



Women's  
Pioneer Housing  
Est 1920

# Corporate Plan 2023-2028

Quality homes, excellent services,  
strong foundations with residents at the heart



# Foreword



**Kim Vernau**  
Chair



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Chief Executive



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Chair of Resident Engagement and Scrutiny Panel

We are delighted to introduce Women's Pioneer Housing's Corporate Plan for 2023 – 2028. We celebrated 100 years of achievements during our last corporate plan and welcome the beginning of our second century as a housing organisation committed to addressing the inequalities faced by women seeking good quality affordable homes in London.

Despite the many changes in housing, the number of affordable homes for single women is still inadequate and our work is needed as much now as it was when we were formed in 1920. We are a developing housing association and will continue to provide new homes to meet this need. Over the next five years we intend to grow significantly, with our pioneering developments at Gunnersbury Lane in Ealing and Wood Lane in Hammersmith and Fulham.

Since our last corporate plan, there have been significant changes in housing, new legislation to improve building and fire safety, anticipated increases in consumer regulation including the introduction of tenant satisfaction measures, a pandemic and new ways of working. All these will be addressed over the next five years as we modernise our services to meet today's needs.

We are really pleased to be introducing a new mission statement, vision, values and a new look for WPH. Our longstanding logo was first introduced in 1924 and has served us well for 100 years. As we now reflect a more diverse resident group and are an established housing association, we have adopted a new logo that reflects our aspirations to continue to build homes. Our colours reflect those we first used (green and purple) and symbolise the suffrage movement that WPH was built upon.

As we entered 2023, we saw high inflation, significant increases in basics such as food and utility bills, political changes, concerns about climate change and a recognition of the need to achieve more with less funding. It is clear that the next five years will require cultural changes to meet the needs of our residents and achieve our ambitions to provide good quality services.

We are restructuring in 2023 to improve our communications and are committed to being more resident-influenced over the next five years. We will continue to find ways to make it easier for residents to speak to the right person, to see or talk to a named contact and be confident that we will put things right quickly. There will be more opportunities to contact us when things go wrong, including through digital services for some residents and telephone and face-to-face for others. We want to offer services that truly meet the diverse needs of our residents and put customers at the heart of all we do.

This may be a new look for WPH but our strong beliefs and commitment to house single women in affordable homes and desirable areas remain the same. We are an ambitious housing association and our strong partnerships are ensuring that we deliver on those ambitions. With a strong financial plan and further opportunities for growth, we are excited about our plans and hope to end 2028 having achieved all we set out to – and more.

# Mission, vision and values

## Our Vision

For all single women across London to have access to a safe, secure and affordable home.



## Our Mission

To offer single women access to safe, secure and good quality affordable homes and services that enable women to live a good quality of life. To influence other housing providers so they understand the needs of single women and offer services that meet this need.

## Our Values: As PIONEERS we

- Put our residents **1st**
- Are **O**pen, trusted and
- N**urture great relationships
- Value **E**quality, inclusivity and
- E**mpowerment
- Provide a **R**espectful and
- S**afe environment



# Our values



## **Putting our residents 1st**

Our services are designed through collaboration with our residents, and we aim to achieve excellence in all that we do, providing innovative solutions that ensure our residents are positive about living in a WPH home.



## **Open, trusted and nurture great relationships**

Our customers and partners can trust that we will do what we say we will do and feel confident when they contact us that they will receive a service that is exceptional and responsive to their needs.



## **Equality, inclusivity and empowerment**

We champion equality and diversity and in particular, the role that women's housing plays in tackling gender inequality. We work as one team and empower our teams and residents to think and do things differently in recognition of our diversity and the legacy of our founders.



## **Respectful and safe environment**

We respect each other and our residents in all our communications and deliver services and create homes in the right environment so that our residents and teams feel safe.

# Our Legacy

Women's Pioneer Housing (WPH) was formed in 1920 by a group of suffrage and housing campaigners. Along with the right to vote, they understood the importance of providing women with good quality affordable homes of their own as part of their wider fight for equality.

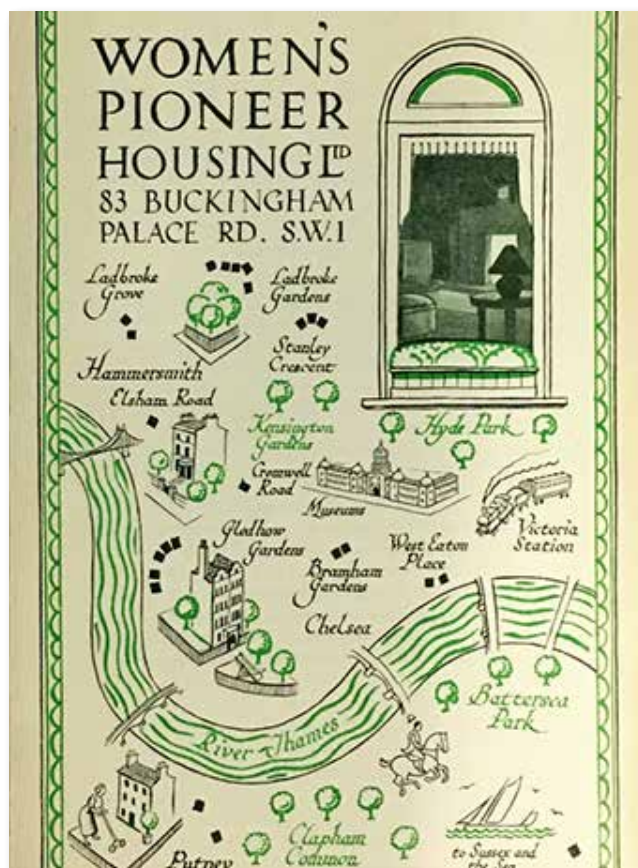
Led by Anglo-Irish suffragist Etheldred Browning, WPH was founded with the mission "to cater to the housing requirements of professional and other women of moderate means who require distinctive individual homes at moderate rents".

In the face of overwhelming demand, WPH set about tackling the lack of such housing for professional working women by buying properties in West London and developing them into flats. Within 10 years we owned 39 houses providing 313 flats, and in 1935 the organisation bought three blocks of purpose-built flats – Brook House, Nightingale House and Browning House.

Today we own around 1,000 properties in West London, including homes for general needs residents and women aged 60-plus, for affordable rent, market rent and leasehold. We also remain a leading voice for women's housing, having established in 2019 the Women's Housing Forum which we co-chair.

We are proud of WPH's long and fascinating history, our pioneering founders, inspiring early residents and the role they played in the battle for women to achieve independence in the early 20th century.

With that same pioneering spirit and passion, we now look to build on their legacy as we continue to provide much-needed quality affordable homes for women and challenge gender inequality in the 21st century.



# Today's Challenges

Our work remains as important today as when we were founded over a century ago, with women still fighting inequalities and their need for high quality affordable housing as pressing as ever.

## Women and housing

The COVID-19 pandemic and the UK's current financial crisis has had a greater impact on women than men. As well as the rise in domestic abuse during lockdown, the pandemic exacerbated existing social, economic and health inequalities – particularly for women on lower incomes and from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Women in employment were disproportionately affected by the financial damage to sectors such as hospitality, retail, leisure and personal care, which have borne the brunt of job losses. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, working mothers were also 47% more likely than fathers to have permanently lost their job or resigned as they sought to cope with home schooling and increased childcare responsibilities during lockdown.

The gender pay gap continues to widen. In 2021 the median pay gap in London was 16.19% compared to 15.39% for the UK, while women earning the median wage spend 63% of their wages on private rent compared to men's 49% spend. Women also make up a greater proportion of housing benefit claimants, restricting their access to good quality private sector housing. A recent report by the Women's Budget Group revealed that older women tend to have lower pensions and many migrant women have no recourse to public funds or housing entitlement. In addition, there is a lack of women-only housing to support more vulnerable individuals such as those experiencing domestic abuse or leaving prison.

Women still feel unsafe on some housing estates, reinforcing the need for a fresh look at how new developments are designed. This is something we champion at WPH, looking to develop homes in desirable areas and designed with women's safety in mind.



# Today's Challenges

## The wider sector

Social housing currently faces significant challenges, not least the financial crisis which is forcing many housebuilders to re-think their development plans. To tackle the climate crisis, our sector also needs to invest in ensuring all homes achieve Energy Performance Certificate 'C' rating by 2030.

There is increasing pressure to improve housing quality following a number of well-publicised cases which have highlighted the impact of poor housing on residents' health, with the tragic death of Awaab Ishak prompting particular scrutiny of how landlords deal with damp and mould.

On top of new building and fire safety regulations resulting from Dame Hackitt's review, the Better Social Housing Review has made recommendations to improve the quality of our housing, services and relationship with residents. The Housing Ombudsman continues to push for better handling of complaints and the Social Housing Bill calls for increased transparency and better resident engagement, while our regulator implements new consumer standards to drive up resident satisfaction.

We are committed to making the changes required to ensure WPH meets these challenges and, over the next five years, we aim to build on our past achievements to deliver consistently good social housing services.





# Our Achievements

We have achieved a great deal over the past five years, delivering on our last corporate plan's key objectives – particularly our aims of growing locally to provide more homes, a renewed focus on resident engagement and remaining a leading voice for women's housing.

Our successes included setting up and co-chairing the Women's Housing Forum, which raises awareness of the links between women's housing needs and gender inequality and works with partners to tackle such issues.

We were also delighted to recently recruit more resident Board members, strengthening our commitment to resident engagement and ensuring residents have an influential voice.

## New homes

We are pleased to see our development plans coming to fruition, with building work soon to start on two major schemes – Wood Lane and Brook House.



# Our Achievements



## Wood Lane

Wood Lane is a ground-breaking scheme on the site of our current offices and obsolete homes at Browning House, which is being developed in partnership with progressive developer HUB.

It will provide 60 one-bedroom homes and new purpose-built offices for WPH, along with an adjoining building designed to be an exemplar co-living scheme.

Work is due to start on site in summer 2023 and be completed by the end of 2025, with the WPH homes to be let at social and intermediate rents.

Our new offices will enable us to work more flexibly and collaboratively, so that we can offer our services in ways that better meets our residents' needs. The scheme will also consolidate our presence in an area where we have operated since the 1920s.



## Brook House

After more than 12 months of working with residents and engaging with the local community, our ambitious plans for Brook House were approved in 2022.

The development will replace 39 existing homes, which are below current space standards, with 102 apartments which will be larger, more energy efficient, better ventilated and accessible to women with restricted mobility.

We are developing this scheme in partnership with L&Q, who are securing the necessary grant funding required. Work will start on site in the latter part of 2023, with completion due by the end of 2025.

Existing residents are moving to alternative accommodation while building work takes place and will be offered the opportunity to return to the new homes once they are completed. The scheme offers a unique opportunity to provide 100% affordable accommodation, with all the homes to be let at social rent levels to single women of all ages from differing backgrounds.

Working with partners is key to realising our development ambitions. In 2022 we bought our first five Section 106 homes in Kingston upon Thames, which is a new area for WPH and includes our first shared ownership properties. This acquisition reflects our aim to diversify the tenures we offer and move into new areas.

We are currently forging relationships with developers whose schemes routinely comprise a small number of affordable homes, investigating various opportunities to provide more new homes over the next few years.

# Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028



# Our Homes

Our homes will be safe and warm in desirable neighbourhoods and built to a high standard.

We are committed to providing safe, well-maintained and energy efficient homes where our residents can flourish. To achieve this, we will invest in our existing properties as well as seeking opportunities to grow our portfolio.

Our team will work to better understand our stock and our residents' specific needs, to ensure our homes can be adapted as individuals' requirements change. Combined with measures to reduce our properties' carbon footprint, this will make our homes fit for purpose now and into the future.

- We will provide safe, well-maintained and compliant homes that reflect our unique aims and objectives.
- We will create vibrant, clean, sustainable and safe communal spaces, which our residents can be proud of.
- We will seek out and respond to opportunities where we can grow, working through partnerships and in communities where single women can thrive.
- We will develop modern, future-proof homes that help to meet the aspirations of single women in London and enable women to achieve a good quality of life.
- We will support other charities and organisations with similar values and objectives to ours.
- We will contribute towards tackling the climate crisis and reducing our carbon footprint through both our developments and maintenance of our homes.



# By the end of 2028 we will have



Developed a new home standard with residents, that represents value for money



Carried out a stock condition survey and implemented improvements to 100% of homes



Achieved upper quartile satisfaction with the home being safe and in good repair



Ensured our homes are fit for purpose, with building and fire safety prioritised



Achieved upper quartile satisfaction that our neighbourhoods are good places to live



Demonstrated a reduction in the average carbon emissions of our homes



Fully implemented our Environmental Strategy



Achieved a 10% growth in our affordable housing for single women portfolio



# Our Services

Our services will be excellent, delivered professionally and designed to meet the needs of single women.

We want our residents to be happy with our services, have a strong voice and work with us to ensure we meet their diverse needs. Our team will get to know our residents well, listen to what they have to say and encourage more people to get involved in shaping our services.

To make sure residents get the care and support they need as their circumstances change, we will also work with partner organisations to enhance our service offer.

- We will deliver excellent services with resident satisfaction our priority.
- Our services will adapt to reflect the diverse needs of our residents, prioritising single women.
- We will forge strong partnerships that expand our service.
- We will be clear about our service offer and work with residents to ensure our services empower women to live independent lives.
- We will know our residents, their community and their views and use this information to deliver our excellent services.
- We will demonstrate a legacy of leading on women's issues across the sector and influence larger registered providers to establish similar focus.



# By the end of 2028 we will have

- ✓ Reasonable adjustments to be made in our services and communications to accommodate disabilities and language needs
- ✓ Become a dementia-friendly organisation
- ✓ Adjusted our services to reflect the diversity of our residents
- ✓ Established fundraising activity accessing grants, donations, etc
- ✓ At least two management agreements in place that add value to our portfolio developed strong local partnerships with support agencies that customer-facing staff are knowledgeable about and utilise
- ✓ A clear service offer supported by clear published policies
- ✓ Created and implemented a comprehensive resident engagement offer that is well managed and not secondary to other business activities
- ✓ Been able to show demonstrable change as a result of promoting the difficulties faced by single women seeking affordable, good quality housing



# Our Organisation

**Our organisation will be financially robust, well governed with a culture that values people who are passionate about doing a great job.**

In such a challenging economic climate, financial strength is fundamental to achieving our corporate aims, managing our growth and adapting to new legislative and regulatory requirements.

For our organisation to thrive, we must also have a committed and professional team. So we will create a framework for staff recruitment and development, while nurturing a culture where our people feel empowered and accountable.

We will also ensure we have excellent IT systems which can support modern services and allow us to capture, hold and analyse data effectively. This will help us improve our knowledge about our residents and homes, so we can make more informed business decisions.

- Our governance will remain strong and we expect to achieve G1/V1/C1 status by the end of 2027, giving confidence to the regulator and funders.
- We will develop an organisational structure that reflects modern professional housing services and gives our residents, partners and stakeholders confidence.
- We will continue to ensure we are financially robust and consider seeking out opportunities that strengthen our financial plans.
- We will use our values to create a culture where our people share a common purpose, are engaged, empowered and able to thrive in a diverse and inclusive environment.
- We will have IT systems that support growth and the delivery of excellent services.
- We will be strongly influenced by our residents who will be encouraged and supported to work alongside WPH to build an organisational culture of professionalism, responsiveness and value for money.



# By the end of 2028 we will



Be compliant with the regulatory standards and able to demonstrate we meet the requirements of a G1/V1 organisation



Have an organisational structure that can properly deliver services that meet the needs of residents and enables growth



Be recruiting and training staff to a professional level, evidenced through appropriate qualifications and staff effectiveness



Have achieved Investors in People silver accreditation (or similar)



Have excellent core IT systems and suitable support systems



Have captured and hold accurate data and have a data management approach that accurately informs our work



Have developed an aspirational people plan – Our People Strategy – which will achieve organisation-wide alignment with our goals, our mission and our vision



Have financial depth that enables us to grow and develop our properties



Have the appropriate finance arrangements in place to meet our energy efficiency investment



# Residents at the Heart

Our residents remain the focus of everything we do. Here are some comments from residents about WPH's homes and services.



"I think the homes they lease are safe. It's good to know that most of the tenants are women and I feel quite safe."

"They offer security and opportunities for women, and help me to keep up with my career. They give women the opportunity to live in a safe, warm and clean environment."

"They provide homes that are well maintained and offer safety and security of the homes for tenants."

"I like the service and staff, they are always helpful and I like that I feel secure and safe."

"They provide a good standard of homes to live in and they're willing to listen to your concerns."



"I think they care about their residents. I like that it is a smaller organisation and we can actually talk to people. We are able to talk to the same person and I know most of them by name, which is good."

"I like the fact that it's secure and safe. I pay below-market rent and can actually speak to someone to get any problems resolved quickly."

"I like the fact I have a lovely big studio flat with bay windows and a nice view, and on the ground floor a lovely garden in the back, and I've made friends with four other tenants."

"I have been there for 36-37 years now and we are looked after very properly – we are upgraded when we need to be with safety."



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