

OCTAVIA



DRIVEN  
BY PURPOSE,  
INSPIRED BY  
**IDEALS**

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CORPORATE STRATEGY  
2026 - 2031



With thanks to all our customers and colleagues who appear in this document.

## Our vision

To provide the very best homes and services we can today while pursuing ideals that make **tomorrow better.**

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# Introduction from Group Chair and Group Chief Executive

160 years ago, Octavia Hill championed an ideal that decent, affordable housing, coupled with respect and a sense of community, transforms lives. She believed that home was far more than shelter – it was the foundation of opportunity, education, employment, health, wellbeing and human dignity. A belief that, time and time again, has proved to be true.

Pursuing similar ideals and beliefs, Abri came into being with a 'Triple 10' strategy and the ambition to become a top performing organisation known for customer service, employee engagement and scale. The rationale was simple: scale brings efficiency and impact, while only engaged and empowered colleagues can deliver the best possible homes and services.

Five years on, Abri has delivered strongly against these aspirations, delivering benefits for its customers, communities, and the organisation. Abri has bucked the trend on customer satisfaction by improving it, has become one of the UK's best large companies to work for and created more than 5,000 new homes, with another 5,000 in the pipeline.

By pursuing a partnerships strategy of value creation through partnership, Abri has become one of the UK's most efficient and influential large housing providers.

The reasons why Abri chose to pursue a Triple 10 strategy in 2020 remain just as relevant today, as do the potential benefits.

Today, the housing crisis is deeper and more complex. Rising costs and insufficient new supply mean that far too many people are denied a safe, secure and affordable home, limiting their life chances. For all the achievements of Abri's first five years, there remains significant work to do.

Across the country, there are too many examples of individuals and families not having the quality homes, services and respect they deserve. Research by Crisis and Heriot-Watt University has highlighted that pockets of discrimination are still restricting access to social housing for people of black and mixed black heritage. They also highlight that minoritised groups are at a disproportionate risk of homelessness. There is a pressing need to rebuild trust with partners alongside restoring the credibility of housing associations by improving satisfaction and tackling social stigma.

Housing providers face a growing list of competing demands on where to invest their limited resources for biggest impact. The long-term sustainability of homes, and funding new supply alongside investment in existing homes, has never been more important. Our environmental climate is also changing fast: over the next five years we will experience more regular droughts, heatwaves, storms and floods that will impact our customers. Abri Octavia will play its part in addressing climate change by reducing its carbon footprint, and remains committed to achieving net zero by 2050.

With Octavia now part of the group, Abri is a more diverse organisation, serving one of the most diverse cities in the world. We need to accelerate our work to ensure that we are a truly inclusive employer and housing provider that delivers fair and accessible services. We must also be prepared to tackle wider issues in our communities, including the increasing risk of social division. This strategy outlines our commitment here, too.

Every decision we take must be rooted in the realities of today - the needs of our residents, the challenges in our communities and the resources available to us. At the same time, we must never lose sight of our ideals and always strive to provide the very best homes and services we can, today and tomorrow.

This strategy is both practical and ambitious. It recognises the importance of providing safe, affordable and sustainable homes and reliable services today, while setting our sights on what's possible if we continually raise our standards, listen to our customers and pursue our shared ideals.

One of the many positive outcomes of successfully pursuing this strategy will be increasing scale and impact. This continues the journey Abri has been on since its creation five years ago. What started as an aspiration to be top 20, and then top 10, is likely to conclude with our new organisation becoming a top 5 housing provider for scale, colleague engagement and customer service.

The good news is that in June this year, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the government committed to investing record amounts in affordable housing. It is now time for the housing sector to step up and play its part.

These challenges demand a new approach, one that Abri and Octavia, given their long legacies of addressing housing inequality and improving people's life chances, are well positioned to create. A new model that recommits us to pursuing the very highest standards, today and tomorrow, that rekindles the spirit and ideals of Octavia Hill as a positive reformer. A model that may be useful to the whole sector, reconnecting us to the pioneering ways of the founder of our sector, Octavia Hill.



**David Montague**  
Group Chair



**Gary Orr**  
Group Chief Executive

A bold new model that combines realism and idealism – the confidence and belief to address today's realities while striving for **tomorrow's ideals.**



## Listening to customers

This new strategy creates the opportunity for a new dialogue with our customers about their needs, priorities and expectations. We've already started this dialogue, having launched a consultation with our residents to better understand their priorities.

The answers were clear: get things right first time and more quickly, keep neighbourhoods safe and communal areas clean, help keep homes affordable amid cost-of-living pressures, and provide health and wellbeing activities and opportunities for social connection.

## Listening to colleagues & other stakeholders

We have also listened to colleagues and stakeholders when developing this new strategy. They told us that they were excited and inspired by our bold, long-term ambition to be a Top 5 housing association.

But they also want us to focus on making sure we provide the very best homes and services we can today, based on having the right resources, tools and culture to deliver our very best work.



## What do we mean by ideals?

Our ideals are the principles and standards that we strive towards and uphold – the guiding lights that direct how we approach challenges, engage with customers, and shape our communities to make things better.

Inspired by the ideals of Octavia Hill, whose lifelong mission was to “make lives noble, homes happy and family life good”, we understand that homes are about people, and that lasting change comes from nurturing dignity, respect and potential in everyone.

Octavia Hill’s ideals remind us to treat every customer, every tenant and every resident as an individual and with respect; to enable self-reliance and promote a sense of community; and to provide homes and services that enable people to truly flourish.

Ideals matter because they inspire us to look beyond the immediate challenges of today and pursue a better future – a future where every home is a platform for growth, every community a source of strength, and where our actions improve the lives of generations to come.

Every day, our ideals should challenge us to set a higher standard: to lead by example in the relentless pursuit of excellence.

In the words of Octavia Hill: “What we care most to leave them is ... the large hope to grasp the mighty issues of the new and better days to come – greater ideals, greater hope, and patience to realise both.”

## Our vision

**To provide the very best homes and services we can today while pursuing ideals that make tomorrow better.**

## Our beliefs

Everything we do is powered by three core beliefs:

- Everyone has the right to a safe, warm, affordable and sustainable home.
- Homes and communities are places to belong, grow, and thrive.
- Equal opportunity must exist for communities so everyone can have improved life chances.

We work with everyone on the basis of fairness, dignity, and respect. Every area of our business is inspired by this ongoing partnership. We are dedicated to creating communities and empowering lives.

## Our values

We lead with our values. They guide our actions and define our culture.

### BE THE DIFFERENCE

We treat every individual with respect, compassion and belief in their potential. We go beyond housing to create life-changing impact in our communities.

*“You cannot deal with people and their houses separately.”*

OCTAVIA HILL

### ACHIEVING TOGETHER

We work side-by-side with customers, colleagues and our partners to build strong, connected communities.

*“It is only by the united efforts of many, working together in a spirit of comradeship, that any real and lasting good can be accomplished.”*

OCTAVIA HILL

### ALWAYS CURIOUS

Reflecting Octavia Hill's pioneering spirit and social reform mindset, we are open-minded, thoughtful and forward-looking; we challenge convention. Our curiosity drives better homes and stronger communities.

*“New circumstances require various efforts...it is the spirit, not the dead form, that should be perpetuated.”*

OCTAVIA HILL

### OWN IT OPENLY

We act with honesty, clarity and accountability. We hold ourselves to the highest standards in service and stewardship.

*“Believe, day after day, when it is inconvenient, and when it is agreeable, that there really is a truth.”*

OCTAVIA HILL

### EMBRACE POSSIBILITY

We see potential, where others only see limits. We take bold, decisive action to create homes, places and services that improve lives.

*“What we care most to leave them is ... the large hope to grasp the mighty issues of the new and better days to come – greater ideals, greater hope, and patience to realise both.”*

OCTAVIA HILL



# Our strategy

Our journey to providing the very best homes and services will take time. It will focus on three core themes – Homes, Services and Organisation, each supported by an investment strategy and detailed implementation plans.

While we embark on this journey from a position of strength – in effect, we're running across the starting line – we must recognise that when it comes to pursuing ideals for our homes, services and organisation, we have more to do in some areas than others.

As a strategic partner of government, we're already delivering high quality, safe and affordable homes at scale, and our regulatory and credit ratings demonstrate our strong governance, financial strength and resilience as an organisation.

While we have made good progress on customer service, this is clearly the most challenging of our aspirations to deliver to a standard our customers would call ideal, and there is much more for us to do here.



## Homes

We will provide **safe, affordable, sustainable and healthy** homes that are designed for **long-term value** and which support **people's wellbeing, independence** and **aspirations**.



## Services

We will provide **reliable, responsive** and **empowering** services that are delivered with **empathy** and **respect**.



## Organisation

We will be a **values-led, purpose-driven** organisation that sets the standard in **good governance, financial resilience** and **social impact** and is **trusted by its residents** and **partners**. One that attracts talented people and other organisations to better deliver our shared goals.



## The scale of our ambition: from building new homes to tackling social division

We're ambitious and want to make the biggest contribution we can to easing the UK's housing availability and affordability crisis, and in turn, the biggest impact on reducing homelessness and improving people's life chances. We believe this is best served by maximising the supply of new, affordable homes, but not at the expense of compromising our home and place standards or investment in our existing homes.

Over the course of this strategy, we aim to build a minimum of 1,000 new homes each year, with a clear aspiration to do much more, raising that number each year, as we find new ways to acquire land and access the finance, resources and skills to build more homes. Our aim will be to double our contribution of new build homes, as quickly as conditions allow. Our investment strategy sets out how we will maximise the supply of new homes, including our plans to develop strong relationships with our partners, diversify our funding sources, secure access to strategic land and build our capacity to deliver.

We will also play a role in addressing social division and mitigating the impacts of political extremism and anti-immigration views that threaten the cohesion of our communities.

In partnership with other housing associations, central and local government and other community-based organisations, we will make sure that housing policies and decisions promote inclusion and don't inadvertently reinforce division.

To guide us on our journey, and to ensure that we make the best decisions when faced with conflicting choices, we have developed a set of guiding principles, based on our strategic intent. These principles form part of our ideals.

## Guiding principles

Our focus: people, listening, technology, innovation and influence.

### 1. People first, always

We are a people business that only exists to enhance the lives of our customers.



### 2. Customer voice

We will listen and act on the views of our customers and what matters most to them.



### 3. Technology is an enabler for good

We use technology to connect and empower people, and to make things better.



### 4. Willing to fail within safe boundaries, and always learning

We always create space to find better ways to tackle inequality and improve people's life chances, even taking some risks to do so.



### 5. Influence to create better, fairer housing

We use our voice and experience for the greater good, not organisational gain.



# Our journey: from today's realities to tomorrow's ideals

## Homes: Our ideals

We will provide many more new homes. All our homes will be safe, affordable, sustainable and healthy; and designed for long-term value, supporting people's wellbeing, independence and aspirations.

### What we will do over the next five years

- We will create a minimum Abri Octavia Home and Place standard to ensure that all our homes are safe, affordable, sustainable and healthy by design, prioritising long-term value and efficiency. And we will dispose of stock where it does not meet our standards and it is not financially viable to improve it.
- We will create an aspirational Home and Place standard for safety, affordability and sustainability, and seek to deliver this whenever feasible and financially viable.
- We will invest in our existing housing stock to improve safety, reduce energy bills and carbon emissions, ensure that our homes are healthy and that they enhance residents' wellbeing.
- We will carry out an environmental and climate risk assessment for our homes and identify measures to mitigate the impact of these risks on our homes and communities.
- Building on our existing plans and cost analysis, we will further develop our strategy for homes and other assets, outlining the measures needed to achieve net zero by 2050.
- We will embed inclusive and adaptable design principles in our Home and Place standards to ensure that every home we build, retrofit, redevelop or regenerate, enables residents to live independently and thrive throughout all stages of life.
- We will carry out research to better understand the relationship between ethnicity (and other specific protected characteristics) and homelessness and identify what can be done to address inequalities.
- We want to ensure every tenancy begins with affordability at its heart, and we will aim to provide the essential things that guarantee a successful start when people move into their new home.
- We recognise that the current condition of some of our estates doesn't always reflect the pride our residents deserve to feel in their neighbourhoods. We will invest to put this right.
- We will work with our residents and partners to design homes and communities that reflect the needs, aspirations and lived experiences of our residents.
- We will create safe and cohesive communities, integrating green spaces, access to transport and facilities to support people's wellbeing, independence and aspirations.
- We will use data, innovation and smart technology to improve the long-term performance of our homes and minimise future maintenance costs.
- We will embed sustainability into every stage of development in line with our net-zero carbon commitments.
- We will champion partnerships with local authorities and third-party providers to ensure our homes support people's wellbeing, independence and aspirations.
- We will measure and report on the impact of our homes, using clear metrics on safety, affordability, sustainability and social value to stay true to our vision.

## Services: Our ideals

We will provide reliable, responsive and empowering services that are delivered on the basis of listening, empathy and respect. We will consistently meet expectations.

### What we will do over the next five years

- We will use the first year of the strategy to work with our customers to define a level of service that aligns with our ideals and their expectations.
- We will deliver consistently reliable core services such as repairs, maintenance, and tenancy support, with clear, benchmarked service standards and timely responses that build trust.
- We will provide responsive services that listen, take ownership, act quickly, and resolve issues effectively, ensuring that every interaction with our customers is personalised and meaningful.
- We will treat everyone with fairness, dignity and respect, embedding empathetic and culturally aware approaches among all our colleagues.
- We will support customers' wellbeing and independence through community-based services that go beyond the home to improve independence, health, education, wellbeing and positive life outcomes.

- We will empower our colleagues by giving them freedom to act in line with our values to deliver service aligned to our ideals, with empathy and respect.
- We will proactively identify and support residents who are vulnerable or at risk, ensuring early intervention and partnering with those with specialist knowledge and expertise when tackling acute homelessness.
- We will provide services that are accessible and inclusive for all regardless of age, ability or circumstance, with an aspiration to become the landlord and employer of choice for disabled customers and colleagues.
- We will become better connected to the diverse communities we serve, and better placed to identify examples of inequality and discrimination.
- We will be a transparent, accessible and identifiable organisation to all our customers, sharing performance information openly and learning from concerns, complaints and compliments to build trust and continuously improve the service we provide.
- We will identify means to build and maintain social cohesion across our communities, to ensure that everyone feels welcome and safe in the communities in which they live.

## Organisation: Our ideals

We will be a values-led, purpose-driven organisation that sets the standard in good governance, financial resilience and social impact, trusted by customers and partners, attracting and nurturing talent.

### What we will do over the next five years

- We will lead with our values and purpose, embedding them into decision-making, strategy and everyday behaviours across the organisation.
- We will uphold the highest standards of governance, ensuring our leadership is diverse, accountable, transparent and focused on long-term value for residents and communities.
- We will maintain robust financial resilience, managing resources responsibly while investing wisely to deliver on our social purpose and long-term sustainability.
- We will maximise our social impact, setting clear goals and using evidence to demonstrate how our work improves lives and strengthens communities.
- We will earn and retain the trust of customers and partners, through honesty, consistency, and meaningful accountability at all levels of the organisation.
- We will invest in our people, building a skilled, motivated and diverse workforce that is empowered to live our values and deliver with excellence.
- We will embrace technology and innovation, including AI, to drive efficiency and release capacity for more added-value customer focused activities and foster a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring all technological deployment is ethical.
- We will act as a sector leader, using the Octavia Foundation as a convenor to share good practice, influence positive change in housing policy and work in partnership with others to raise sector standards.
- We will be a responsible and ethical organisation, upholding integrity in our procurement, environmental practices and social value creation.
- We will develop clear plans for electric vehicle charging across our estate, replacing grid energy with solar, reducing water usage and diverting our waste away from landfill and incineration.
- We will measure and report on our performance with integrity, using evidence and data to drive learning, improvement and transparent accountability.
- We will commit to reviewing this strategy on an annual basis, ensuring it is effective and sufficiently ambitious to move us towards our vision of a new Abri Octavia.
- We will also work with our board, colleagues, stakeholders and, most importantly, our customers to extend the horizon of our strategy much further into the future: creating a long-term vision for a housing association capable of meeting national future housing need.

# Leaving things better than we found them

In five years' time, a key test of the delivery of this strategy will be whether we can, with hands on hearts, say that we:

- Listened, then acted upon the things our customers told us mattered most.
- Maintained, improved and regenerated our homes (where necessary).
- Divested ourselves of activity and assets inconsistent with this strategy.
- Built a substantial amount of new, quality homes.
- Created communities proud of who they are and where they live.
- Have an operating model and financial plan that offers confidence for today and for the future.
- Pursued our ideals.



## Achieving our vision will result in Abri Octavia becoming a top 5 housing association

In pursuit of its ideals, Abri Octavia must become an even stronger and more resilient organisation with highly motivated and engaged colleagues delivering sector-leading levels of customer service. This, together with a growing influence across the sector, will attract future partners and continue our growth journey.

While not chasing size or status for its own sake, it follows that successful delivery of this strategy will most likely result in Abri Octavia expanding our geography, and becoming a top five housing provider for customer service, colleague engagement and scale.



**Top 5** housing association by scale



**Top 5** for customer satisfaction



**Top 5** place to work

To be top 5, measured by housing stock and the number of new homes.

To be top 5, measured by Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

To be top 5, measured by independent, benchmarked employee engagement survey.

## A final word from the Chair of the Resident Scrutiny Group (RSG)

The RSG welcomes the ambition set out in this new corporate strategy, and its focus on delivering the very best homes and services for residents, today and tomorrow.

From a resident's perspective, this means a safe, affordable, sustainable and healthy home backed up by effective housing management and repairs services. It is particularly encouraging that this strategy seeks to provide those people who can make the biggest difference to the delivery of homes and services with the tools they need to make empowered decisions that are in the best interests of residents.

As a critical friend, the RSG will continue to provide residents with opportunities to shape what Abri Octavia does and to learn and improve based on our feedback and suggestions. Resident voice has helped shape this strategy, RSG will now hold Abri Octavia to account in its delivery, making sure that the voice of our residents is loud and clear, always.



**Andy Frost**  
Chair of the Resident Scrutiny Group



OCTAVIA Abri

[www.abri.co.uk](http://www.abri.co.uk)