.

6. Governance

Key highlights:

- G1/V1
- Median Gender Pay Gap of 9.8%, down from 16.5%
- Real Living Wage payer
- Board make up:
 - BAME increased from 8% to 23%
 - Female increased from 58% to 62%

Our Priorities:

SRS Theme	Priority metric	Our commitments
Structure and Governance	Financial Viability and Risk Management	Maintain G1/V1 rating from the Regulator of Social Housing.
Board and Trustees	Composition and Diversity	We'll continue to regularly review succession planning and seek to attract further talented Board Members
Staff Wellbeing	Gender Pay Gap	Reduce our median gender pay gap from 9.8%. We hold the view that the only appropriate long-term target for GPG is 0%.
Supply Chain	Social Value	We will implement a framework for assessing the social value of energy efficiency retrofit projects during 2022.

Structure and governance

Abri Group Limited is a Community Benefit Society, registered with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). This year, we retained the highest possible G1/V1 ratings from the Regulator for both governance and viability. We also retained our strong Moody's A3 credit rating. We have adopted of the National Housing Federation's (NHF) 2020 Code of Governance.

The Group Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction, values and objectives of Abri and its subsidiaries. It monitors our performance, how well we're managing our finances, and is responsible for ensuring effective governance across the business.

The members of the Group Board also hold positions as Directors of other legal entities in the Group and/or members of committees including Audit and Risk Committee; People and Culture Committee; Customer Service and Performance Committee; Treasury Committee; and the Development and Assets Committee.

The Board is led by the Group Chair, Wayne Morris, who sits alongside nine other Non-Executive Directors, and the Group Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer. Our Company Secretary is an experienced qualified lawyer, and supports the Board on all matters regulatory, governance and legal.

Risk Management

Our Board is ultimately responsible for our group-wide control framework, supported by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the work of the external and internal audit functions, the system of risk management and the internal control framework.

The Group maintains a risk register which is formally reviewed every quarter, with reports submitted to the Executive Board, Group Board, and Audit and Risk Committee. Numerous assurance activities take place throughout the organisation including internal audit, stress testing, and annual self-assessments of our compliance with the NHF Code of Governance and our compliance with the Regulatory Standards.

Our Audit and Risk Committee is chaired by Joanna Makinson, Vice-Chair of the Group Board. Simon Porter, a Senior Independent Director on the Group Board, is also a member of the committee. Simon is a qualified Chartered Accountant with over 30 years' experience in the financial sector.



Board demographics

During 2021/22, our People and Culture Committee reviewed the diversity and tenure of our Group Board members, and the required skill sets to strengthen and future-proof the Board in its succession planning. We've since worked to further increase the diversity of our Board:

Age

	2021/22	2020/21
<44 years	3 (23%)	3 (11%)
45-64 years	9 (69%)	7 (67%)
65+ years	1 (8%)	2 (22%)

Disability

	2021/22	2020/21
No disability	12 (92%)	7 (100%)
Disability	1 (8%)	0 (0%)

Gender

	2021/22	2020/21
Female	8 (62%)	7 (58%)
Male	5 (38%)	5 (42%)

Ethnicity

	2021/22	2020/21
BAME	3 (23%)	1 (8%)
Non-BAME	10 (77%)	11 (92%)

Working alongside our People and Culture Committee, we'll continue to regularly review succession planning and seek to attract further talented Board Members. In line with the NHF Code of Governance, our Board members work to a maximum of six years, a reduction from the nine-year tenure which applied in 2021/21.

Colleague wellbeing

In May 2021, we launched our Wellbeing Strategy to help build a safe and welcoming culture that respects and upholds the dignity of everyone and supports the importance of health and wellbeing.

We offer a huge range of wellbeing resources and support to colleagues, including 24/7 access to our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), membership to 87 Percent, a personalised mental wellbeing app, and support from our dedicated Wellbeing Ambassadors. Colleagues also have access to an abundance of online courses, workshops, fitness classes and offers through the wellbeing centre on ROAR (our Rewards, Opportunities and Recognition portal) and through LEAP (our Learning, Education and Performance platform).

In November 2021, we launched our Elephant in the Room campaign, a series of conversations focused on traditionally 'off limit' topics. These online group talking sessions and vlogs have been a huge hit with colleagues and opened up vital sharing of experience on topics such as menopause, anxiety and depression, loss, grief and bereavement, and being your authentic self in recognition of Pride month.

Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing team continue to protect the health and safety of colleagues and customers through risk assessments, guidance on illnesses/covid-19/PPE, managing stress, accidents /first aid, and safe working practices.

The average number of sick days was 10.6 per year in 2021/22. Just over half of all sickness was long term sick and can be broken down as 5.4 long term and 5.2 short term. In 2020/21, the average sick days taken by staff was 5.8 per year.



Pay

Part of our Inclusion and Belonging report and our focus on EDI includes fair pay. We work closely with ConneXus, our team of colleague representatives, to make sure we address the gender pay gap and ensure we have equal opportunities in the organisation.

Abri has a pro-active Gender Pay Gap reduction plan. This is approved by our EDI Committee and its delivery is formally tracked through our governance structure. Gender Pay Gap reporting and associated remedial activity is high-profile within the business and is in the direct eyeline of the Group Board.

Abri has very recently acquired software that allows the regulatory reporting of organisation-level pay gaps to be supplemented with additional actionable data at the level of departments and teams. This has also opened up the opportunity to report on ethnicity and disability pay-gaps in 2023, in order to also create insight against those protected characteristics and generate further action plans where required.

Our Median Gender Pay Gap in 2021/22 was 9.8%, down from 16.5% in 2020/21. In keeping with our previous Gender Pay Gap report, our actions are focused on attracting, progressing and keeping women in the workforce. Our action plan includes new interventions to reduce the gap. New actions include:

- **holding a series of listening groups to understand the barriers to progression within Abri**
- **using the talent and succession module within our Learning and Education platform to identify a talent pipeline within Abri**

- **establishing a women's network to support women at all levels in the organisation**
- **using Gender Decoder to remove the potential for bias in our job adverts**
- **exploring becoming signatories of the Tech Talent Charter and Tech She Can Charter**
- **putting in place robust policies to support women experiencing bullying and harassment in the workplace to create a positive environment in which they can develop and progress their careers**

Supply chain

Social value creation is a key consideration when procuring goods and services. Where possible, a minimum of 2.5 per cent of the contract must derive social value but this is weighted dependent on the contract value, so may in some cases be higher.

Working with like-minded supply chain partners to reduce emissions and eventually become net zero by 2050 is a key part of our Environment and Climate Change Strategy. We'll partner with suppliers to reduce the impact of our supply chain and prioritise the use of lower carbon raw materials. Collaboration and transparency between partners is essential if we're to achieve this, and we'll seek to embed circular economy principles throughout our supply chain.

We also support the World Economic Forum (WEF) initiative for decarbonising supply chains, which seeks to address the barriers associated with supply chain decarbonisation.

7. Conclusion

We hope this report has provided you with a clear picture of our ESG and sustainability efforts here at Abri, and the trajectory we are now on as a business.

We are proud of the progress we are making, but we know there is so much more to do.

The coming year will see us put a sharper focus and greater investment into the following areas:

- **Putting our Environment and Climate Strategy 2022-26 into action.**
- **Continuing to promote our Carbon Academy and Carbon Literacy training**
- **Collaborating with our fellow housing associations and other partners to deliver on net zero.**
- **Embedding our Sustainable Finance Framework into our ESG reporting**
- **Taking a proactive role helping to shape and evolve the Sustainability Reporting Standard for Social Housing**
- **Developing a company-wide Biodiversity Action Plan over the coming year**
- **Enhancing our Scope 3 reporting**
- **Further embracing international reporting mechanisms that demonstrate our work to manage climate-related risks and protect the natural habitat, such as TCFD and TNFD**
- **Evolving our E, S and G forward-looking commitments, with both short and long-term goals**
- **Designing a forward-looking ESG dashboard that will provide a clearer picture of our objectives and our progress.**

We would very much welcome your views on this report, our progress and our ESG reporting process.



