



Customer Annual Report
2020/2021

midland
heart



INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on a year in a pandemic



Over the past year we've all spent more time at home than ever before, they became our gyms, offices and schools. Despite the challenges we've been busy making sure that our homes remained comfortable and safe and that our services were still there for those who needed them.

Our customers and colleagues safety has always been and will always be our number one priority. This year, like all other organisations, we've made changes to the way we do things to make sure that everyone stayed safe and well. We worked quickly to put the right measures in place to maintain 14-day repairs, invest over £20million on new kitchens and bathrooms, and ensure none of our colleagues faced the uncertainty of furlough. I am proud to say that over 99% of customers said that their work had been undertaken in a way that made them feel safe and was in line with Covid secure guidelines.

During the year we've seen a record level of contact to our customer hub and held over 1,300 money advice meetings. Whether your home has been your office, gym or nursery we know how important it is to you and our colleagues have gone the extra mile, many of them working from home in challenging circumstances. I'm really pleased to see that we've been able to maintain our 90% customer satisfaction score.

Your feedback is so important to how we shape our services and so it was vital that we found new ways to do this. I was so pleased to hear about the online meetings that you've been taking part in on MS Teams, the telephone interviews and surveys. Great examples of your continued dedication and adaptability during a difficult time, thank you.

We're moving forward together in a strong position despite the challenges we've faced in the past year. I'm really looking forward to working with you to continue this great work and I'd encourage everyone to find out more about how to get involved in shaping our services.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Harris'.

Glenn Harris MBE
Chief Executive



Getting to KNOW US

34,000

Homes
managed



1,078

Local people
employed



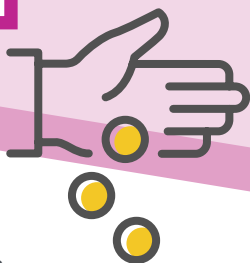
70,000

Customers
living in our
homes



1,385

Customers
accessed
money advice



90%

Satisfaction
with our service



91%

Satisfied with our
repairs service



350

New
homes built



10,187

Customers
using the app



MY VOICE

Telling us what you think...



Last year we couldn't meet with you in person to get your feedback because of the pandemic but we've been so pleased to see a record number of you get involved in our new virtual meetings.

Everyone has been flexible and keen to work with us through a difficult and unprecedented time to keep our engagement activity going. I was really impressed with the meetings you've taken part in virtually - thank you!



David Taylor,
Executive Director of Operations



10,966

Phone interviews



169

Scheme based phone surveys



26

Surveys



3,287

Survey responses



64

Customer meetings



49

Estate Inspections

Carol Isted tells us what its like to be an involved customer:

//

Covid-19 and the lockdown gave me the opportunity to join the Customer Scrutiny meetings on Microsoft Teams as i'd not been able to attend in person due to ill-health. I've met some very supportive staff members and residents and I feel that my thoughts and comments have been valued.

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To make sure our customers get their voice heard, we're supporting the National Housing Federation's (NHF) 'Together with Tenants' initiative. The NHF launched this programme to help strengthen the relationship between residents and housing association landlords. They want to transform the balance of power between tenants and landlords – giving residents a stronger collective voice to make positive changes in the sector.



Lisa, a customer who attended one of the NHFs webinars on Together with Tenants, told us:

//

I wanted to find out how we can influence change to make sure everyone can have their voice heard. We need to look at the customer journey and see how we can get the voice of as many customers as possible to make sure everyone can give their feedback. It's important we all work together.

//

How we can **IMPROVE**



Government and the Regulator for Social Housing are clear that they want to increase transparency in our sector and review the way our performance is measured. We'll be asking for your feedback lots in the coming months to help us to understand what matters most to you, what performance measures you'd like to see and how you'd like to receive this information.

Watch out for more soon!

When things don't go to plan



It's important to us that you've got a clear route to raise your concerns and get them resolved quickly.

Your feedback helps us to keep improving our service to you.

246

Total complaints
(190 2019/20)

67%

Complaints upheld
(73% 19/20)

7.4

Complaints
per 1000 properties
(6 2019/20)

The main reasons you said you were unhappy and raised a complaint were:

**Because of the way we'd
communicated with you**
(32.1%)

**Because a repair had been
delayed or not completed**
(27.7%)

Last year our Customer Scrutiny Panel surveyed over 200 customers and reviewed over 2,500 complaints to understand how we could improve our services following a complaint. The customer panel felt reassured that we use the feedback you've given to us when you make a complaint.

How we can **IMPROVE**



We're working hard to develop our internal app to give our teams access to systems when and where they need it. This will help us to record your feedback and work on your case while we're with you, rather than having to do things 'back at the office'.

You've told us that we need to make sure that we're communicating with you in the right way and at the right time. So, we're also going to be looking at our internal repairs processes and using your feedback to improve the way we communicate with you during your repair.



Domestic Abuse and safeguarding

As a landlord, we can play a part in helping to tackle abuse and exploitation. We're proud to have been awarded our Make a Stand certificate – **a national campaign** which recognises organisations that provide support for people experiencing domestic abuse.

Housing associations are well placed to help recognise and support victims of domestic abuse and work together with local authorities and specialist support agencies. We've made a promise to meet the campaign's four commitments. Find out what they are by taking a look at [our website](#).

How we can **IMPROVE**



We don't publish a policy on tackling domestic abuse so we're reviewing this recommendation from the regulator of social housing and will publish ours on our website.

INVESTING IN HOMES

Repairs to your home

The pandemic made it very difficult to complete repairs and maintenance to your homes as the safety of our customers and colleagues was in the front of our minds. Despite the obvious challenges the pandemic presented to doing work within our homes, we've been able to maintain customer satisfaction with repairs and completed 60% of them within 14 days.

We've supported training for our Customer Hub to help our team diagnose the problems you report to us so that we can get things fixed right first time.

Throughout COVID-19 Government restrictions, 98% of you told us that our teams kept to social distancing rules. We also started calling you before a visit to make sure you weren't poorly with the virus.

£22.2m

Invested in
our homes

90.5%

Repairs
satisfaction

83%

Repairs completed
first time

60%

Repairs completed by
our in-house team were
completed in 14-days

Upgrades

386 Bathrooms

175 Windows

488 Kitchens

109 Roofs

How we can **IMPROVE**



We want to be sure that you receive the same brilliant service from us regardless of the area you live in. So, from August 2021 our In-House Maintenance Team (IHMT) will be taking over the repairs contract from Fortem. You can find out more about what this means for you [here](#).





Decorating your new home

When you move into one of our homes, we'll offer you a voucher to help you decorate. We asked for your feedback on this voucher and you told us that it doesn't always work for you.

As an alternative, we trialled decoration packs, to give you paint and decorating tools instead. While Customer feedback told us that receiving a pack in the post was more convenient, you felt you had less choice of colours and delivery sometimes took too long.

It made sense to trial something different, but feedback was clear: we should keep the voucher scheme. We're now working with the provider to see how we can get better value for money.



Aids and adaptations

Adaptations: 64

Total spend: £74,104.60

We've been working with local authorities to access Disability Facilities Grant to help you get grab rails, handrails, over bath showers and low and level access shower cubicles to make a real difference to customers.

Doing our bit to tackle climate change

When we asked you about environmental issues you told us you wanted to understand the energy efficiency of your homes.

In 2020/21 we started working with a group of customers to try out some new energy-saving technologies in their homes. We met with them before any work was done to their home to understand their lifestyle and what new technologies might work for them.

We've worked with our specialist green energy supplier to produce an information pack to support those customers and we'll meet with them regularly to see how they're getting on. This will help shape our future plans to improve the energy efficiency of all of our homes.

How we can **IMPROVE**



We're working hard as a business to understand what changes we need to make to reduce our carbon emissions. As part of our annual report, we'd like to set you a challenge. To think about the ways that we can all be a little kinder to the environment. There are lots of ways that you can do this, find out more **here**.

SERVICE FIRST

Contacting us

During the pandemic we saw record levels of contact to our customer hub.

Our teams worked from home to make sure they were as safe as possible. The actions we took meant that we were able to maintain vital services during the pandemic and get back to delivering our normal service quickly.



@ E-mail **68,478**

👤 Face-to-face **49**

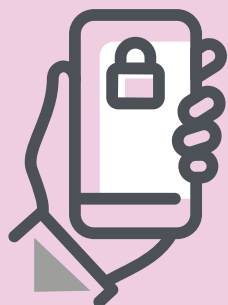
✉ Letter **186**

📞 Phone calls **177,686**

📱 Social media **2,820**

🌐 Web interaction **69**

Total
249,288



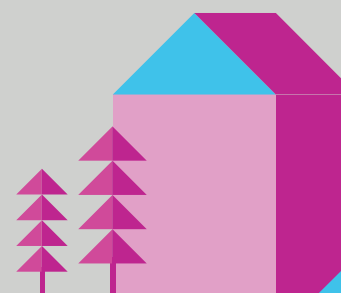
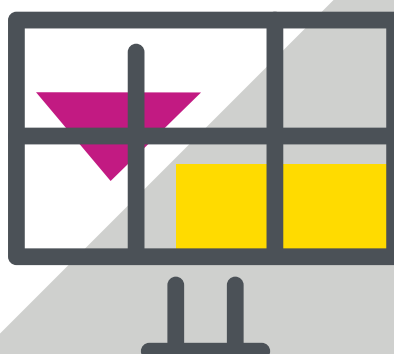
10,187

registered users on
our app by the end
of March 2021

To help us understand a bit more about how you'd like to contact us we asked you to complete a digital survey. 85% (78) of you told us you use a digital device to contact us. 63% (61) of you told us that you'd downloaded the app and found it easy to use.

We've invited the customers who took part in our digital survey to join a regular communication working group. They plan to meet every six weeks to give feedback on developments to our digital channels.

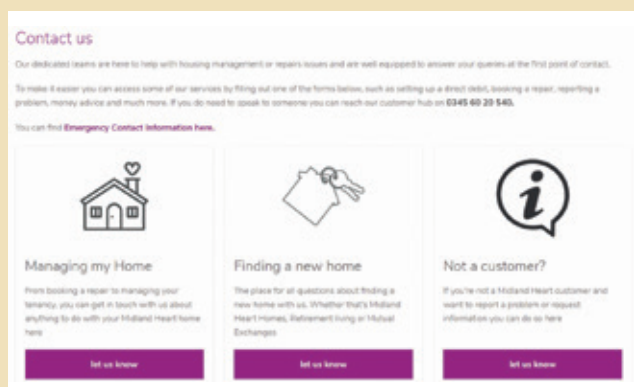
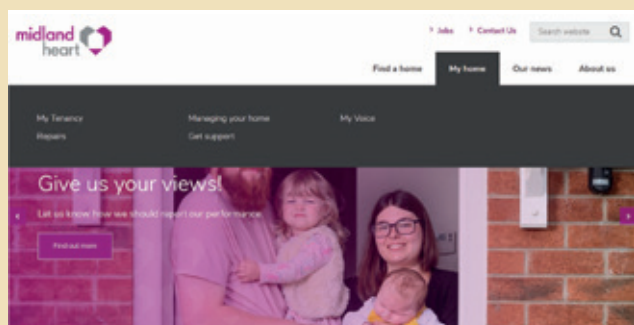
This feedback will help us to develop our digital offer and give you the ability to report your repairs online by Spring 2022.



Customer website review

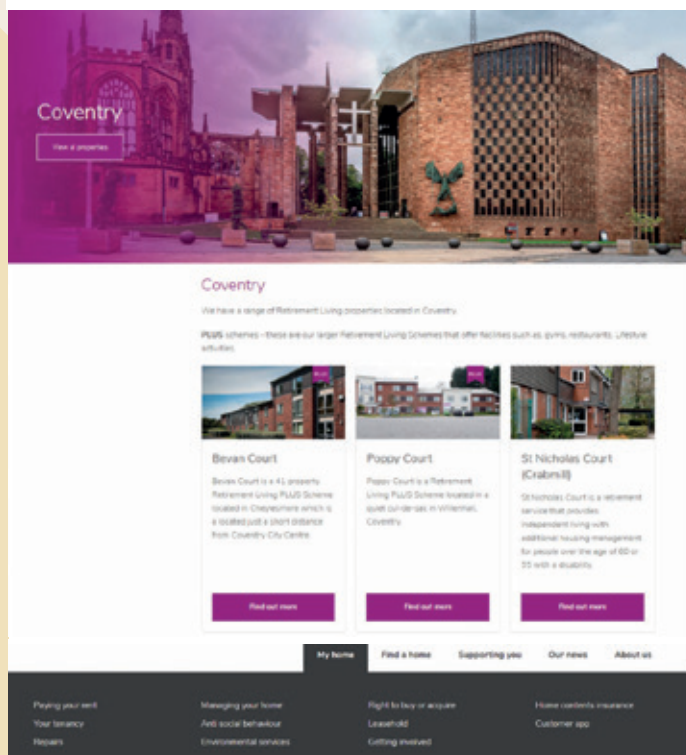
Last year we reviewed our customer website to see how we could make it better for you.

Through our digital survey you told us that 31% (30) of you only used the site monthly. You told us that you needed more options to resolve your query online and that we needed to make it easier to find information.



As a result of this review we have:

- Updated the current sitemap deleting out of date and unnecessary pages
- Redesigned our online webforms giving you a more simplified user journey
- Removed jargon from our website and made it easier for everyone to use



How we can IMPROVE



76% of you told us you'd be likely to use our app more frequently if you could report repairs. You also told us you'd like the ability to upload photos of issues. We're excited to let you know that you'll have the ability to report repairs on our app in Spring 2022.

Using your feedback, we've also reviewed our customer service strategy and had Board approval to progress some exciting changes to the way we work. We'll start by looking at the customer journey through our repairs process and how we can make this work better for you. **Watch out for more coming soon!**

Housing management



We understand how much our services matter to you, and we hold ourselves and our partners to high standards. Our teams go the extra mile to find out what we can do to improve our homes and your experience living in them.

BEFORE



AFTER



We're doing a wide range of improvements to blocks that have been troubled by high levels of crime and ASB. We want to help you feel at home, improve safety and security and address any ongoing issues. Last year we completed upgrades to 30 properties spending c£1m.

Improvements we've made to communal spaces include:

- new door entry systems
- new lighting or flooring
- CCTV
- working in partnership with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour
- increasing patrols by staff or Safetynet



Antisocial behaviour

Antisocial behaviour can have a really negative impact on our communities. It's a nuisance and can lead to neighbours not feeling safe or happy in their homes. Through partnership working we've been able to tackle ASB and make a real difference to you.

Last year, you told us that noise nuisance queries were taking too long to resolve. To help with this issue we've been encouraging more customers to use **the noise app**. Where you've got evidence as soon as noise nuisance happens, we've been able to act quicker and you've been more satisfied with our service.



Julie and Lynsey's story*

We're proud that our teams use restorative justice (RJ) to support our residents to resolve neighbour disputes. RJ brings people together in the same room to have an open and honest conversation.

Julie lived in a block of flats and had made complaints about noise nuisance from her neighbour Lynsey who lives upstairs and has two young children. Before Lynsey had children both neighbours got on fine but as her youngest son got older and started walking, the noise started to become an issue for Julie.

Julie complained that they would run and tumble around in the flat day and night. The noise was having a big impact on Julie's life and meant that she would spend time in her bedroom to avoid noise in the living room.

Lynsey had bought rugs, tried to keep the kids in the bedroom early in the morning and stayed out as late as possible to give Julie a break from the children. She felt that although she tried, she was still getting complaints. She also said that she suspected that her son has autism, and this was another reason for the noise along with the floorboards being very squeaky.

During the RJ conference, Julie explained how the noise had been affecting her and the fact that she has a 20-year-old son who's autistic and that disturbed sleep negatively affects his behaviour. She told Lynsey she could relate with issues she's having trying to access support for her son without a diagnosis.

Julie began to give Lynsey advice and told her that she can come to her any time. They discussed where in the house the noise was worst and the layout of the flat. They realised that the layout was not as they'd thought and so some of what Lynsey had been doing was making the situation worse.

During the meeting they both agreed some actions that they were happy with. As they left the meeting room Julie offered Lynsey a lift home and they joked about taking trips out together!

*The names of these individuals have been changed to protect their identity. The RJ conference allowed the residents to share an understanding of each other's situations that isn't possible without having an open conversation face to face. A great outcome for all involved.

Communal services

Last year you gave us our highest ever satisfaction ratings for communal services.

During the year we relaunched our Estate Champions scheme to empower you to **see it, report it and stop it in your area**. Our grounds maintenance contractors can now take photographs before and after their work, so we don't have to go out to respond to customer queries. Making it faster for us to respond to your questions and easier for us to pick up and correct a drop in your services.

How we can **IMPROVE**



We're going to install new notice boards in all our blocks so that our Estates Officers and Rangers can share useful updates with you during their monthly visits.

You can view our updated **environmental services guide on our website**.

Our money advice service

Last year every customer who used our money advice service got the support that they needed to continue with their tenancy.



900



face-to-face appointments



485

advice sessions
over the phone

The team supported customers to get access:

- **£1,545,470.17** in income maximisation
- **£540,496.06** in Universal Credit
- **£116,311.47** in Discretionary Housing Payments
- **£302,108.13** Housing Benefit
- **£23,588.90** in Attendance Allowance

It might be useful to know that the money advice team can also **support with food vouchers** and **emergency fuel top ups**.

Visit www.midlandheart.org.uk/moneyhelp if you need support.



Retirement Living

After a year working with Covid-19 restrictions we asked for your feedback to see how you thought we'd responded to the pandemic. Overall, your feedback was positive. You told us that you felt we responded well to Covid-19 restrictions to support customers to be safe in their homes.

You told us:

- You've been communicated with well throughout each lockdown
- Changes to services like meal deliveries worked well
- More technology has been used than ever before
- We need to capture your feedback locally to make sure communication is consistent

Helping you to manage your money

We want to make it easier and safer for you to pay for the services you receive from us. Lots of us have moved to card payments during the Covid-19 pandemic and found it more convenient. So, we've been looking into a cashless payment system for our Retirement Living services.

We spoke to 348 customers to get their feedback and found that two thirds of customers would prefer a cashless system, you said that was because it is: safer and quicker (70%) and you already use a card outside of your scheme (51%).

Retirement living refresh

You told us some of our places needed a bit of a refresh, so we're investing in them to make sure they're great places to live and somewhere families can enjoy spending time together.

The work has included upgrades to communal spaces, decorating, new furniture, new flooring among many other things. Here are some photos and feedback on our work so far.

£1.2m
spent



6

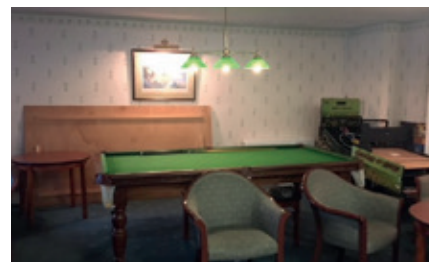
**services updated
and refreshed**

CASE STUDY

Refurb at Reginald Mitchell Court

When we started work at Reginald Mitchell Court in Stoke, you told us:

- The communal areas aren't bright and welcoming and need updating
- You'd like more furniture in communal areas
- The service feels dated



Now, six months on, Reginald Mitchell Court has been transformed. We've installed new sensor activated LED lighting throughout the scheme, communal areas are more modern with brighter colour schemes and up-to-date furniture, and what a difference it's made.

We spoke to some of our residents, to find out what they thought about the brand-new look and feel. The response has been extremely positive with the only disappointment being that they couldn't make full use of the space straight away because of the restrictions.



Feedback	Before the work	After the work
Customers who thought the communal areas were bright and welcoming	19%	81%
Residents who feel proud that Reginald Mitchell Court is their home	54%	80%



Joan, resident at Reginald Mitchell Court, Stoke

“We're very pleased with the décor, couldn't ask for a nicer place to live. Well done to all involved. Very content living at Reg Mitch.”

Catering at our larger services

Our catering teams made sure that residents had a food delivery service when our restaurants and bars were forced to close because of the pandemic.

We've also worked with you to develop new menus and updated training for our staff to improve everyone's understanding of allergens. We're all looking forward to getting our restaurants back to full service!



Keeping help on-hand

We asked you what you thought about the current arrangements with our **warden call system**. 419 of you gave your feedback and told us:

- The system is cost effective (**73%**), useful (**83%**) and easy to use (**84%**)
- You value the peace of mind this service brings.

How we can **IMPROVE**



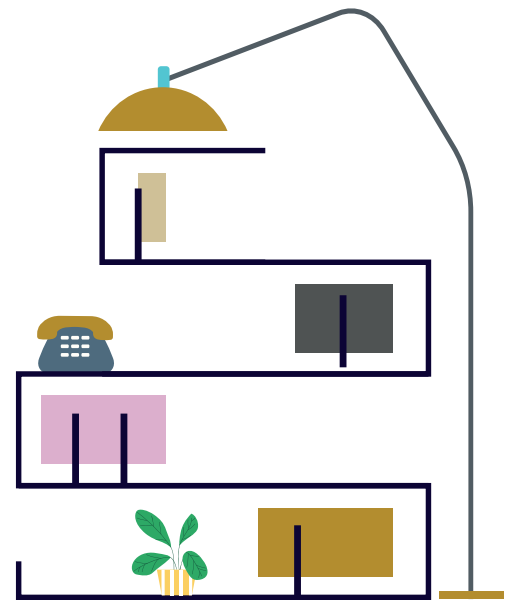
Last year we worked with you to see how diverse our services are. We wanted to understand whether our services catered to the needs of Black, Asian and minority ethnic customers and find out if they promote an inclusive culture.

Our customer panel made five recommendations which included gathering more accurate data on our customers, promote our services to local businesses and review how we market our offer.

Supported living

Last year we worked with 326 new customers to provide support and help them prepare for independent living.

To do this we launched our new independent living workbook with 10 modules. Each module supports our customers to develop the skills they need to live independently such as: maintaining a healthy diet and exercise, managing a budget and paying rent and charges.



How we can **IMPROVE**



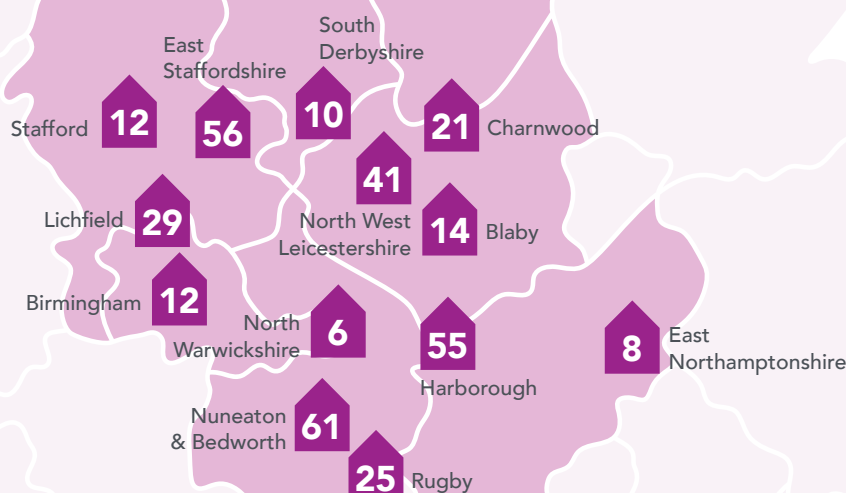
In supported living our customers have told us that one of their challenges is accessing the internet at an affordable price and the fact they often run out of data during the month. This makes it difficult for them to access online services, such as applying for jobs, benefit applications and accessing long-term accommodation.

We've worked with these customers to understand how they want to access the Internet and what would be affordable for them. Most of our customers said that if we provided Wi-Fi access, they would use it so we're now in the process of installing this in our supported living services.

GROWTH AND PARTNERSHIPS

Building new affordable homes

The Midlands needs more affordable homes and we're playing our part to build as many as we can over the next five years.



4,000

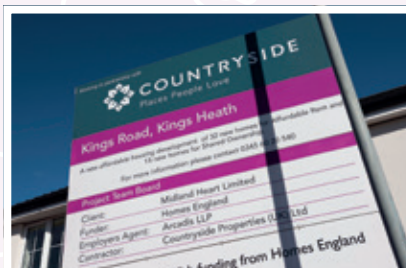
new homes
2019 – 2025

2,270

started building or
completed

350

homes completed
2020-2021



Sharing the cost of buying your first home

We support those who want to own their own home. Shared Ownership allows you to buy a share in a property at a price you can afford - usually between 50% and 75%.

153 of you took your first step on the property ladder by sharing the initial cost of buying your home with us. You can find out more about our shared ownership offer on our [website](#).

SAFE AND STRONG

We're committed to staying financially strong, investing the money that we make in our new and existing properties.

In 2020/2021 we had a turnover of £195.7m.

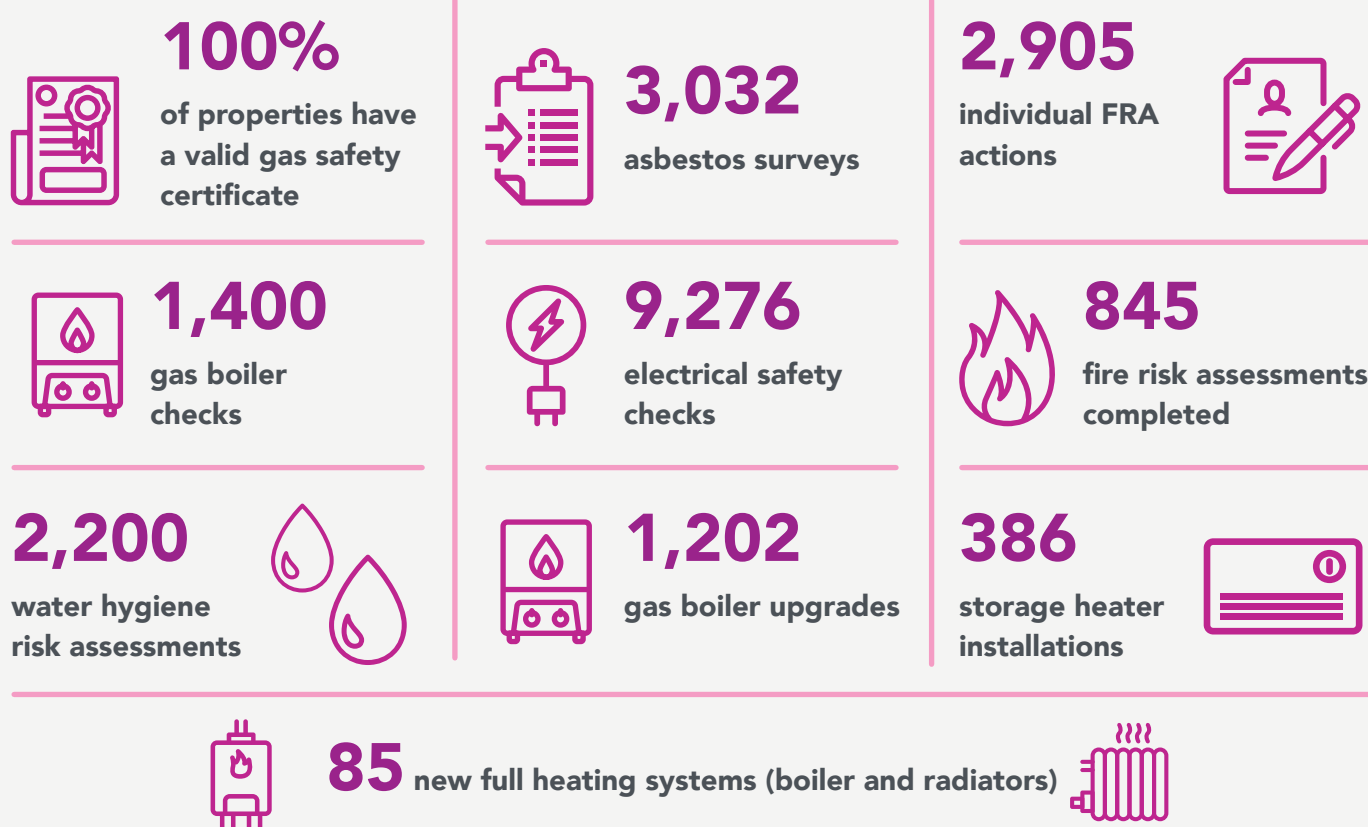
We achieved the highest score possible from The Regulator of Social Housing: **G1/V1 rating**. This means we're well run and a strong organisation, which will help us achieve our future plans.

Keeping you safe

Your safety is our number one priority so last year we opened a survey to help us understand what you'd like to know about how we keep your building safe.

We had 444 responses and you told us you'd like to know more about the work we'll do after you've raised a safety concern about things like gas, electric and security matters.

You also told us you'd like to receive updates via text message or an e-newsletter. We've used this feedback to help shape our building safety engagement plan which will be shared on our website. It sets out how we'll communicate about safety matters and has lots of other useful information about keeping you and your building safe.



Making your homes even safer

We've been working in partnership with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service to make high-rise properties safer and protect residents from domestic fires. As part of this work we're planning to retrospectively fit sprinklers into Charnwood House in Lichfield and several of our retirement living services.

Although these buildings already meet the current fire safety regulations we've identified that sprinklers could offer even more protection to our residents in the event of a fire.



CASE STUDY

Sara Turrell

Sara, 36, is a mother-of-two and has osteoarthritis in her right hip which affects her mobility. She has lived in her third-floor flat at Charnwood House with her 15-year-old son and nine-year-old daughter for three years.

Sara said: "Before we were given the option, I would worry about how long it takes me to get up and down the stairs and encouraging the children to go down, but now I know there is going to be an extra barrier between us and any fire – I feel a lot safer.

"Since (the) Grenfell (fire), we as a family have got a fire plan and the children know what to do, but the sprinklers will make it even safer, along with the fire doors everywhere.

"I didn't hesitate to agree to have them fitted – it makes me feel so much safer knowing that there will be another line of defence against fire, to protect myself and my children."

// Having the option of having sprinklers fitted has made me feel a lot better about what could happen if there was fire. //

Value for money

As a profit for purpose organisation, every £1 that is paid to us in rent is reinvested into our homes and the things that matter most to you.



Income	2020/21 £'000	
Rent	140,274	79%
Service charge	25,016	14%
Supporting people	12,743	18%
TOTAL	178.033	

Costs	2020/21 £'000	
Managing your home	28,677	19%
Looking after your scheme and neighbourhood	26,029	17%
Supporting people	7,485	5%
Repairs and planned investment	55,628	36%
Major repairs	8,035	5%
Loan costs for new developments	27,995	18%
TOTAL	153,849	

My voice

How can you get involved?

'My Voice' offers you a vital route to make sure that you can help shape our priorities and make improvements to the services we provide.

If you would like to hear more about 'My Voice', we'd love to hear from you. Come and chat to us on Teams – you can drop in 3-4pm on the 1st Wednesday of every month - <https://bit.ly/ScrutinyQA>.

If you prefer to do your research before getting in touch you can visit **our website** where you can find more information and read our frequently asked questions.

Want to speak to us? Call or text us on **07771 676 773** or email **Customerscrutiny@midlandheart.org.uk**.

Our Customer Scrutiny Team are there to support you with everything you need to get your voice heard and offer training and support if you need it. You'll also get access to Yammer, a secure online group where you can talk to other customers and share feedback with us.

We can't wait to hear from you!

