



Mobilising a new wholly-owned subsidiary

Creating a collaborative culture



Our commission

To repurchase an outsourced contract to deliver repairs and maintenance services on behalf of Riverside for its properties in southern and central England.

Client: Riverside

Riverside is a major provider of affordable housing, care and support services in England and Scotland. It works across over 160 local authorities, managing almost 56,000 homes. Its vision is to transform the lives of its 90,000 plus residents and to revitalise the neighbourhoods in which they live.



Project overview

A detailed analysis of the existing service was undertaken by echelon and workshops were held for residents and key operational staff across the Riverside business to establish the key drivers for service delivery in the future.

The outcome was that while the outsourced contracts were delivering a good service, it was felt that they were detached from the rest of the business.

The key driver was to create a service covering central and southern England that looked and felt like it was part of Riverside rather than a separate entity, emulating the ethos and culture of its in-house contractor which delivers repairs and maintenance services in the north of England.

Following a comprehensive review of Riverside's repairs and maintenance services, a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS) model was decided upon. It would include personnel from a contractor and Riverside and the idea was to create a unified ethos to deliver services, bringing together the best of both organisations.

A competitive dialogue process introduced bidders to Riverside's culture and enabled discussion around how the new contract would be embedded within the business to deliver a seamless service.



It explored how IT would be used for the delivery of the service and how data could be collected and analysed to form future investment and improvement plans and to help Riverside use its budget more intelligently. It also explored how the chosen contractor could work with Riverside to deliver meaningful social value through the WOS.

A Price Per Property model was also decided upon after Riverside was able to see it in action during a visit to a former echelon client. Under the model, the contractor is paid an annual fixed sum per property, making it more economical to follow a planned programme of repairs, grouping together visits in the same area, and completing multiple repairs while on site. This is particularly beneficial to Riverside, which has a wide geographical spread, as it reduces the amount of time that operatives spend travelling.



"echelon provided a vast amount of resource including relevant experience, and commitment to our project team which allowed us to meet a tight timescale for implementation, whilst building strong relationships with our contractor partner"

Phil Pemberton
Director of Asset Strategy and Delivery
Riverside



The solution

The creation of Riverside Direct, a wholly-owned subsidiary, to deliver repairs and maintenance services in central and southern England. Although delivered by an external contractor, the model is designed to look and feel very much like an in-house contractor, with all services delivered under the Riverside Direct brand.

Mears emerged from the competitive dialogue process as the preferred partner and was appointed to manage the delivery of repairs and maintenance services in central and southern England, through Riverside Direct.

echelon held a one-day culture and values workshop with employees from both organisations to create a common shared ethos and a set of shared values for the new organisation. Participants worked in groups looking at the existing cultures within Riverside and Mears, covering positive behaviours and attitudes, as well as highlighting areas for improvement.

They used this to start to shape a new, common culture for Riverside Direct, outlining their aspirations around values and behaviours, as well as identifying hard objectives around service-related targets, such as customer satisfaction.

A mobilisation manager was appointed by echelon to ensure that the tight timeframe for implementation of the new WOS was met. She was based at Riverside three days a week for four months and led on the demobilisation of existing contracts, as well as co-ordinating the mobilisation of the wholly-owned subsidiary and drawing up and managing a task timeline.

The mobilisation manager acted as an intermediary between the client and contractor, supporting them to develop strong working relationships, ensuring communication and information sharing between the two parties and helping to align systems and processes.

A shared IT platform enabled the dissemination of information between contractor and client, as well as notifying individuals about tasks for completion and all non-Riverside staff were trained in the use of its systems.

Monthly Mobilisation Core Group meetings were co-ordinated by the mobilisation manager to give updates on progress and to ensure that both parties were on track. She also facilitated sub groups covering areas such as finance, commercial, IT and operations.



Key outcomes

Riverside Direct went live in July 2018, delivering services to almost 12,000 homes across more than 100 local authorities in central and southern England. It provides a wide range of services, including reactive repairs and maintenance, planned works, repairs and maintenance under the Property MOT programme, gas servicing and installation and a 24-hour out of hours service.

Riverside's vision is to transform the lives of its 90,000 plus residents and to revitalise the neighbourhoods in which they live.

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