



Housing
Solutions

Annual Report

To Residents 2019-2020

For the year 1 April 2019
to 31 March 2020

About us

Our Core Purpose

To meet local affordable housing needs by creating homes and places where residents are safe and proud of where they live.

Our Values



Ownership



Innovation



Teamwork



Inclusion





Welcome

2019/20 will surely stand out in our minds for many reasons. Having hoped to enjoy celebrations marking Housing Solutions' 25th anniversary with our residents in 2020, Covid-19 arrived.

I would like to thank you for working with us through these past challenging months, as we strive to keep everyone safe while still maintaining vital services.

We have worked with our partners to support you as best we can, from delivering food and other essentials to ensuring you get any extra care you may need.

Bearing in mind the economic impact of the pandemic, we are also assisting people who have lost their jobs, have seen their working hours cut or face an uncertain employment future.

Such a crisis reminds us of the importance of what we do, providing safe and comfortable affordable homes for those who need them most.

So I am pleased that, in 2019/20, we smashed our development programme target by building over 200 new affordable homes.

We also continued investing in 'green' technology in our properties to save energy, cut fuel bills and reduce their carbon footprint.

As part of ongoing work to improve our services, we are embracing digital innovation to make our residents' lives easier and boost the efficiency of our business.

This certainly paid off when the first national lockdown was announced, enabling us to move quickly to remote working.

As we look ahead, I want to assure you that we remain committed to our residents and our communities – and will rise to whatever fresh challenges the future may bring.

In conclusion I would like to thank all our residents for their feedback, we always value your input as well as all our staff who have worked incredibly hard. I do hope you have found this report informative and helpful. I have no doubt it's going to be another demanding and unpredictable year, but we've seen how our closely-knit team are committed to our communities and residents, and that's why we'll rise to any challenge that comes our way.



**Orla
Gallagher**
Chief
Executive

Our homes

We are dedicated to providing safe, comfortable, affordable homes. Over the last few years we have also invested in making our homes as energy efficient as possible, for the benefit of residents and the planet.

This has included installing new windows, doors and heating systems on many of our properties.



We own and manage and maintain

7,306
homes.



100%
of them meet the
Decent Homes
Standard



100%
have a gas safety
certificate



In 2019/20, we invested...



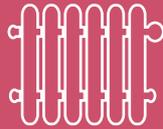
£27m
in building
203
new homes



£7.1m
repairing,
maintaining and
improving homes



£1m
on new roofs



£400,000
on upgrading
heating systems



£1m
on fire safety
measures



£242,000
on new windows
and doors, boosting
our homes' energy
efficiency

BB

I was very pleased
with the service and
you did a brilliant job.



Breathing new life into communities

Members of the community gathered to celebrate the grand opening of Brill House, in Cox Green, in May 2019.

We redeveloped a former over 55s sheltered housing scheme to deliver a scheme comprising seven houses (two for shared ownership, five for social rent) and a two-storey block of 11 flats for social rent.

Part of the newly built block now houses former residents of Mokattam Care Home.

Supporting residents

Our teams run a range of initiatives to support our tenants, from welfare benefits advice to projects boosting people's employment prospects.

During this year's Covid-19 pandemic we provided extra assistance, particularly for our most vulnerable residents. We have worked with local charities to ensure they have enough food, medicine and any other help they need.

In 2019/20



We generated over
£826,000
of social value for
our communities



Our Welfare and
Support Team helped
over
840
residents to access an
extra
£195,000
of income





Going the extra mile

In 2019, we co-funded Strive, a 12-week training programme for budding entrepreneurs including some of our residents.

We organised a host of activities throughout the year at our sheltered and extra care schemes. In 2019/20, this included 'fish and chip Fridays', afternoon tea at local hotels, garden centre trips, a summer garden party, Christmas party, quizzes and coffee mornings.

Since this year's first lockdown, events have obviously been limited but we have continued to run stimulating activities appropriate to our residents' needs.



BB

The HS staff deserve a clap. If it wasn't for people like you continuing your services, and being there when we really need it, I would be totally lost.

During the coronavirus crisis, we have



Offered support to over

95%
of tenants



Reached out with over

30,000
communications (email, text and post) to tenants



Phoned over

900
vulnerable residents



Helped with over

300
Universal Credit applications

How are we doing?

We strive to ensure our residents are happy with our homes and services.
We welcome your feedback, so we can constantly work to improve our performance.

In 2019/20:



94%

of residents were satisfied with our repairs



83%

were happy with our services



92%

said our staff were friendly and approachable



I have always received nothing but good customer service. I feel that you always look out for your residents

We have:



Carried out
17,159
routine repairs



Completed over
96%
of emergency
repairs within
four hours



Received
139
compliments



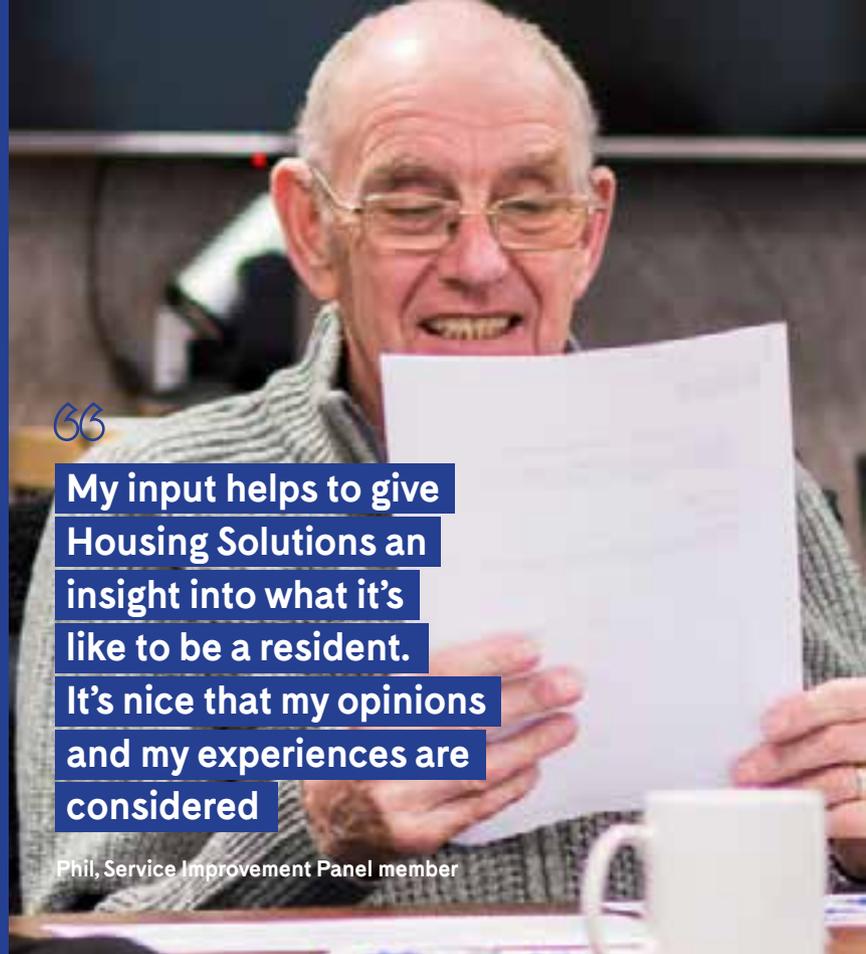
Dealt with
72,207
enquiries in our
Contact Centre



Completed over
88%
of all repairs on our
first visit



Handled
194
formal complaints



My input helps to give Housing Solutions an insight into what it's like to be a resident. It's nice that my opinions and my experiences are considered

Phil, Service Improvement Panel member

Listening to you

A total of 80 colleagues took to the streets in June 2019 for our 'Getting to Know You' event, visiting 1,750 residents to chat about their experiences of our services.

In 2019 we also conducted a 'Have Your Say' survey to gather your views. You told us there was scope for improvement in some areas, including how we handle anti-social behaviour reporting and ways we can improve neighbourhood satisfaction.

We have taken your comments on board and are using them to enhance our frontline services.

Let's get digital!

More and more residents are embracing the opportunities of the digital age, and we are doing our best to support them to get online.

In 2019/20:



42%

of residents had signed up to our online customer portal



£1.8m

of rent was paid through the portal



We doubled Wi-Fi access for our tenants, with

800

households now connected to our network

Making life easier

Over 100 residents took part in a free 10-week trial of the Housing Solutions Alexa Skill, as we explored how this virtual assistant might help you to access our services.

We gave each of them a new Amazon Echo Dot in October 2019, asking them to use it as their main form of communication with us. Their feedback will inform our future digital plans.

Here are some of your comments:



“Sometimes picking up the phone is awkward when cooking dinner or the children are running around the house, so the Alexa makes it really easy to connect with Housing Solutions to book appointments or check rent statements.”



“I do like the Alexa and I use it every day. I have it in my kitchen so I can play music whilst cooking, and it makes checking my rent balance easy!”

Money matters

We pride ourselves on running our organisation efficiently, managing our money well and making the best use of our resources.

In 2019/20, we:

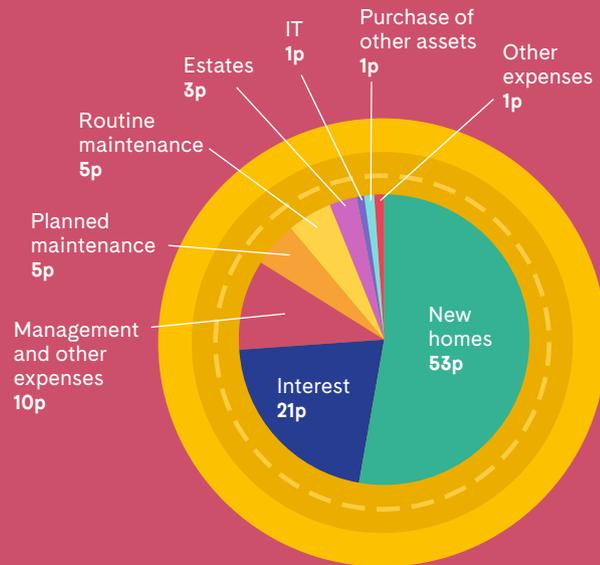
Achieved the top **G1/V1** rating for governance and financial viability with the Regulator of Social Housing

Saved over **£217,000** by maximising value for money in areas ranging from routine redecoration to kitchen and bathroom replacement

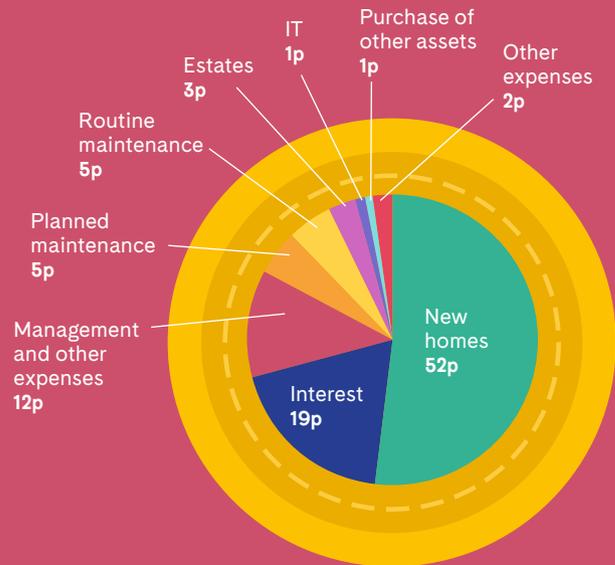
Had **2.88%** rent arrears at 31 March 2020

Maintained our **A+** credit rating with Standard & Poor's, reflecting our strong financial position

What we spent each £1 on
In 2018/19



What we spent each £1 on
In 2019/20





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Crown Square
Waldeck Road
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 8BY

Tel: 01628 543101
Email: contact@housingsolutions.co.uk
Web: www.housingsolutions.co.uk

